

Storytelling as an informational tool in the tourism industry

Case: VisitLappeenranta

Abstract

Author(s) Malevanaia, Ekaterina	Publication type Thesis, UAS	Completion year 2020
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Degree Tourism and Hospitality Management		
Name, title and organisation of the thesis supervisor Lari-Pekka Ruotsi, Senior Lecturer, Tourism and Hospitality Management		
Name, title and organisation of the client Lappeenranta Region Tourist Information		
Abstract <p>The purpose of the thesis was to determine storytelling as an informational tool in the tourism industry. The author was responsible for clarifying the subject from the theoretical and research points of view.</p> <p>The theoretical part included the meaning of the storytelling, significant parts, benefits, and the tool's role in E-marketing and tourism.</p> <p>The writer used the qualitative research method, represented as interviews with the professionals and the brand's workers. Interview questions were sent by email.</p> <p>In the last part, she had to define the case brand's situation and provide useful recommendations.</p>		
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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The history of storytelling had begun when humans started to communicate with each other. From those times, this phenomenon has been developed and changed completely. Today, people can write books, make films, and share their stories via internet platforms.

The matter is that stories can be different. Their range varies from the innocuous fairy tales for children to those, which help the corporations to be successful and stay in a strong position on the market. Nowadays, storytelling is one of the most potent tools for business.

Why does a company need a storytelling approach? First of all, because it helps to establish the connection between the organization and its customers. Stories awake feelings and emotions in the person. It leads to the creation of a trust.

The fact is that buyers are not seeking a product or a service. They are looking for experience. Designing the narrative helps the business represent itself in the form of the story and highlights its main, more personal aspects. (Kalliomäki 2014.) Customers can experience that they are not conducted with a company, but with its history and even feelings.

1.2 Research purposes

The research purposes are needed to answer the main question: "How to save the attention of customers, especially those who cannot come to Lappeenranta during the quarantine period – and those who don't yet know the area?"

The group of people who cannot come to the destination is Russians. The tourists who do not know the area are primarily Finnish people living in other cities of Finland. Achieving this goal, the case organization would not lose its foreign customers and could attract new ones. To get a response to the research question, the author has to follow the established aims.

1.3 Aims

Firstly, she needs to discover and examine the topic from the theoretical perspective, using printed books, and different internet materials. Secondly, with the help of research approaches - it is necessary to gather needed data and analyze it.

Finally, the author has to give recommendations for the case organization, which are supposed to assist in reaching the set goal and generally improve its situation.

1.4 Delimitations

The delimitations are reflecting itself as boundaries. They are showing and determining the limit of the subject. (Oxford Lexicographers.) Delimitations play an important role in any research because they set the scope on the amount of potential data, making it clearer and more oriented on the target subject.

The main focus would be reflected in the quality of the information. The author plans to determine the subject's main features from the professional and practical points of view. That is why the number of persons would be approximately 3 to 4 people. Some of them would be professionals in that sphere - others part of the case organization.

1.5 Exordium of the research method

It is decided to choose a qualitative approach to her research. The research is organized as an interview with the professionals in the chosen subject. The main idea is to gather and analyze the interviews' information to understand it from the practical's side. Because two persons would take part in that research, the writer would not focus on the quantity of the data but the quality.

Moreover, the interviews would be taken from the workers of the case organization. It would help to understand the "position" of the storytelling there. The purpose of the research is to recognize the brand's situation and its strong sides. So, at the last step – giving the recommendations for improvements for the organization's operations.

1.6 Intro of the case organization

Because the author chooses the tourist's sphere for her thesis and research-the case organization should also be related to that. The case's name is "Lappeenranta Region Tourist information." It is a city-state community in Lappeenranta. The exact address is Brahenkatu 1, Lappeenranta, Finland.

The organization's main goal is to provide information for the tourists who arrive in the city. To implement this target more attractively, the managers decided to create a brand and portal, called "VisitLappeenranta."

The portal has web pages on Social Media, like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Vkontakte. The main internet platform of the brand is the official site. The visitor can find plenty of interesting information about different city activities, high-quality pictures, videos, and blogs here. Another positive aspect is that the site is available in three languages: Finnish, English, and Russian.

The tourist organization is working well despite the difficult quarantine period and doing its best to solve the problem with the lack of tourists. The author would describe this information deeply in the Empirical part of the thesis.

After a brief explanation of the subject, case organization, and specification of the aims and delimitations, it is suitable to proceed with the dissertation's theory part.

