

**Sunil Karki**  
**SMALL CHANGE, BIG DIFFERENCE**  
**Quality Development Project at Camping Svanen**

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**ABSTRACT**

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<p>The aim of this thesis was to develop the overall quality level of Camping Svanen, situated in Pietarsaari/Jakobstad. The development was done through a renovation and designing project of three cottages. The camping site is owned by the town of Pietarsaari and since 2004 run every summer by Central Ostrobothnia University of Applied Sciences (COU), under the supervision of Centria. Centria is a research and development unit of COU. The thesis was commissioned by Jarl Sundqvist, who is a former development manager of Centria.</p> <p>The thesis was practice-based and its main objective was to conduct a cottage renovation project followed by the marketing of the project. The marketing was done through press release, project updates on a Facebook group and Svanen web-page as well as via brochure and leaflet distribution on the Kokkola Housing Fair. The project was sponsored by the town of Pietarsaari, who is also the owner of the camping site. The project did not involve any professional experts. All the project members were employees of the camping site for the summer 2011 as well as tourism students at COU. The designers were from the COU fur design department while the carpenter, who worked as a handy man, was from Optima Vocational School.</p> <p>The renovation part of the project took about one and half month and it was open for the public to see for another month. Some articles were published in the local newspapers and over fifty people both from Finland and abroad, visited the designed cottages, as expected. The town was happy and positive about the project and they were being supportive in different ways. In conclusion, the project was a success as it was able to achieve its objectives mentioned above. The cottages received new looks and the entire project helped to improve the overall quality of the camping site.</p>		
<b>Key words</b> Accommodation, marketing, project management, risk management, quality, quality development		

**ABSTRACT**  
**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 QUALITY DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1 Quality	3
2.1 Quality management	4
2.3 Analyzing different gaps	6
<b>3 ACCOMMODATION</b>	<b>9</b>
3.1 Accommodation sectors	9
3.2 Camping and caravan sites	10
3.3 Classification of camping sites in Finland	10
<b>4 CAMPING SVANEN/JOUTSEN</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>5 PROJECT MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>14</b>
5.1 Project types	14
5.2 Life cycle of the project	15
5.3 Project cost or budget estimates	17
5.4 Project risk management	18
<b>6 MARKETING THE PROJECT</b>	<b>21</b>
6.1 Marketing mix	21
6.2 Product	22
6.3 Price and place	23
6.4 Promotion	24
6.4.1 Advertising and sales promotion	24
6.4.2 Personal selling and public relations	25
6.4.3 Sponsorship	25
<b>7 PROJECT SVANEN 2011</b>	<b>27</b>
7.1 Small change, big difference	27
7.2 Project plan	28
7.3 Implementation of the project plan	31
<b>8 DISCUSSION AND FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>9 CONCLUSION</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>	

**GRAPHS**

GRAPH 1. Gap model (Adapted from Grönroos 2005:101.)

GRAPH 2. Finland's map showing the location of Pietarsaari/Jakobstad (Adapted from jakobstad.fi.)

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The term 'quality' is one of the most important components in the service industry due to the fact that service as a product in the tourism industry is more complex and abstract in all aspects compared to other products. Quality is the deciding factor in keeping good relationship between service providers and customers. With the growing numbers of service industries in today's world, the need for improving quality of one service industry over another in order to earn competitive advantage has been strongly realized. This is the reason why several tourism enterprises are seeking out for the best possible ways of providing the best quality services to their customers through different improvement measures. This thesis is solely based on a project of cottage renovation and designing, carried out at camping Svanen, in order to improve its functional quality. The camping site is located in Pietarsaari. The project is realised because most of the cottages that are being used for accommodating customers on the camping site are currently turning old and out of shape. As a result, customers had been giving negative feedback about the cottages they were living in, which is not a good scenario for the camping site's future.

The aim of the project was to develop the overall quality level of the camping site with the renovation and interior designing of three of the cottages. A similar step had also been taken the earlier year with a project named "Three Cottages Three Styles". In that project, three professional interior designers were involved in giving three cottages three different styles for a cosy living, following the original theme of the camping site residence. However, those designed cottages were there only for some time and with the termination of the project the cottages were almost emptied as the designers took away all their materials that had been used. However, this year's project is quite different in a way that the cottage designing will not involve any professional experts, and the designed cottages will be rented out to customers from the next year 2012. The project members including the designers were the students from Central Ostrobothnia University of Applied Sciences (COU), and a carpenter from Optima vocational school.

This thesis is practice-based, with a theoretical framework in the first six chapters, giving enough support to the empirical part of the thesis project. To start with, the first chapter explains the quality development approach where discussions about quality management and existing quality gaps will be made. The second chapter gives an introduction to the accommodation sector where accommodating in camping and caravan sites is explained in brief with the information involving the ground basis for categorising camping sites in Finland. The following chapter introduces Camping Svanen and Pietarsaari town. Chapter five presents theories about project management, its types, life cycle and in the end about cost or budget estimates.

Furthermore, chapter six is solely based on the marketing part where a short definition of marketing has been made followed by marketing mix elements with more focus on product and promotion. At the end, starting from chapter seven, the empirical part of the thesis project is presented. The actual project is introduced, followed by the project plan and its implementation. Chapter eight discusses the different aspects of the project, entailing what went well, what went according to the plan, and what did not, and then gives future recommendations. Finally, the conclusion about the whole project and the learning process is presented.

## 2 QUALITY DEVELOPMENT

This chapter will define and discuss the service perspective of quality, quality dimension, quality management and possible outcomes of perceived service quality followed by a quality gap analysis at the end.

### 2.1 Quality

Quality as a term is complicated to define as different people perceive it differently. When it comes to describing a product, quality refers to the point of its excellence. According to the definition made by ISO 9000:2005, quality is a “degree to which a set of inherent characteristics (distinguishing features) fulfills requirements i.e., needs or expectations that are stated, generally implied or obligatory” (Qualitysystems3p 2010). The concept of quality with respect to services is even more complex compared to that of goods, since services are intangible and production and consumption processes are inseparable as well. Cooper, Fletcher, Fyall, Gilbert and Wanhill define quality as “the totality of relationships between service providers (functional aspects) and the features of the product (technical aspects) which are related to the delivery of satisfaction”. According to Grönroos, the overall quality in service business is determined from the customers’ point of view, about how well they expect quality to be and what could be done to improve it, in order to achieve what they are actually looking for. Godfrey and Clarke state that quality in tourism is tourists’ expectations, no matter if it is via luxury hotels or via ordinary camping sites. Therefore, quality that is related of Camping Svanen can be referred to all those aspects dealing from buyer-seller interactions to how well the actual services are rendered to domestic as well as international visitors for their overnight stay, either in cottages or in caravan or tent places. (Lal 2008, 22; Cooper, Fletcher, Fyall, Gilbert and Wanhill. 2008, 526; Grönroos 2005, 62-63 & Godfrey & Clarke 2000, 161.)

Grönroos has divided quality into two dimensions; a technical dimension and a functional dimension. The technical dimension comprises of technical solutions to the customers’ problems

where provision of the main services to the customers takes place. For instance, provision of a cottage room and beds to the guests, serving of customers with a coffee and breakfast in the café and reception services are some of the examples included in the technical dimension in camping Svanen. However, the technical dimension is not enough to take into account in the total quality perceived by the customers, since the way the services are rendered also highly influences the overall outcome of the process. This includes the task performance made by the service employee accounting what they say, and in what ways they behave in order to impact the customer's perception of the actual service. This is because the customers tend to be highly influenced by the outcome of the process. Thus, the functional quality has to do with how well the service providers are functioning and how the service rendered corresponds to the customers' expectation. In other words, functional quality is all about buyer-seller interactions during the encounter of the services. The perceived quality can also be influenced much by brand name or local image of the company, entailing that if the company has been able to create a good image in the customers' minds, then small error can easily be forgiven by the customers. However, if mistakes occur too often, it can negatively influence the image of the company and the customers might start doubting the overall quality and image of the company. (Grönroos 2005, 63-64.)

## **2.2 Quality management**

Grönroos strongly points out that every business is capable of providing a 100 per cent quality level if it tries hard enough, arguing against the fact that managers find it quite impossible to give 100 per cent quality whatever business they are running. He points out that since the firm's quality development approach is not effective enough, the managers feel that the quality development program could not gain the expected results. This is the reason why quality management should be considered as an ongoing process instead of a particular program. Furthermore, each individual in a company realizing the importance of quality maintenance and having the know-how to contribute to the overall service quality, is considered to be important. Quality improvement may give rise to different dimensions for different managers due to the fact that some might look for an effective method with respect to time and effort, or for an



investment in effective machinery, while others might consider it as a program for some sort of training or giving rewards to employees. The bigger responsibility hence falls upon top management to maintain quality and quality improvement and management process (Grönroos 2005, 97-98.)

According to Cooper et al, the main reason behind the growing importance of quality management is that firms should be able to come up with a good level of services to its consumers in comparison to their competitors. The consumers have become more sophisticated and they are aware of using their rights when looking for the best possible options to meet their expectations. Thus, the quality of the product needs to be controlled during the service delivery process, as quality is a significant factor for deciding market share and profitability. This is the reason why quality is one of the most important competitive components that make the organization's strategy successful. However, it is difficult to define out the criteria for the optimum level of service quality, since it is mostly based on a firm's own strategy and the customer's expectation. These two elements are dependent on each other, where the service provider should try to implement their strategy in such a way that it can create expectations among the customers for excellent services, and later on such expectations will be fulfilled with excellent quality in the service offered. On the other hand, the strategy for other firms can be the provision of low quality services at a lower price to the customer group which has lower demands. This kind of strategy should still keep the customers' expectations alive and not vary from the actual level of quality since the perceived quality is considered to be good as long as the customer experience meets the expectation. (Cooper, et al. 2008, 526 and Grönroos 2005, 98-99.)