2 Definition and relevant aspects of the topic

2.1 The meaning of storytelling

The definition of “storytelling” includes many senses. Depending on a sphere of usage-it exposes itself with different meanings. In general, storytelling is a “communicational craft.” Applying the words to disclosure details and features of the story it stimulates the listener’s fantasy. (National Storytelling Network Organization.)

In the sphere of marketing, “storytelling”- is a tool, which delivers needed for the manager data to the target group in the form of the story. (Smirnova-Matros 2019.) People usually remember information, which was provided in that way. The matter is that even clear and well-structured data can be forgotten very quickly if it cannot call any emotions in the person.

Moreover, it is playing the role of an ordered sight on the humans’ existence. It makes others understand and interpret data, especially when it suits thoughts the same as the storyteller has.

The structure of a story is significantly important. If a narrative presented messily, people would not understand anything. It would be complicated to find out the purpose of it and apply that to their situation. (Morgan 2019.)

Summarizing the information above, the story is a sensitive speech provider, allowing the audience to understand the data and determine its sense (Dietz et al. 2014, 13).

2.2 The main elements of creating a story

Many companies think that they use storytelling for their business, but usually, they do not. These “stories” are far away from the well-developed, clear, visual context. There are no “heroes” who could arouse sympathy or interest from the person. Also, there is no discordance. Thus, it does not carry any relevant information, which can be considered for the buyer. It one of the common mistakes that the organization makes during its marketing operations.

What are the basic parts of a story? First of all, it should include an interesting personage. The best choice is to put the audience or the target group of listeners in the place of this hero. It will help them to understand the story and take over. The more narrative is close to the reality-the better result the marketer would get. (Dietz et al. 2014, 29 & 33.)

Also, the character needs to set and achieve the goals. Depending on a story, the teller should endow the hero with skills or features, which would be suitable in their case. (Smith 2012, 55-56.)

Secondly, each tale must include a conflict, which needs to be solved (Smith 2017, 124). This conflict helps the listeners to focus attention on a particular aspect of the story. The audience would remember their own emotions when they meet the same kind of problem in their lives. (Dietz et al. 2014, 32-33.)

The third aspect is concerned with the place and time of the story. Missing this part would make the story not interesting because it creates a “*Background*.” The “*Background*” shows to the listener, the story is real or not. Narratives included the exact time and place. For example, historical origins are realistic ones. Those that start with the phrase: “*Once upon a time...*” and the like are fantastic tales.

The storytellers have to be attentive and truthful when they start the narrative. Otherwise, the audience could think that it is a true one and could find out that it is not after all. By that, it is possible to lose the trust level of the listeners.

The last of the aspects is the outcome of the story. It has to clarify the reason for telling it. The clearer and more structured was told the narrative, the more obvious became the inference for the listeners. (Smith 2012, 55-56 & 59-60.)

Finishing this part, the author mentions that the “*description*” of something is not a story even though it can offer plenty of information. People who share their stories without any emotional or experience aspects tell about the facts, which happened to them. (Dietz et al. 2014, 40-41.)

2.3 The Infographic as a significant part of the story

Before proceeding directly to the subject’s importance, the writer wants to explain the term “*Visualization*” first. It is not a simple photo or picture. “*Visualization*” or “*Visualization data*” usually provides short and certain information about something. An example of *visualization* can be graphic, which shows data. (Lankow et al. 2012, 20.)

In its turn, Infographic is a “*visual*” presentation of data (Rogier). It should represent or contain informational prompts, and there are no standards about that. The infographic can be shown anyhow. For example, by the road sign or complicated analytical assessment of a subject. (Lankow et al. 2012, 20.)

The difference between these two meanings is that “*Visualization*” expresses not large information with certain numbers or other exact data. The Infographic can contain complicated stories for the viewer. (Rogier 2020.) With the tool’s help, it is possible to lead the people’s thoughts through the story, delivering the exact message to the audience.

These days, the information is quite simple to spare, especially the interesting one. On the other hand, the challenge is that the provided content should be attractive and arranged in a quality, bright, and well-structured way to “catch” the viewer’s eye. (Lankow et al. 2012, 21 & 148.) Thus, the infographic is one of the appropriate and clear ways to express the story. Next, would be mentioned the concepts of how to use the infographic more aptly.

2.4 Advice of using the Infographic

The first point should be concerned from the beginning - the story’s name, which a company wants to tell through the mentioned tool. The *title* has to make the reader interested in the story. It must not be too complicated and long. Paying attention to the name is important because the reader would notice this one beforehand. Moreover, the topic has to deliver the message of the story directly. (French 2020a.)

Another aspect is related to the structure. The information has to be presented in a clear, plain way. Thus, in the same manner, it has to be created in the story. Everything should be told and showed step-by-step, so there would be no misunderstands from the watcher’s side.