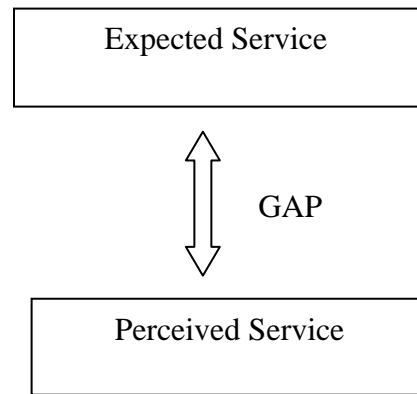
The perceived service quality as stated by Grönroos, possesses four possible outcomes such as underquality, confirmed quality, positively confirmed quality and overquality. Confirmed quality or acceptable quality, is a must for the firm, but it is not enough to make the customers overly satisfied, for which exceeding customers' expectations are required. The firms should aim at providing positively confirmed quality or good quality as it is the best possible solution needed to make a good impression among customers. It is not so cost effective if the quality perceived is too high, as it leads to high production costs. Even though overquality helps in exceeding customers' expectations, it may result in negative word-of-mouth in case something

goes wrong during the service delivery process, and it can give customers a notion that the service is overpriced, even if it is not. It is true that the customers would like to maintain a good relationship with the service providers and do not want to break it if the service provided exceeds their expectations, rather than if they are just provided acceptable quality. If the expectations of the customers are exceeded while rendering them the positively confirmed quality, it creates a bonding between service providers and customers resulting into a good word-of-mouth, where customers can influence their friends, neighbors and colleagues with the good experience they have had. (Grönroos 2005, 99-100; Rust & Oliver 2000, 86-92.)

The customers always have high expectations when they come to experience a service for the second time due to the experience they have had before. This might result in a situation where, at some point, it becomes quite impossible to maintain a certain quality level with respect to the increase in the experience level. Even a small surprising attempt to try to exceed customers' expectations can have a positive impact. However, it is not a good idea to return to the same quality level after having created a surprising effect once among the customers. This is called a "hit-and-run delight" by Rust and Oliver, which means that once firms create a surprise effect and fails to do so the next time again, customers learn from their experience and they will not be as satisfied as before, resulting into a worse quality outcome. Nevertheless, providing a constant level of quality may make customers forget the surprise factor on all occasions and it becomes hard for them to remember the feeling of surprise. As a result, it is possible to reach the same positive quality effect every time with the repetition of the same positive experience. (Grönroos 2005, 99-100; Rust & Oliver 2000, 86-94.)

### **2.3 Analyzing different gaps**

A gap analysis model introduced by Berry and his colleagues is useful in determining reasons or sources behind quality problems, and giving managers ideas on the improvement of service quality. The main gap exists due to the result of other gaps when customers' expectations could not be met by performed services; this is shown in Graph 1 on the next page.



GRAPH 1. Gap model (adapted from Grönroos 2005, 101.)

The gap model shown in Graph 1 reveals the possible gap between a service provider and a customer during the service delivery process. The expected service can be highly influenced by needs and personal experiences of the customer and even by word-of-mouth communication and market communication. The perceived service is the service experienced by the customer as a result of every step taken by the service provider as a part of decision making and conducting appropriate activities. Marketing communication can largely affect both the expected service and the perceived service. The determination of possible sources of quality problems can be done through identifying quality gaps or incompatibilities, existing between various elements in the basic structure of the management process. There are five gaps that will be discussed more in brief in the following sections. (Grönroos 2005, 100-102.)

The management perception gap or gap 1 is the situation when the management is not so certain about the quality expected by the customers. Basically, it can be mainly due to inadequate information obtained through market research or due to false interpretation about expectations. It can be prevented either through good market research in order to find out the actual needs of the customers, or through better understanding of the type of service competition between managers. Gap 2 is the quality specification gap which occurs when quality expectations perceived by management are not equivalent to the specified service quality due to improper planning processes and the management lacking a specific goal. This gap can be filled when management and service providers are committed to following the service quality specifica-

tions, taking into consideration goal-setting and planning procedures. Furthermore, gap 3 or the service delivery gap, is the result of when the actual performance does not match the specified quality, when producing and delivering the service to the customers. This is due to too complex specifications that employees have a trouble following, poor internal marketing and a system and a technology that are not being able to support the performance regarding specifications. However, this gap can be filled with good supervision and management, good understanding about specifications among employees and a supportive system and technology. (Grönroos 2005, 102-105.)

The market communication gap or gap 4, is realized when the service providers are not able to deliver the same types of services to customers which they have promised through external communication methods. This situation arises when the planning for market communication does not correspond to the service procedures, and when service providers promise too much to the customers. This gap can be filled with the improvement of market communication, where a system for supervision can be developed in order to adjust market communications with service performance and delivery. Finally, gap 5, or the perceived service quality gap is created when the perceived service does not meet the customers' expectations and this can be the case when the quality is bad and when the word-of-mouth is negative due to a negative perception of the image of the corporation. However, this gap can have positive aspects as well since it might result in either a positively confirmed quality or overquality. This gap can be addressed by identifying the reason behind the quality problem, for instance, finding out the incompatibilities between a service provider and a customer, and taking necessary steps to overcome them. (Grönroos 2005, 105-106.)

### **3 ACCOMMODATION**

In this chapter, a brief description about what is accommodation and its types will be presented, followed by some information about camping site accommodation and classification of camping sites in Finland.

#### **3.1 Accommodation sectors**

Accommodation is considered to be the biggest and also the omnipresent sub-sector in the field of tourism. Accommodation is a location where tourists can stay and rest during the time of their travelling to certain destinations. As accommodation originates in tourism, tourists and visitors have been hosted at a destination where payment has been made by the guests for using certain services as per level of excellence, including additional provision for food and beverages. Furthermore, accommodation plays a significant role in the growth of tourism at the destination and is aimed at serving visitors staying overnight rather than day-trippers. The accommodation with respect to the amount and ranges of facilities available can influence the attracting of visitors to the destination. Accommodation can therefore be put into an important category of overall tourism infrastructure. The contribution made by the accommodation is also significant in the overall economy at both local and international levels. Research has shown that about 33% of total expenditure on trips is made for the sectors of accommodation. (Cooper et al. 2008, 343-344; Page 2009, 253.)

According to Cooper et al., accommodation can be categorized mainly into four sectors depending upon the nature of services offered, and these are: fully or partially serviced accommodation, self-catering accommodation, accommodation service facilities and mobile transportation type of accommodation. Hotels, motels, guest houses, bed and breakfasts and farmhouses come under fully or partially serviced accommodation, where there is a provision of food and beverage as well. Self-catering accommodation such as apartments, cottages, camping and caravan sites and gites, provide recreational areas as well as food preparing facilities.

In the accommodation support facilities type, there is a facility provided for campers, caravanners and trailer owners enabling them to bring their own accommodation with them. The mobile transportations such as trains, cruise ships, aircrafts and ferries are providing functional accommodation services to the passenger, especially for those travelling long distance. (Cooper et al. 2008, 343-352.)

### **3.2 Camping and caravan sites**

Locke has defined camping and caravan sites to be land area comprising of two or more caravan pitches and/or tents. The caravan is a vehicle used as trailer for the purpose of leisure accommodation while travelling. Thus, Caravan sites have the provision of caravan pitches to provide space for accommodating caravans. (Locke 2008, 239.) According to Cooper et al., camping and caravan sites are the sites where visitors, especially campers and caravanners, bring along their own accommodation such as tents, caravans or trailers to the places they are travelling. These forms of accommodation carry high importance both in domestic as well as international tourism in several countries. The level of accommodation on these sites are improving to a larger extent, however, there still exists some limitations regarding space and privacy. Moreover, Page states that there has been seen a significant development in the caravan sector in recent years. There is even a good provision of permanent tents or caravans on some sites where tourists can stay a week or longer. The services being offered on such sites can be as sophisticated as hotels and resorts. Young families and retired people are the biggest groups of caravan site users. (Cooper et al. 2008, 351; Page 2009, 283.)

### **3.3 Classification of camping sites in Finland**

The classification of camping sites in Finland and in most of the countries can be done according to the number of stars given to them. About a hundred camping sites in Finland are granted a certain star category. The camping sites with one-star have the capacity to provide basic services, whereas the five-star camping sites have a higher standard of services. (Suomen Leir-

intäalueyhdistys ry.) In the following paragraphs, the detailed information about the different star classifications in Finland is given.

The camping site with one star has a tendency of providing a minimum of 25 tents and caravans and the minimum pitch area is between 80-100 square meters. There is a provision of site supervision during daytime and the facilities such as cooking facilities, toilets, showers, dish washing, telephone and slop sink for caravans are also provided. In the two-star class, there are additional facilities to those of the one-class, which include a marked route for the road, electric hook-ups in at least 20% of the caravan pitches, reception, tent pitches, site supervision from 7 am to 11 pm, warm water for showering and dish washing facilities, a kiosk, playground for the children and outdoor grilling facilities. (Suomen Leirintäalueyhdistys ry.)

In addition to already mentioned facilities for those of one and two star classes, three-star classes possess illuminated roadways, provision of electric hook-ups in 50% of the caravan pitches and 100% if they are winter camping sites. They also have a separate area for the tent pitch, tourist information, possibility for advance booking, check-in and check-out facilities with Camping Card, day and night site supervision, nursery room for babies, dining room, washing machine, sauna, cafeteria, waste disposal facilities, public telephone, postal service, map over the site, and accommodation facilities in terms of cottages, cabins or rooms. Four star-class sites have additional facilities such as electric hook-ups at about 75% of the caravan pitches, possibility for advance booking throughout the year, employees with versatile language skills, heating facilities in service buildings, common room with TV and selling of meals in the cafeteria. Likewise on five star class sites, the extra services include site supervision all the time, heat insulated service buildings and sanitary installations, baby-sitter services, restaurant, different activities, illumination of the site and toilets, shower, TV and kitchenette facilities in some cottages or rooms. (Suomen Leirintäalueyhdistys ry.)

#### 4 CAMPING SVANEN/JOUTSEN

In this chapter, a brief glance of Camping Svanen/Joutsen is presented, entailing its history and the current structure. A short introduction about the town of Pietarsaari, where the camping site is situated, is also given at the end of the chapter.

According to the article published in 2005 by Guy Björklund, who was the director of a museum at that time, the history of Svanen dates back to the 23th of June 1954, which was when the Svanen started operating. At the beginning, there were only three cottages for accommodating visitors and one cottage was used as a small cafe and as a room for the caretaker. There were altogether 26 beds, where 12 beds were for men, 12 for women and the remaining two beds were put in a family room. The number of cottages was increased during the 60s and 70s, whereas in 1970, shower rooms and toilets for both men and women were added. Furthermore, the camping area got a new cafe in 1983 with an addition of five new cottages, and the old café was turned into two cottages. The majority of international tourists were from Sweden and Norway due to the ongoing boat traffic between Finland and Sweden. With the ending of the boat traffic, the number of visitors decreased and the camping could not function as before. (Laxåback 2005, 5-6.)

Today, Camping Svanen is considered to be a two star camping site, where there were 99 bed places provided by 27 cottages in the year 2010, out of which, seven cottages have own kitchen and five cottages have a kitchen and a toilet. Currently, after the renovation in the summer 2011, the number of cottages increased to 30 and the bed places to 107. There are 24 caravan sites that have electricity and there is also a bigger area for putting up tents. The camping site has a public kitchen, where there is possibility for the guests to cook, and the site's only public sauna is located nearby a lake. Furthermore, there are shower rooms and toilets for men, women and disabled people, laundry and other washing facilities, and childcare facilities. There is also a provision of outside grilling places, playgrounds for the children, mini-golf and volleyball fields. Every summer, the camping site is run by the students from Central Ostrobothnia University of Applied Sciences (COU), the Pietarsaari



unit, and the project is supervised by Centria since 2004. Centria is a research and development unit of COU whose main task is to work for the development of enterprises and communities in the region. Centria is also the commissioning party of this thesis project. (Camping Svanen 2006; Centria.)

Geographically, Pietarsaari/Jakobstad is located in Western Finland on the Gulf of Bothnia as shown in Graph 2 below. It is a bilingual town where more than half of the population speaks Swedish as their mother tongue. The history of the town dates back to 1652, the time when it was founded by Ebba Brahe, who decided that the name of the town would be Jakobstad. However, the Finnish speakers preserved the old given name, which is Pietarsaari. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the town turned out into industrial town as the building of sawmills, shipbuilding industries and the exportation of their products such as tar and timber started. The population of the town in 2010 was 19,627 where Finnish speakers were comprised of 39,8%, Swedish speakers equalled 56,4% and the remaining 3,7% spoke other languages than Finnish and Swedish. Jakobstad is also popular as a town of parks and gardens and the town is crowded during Jakobs Dagar in July. (Jakobstad/Pietarsaari; 7 Bridges Archipelago.). Jakobs Dagar is a festival week in July that is held every year and is full of happenings for all age groups with a blend of music and dance performances, sports, child programs and city tours (Jakobs Dagar).



GRAPH 2. Finland's map showing the location of Pietarsaari/Jakobstad (Adapted from Jakobstad.fi.)

## **5 PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

In this chapter, the discussion revolves around the project and project management presenting its introduction, its types and the life cycle during the conduction of the projects.

### **5.1 Project types**

According to Westland, a project can be defined as “a unique endeavor to produce a set of deliverables within clearly specified time, cost and quality constraints” (Westland 2006, 2). A project is conducted over a certain time, with an approved budget through the allocation of limited resources, in order to reach beneficial change, where risk factors are common. Thus, project management is the process of undertaking a project successfully through the utilization of required skills, knowledge and tools. Lock argues that all projects have similar features where the ideas and actions are transferred into new accomplishments. He also puts emphasis on the fact that such project tasks always possess risk and uncertainty, since the completion of those tasks cannot be forecasted in advance. The reason behind project management is to foretell all the possible risks and dangers and to lead the project into a success through planning, organizing and controlling activities. The starting of the process should take place before the investments of any resources are made. The primary feature of a project is to accomplish something totally new and this can be considered as a move into the unknown, full of risk and uncertainty. Projects are always completely different from one another, meaning that even two identical projects may vary greatly in one or more aspects with respect to commercial, administrative or physical aspects. Lock categorizes projects into four different types (Westland 2006, 2; Lock 2007, 1.)

The first types of projects are related to industrial projects where the conduction of the work takes place on a particular site, away from the working place of the contractor. The public can even get to observe these kinds of projects. The capital investment in these types of projects is relatively high and special attention must be paid to the management regarding finance,

progress and quality. Since the operation might often cause some health hazards, precaution must be taken through safety measures, for example, in big constructions, mining and tunneling. The second types of projects can also be called manufacturing projects, which deal with the production of special equipments such as machine, ship, planes and vehicles. These projects are conducted in a factory and laboratory, with the provision of a favorable environment by the company in order to manage the work properly. Projects of the third type are needed when some changes with the system of the companies are made, for example, during the introduction of new computer systems, when relocating the headquarters of companies, when launching a campaign for marketing and or making a preparation for exhibitions. Projects done for a pure scientific research fall under the fourth type category, where the uncovering of the result is occasional, and thus it leads to the occurrence of the highest risks. It is also difficult to define the objective of the project and to get the expected outcome and to guarantee its success. (Lock 2007, 1.)

## **5.2 Life cycle of the project**

The product life cycle is “the period that begins with the authorization of work on the project and ends with the handover of the desired product to the customer” (Lock 2007, 3-4). According to Westland (2006, 3) there are mainly four phases included in the life cycle of the project such as initiation phase, planning phase, execution phase and closing phase and these are explained in brief in the following paragraphs.

The initiation phase is the first stage of a project where the identification of a business opportunity or problem is made, followed by the specification of several alternatives for the solution. Then the investigation is done in order to know if the business problem is addressed by each alternative and then the final solution is recommended. This will help when realizing the right activities for the project as well. Finally, when the solution recommended is accepted, a project is kicked off to achieve the target and that is when the manager for the project is appointed. The recruiting of the project team is carried out by the project manager, thus creating a working environment for the project. (Westland 2006, 3-4; The Ohio State University.)

In the planning phase, the project team is familiarized with the work, the schedule is prepared, the required resources and budget for labor, equipment and materials is estimated, as a part of the planning process. The project team is informed about the ground rules, working procedures and the plan for communication. Furthermore, the involved stakeholders are provided the information through the communication plan and a certain criteria list is made in order to get the acceptance from the customers, which in other words is known as quality strategy. Precaution is taken in order to handle possible threats, which is also known as risk management. The possible risks that may occur in the future are identified and action is taken in order to reduce both the probability and the impact of the risks. (Westland 2006, 3-4; The Ohio State University.)

The project plans made during the planning phase are to be implemented in execution phase. Constant monitoring and controlling are needed during the execution of each plan for the delivery of the project outcome. Moreover, the follow-up process is applied in order to check that the progress of the work is satisfactory and is headed towards the main goal before the pre-scheduled deadline. The quality measurement of the outcome is undertaken in order to match it with the customers' criteria of acceptance, where issues related to risks and changes to be done are identified. (Westland 2006, 3-4; The Ohio State University.)

The project is terminated in the closure phase with the delivery of the outcome or products to the customers, followed by the submission of the final project document to the business, bringing an end to the contracts for the supplier, relinquishing the resources and informing the stakeholders about the closure of the project. However, the closure of the project must include that the project is approved and accepted by the customers as well. It is important to review the finished project in order to find out how well the project ran and what were the development needs, in order to conduct other successful projects in the future. (Westland 2006, 3-4; The Ohio State University.)

### 5.3 Project cost or budget estimates

This is a challenging step where project managers must be serious in taking into account cost estimates for the project, so that it is completed within target budget. The cost is estimated in order to identify the price for commercial and industrial projects in which a proper estimation is very crucial. Lock divides cost elements into two different costs; direct and indirect costs. Direct costs are the variable costs that are fully invested in the project, which includes, for example, labor costs and essential material costs, which are responsible for adding value to the project. Indirect costs are the fixed costs that are essential in running the business, for example, costs such as salaries to all the staff members. These costs only add cost to the project but not the value. It is a difficult job to predict initial costs accurately since unplanned costs may occur during the project. However, an effective use of all the data and the time period can lead closer to the estimation. Lock has also discussed different methods, described in the next paragraph, to estimate costs, and argues that the accuracy of the cost estimation is also greatly affected by how well the project has been defined and how much time is allocated in order to make the estimation. (Lock 2007, 29-30; Schwalbe 2010, 261.)