Last but not least, about one of the common mistakes which the designers could make. It is overdrawing. The fewer pictures and diagrams are used, creating the story - the better. The abundance of them would play the role of distraction and would interfere viewer from the story. (French 2020b.)

Where is it suitable to use the infographic? The research’s case can be applied for fast and short lettering, for example, in Social Media platforms. Moderately ordered and clear storytelling, produced with the infographic, would attract the visitor and help realize and interpret the idea quickly and easily. (D’Agord 2020.)

3 Reasons of telling the stories

3.1 Storytelling induces people to act

The previous chapter represented the definition and significant parts of the story. In this section, the author wants to open up the main benefits of the tool. Thus, the third part of the thesis describes this aspect deeply.

One of the main persons who had made a considerable contribution to this study was Marshall Ganz. Ganz is a Senior Lecturer in Leadership, Organizing, and Civil the Society at Kennedy Harvard University. (The president and fellows of Harvard College.) He had developed the frame, which had included three main sections of the story. (Figure 1.)

The first one reflected the tasks of the present time. The managers who utilized the framework had to understand the goal, which would motivate others to proceed. This goal had to contain the tasks leading to achieving the set aim. The second one included the story of the organization. It could be the main values and experience used in the aim's achievement. The third represented a personal story.

The leader or manager has to think, what kind of his/her aspects of life, work and other important data could be better to share to motivate others inbounding the task's implementation. (Ganz 2009.)

The information described above was taken from the Harvard Library article. The Harvard community decided to open it publicly. Thus, it could be used in the thesis. A visual picture of the frame is illustrated below.



Figure 1. Public Narrative frame (Ganz 2009)

3.2 Storytelling helps the company to be unique

The best information for the customers is that, which they do not hear before. It increases the possibility of making potential clients interested in the businesses' offers. Each company has its ones to tell.

Usually, these types of stories do not look similar to other organizations. Thus, theirs' exploiting would catch the visitor's attention because it would not be the normal marketing method with identical texts and techniques, but something new and original. (Smith 2017, 21-22.) The stories can be about the company's or product's creation, staff members, location, or other personal and identical aspects that could be unique and interesting for a buyer.

3.3 Other general reasons

The other benefits and motivations are counted below:

- Storytelling always actual. It has been existed many centuries before and would exist in the future. Probably, the manners of using and spread it would change, but not the main sense.
- High-quality and interesting stories are easy to distribute among the people. (Smith 2012, 11-12.)
- Storytelling can make the company's offer worthier and more interesting for the clients (Smith 2017, 19).

Summarizing this part, storytelling includes many benefits. It is suitable almost in any situation and can play a powerful role in the marketing industry and simply in relationships between people. The next and the last theoretical section consists of Internet marketing and other electronic platforms, which can be significant in the tourism sphere.

4 E-marketing in the sphere of Tourism

4.1 Benefits of E-marketing

Technologies are developing all the time. Nowadays, the most powerful platforms to spread information all over the world are the Internet. The author wants to consider this topic because it is directly related to the case organization's situation. The case's goal is to provide the information to their potential clients via different internet platforms: Social Media and the official site. That is why the last part of the theory consists of a description of the topic's significance.

E-marketing's main goal is using the Internet and other technological ways to connect and be in charge of the purposed audience. With the help of that, the person who needs contact with the focus group does not require to spend much money, energy, and time on that.

The benefits of E-marketing:

- The huge data are spreading more effectively for the "right" people.
- Suitable possibility for the companies to provide digital customer experience with the help of different technological tools.
- Possibility of providing "*Customer's Journey*." (Figure 2.)
- The "ads," which exist in the internet space, offer to advertise and sell the goods simultaneously.
- The digital and not digital services can work together and make the job more efficient. For example, using the internet page It is possible to provide contact information (phone number and other details), also exactly the opposite.
- Gathering information about potential customers and creating and developing cooperation with others also happen in a fairly easy way. (World of Tourism Organization and European Travel Commission 2008, 25 & 2.)