A ballpark estimate is prepared when there is not sufficient information provided and the time given is too short to make estimate in detail. The estimate has a  $\pm 25$  per cent accuracy rate. This estimate can be done already before the official kick off of the project. Furthermore, costs can also be estimated by comparing the new project with older ones of similar nature and these are called comparative estimates, which have a  $\pm 15$  per cent accuracy rate. Feasible estimates, having an accuracy rate of  $\pm 10$  per cent, require an advance plan for the project entailing all the materials to be used and the costs are based on how much they cost. The most effective estimates can be considered as definitive estimates, since these are made when much of the worked has been performed showing the actual costs obtained with estimation made for costs incurring during the rest of the project. These estimates have an accuracy of  $\pm 5$  per cent. (Lock 2007, 29-31; Schwalbe 2010, 261.)

The calculation of the cost is started with the listing of all the required jobs and materials that are supposed to incur costs, in the form of a shopping list. It can be a difficult job to compile

the list properly since the lack of an important item might affect adversely to the whole project largely. In this case, the use of checklist and the division of work in a reasonable way can be the best solution for minimizing errors. Software has also been used in most of the commercial and industrial projects when inspecting and testing schedules. The project cost estimates can be documented and cost codes can be saved with respect to the possibility of a work breakdown. This document can be useful in comparing between the actual costs incurred and estimates later on and strictness can be maintained for each item in order to control the costs. The purchase department is required to be engaged in. The amount and size of the materials are also important aspects to be taken into account. Additional costs may occur if there are any errors, for example, the design and production and materials chosen do not have the right quality. (Lock 2007, 31-38.)

In conclusion, it can be seen that there are two fields involved, one that specifies the materials that are needed to be purchased and the other to sort out the cost and time involved in their delivery. Listing all the needed materials and having an idea of their prices prior to the project implementation, can lead to a better accuracy in the estimation of a certain budget. Furthermore, taking former projects with a similar nature as a reference is very helpful when estimating the costs. In the following sections, different risks involved in a project are discussed and the useful ways of dealing with the risks are presented.

#### **5.4 Project risk management**

Every project is likely to have different possible risks, which sometimes can be identified easily while sometimes it is quite impossible to do so. Risk can be defined as uncertainties concerning the physical elements and can be of a political, economic, technical, commercial or operational nature. They can even occur from a physical injury and the change in a relationship between different parties involved in the project, for example, employees, suppliers and operators. There is a possibility that a risk can be involved at any level in project process in which some are related to project tasks while some arise from external factors. Risks that occur later have more negative impacts than that of those occurring during the beginning of the

project. This is the reason why there is a focus on project risk management which helps with identifying possible risks, evaluating the nature of the risks and giving appropriate ways of either reducing negative impacts upon the project or avoiding them if possible. The possible risks can be identified by making checklists of predictable risks, and historical related to similar projects can help project managers learn a lesson and try not to make similar mistakes again. Another useful method of identifying risks can be brainstorming where central staffs can work together in predicting possible risks and their causes and then find the favourable ways of managing them. (Lock 2002, 43-44; Cooper, Grey, Raymond & Walker 2005, 1-4.)

When the possible risks are listed, they can be put into a certain order taking into consideration the most probable risks that can occur and the extent of their impacts. Lock has suggested two ways of assessing risks, in the form of qualitative and quantitative analyses. In the qualitative type, the risks are analyzed in detail with an in-depth imagine of different risk features and their physical effect on the project. This method involves an identification of the failure parts of the project and their modes followed by an analysis of the effect. Meanwhile, a quantitative risk analysis is often one step ahead of the qualitative, since it helps with measuring the consequences of the risks, and taking the necessary actions to prevent them in a numerical order. It is not recommended to rely too much on quantitative methods since the results are taken from human presumption and estimation. This method involves failure, mode, effect and critical analysis. Finally, the risks are registered and are then reviewed and updated whenever necessary during the project life cycle. (Lock 2002, 44-47.)

At the end of the risk management process, the appropriate steps are taken for handling the risks carefully. Lock has recommended several options regarding this matter. The risks can be avoided by preventing their causes in the first place which also means that projects are not conducted at all. Furthermore, necessary precautions can be implied to prevent risks by applying high-level strategy of risk prevention through an active involvement of staffs and managers involved in the project. Another way of dealing with the risk could be accepting it since it is quite impossible to avoid risks, and some of the smaller risks do not even have such serious effects that they cannot be corrected easily. The risks can also be shared among partners with the sharing of workloads, as risks sometimes can be so big that it is impossible for a single

person to handle them. It is also a good idea to limit the risks by dividing project into various steps and dealing them one by one. Finally, risks can also be transferred to a third party, which in this case means obtaining insurance. (Lock 2002, 47-50.)



## **6 MARKETING THE PROJECT**

This section presents a brief introduction into marketing in travel and tourism followed by a discussion on marketing mix elements. This is because the other important part of this thesis is based on marketing both the project on camping Svanen and also the whole camping site during the housing fair in Kokkola from 15<sup>th</sup> of July to 14<sup>th</sup> of August 2011. The theme behind this housing fair was to present different homes options suitable for all age groups, in different sizes taking into consideration both safety and functionality. (Suomen Asuntomessut.)

### **6.1 Marketing mix**

Cooper et al. argues that the era we are living in is dominated by marketing, and that marketing can be interpreted simply as an activity concerning promotion and communication with the employment of a certain budget for marketing. However, one definition describes marketing as a process of management providing the right product, in the right place, at the right time and at the right price. As defined by Kotler and Keller, marketing is “a societal process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating, offering and freely exchanging products and services of value with others”. It is an organizational process of determining needs of the people and fulfilling them in a profitable way with the creation of value through a customer focus approach. Furthermore, Middleton, Fyall, Morgon and Ranchhod (2009: 23) describe marketing as “the process of achieving voluntary exchanges between two parties”. Out of two parties, customers have a greater influence on what products or services they want to have, whereas producers are concerned with how to fulfill those customers’ needs and desires. Middleton et al. also points out that the most important thing is to have a better understanding of the needs and wants of customers in order to be more effective in providing them these services. (Cooper et al.2008, 511-514; Kotler, Kelly, Brady, Goodman & Hansen 2009, 6-7; Middleton, Fyall, Morgon and Ranchhod 2009, 23-26.)

A marketing mix is a set of management tools designed to attract the target market and concerns each and every decision making process from the time when a product is produced until it reaches its target customer groups. There are four key elements in a marketing mix and they are product, price, promotion and place. The four Ps was introduced by McCarthy and they are producer oriented, whereas Kotler added four Cs to make it more consumer orientated as it has been the main marketing approach in modern era of competitive market. (Cooper et al.2008, 577; Kotler and Armstrong 2010, 76-77.) Since, this thesis focuses more on its products, being the “Quality Development Project of Camping Svanen”, and the promotion of the project through involvement in a marketing campaign during the house fair and press release, these two Ps will be discussed more in brief and the remaining Ps such as price and place will be explained shortly.

## **6.2 Product**

Product can be defined as a solution, either goods or services that customers are seeking for in order to achieve what they need. Cooper et al. define products as “problem-solving services” that show the tangibility of the offered services and comprises all the benefits or features received by the customers. As defined by Kotler, Armstrong, Saunders and Wong, “services are products that consist of activities, benefits or satisfaction that are offered for sale that are essentially intangible and do not result in the ownership of anything” (2002: 460). Furthermore, products, in other words, as stated by Kotler and Armstrong, also mean customer value, which is considered as such in a customer oriented approach, where service quality or benefits perceived by the customer give them the actual value in terms of money (Kotler & Armstrong 2010, 77). Basically, the product can be divided into three main categories comprising of core product, facilitating product and supporting product and augmented product, and these will be discussed in the next paragraph. (Cooper et al. 2008, 579.)

The core product includes the basic services that customers encounter during the service delivery process that benefits them by meeting their actual needs. The facilitating product are the services that help the customer utilize the core product in a convenient way and must be

present at all times, whereas, supporting products are the extra goods and services that help to improve the utility rate of the core product. Lastly, an augmented product is the combination of core product and peripheral product in order to form some sort of benefit package that helps to get a competitive advantage over competitors and create a good image in the market. (Cooper et al. 2008, 579-580; Reid & Bojanic 2010; 283-284.) In the case of Camping Svanen, the core product that it offers to customers is accommodation services with the bed places in different cottages and the places for caravans and tents, whereas the cottages with kitchen and shower can be labelled as peripheral services. The facilitating service includes receptionists and the advance booking system, whereas supporting services include café, playground for children, mini-golf area, beach volleyball ground, canoe renting, sauna, child care room and toilets. (Svanen Camping 2006.)

### **6.3 Price and place**

The amount of money paid by the customers to buy certain products is known as a 'price' and all the other components such as discounts, allowances, time for payment and terms concerning credits come under the pricing process. It has been always challenging and difficult to set the right price for the right products and this decision-making is considered to be very important since it determines the profitability. The decision making of prices for tourism products is too complex due to the fact that tourism products are intangible, perishable and inseparable and is greatly affected largely by the seasonality of the demand. In a customer orientation approach, price is equivalent to customer cost, since customers want to know the total costs during the purchase of the product in detail. Similarly, place comprises of the activities that the organization perform in order to distribute their products to customers in a convenient way. There is a need for some sorts of distribution channels which will make it easier to make products available to potential customers. Place means convenience from the customers' point of view, in which convenience refers to an easy availability and an accessibility of the products to the customers. This approach has been significantly important since customers have become sophisticated nowadays when it comes to purchasing tourism products. (Kotler and Armstrong 2010, 76-77; Cooper et al. 2008, 586-.606.)

## **6.4 Promotion**

Kotler and Armstrong define promotion as communicational activities that tell target groups of customers about the product and convince them to purchase it. The objectives of marketing should be clear so that the marketers can choose effective methods from different promotional activities comprising of advertising, sales promotion, merchandizing, direct mailing, marketing campaign, public relations, personal selling, internet, web-sites and printed materials, for example, brochures. These communicational tools are applied to create a positive attitude towards the product through awareness, information and education that help customers, particularly regular customers, make the decision of buying easier. During the promotional activities, the stress must be given in creating a good image or brand of the company since it might take long for the customer to recognise the particular brand and what they are actually offering. (Kotler and Armstrong 2010, 76; Cooper et al. 2008, 593-600; Middleton, Fyall, Morgon & Ranchhod. 2009, 140.)

### **6.4.1 Advertising and sales promotion**

Advertising and sales promotion are the most common forms of promotion that most of the marketers prefer to use. Cooper et al. (2008: 597) define advertising as “any paid form of non-personal communication through the media which details a product that has an identified sponsor”. The media can range from radio, television, newspaper and magazine to direct mail, web pages, travel guides and billboards. It enables marketers to let the large numbers of customers know about the company and its products on offer with a single message through commercials, direct mailings, brochures, trade-shows and personal contact (Free Management Library). Sales promotion is an activity where incentives are given to add value to the products with the target of stimulating sales. It works effectively if combined together with other promotional tools as supplements. The main objective of sales promotion is to attract new customers, strengthen advertising and boost the sales volume. (Cooper et al. 2008, 597; Pride, Hughes & Kapoor 2010, 443.)

### **6.4.2 Personal selling and public relations**

Personal selling can be defined as oral communication, either face to face or through telephone, between the potential customers and a salesperson with the aim of selling a particular product. This technique is widely used by non-profit making organizations and its main objective is to keep in touch with the customers so that the sales volume can be increased. This gives the salesperson an opportunity to listen to their customers and find out the actual needs of the customer. According to Cooper et al. public relations (PR) is non-personal communication made to cover certain information via the mass media and it is free of cost. Any sorts of coverage in a newspaper, such as an article or press release are some of the examples of PR. It is to help the public understand through the flow of information to overcome their ignorance or misunderstanding about a particular company, product or place. The significant part of PR is to build up a strong image of the company and overcome the negative aspects or news since people are more likely to believe articles published by printed media than simply commercial advertisements. PR has been categorized by Cooper et al. as planned and unplanned, in which planned PR is an activity where a company decides what they want as news release, whereas, unplanned PR provides company with an opportunity to promote itself and gain control over a negative message. Furthermore, delivering a press release and photographs to the mass media, for example, the local and national press, radio and television, holding a press conference for upcoming important events, informing journals of local newspaper through letters and making speeches, are some of the examples of planned PR. (Cooper et al. 2009, 598-600; Godfrey & Clarke 2000, 153-154; Henslowe 2003, 6-7.)

### **6.4.3 Sponsorship**

Other types of promotion can be sponsorship, which in case of this project is also one of the important parts since the town of Pietarsaari is providing all financial support for its execution. Donovan and Henley define sponsorship as “the payment for the right to associate the sponsor’s company name, products or services with the sponsee” (2010: 364). This means that sponsorship is one of the marketing forms in which sponsors offer sponsees financial support

or other resources under certain binding agreements, in order to support an event, activity or project. An organization, individual or group of people and an event can be different forms of sponsees. According to Goldblatt, sponsorship is a commercial transaction between two parties where offer and acceptance takes place. An offer includes marketing services offered by an organizer with an exchange of money or other resources from sponsors. The marketing services may comprise of everything from simple company advertisements and banner displays, to vast marketing programs such as advertisement, public relation and promotion. There is a vagueness existing between sponsorship and advertising as sometimes people find them very similar, which in reality they are not, since advertising is more likely to be of a quantitative type, while sponsorship is more of a qualitative type. For a sponsoring company, another alternative is to use the marketing budget for the advertisement. (Donovan & Henley 2010, 364; Goldblatt 2005, 287-289.)

Donovan and Henley have presented two main objectives of sponsorship, which are trading and communication objectives meant for commercial purposes, and structural and communication objectives meant for health purposes. Trading objectives basically ensure the right of the company to market themselves in the events with the purpose of influencing the behavior of the customers. The communication objectives help in enhancing the image and brand of a company among its potential target group, and influence their behavior and attitude in order to drive sales up. However, the entertainment of customers, giving special rewards to the best employees and to offer incentives for driving more sales are some other major objectives of sponsorship. (Donovan & Henley 2010, 367-368.)

## **7 PROJECT SVANEN 2011**

This thesis is practice-based as it involves a conduction of the project at Camping Svanen in the summer of 2011. This chapter gives detailed information about the project, starting from the introduction of the project, project plan and the implementation of the plan.

### **7.1 Small change, big difference**

SMALL CHANGE, BIG DIFFERENCE is a cottage renovation and interior-design project, run by the students of Central Osrobothnia University of Applied Sciences (COU), Pietarsaari Unit, at Camping Svanen in the summer of 2011. The project was conducted with the financial aid from the town of Pietarsaari. The project was realised in order to improve the quality level of the cottages as most of the cottages are turning old and getting out of shape. The other main reason behind the conduction of this project was to continue on the development started the previous year with a similar project. The project was named “Three Cottages-Three Styles”, where three professional designers from the Pietarsaari region were involved to design three cottages each, and they were able to give them three different looks. One of the main aspects that distinguish this year’s project from last year’s project was that professional interior designers were involved last year, while this year only students from COU were involved.

The project team members were students from the tourism degree programme while designers were students from the department of fur design. A student from an Optima vocational school helped to build some furniture. The other difference between these two projects concerns the types of cottages being used, since the design solutions were only provided to cottages of similar sizes and functionalities last year i.e. cottages for two persons, with the area of five square meters, while this year different cottages with different sizes ranging from five square meters to 12 square meters and with different functionalities were chosen. (Åhman & Sundqvist 2011.)

The theme of last year's project was to create comfortable and functional cottages from the cottages representing camping residents of the 1960s for today's visitors (Åhman & Sundqvist 2010). This year the project had three different themes, such as "Honeymoon" cottage, "Flower" cottage and "Sailor" cottage. The project 2011 had two major parts, involving a renovation part and a marketing part. The renovation part included painting, wallpapering and interior-designing of the cottages. Meanwhile, the marketing part included marketing of the project or Camping Svanen as a whole, via press release in the local newspapers and the distribution of brochures and leaflets to the people attending the housing fair in Kokkola.

Nonetheless, the main target of the project was to bring about rational changes through the improvement in the quality of the cottages and to receive publicity for the project and the camping area so that there would be an increase in number of customers visiting the camping area. The project was also meant to provide evidence to the town of Pietarsaari and COU that improvement in the conditions of the cottage, for example, through their renovation and effective marketing, with some investments, can bring a lot of customers to the camping area and help in securing the camping future as well. The motivation for this is that the town seems to be in a dilemma whether to continue the camping service or not, since the camping these days attracts less people as compared to the past, and the camping infrastructures are slowly deteriorating.

## **7.2 Project plan**

The original plan concerning the kick-off of the project was the first week of June 2011, which was when the project team would be formed and the budget plan would be made. The idea was because the idea was to start the actual renovation work by the second week of June so that the interior designing of the cottages would be finished a week prior to the housing fair i.e. by the first week of July. Then, there would be a week's time to prepare for the marketing of the project and the camping site as well. This was the reason why everything else would be done in advance, meaning already from March, for example, to look for possible sponsors, to find out the possibility of taking part in the marketing campaign held by the city group of Pietarsaari



during the housing fair, and to form a project team. The fair would start on the 15<sup>th</sup> of July and continue until the 14<sup>th</sup> of August. The potential sponsors would be the town of Pietarsaari, who owns the camping premises and other bigger stores such as Hartman, Sotka, Rautia, etc. from the region that can provide materials needed for renovation purposes comprising of everything from paints to linens and furniture. Sponsors would be told about the benefits that they would get from the sponsorship, for example, their company name would be highlighted when marketing the project via press release and brochure distribution.

According to the plan, contacts would be made during March with the city group in order to be able to take part in the marketing campaign being carried out by the group during the housing fair. This would give the project an opportunity to do marketing via telling or distributing brochures to the people who would come to attend the fair. Meanwhile, the contacts would also be made with the technical department of the town to find out if they would be interested in the project and grant the permission to continue with the project. The technical department would also be asked if they had had any plans for the camping site concerning the renovation of some of the cottages from their side or if they were thinking of allocating some of the budget to the development of the camping site. They would be explained about the objectives of the project and the process involved so that it would make them interested in helping the project financially.