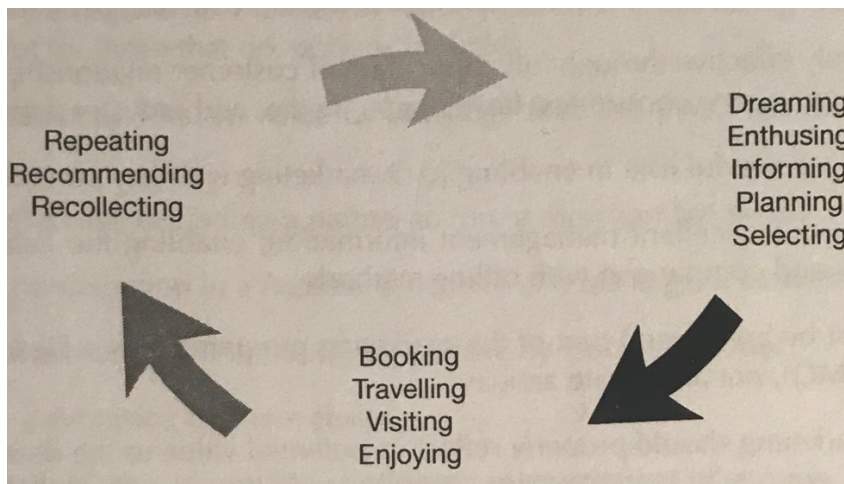


Figure 2. Customer Journey Wheel (World Tourism Organization & European Travel Commission 2008)

4.2 Customer's Journey

This section would describe deeply the “*Customer's Journey Wheel*,” which the author mentioned above. The “*Customer Journey*” is, first of all, the marketing instrument. The tool helps to create the “*scenarios*” for the future various steps of the clients. It is possible to foresee them beforehand. It assists in being more client-oriented and makes the process of purchase easier. (Hogan 2018.)

The fundamental aspects of the customer journey include:

- Having thought about something and the desire to get it.
- Planning.
- Reserving.
- Coming over.
- Feedbacks.

The steps should be provided to the customer, so they have to be aware of each of the touchpoints and follow “the path” or “*scenario*” created by the company's managers.

At the first stage, the clients have to find the company and become interested in its offers. Thus, the organization can provide it with different email advertisements and videos on the net. One suitable alternative of “mediator” can be, e. g. “World Travel Guide.”

The “planning” process includes information for the visitor about transportation, festivals, hotels, and the like. There can be distributed data about sales and new offers and bonuses.

The reservation part has to give the possibility of booking for a traveler. Thus, a business should offer this service. The company can allow a customer to select the needed goods in the most suitable variation for them. It can be an official site or third parties. (e. g. Booking.com)

The last two steps include visiting the destination and feedbacks. The organization needs to provide special places (services) there. (There can be used storytelling by the different media types to open up the data easier). Also, distribute the information about these services by messages and delivering it through the hotels and shops.

The “after-visiting” and feedback process is quite significant because it develops the relationships between the business and customers. The data gathered from the feedback can represent how satisfied the client was, would they like to use the service again, and recommend it to others. Blogs and recommendations (reviews) stimulate the customer’s interest. (World Tourism Organization & European Travel Commission 2008, 3.)

4.3 Storytelling in the Tourism Industry

Stories are playing a significant role in the tourism industry. Many of the tourism brands use the same tools to attract customers instead of utilizing storytelling. It makes it to be similar to each other.

The tourism sphere has already included many stories, which just needed to be developed and spread to the audience. Moreover, the customers’ feedback, who already used the product and got an experience from it are also stories that can be spread by themselves. (Cavanagh 2019.)

Using the visual aspect of storytelling, like photos and videos, would be a rational idea as well. The tool provides personal integration and emotions, which are important for attracting new visitors. (TrainingAid Expert Team 2014.)

4.4 Example of negative emotions from storytelling in Tourism

Storytelling can generate different senses from the listener. The person responsible for creating and telling the story has to understand in advance what kind of effort it would make on the audience.

In the author’s opinion, one of the bright examples of using storytelling in an unappropriated way was the case with the “Visit Denmark” campaign. It happened in 2009 year, but still carrying a lesson for other businesses.

In that year, was a video posted on YouTube. It was a simple, amateur video file, which was recorded by a woman. The woman was sitting with a child in her hands and told the audience a sad story about the meeting with the “father” of this child and his disappearance. She asked for help to find the “father.”

Many people were imbued by the story and spread the video quickly all around the Internet. Millions of people watched it. After a short period of time, the recording was opened up as a falsification one. The national country’s tourism agency of Denmark created the video to increase the attention to the country. Internet users felt angry about that situation because most of them used to believe and trust the woman. The video file was deleted soon after exposure.

Analyzing the situation, it has to be said that the campaign used a hero, told a sentimental, personal story, which influenced others. The strategy had worked until the moment when everybody realized that it was counterfeit. In this way, “Visit Denmark” lost others’ trust and left a negative imprint in peoples’ minds about their country. (Rachlin 2009.)