Fur design students would be asked already in the third week of May 2011, if they would be interested in taking part in the project and help with the interior designing of the cottages. The designers would also be encouraged to come up with the designs that involve their own fur products so that the designed cottages would look unique and people would receive more knowledge about COU fur design department. A decision-making on what cottages to be renovated or designed would also be done during the same month. The Svanen employees would be informed in short about the project and their possible roles as a project team, during the first meeting and second meetings at the end of April and the beginning of May. The meeting would be held with the Svanen supervisors and the town personnel in order to make decisions on cottages that would be chosen for the renovation.

In the first week of June, the budget would be made in detail, entailing the possible costs that would occur during the execution of the project. Afterwards, all the necessary materials for the renovation task, for example paints, brushes, primers, thinners and rollers would be bought. In the same week, the project team would be informed about the ground rules of the project and also about the tasks they were supposed to perform. Different schedules for the team members would be made showing the days and amount of time that they were supposed to work. The schedules would be made in a way that they would do their regular camping job first and then a project task concerning the renovation for example, painting and designing, would start from the second week of June and last until the middle of July. At the same time when the cottages would be painted, the interested designers from the fur design department would be showed the cottages and they would be asked to work already on the preliminary designing of the cottages. The speed of the work would be controlled so that everything would be set ready as planned. Similarly, the work would also be supervised by the Svanen supervisors and the town representatives.

After the renovation part was completed, the promotional part would be given attention in the second week of July. The coverage about the project would be made via press release in the local newspapers so that the local people would also be aware of the project which would bring them to the camping area to observe the new cottages. The cottages would be open to local people and customers who would be willing to take a look at them. The visitors could then find out the differences in the cottages before and after the renovation. Brochures and leaflets would be made including the brief introduction about the project and some interesting pictures showing the older and newer looks of the renovated cottages. The brochures and leaflets would be distributed to the visitors who would come to attend the housing fair. on the fair, visitors would also be told about the possibility to accommodate on the camping site in case they were seeking an accommodation outside of Kokkola. The termination of the project would be on the 14<sup>th</sup> of August when the camping site closes for the summer of 2011 and the fair would end by then as well.

### 7.3 Implementation of the project plan

It was realised during the project implementation how much a plan can vary from the original idea once it is set in motion. Various changes made during the project execution had been influencing the project process in many different ways. However, it can be said that the main goal of the project such as to renovate some of the cottages and bring significant improvement in their quality along with the effective marketing tactics, was achieved, regardless of project cost and time. To convert the project plan into practice, the steps were taken already from February. A meeting was held with a commissioner, who is a former development manager of Centria and a project leader of Camping Svanen. An idea about the possibility of the project was discussed with him and the contract was made after his approval. The contract would allow help from the commissioner in time of need and also help to proceed with the project.

An email was sent to the tourist office of Pietarsaari to find out if they were planning on doing any marketing campaign during the housing fair in Kokkola. As suggested by the tourist office, the city group of Pietarsaari was contacted for further information. Furthermore, representatives from the technical department of the town of Pietarsaari were contacted to know if they had had any plans concerning Svanen during the summer in question. They were also inquired about the budget they had got for development activities of the Camping site. According to the department, decisions could be made after they had had a meeting with Centria representatives regarding this matter.

A meeting was held at the beginning of April with Kirsi Kälström, a representative from the city group, in the presence of a Svanen supervisor Sirpa Syrjälä. Kälström was told about the project and the purpose of taking part in the marketing campaign for the fair. She also explained in short about the campaign and the tasks that they were planning to undertake there. According to her, there would be a stall where different products of Pietarsaari would be presented to visitors who would attend the fair. The visitors would also be given basic information about Pietarsaari. Kälström said that the visitors would also be told about the possibility of finding accommodation in Pietarsaari, since it is located only a few kilometres away from Kokkola. After a thorough discussion, she agreed to provide us a space in the stall. Further-

more, she promised that she would give a pass that would allow me to attend the housing fair whenever I would want. This would definitely give me an opportunity to tell the visitors about the project and to distribute the brochures or leaflets.

In the first week of May, a meeting was held with the supervisors of Svanen and they were Sirpa Syrjälä and Emilia Tuura. It was easier to talk to them about the project as they knew about it already and they were positive to support this as well. It was because they had also realised from their working experience at the camping last year as supervisors, the need of some sort of project concerning the renovation of some of the older cottages. The supervisors also liked the idea that the Svanen employees would function as the project team. The team consisted of fourteen members including supervisors and me as a project leader. The names of the members were Binaya Paudel, Jonna Kurikkala, Jim Gäddnäs, Sujan Rajbhandari, Henna Levänen, Amit Kunwor, Bada Olubukola, Vilma Tuomaala Noora Huotari, Ludzzie Rose and Christian Dahl. Noora Huotari and Ludzzie Rose were the designers and Christian Dahl was the carpenter. At first, the bigger cottages were thought to be chosen as they were the most selling ones. However, the idea was dismissed because it would not be possible to carry-out the project on those cottages when the camping was open for the summer, due to the early bookings of them. The decision was then made to use three of the cottages that were not in use due to their poor functionality.

The three cottages chosen were completely different from each other regarding the size and functionality. One of them was a cottage with chimney, which was named “Torpet/Torppa”. One of the main reasons of choosing this particular cottage was that since the town had already started renovating it the previous year, it would be easier to finish it with interior designing in a way that we wanted. The other cottage chosen was “Göken/Käki”, which was a hostel for accommodating two persons and it was of a similar type as the cottages renovated the previous year. The other cottage next to it was designed the previous year and this would make it easier in getting two functional cottages under the same roof. The third and last cottage chosen was “Gåsen/Hanhi”, which was a four person cottage. The cottage was still in use the previous year at the beginning, but because of its poor quality and shape it could not be rented out to customers anymore.

When the decision was made for the renovation of the cottages on our part, town representative Leif Björkholm, who was also a Project Engineer, was informed about it. As Björkholm suggested, the supervisors and I had a meeting with him and we went through the cottages again and discussed more about what and how the project would be carried-out. Björkholm also agreed on the cottages chosen by us and he liked the idea of using Svanen employees as a team during the project and marketing the project and camping site afterwards. We also discussed about what budget the town would be ready to invest in the project, and Björkholm explained that the town could pay all the expenses that the project would need. According to him, the budget for the project or the budget that the town had been planning to use for Svanen would be three thousand and five hundred euro. Furthermore, Björkholm suggested that we would buy painting materials from Hartman, Pietarsaari, since the town had had their own account there. When everything was fixed, fur design students were sent an email at the end of May, with an explanation about the project and the idea behind it, to find interested students. One of the fur design students, Noora Huotari, replied that she would be interested in taking part in the project and she expressed her interest in the design and decoration of houses. She had a friend named Ludzzie Rose, who was an exchange student from Belgium, helping her with designing the cottages. A meeting was held with the designers on the camping place and they were shown the cottages and were explained in brief about the purpose of the project and some useful hints on how to start the task.

June was the month when the actual project work was started with, for example, painting. Designers were also busy trying to come up with some good sketches to give the cottages an attractive interior look. At the beginning of the month, a preliminary painting work schedule was made for the couple of weeks. It was made in a way that at least three persons would be working on the project for about two hours in their own working shifts. They could go to work whenever they find it feasible, meaning that they would first do the camping job and then work for the project on their free time. This was a good idea and instead of just sitting in the reception without anything to do, everyone could contribute some of their working time to paint the cottages and getting them ready. There were eleven employees including two supervisors in the project team, among whom the task was divided. The team was told in brief both via email and orally what they were supposed to do and how. Since they were supposed to

paint, the instructions about painting were put on the wall of the reception and links of painting tutorials from YouTube was attached to the email, so that everyone could see those and try to learn the job themselves.

Designers were given a task to come up with the colours they would want to use for painting different sections of the rooms, such as ceilings, walls, floors, doors and windows. When they sent the information about the paint, then a brief list of painting materials to be bought, for example, paints, brushes, rollers, thinners and primers, was made and almost all of those were purchased from Hartman. The designers even decided to put wall papers on one of the walls of the cottages, Göken/Käki and Gåsan/Hanhi. Furthermore, the designers went to Hartman to look for the wall papers and the order was made for the ones they liked. The delivery took more than three weeks. The purchase from Hartman was done several times throughout the month since it was not so easy to know beforehand about the quantity of materials needed. As agreed with Björkholm, the bill was sent to the billing address of the technical department of the town. It was the 6<sup>th</sup> of June when we started clearing everything from the cottages, for example, beds, linens and other furniture. The ceiling and walls were then sand-papered and made ready to be painted.

In the third week of June, another work schedule of painting was made as the former one did not seem that effective. The task was hard for those who were painting for the first time so I decided to make some changes in the schedule. Earlier, people could go to work whenever they wanted and that could sometimes result in one person working alone or no one working at all. It was because they were confused about what they were supposed to do due to lack of enough information and the project leader would not be available around at the same time to guide them. To cope with the situation, two shifts per day were made with at least a team of two persons working together in each shift. The teams were given separate areas of painting, for example, starting with ceiling, walls, floors and finishing with doors and windows. The designers were also able to come up with the sketches for the design. They had three different themes for the three different cottages, for example “Honeymoon Cottage” for Torpet/Torppa and “Sailor Cottage” for Gåsen/Hanhi. Göken/Käki was decided to be named “Flower Cottage” after it was ready, as the name was not given to it at the same time as the others. In the

same week a reporter from YLE Keski-Pohjanmaa interviewed Syrjälä via phone and the article about the project was put on the YLE home page on the 27<sup>th</sup> of June. The article told about the project and the themes involved in it along with the short information about the previous year's project. (Holopainen 2011.) The interview was also broadcasted from Keski-pohjanmaa radio station. Having the article made already during the execution of the project could be considered as a good sign for the promotion of the project.