5 Research approach

5.1 The definition of Qualitative research

The sub-chapter is based on the Denzin & Lincoln (2003) Ideas. Note that it is the one source needed in this part of the thesis. The main research method of the diploma is a qualitative one. The author would use “Interviews” to get the needed data. The qualitative approach can vary and include many aspects and subjects in itself—for example, sciences related to human beings and social fields.

Comparing with quantitative research, the qualitative approach is focused on the quality of the objects, which usually hard and almost impossible to count or measure. The research usually represents the relationships between variables. It does not need to be examined with the strict framework as a quantitative approach. The approach's implementation types are *case studies*, *interviews*, *observing* the participators, and the like.

5.2 Interview

The thesis reader must pay attention that this section is mostly based on Brinkmann & Kvale’s (1999) theories, except the one source mentioned. After a brief introduction of the research type, it would be logical to continue with an exact way of gathering, collecting, and analysing information on the dissertation’s case. Interviewing-is one of the suitable possibilities to get the data from people.

Humans are communicating with each other. By this communication, they can learn something new and exchange different data. Interviewing is more based on the practical background than following the particular rules in collecting knowledge.

Before taking an interview, it is significant to inform those who would take part in it about the aim, context of the research. The interviewees have to be aware of the platform of publishing and people who would potentially get this data.

The *context* plays a significant role in the interview research. It does not have any limits in size. Everything depends on the case of studying and a particular situation. After taking into account the basic aspect of conducting an interview, the author wants to come to the stages of the interview’s creation:

- Phrasing the main goal of the research before the actual process of interviewing.
- Creating the plan of gathering the data with the interview. (The stages have to be accounted for as well).

- Forming an interview's questions with an awareness about the person, who would answer them, and the overall situation.
- Translation of the evidence, gotten by interview. It should be prepared for the next step. In the author's case, it would be a writing version of the answers.
- Analyzing. By taking into consideration the aims and approaches of analyzes would be more suitable for a particular subject.
- Checking the reliability of the results and how do they suitable for the re-search's goal.
- Concluding and publishing the results.

The interviews can be implemented in different forms: *Computer-Assisted*, *Focus group*, *Factual*, *Conceptual*, *Discursive*, and *Narrative* ones. The writer would like to explain more about the first of them because she would use it in her research.

Thus, was chosen the computer form. In the busy time, emails benefit a lot in collecting information from the interviews and include many advantages. The first one is accessibility. It means that the interviewee can be in any place on the Earth, but if this person possesses the devices and access to the Internet, they can do that.

Another aspect of the interviews is about the existence of three types of them. Basically, they are *structured*, *semi-structured*, and *unstructured (in-depth)*. All of the varieties have advantages and disadvantages.

In the author's situation, she preferred the *semi-structured one*. The way of arranging this kind of interview is "normal," such as a *structured interview*. It follows the order and saves the fundamental ideas during the process. It allows people to express their opinion in a way they want. It would make future data richer. The *semi-structured* interview has a sense when the researcher is needed for wider knowledge, but not exact information. (QuestionPro Executive Team.)

On the other hand, analyzing data becomes a little difficult because of allowing interviewees' freedom. About this process, the writer would express more in the next sections. It was considered an interview with two professionals in the subject sphere and the case organization's workers to understand their opinion about the storytelling.

The professionals would get slightly different questions, but with the same sense. The main target is to collect data about the tool from realizing its benefit and using it. The matter is that the author has to be aware of the storytelling strategy from the theoretical and practical

points of view. She could collect this kind of data from people who dealt or potentially dealt with the subject.

Implementing this step, the writer could summarize the gathered information and help the organization to reach its goal, which was mentioned in the first chapter of the thesis as a research question.

5.2.1 Participants

It was asked beforehand about the permission to mention the interviewees' names, and were gotten positive answers on that. First of all, there would be an introduction of the participants. After, the author would come straight to the questions.

One of the interviewees is Anne Kalliomäki. She is a story designer. The designer provides the opportunity for the companies to be unique by creating the story for them. In its turn, it offers the businesses' customers an unforgettable experience. Moreover, Anne Kalliomäki published a book about that, which is called "Tarinakone." The book is in the Finnish language.

Another person's name is Anne-Mari Ruotsi. She is a Senior Lecturer in the Restaurant business. Anne-Mari Ruotsi was also one of the people who wrote the Master's thesis about how South Karelia's companies use storytelling.

Both participants are competent in the research subject. So, the author pays more attention to the quality of information than to a large amount of respondents' number. Now, there can be said a couple of words about the staff members of the case company.

The main communication happened with Alla Niemi. She is the coordinator of the "Lapteenranta Region Tourist Information". The coordinator provided the data about the case organization and the operations inside of it. Thus, she was the person from whom the interview could be taken.