The interior painting of two of the cottages, Gåsen/Hanhi and Göken/Käki, was finished by the fourth week of June. The other shift for painting the outside the cottages, on the terrace ceiling and the floor was made in the fourth week of June and it lasted until the beginning of July. The wallpapering was done next on those cottages. At the same time Torpet/Torppa was also getting finished. In Torpet/Torppa, a worker from the town was able to paint the inside ceiling and put wallpaper on one of the walls and do some exterior painting as well. However, the rest of the job was done by us. We decided to put white wallpapers on the rest of the walls first and then paint over them since the walls had old wallpapers and most of them were worn out. The cottage was ready by the beginning of the second week of July. The cottage's terrace floor as well as windows were also got painted.

The next task then was to furnish the cottages following the designers' sketches. As the designers wanted the similar type of bed in Göken/Käki as in the other cottage that was designed the previous year, the job was to find a carpenter who could make the bed and be handy as well. The town could not provide us any carpenter as none of its employees were available at that time, and it was not possible for them to hire a new carpenter for some reasons. That is why contacts were being made with a carpenter named Christian Dahl, who was a second-year student at Optima Vocational School. As he seemed interested in working with us, a meeting was arranged between me, him and Björkholm. He was showed the bed that he was supposed to make and at the same time Leif was telling him about how he was going to be paid. When everything was clear, Christian and I went to Påras, a wooden materials producing company, to buy the required woods for the bed.

At the end of June, a journalist from a local newspaper, Pietarsaaren Sanomat, made a phone call to the camping site and expressed her interest in the ongoing project. She wanted to visit the camping place the same day and collect some information about the project to write an article. She visited the cottages and made an interview with us. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July, the article was published in the newspaper and it informed people about what was going on in Camping Svanen regarding the project. Some information concerning the goal of the project, project team members, duration of the project and sponsor was also included in the article (Wideman 2011a). This was a good opportunity for the project to get promoted already before the project was even finished, as the article was able to generate the attention of the people.

In the first week of July, a meeting was held with designers to list the furnishing materials that would suit the themes of the cottages, as almost all of the cottages were almost finished. As suggested by Björkholm, we went onto the Internet page IKEA looking for furniture, for example, bed, chairs, linens, pillows, shelves and mattress. The list of materials to be ordered was then made based on the suggestions made by the designers. The orders were made online and then confirmed when all the paper work was done on the part of the town. It took a little over a week for us to receive the delivery, with which the placement of the materials started as made in the design sketch. By then, the designers had already painted a picture of summer flowers on the wall of the “Flower Cottage” as well as painted its door in different colours. Similarly, blue stripes were painted on the door of the “Sailor Cottage” in order to match the wallpaper which had blue and white stripes. Furthermore, the rest of the materials including the remaining linens and a small table and chair were bought from Jysk and Sotka.

The second week of July was spent on getting all three rooms ready. Designers were there to install the beds of the “Flower cottage” and the “Sailor Cottage”. Designer Houtari had been working in the “Honeymoon Cottage” to set the bed and make the table ready and I was there to help her. Huotari often came to the camping site to finish designing and make sure that everything was in the right place. She also made the curtains for the doors and windows of the “Honeymoon Cottage”. The carpenter Dahl also made a table for the “Sailor Cottage” which he finished in the same week. Afterwards, pictures of the cottages were taken for the purpose of marketing. The updates about the project together with pictures had been put on the Face-



book group of Camping Svanen and on the camping web-page. People could find some information about the project and could see from the posted pictures the difference between the old and new looks of the cottages. A document for the press release was made on the third week of July and was sent to two different local newspapers, such as Pietarsaaren Sanomat and Östebottens Tidning and Radio Keski-Pohjanmaan. A journalist from Östebottens Tidning called me the next day and she was interested in making an article about the project. She visited the camping site the same day and interviewed Tuura for further information. The article was published the next day in the newspaper. On the third week of July, the same journalist that visited us before from Pietarsaaren Sanomat, came to visit the cottages and she interviewed Syrjälä and me. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of July, the article was published on the front page of the newspaper. The article was appealing to the people to come to Camping Svanen and see the cottages themselves. It was also thanking the town for their support and especially all the students who had been involved in the project. (Wideman 2011b.)

Furthermore, a leaflet was made in both Finnish and English including short information about the project, the objectives of the project and project members, followed by the pictures showing the changes between before and after the renovation. To go along with leaflets of Camping Svanen, a camping brochure was made as well. As agreed with Kirsi Käldestrom, I went to take part in the housing fair on the 27<sup>th</sup> of July. Although the plan was to take part in the fair already from the second week of July right after the inauguration of the housing fair, the plan changed because it took one more week to finish the renovation than expected. In the fair, I was distributing the leaflets and brochures to people walking around. I was in the stall of Pietarsaari together with other people employed by the city group. Since I had only a few limited copies of brochures with me, I was presenting the project via PowerPoint from the laptop. However, the experience was that people were not so interested in listening to the presentations since they had a limited time to listen to me, so I decided to bring along more copies of leaflets from next time onwards so that the visitors could see for themselves. It was problematic also because it was not possible for me to explain everything in either Finnish or Swedish, and the people were not interested in listening to the presentation in English.

The second attendance at the housing fair was on the 31<sup>st</sup> of July. At that time, I had enough leaflets and brochures to distribute to the visitors. Following a suggestion given to me by one of the employees of Pietarsaari, I went to ask some of the stalls of Kokkola but only one of them agreed to take the brochures and leaflets. I left some copies there so that the employees of the stall could distribute to the ones who came to ask about accommodation outside of Kokkola. Altogether, I attended the housing fair three times; each with six hours and the last day was on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August. In the meantime, different people from the town came to visit the cottages themselves. The arrangement was made so that one of us would go along with the visitors and explain about the renovated cottages and share some experiences related to the project. Over fifty enthusiastic people visited the cottages and all of them appreciated the work. Those familiar with the cottages could see a significant improvement in the state of the cottages compared to the older ones. The project was then completed with the closing of the camping site and housing fair as planned, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of August.

## 8 DISCUSSION AND FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter focuses more on the overall state of the project based on what went well and what did not. In other words, the chapter discusses about what went according to the plan and what did not and what came up during the implementation of the project plan. At the end of the chapter, the discussions revolve around what could have been done differently, or areas of improvement and some useful recommendations have been left to the concerned parties, for example both the town of Pietarsaari and COU.

The project lasted for two and a half months, where one and half a month was spent on the renovation of the three cottages and the remaining one month on the marketing of the project. The most challenging job in the beginning was to convince Centria and the town to grant the permission for the project, so that further steps could be taken. Nevertheless, the project became a reality when the town promised to provide financial help. This is the reason why the original idea of looking for more sponsors did not continue during the actual project execution. Even though the project was completed successfully, there are certain things that could have been done differently. For example, time management should have been done more precisely, meaning that it would have been so much easier to execute the project if there would have been a specific time table entailing each and every steps during the execution of the project. For instance, a specific time for starting the painting and wallpapering, buying the required materials from Hartman and other shops, making an order for the delivery of the furnishing materials from IKEA, and set days for taking part in the housing fair, would have made the project follow the track properly. It is because the renovation part consumed more time than estimated due to the fact that the marketing part had to be pushed further.

Another challenging part was to paint and wallpaper the cottages since none of the team members had had good experience on the field. In this case, it would have been better if we had been given some sort of basic training or instructions on painting by some experts from the town. Nonetheless, it was a good learning opportunity for everyone to make some contribution to the project by actively taking part in the renovation of the cottages from the inside. If a sim-

ilar kind of project will be held in the future, then the provision of some sorts of training or guidance could be taken into consideration. Another area of improvement could have been a better utilization of the project team with a clear description about the particular project tasks and with efficient work schedules. Sometimes it was hard for some of the team members to know what they were supposed to do, and how. It was a good idea when the schedule was made where at least two of the members could work at the same time. It helped them share the workload and get enough help from each other whenever needed. It might be boring if someone had to go and paint alone. Since the whole process did not involve any expertise in the given field, it was not easy to know the amount of purchases to be made in advance. This led to the repeated purchasing of painting materials from Hartman which made the project costly with respect to time. Some sort of reference from the previous year's project could have been useful in determining project costs and the amount and type of materials to be bought. However, taking this project into consideration in the future might help in these matters if a similar project is to be conducted again.

One of the best things that was done during the project was the designing of cottages based on different themes. It helped in making the design unique and versatile. It would be obviously a good idea if the rest of the cottages could be designed giving them different themes or at least different looks. Furthermore, the promotion of the project on the housing fair could also have been also effective if it had been done before and during the Jakobs Dagar. The festival attracts many tourists from all over Finland and abroad as well, due to which there was a good flow of people towards the stall of Pietarsaari on the housing fair. The people wanted to get the information about the town and its accommodation places. More people then could then be told about the project along with the brochure and leaflet distribution and that would have attracted many customers to the camping. There were less people visiting the stall at the end of the festival. Furthermore, offering some sorts of rewards for the ones who came to see the designed cottages would have attracted even more people.