5.2.2 Questions' analysing steps

The interviews included different numbers of questions. The range was from 7 to 10. The questions were adapted to the person to whom they were going to be asked. First of all, the author had to explain the steps she would follow during the analysis.

The choice of analysis was directly proportional to the goal of the research data. It depended on the number of people and the way an interview was implemented. So, the *thematic analysis* was decided to be chosen. *Thematic analysis* – a common way of *qualitative data*

analysis. (Thematic analysis researches of the University of Auckland 2019.) The method is adaptable for *semi-structured* questioning and suitable for any of the research purposes.

After the type of analysis was determined, it would be logical to describe the steps, which the author would follow during the analysis process:

- Reading the data, marking the main points of the interview.
- Writing the *codes*, where there are playing the role of clarifying some important insights into the topic. In the future, it will help to order the data and put it in bunches.
- Getting the *codes*, which have the same sense together.
- Going through the information, checking the availability of the needed logical data provided by the interview.
- Giving the name for all the topics found and understanding the possibility of creating the whole story.
- Reporting the topics, using the worlds of the interviewees. (Mortensen 2020.)

The next chapter includes information about the finding. They were gotten from the interview's data. The writer would persist deeper into the respondents' answers, creating the overall conclusion of their statements.

6 Analysis of the respondents' answers

6.1 Influence of the stories of the humans' emotions

Before it was considered about the main aspect of the story, its creation, and the type of Finnish culture stories, it would be sufficient to start with the narratives' main feature - "influencing people's feelings."

Emotions are the most powerful feature produced by storytelling. It makes this tool unique despite the other instruments. The stories provide the platform for the listener, offering them an accessing to clarifying information. It generates different emotions. (Habermas 2019, 10.) Thus, according to Anne Kalliomäki response:

Stories are the most powerful way of communication. Stories have the power to change the world. Stories create emotional bonds between people. Stories are the way to create meaning, create hope, and show the way to a better world.

The same, but the shorter answer was provided by Anne-Mari Ruotsi:

To create emotions.

The senses, which people feel in interaction with a company are valuable for both parties. According to Robert Plutchick's (American psychologist) "Emotional Wheel" (Figure 3.), there are eight basic emotions, which can experience human: Happiness, Sorrow, Self-assurance, Apprehension, Malice, Astonishment, Expectancy. The other feelings are coming from the main emotions.

Knowing clients' potential sensations beforehand makes businesses understand what customers can think about their products or services. It also helps to understand; what kind of excitement the buyer should experience. It is a compelling knowledge, which can be used in marketing.

Looking at the picture below, it can be seen that emotions in the core are the richest ones. From there are coming the slighter feelings. In this way, it is possible to notice how the secondary sensations emanate from the basics. They are closer to the edge of the picture. All of the perceptions are significant in marketing. The managers need to understand and monitor what kind of attitudes they need to generate from the visitors in one case or another. (Payne 2017.)



Figure 3. Emotional Wheel (Karilova according to Plutchick)

6.2 The story creation

The point about creating a story is meaningful. That is why the writer pays quite a lot of attention to it. The parts of the story were already mentioned in the theory's chapters of the diploma, but it would be suitable to note it again, but from the "practical" perspective.

Both professionals mentioned "hero" as one of the important parts of a story. Another aspect, which was the same about the storytelling was "drama".

A story has distinct characters/actors (can also be a product, company, landscape, etc.). A story combines fact and fiction. (it is dramatized, interesting and captivating.
– Anne Kalliomäki

The arc of drama, the actor, the hero, the place, or the environment. – Anne-Mari Ruotsi

First of all, the author would like to describe the "hero's" part in the story in a couple of words, and after, she would continue with the "drama" aspect. As Anne Kalliomäki mentioned, the "hero" can be anyone and anything from the person to product, company, and the like.

The question is: "Why do people need the hero in the story?" To clarify the answer to this kind of question, it is suitable to come back to when the earliest stories with heroes were born. Examples of the "first" tales, included characters can be: "Odysseus" or "Hesiod." These narratives provided the listeners with the knowledge of significant aspects of living and motivations to be better. (Scott & Goethals, 2019.)

Coming back to the present time, the narratives save the sense but slightly change the telling format. For example, it is quite hard for companies to represent themselves as one specific “hero,” but possible. It should understand how does to need to look like in consumers’ eyes.

One of the best examples can be the “Apple” company. As the main character, they put the buyer of their products. Customers can find their reflections interpreting the information from the mentioned company and trust it. (Truelson 2018.)