On the whole, the project leaves some recommendations to the town of Pietarsaari and COU as it is up to them to decide about the future of Camping Svanen. It can be clearly seen that the cottages are getting older and they have started to wear out. Due to this reason, customers had

been giving negative feedback about the cottages and complaining about the quality of the services being rendered to them. It has been less likely that they want to stay more nights or come back another time. Instead, unhappy customers have been demanding compensations for ruining their holidays and this is definitely not a good situation for the camping. As a result, the image of the camping is deteriorating and every year the number of customers is decreasing. Also, the place is not safe hygienically as pointed out by the hygiene inspector as the cottages have been growing moulds. In order to turn this negative trend, the need for some bigger investment with the co-operation between the town and COU in renovating the old infrastructures, has been recognized.

An important step to be taken is to make ensure of the camping that the camping will still continue. From my working experience in the camping for the last two summers, the place still holds lots of potentials to attract people looking for an overnight stay in Pietarsaari, either in cottages or on caravan and tent places. Visitors have been appreciating the camping environment, its location by a beautiful lake and the surrounding, its history and uniqueness and most importantly the customer-care being rendered to them by young and efficient student workers. According to the supervisors of Svanen, this year has been better than the previous years as there had been a gradual increase in the number of customers. This clearly emphasizes that an investment in infrastructure development can lead to an overall quality development of the whole camping area.

Just as the small steps of renovating and designing the cottages along with the marketing have brought changes in the quality of the cottages, bigger investments would obviously bring bigger changes with respect to the quality and the image of the camping. The content of the existing contract between the town and COU should be revised so that instead of renewing the contract every year, the contract would be made for a longer period. It is because COU seems to have a difficulty in investing in something that is not secured for more than a year at a time. If the contract could be made for a longer period of time, then the town and COU could work side by side and give Camping Svanen a better future. Furthermore, similar kinds of project can be conducted in the coming years as well with the aim of renovating more cottages. Camping Svanen employees can work in their spare time on renovation activities. Perhaps, not

everyone wants to work without getting paid, so it would be a good idea to give them some money for their hard work. In addition, besides the Svanen employees, the students of COU could also be employed. In this way they get to work and learn useful things.

## 9 CONCLUSION

The project had been successfully completed within the scheduled time frame. The objectives and goals were achieved, meaning that the project was able to bring about drastic change in the quality of the cottages that were renovated and designed. The cottages looked fresh and attractive as can be seen from appendix 2. The visitors who came to see the cottages, found them significantly better in comparison to the other older cottages. The project also received enough publicity via the local newspapers Pietarsaaren Sanomat and Österbottens Tidning, that both helped in bringing lot of people to the camping. The most important part was that people would come to see the cottages and realize the positive changes. This, in many ways, helps to make people aware of the camping place and enhance the image of the place in the mind of the customers. The result is still to be seen next year when the Camping Svanen actually starts renting them out for overnight accommodation. The quality level of the cottages has become higher and that might give a good impression to the customers living in them. As a result, the customers might want to come again in the future and in the long run it will be beneficial to the camping group.

In correspondence with the title “Small Change, Big Difference”, the project had been able to bring rational changes in the overall quality of the designed cottages. Simply with the painting, the cottages were looking so much better than they used to. In addition, the designing of the cottages and making them cozy for renting them out to the customers, made the whole project worthwhile. If the rest of the cottages that have become older could be renovated in the same way, the place can attract numbers of tourists from everywhere. Furthermore, with the quality of the cottages being offered together with service quality, the image of the camping will be highlighted and the place can retain its customers. Moreover, the project received much appreciation from the town of Pietarsaari and from everyone who came to visit the cottages. The town was impressed with the work done by the students and they were assuring that if some other students want to do similar types of project again in the future, they will help them too.

If I talk about my own experiences from the project, it has been a challenging job for me as a project leader and for the rest of the project members, since none of us had had professional knowledge on the particular field. Therefore, the whole thesis project has been a learning process for me. It was a great opportunity for me to get engaged in something that I was actually interested in, and to lead the project group. I got to meet different people throughout the process and learned to work together with them. I have learned a various useful matters concerning a project, for example, project management skills, leadership skills, time-management skills and group-work skills. Furthermore, involving myself in the project work, for example, by painting and wallpapering, have helped me to learn new things that might be useful in several ways in the future. Before that, I had never wallpapered in my life. I was able to convince the project team members to work for the project even though they knew that they were not going to get paid for working extra.

However, there are still some things that I could have done differently. As already mentioned in the discussion section, I should have planned the project in a way that there would have been made different time schedules made for different project tasks already in the beginning so that it would have been easier to follow the project track during the execution of the project tasks. Furthermore, there would also have been enough time to make changes if something else had come up. For example, the renovation of the cottages would have been completed on time if the orders for the materials from IKEA had been made already at the beginning of the fourth week of June. I would also have tried to get help from town experts, for example, Björkholm, in order to make the list of materials entailing the types and the quantity, when buying painting materials from Hartman, instead of making purchases repeated times. This would have saved project time and costs as well. Furthermore, some sort of training concerning renovation tasks should have been provided to the team members in cooperation with the town. This would have helped the members do their job in the best possible way.



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**Press Release****18.7.2011****Central Ostrobothnia University of Applied Sciences  
Svanen Camping  
Larsmovägen 50  
68600 Jakobstad****Small Change, Big Difference**

Following the last year's trend of cottage designing, the students of Central Ostrobothnia University of Applied Sciences (COU), Pietarsaari unit, have been able to come up with yet another project in Camping Svanen this summer. The project is carried out with the financial aid from the town of Pietarsaari. Three of the cottages with different sizes varying from 5 m<sup>2</sup> to 12 m<sup>2</sup> have been given new looks based on different themes, for example Honeymoon cottage and Sailor cottage.

The idea behind this project, as suggested by its name, is to improve the quality level of the cottages and the camping site as a whole. The project has two different parts that include renovation part and the marketing part. The renovation part was initiated from the first week of June and lasted until the middle of July. This part will be followed by the marketing part that includes the promotion of the cottages during the housing fair in Kokkola. We are given space in the marketing camping hold by the town to tell people more about our work.

The project is part of a thesis process which is being undertaken by one of the students of COU and every employee of the camping site is a member of the project. The interesting part of the project is that there were no professional experts involved during the execution of the whole project. The cottages were painted by the eleven students of COU from tourism degree programme and designed by two students from furniture design. One of the designers, Ludzzie Ross, is an exchange student from Belgium and the other one, Noora Huotari, a degree student from Finland. Christian Dahl who is also a second year student in Optima vocational school has helped the project by making the furniture and by painting.

Now is the possibility for the visitors to come and have a look at those cottages. The cottages are open for public from the 20<sup>th</sup> of July until the 14<sup>th</sup> of August and they will be rented out to customers from next year. The students working at the camping site will be glad to guide guests to the cottages and explain their experiences in short. The more information and the pictures of the designed cottages can be seen via Facebook group of Svanen Camping and the camping web site.

Sunil Karki  
Student/Employee, Project Leader  
sunil.karki@cou.fi  
0443599788

Sirpa Syrjäla  
Student/Camping site Supervisor 2011  
svanen@cou.fi  
067230660

**PIENILLÄ MUUTOKSILLA AIKAAN ISOJA VAIKUTUKSIA - Projekt 2011**  
**SMALL CHANGE, BIG DIFFERENCE Project 2011**  
*Leirintäalue Joutsen/Camping Svanen*

**PIENILLÄ MUUTOKSILLA AIKAAN ISOJA VAIKUTUKSIA?**

- Kolmen mökin suunnittelu ja remontointiprojekti, jonka toteuttivat tänä kesänä Joutsenen leirintäalueella työskentelevät Keski-Pohjanmaan ammattikorkeakoulun Pietarsaaren yksikön matkailun opiskelijat
- Leirintäalue Joutsenen omistaja, Pietarsaaren kaupunki, toimii projektin taloudellisena tukijana
- Mökit ovat suunnitelleet kaksi amk:n turkisalan opiskelijaa
- Maalauksen ja tapetoinnin ovat suorittaneet opiskelijat itse
- Puutyöt on tehnyt käsityönä Christian Dahl, joka on Optima ammattikoulun toisen vuoden opiskelija

**SMALL CHANGE, BIG DIFFERENCE?**

- Project of renovating and designing three cottages, run by the students of Central Ostrobothnia University of Applied Sciences (COU), Pietarsaari Unit, working in Camping Svanen
- Sponsored by the town of Pietarsaari
- Designed by two students of COU from fur design
- Painted and wall papered by the students
- Carpentry done by Christian Dahl, who is a second year student of Optima vocational school

*Leirintäalue Joutsen on auki 14.8. asti.*

*Olette lämpimästi tervetulleita tutustumaan vastaremontoituihin mökkeihin sekä alueeseemme!*

*Kysy myös majoitusta!*

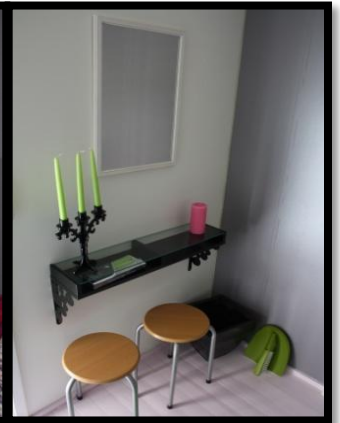
*Campingsite Joutsen/Svanen is open until the 14th of August. We warmly welcome you to come visit the newly renovated cottages and our camping area.*

*Also ask for accommodation!*

# Honeymoon Cottage-Before & After



*Flower Cottage- Before and After*  
*“Kukka” - Ennen ja jälkeen*





*Sailor cottage- Before & After*  
*"Purjehtya" - Ennen ja jälkeen*