The concept of “drama” in storytelling plays a significant role as well. People are curious about the drama. It makes persons feel more and experience more. With the help of drama and conspiracies, the interest in the subject is rising. The largest part of the conspiracies is abruptness. After that, people desire to know about the story. (Dietz et al. 2014, 38-39.)

6.3 How does popular storytelling in Finland and particularly in South Karelia?

According to the respondents’ answers and observations, the meaning of “storytelling” is quite popular as a marketing tool in Finland. On the other hand, not many organizations use it “professionally”:

We are talking quite a lot about storytelling in the business field in Finland. But there is a lot to do what comes to practice itself. Using stories in different ways takes time and companies should use more storytelling professionals. I think too many business owners think they can do their stories on their own. – Anne Kalliomäki

Talking particularly about South Karelia Region, the storytelling is not very popular in this area:

In the fact, only a few companies use storytelling. – Anne-Mari Ruotsi

There is a possibility that some companies apply basic aspects of this tool but do not realize that they utilize it in the context of storytelling. For example, as in the case company:

We have not used the term storytelling, and we have not heard of it much. Used more like the word "advertising" in the marketing of city events. Storytelling is a "new" term, although I think the museums in the city use storytelling. (translated from the Russian language) – Alla Niemi

Summarizing the information above, storytelling as a technique was started to be used in the region. If the focus becomes on the whole Finnish country - it is more popular, and more companies practice it but usually without a professional person of the tool.

6.4 What kind of stories would be suitable in Finnish culture?

After a brief understanding of utilizing storytelling in the destination, the author continues with the potential topics, attracting customers to the case organization. It is needed to understand what kind of stories can be suitable to tell in the “Lappeenranta Region Tourist Information” case. Thus, she again refers to the responses of the participants.

The best stories for tourism are based on historical places of the chosen area. The interviewees’ answers can also prove this meaning:

Fortress Lappeenranta, the Savage, Saimaa Canal. Finnish tourists usually interested in “Salpalinja” defensive line, Geopark sites, nature trails, and sites. – Alla Niemi

All places/buildings are worth a story – it depends on who is the audience. – Anne-Mari Ruotsi.

Because the focus group of tourists for “Lappeenranta Region Tourist Information” consists of Finnish and Russian tourists, the author had a talk with Alla Niemi about both groups’ interests.

Representing the answer to this question, she showed the author one of the blogs published on their official site. The tourist used to experience different activities in Lappeenranta and South Karelia. He wrote a couple of blogs, but one became popular and started to play a role advertisement for the organization.

This blog was about the “Reindeer farm.” It does not exist anymore, but the brand managers could understand what kinds of places can be interesting for foreigners. It also allowed looking at Lappeenranta from their (tourists’) angle.

“The farm of the reindeers” showed itself as a little winter fairytale for visitors. Tourists who came there could ride with the help of the animals, feed them, take pictures. After that, the farm owner invited the visitors to his house and offered cookies and hot drinks, like glögi (a popular Scandinavian winter drink). This farm provided a great experience for the customers and played the role of a small “Lapland” in the South Karelia region. – Alla Niemi

Therefore, to sum up, Russian tourists associate Finland with reindeers, snow, and Lapland. In their turn, Finnish people are more interested in nature, different “nature” activities, and historical places.

7 Accessing and Recommendations

7.1 Monitoring the case organization's operations in Social Media

The interview's research information gave results, which would be applied in that chapter. Before implementing the case organization's recommendations, the author had to access the brand's situation for now. She talked with Natalja Zeleznjakova – tourist advisor and one of the "Lappeenranta Region Tourist Information" workers. The tourist advisor provided the information below:

As soon as the coronavirus's whole situation began, we decided not to stop talking about our city on social networks. We showed interesting places in the city, told some historical facts, showed photos of nature and nature trails. Periodically used the hashtag #dreamnowtravellater, talking about precautions. From March to the present day, about 700 subscribers have been added to @visitlappeenranta_official, about 400 new subscribers have been added to Facebook @visitlappeenranta, about 200 new members have been added to VKontakte. In my opinion, we made the right decision since the dynamics are positive, and we received good feedback and gratitude.

To prove the data above, it was attached the statistics of Facebook, rendered by Natalja Zeleznjakova as well. (Figure 4.) The statistical data about other social media was unavailable.

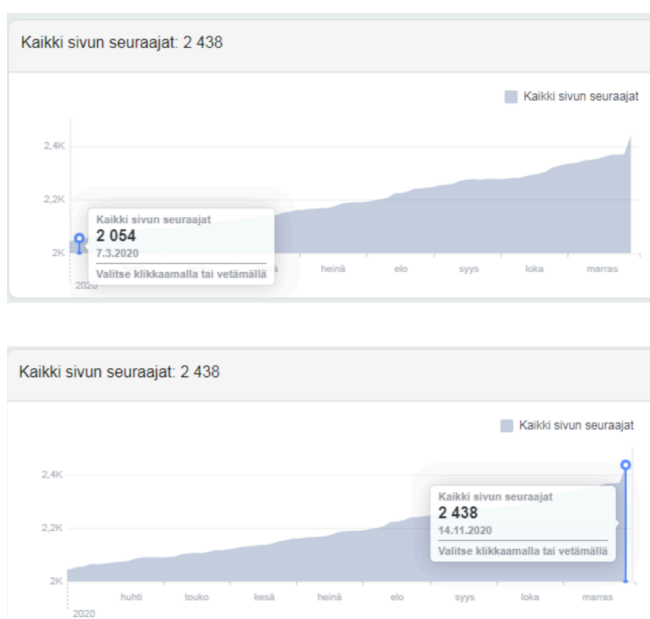


Figure 4. Statistic of the subscribers of "VisitLappenranta" Facebook's page from April to March (Provided by Zeleznjakova according to Facebook 2020)

As it was already stated, “Lappeenranta Region Tourist Information” never used storytelling as a marketing tool. Monitoring the company’s actions, it had to be said that they used stories in their information. An example can be tourist blogs, where people express their opinions about different activities in the city.

The second tool is posting photos of places in Lappeenranta with brief or more detailed stories and information. After submitting the data on the Social Media platforms, the brand got feedbacks, which helped decide if the provided material is acceptable. It could develop the future post of the organization.

As it could be seen, the subscribers who could not come to Lappeenranta were still interested in the destination. More new people started to follow its’ Social pages and got to know the place as well.

The comments from subscribers were usually positive ones. They “missed the city” and would like to come here as soon as possible. The author inserted one of the typical Social Media posts, taken from the “Vkontakte.” (Russian Social Media)

The information was in the Russian language as well. It described the historical aspect of the “*One of the main churches of the Orthodox parish in the city of Lappeenranta.*” There were also four pictures attached to the text. (Image 1.)



Image 1. Example of the post on Social Media by “Visit Lappeenranta” (Niemi 2020)

7.2 Obstacles of the target goal

Another important aspect, which was also discussed with the “Lappeenranta Region Tourist Information,” was the lack of traveler’s awareness. Especially when the talk was about Russian tourists. Many Russian visitors used to come to the destination by so-called “shopping tours.”

These presented an opportunity for people to come to the city of Lappeenranta (Imatra as well) to buy the products in the shops and come back to Russia. Some tours used to exist, which were also more focused on shopping, but with a short “cultural” program. According to the workers’ opinions, many people became amazed when they knew that there were so many places to visit in Lappeenranta.

The target converted more challenging in the quarantine period because Russian people cannot come to the country. Finnish travelers’ situation is slightly better, but it always hard to know what can happen next in such an unstable time. The author’s responsibility to help the brand in its situation, providing the ideas for potential stories. Which can be told for the customers.

7.3 Ideas for the stories

There were many ideas to implement for the case. Definitely, most of them were particularly based on history’s objects and history generally. There was a dialog with one of the competent guides in Lappeenranta. Her name was Katja Roos, and she also produced useful information about the facts. Moreover, the guide shared her experience and gave ideas for future stories as well.

The author chose the main ones between all the various information, which could help the organization in story creation. There were determined three basic themes for the narratives:

- The savage depicted on the coat of arms of the Lappeenranta
- Fortress in Lappeenranta
- Season activities in the city of Lappeenranta

7.4 The savage

One of the main interests of foreign and native tourists is focused on that personage. The mysterious savage is painted with the cudgel, pointed down. The travelers have a question about the meaning of this character and his history. (Image 2.)

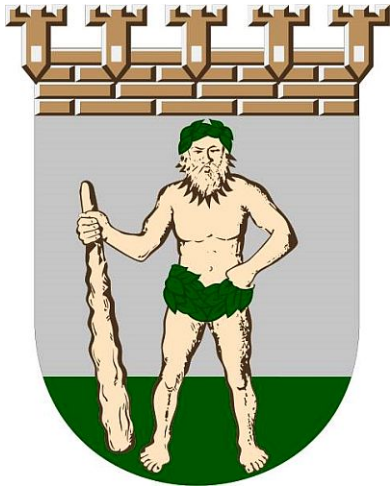


Image 2. The savage, painted on the coat of arms of Lappeenranta city (Ralf Hartemink 2019)

According to Luoto's text, provided to the writer by Katja Roos, the character's Finnish name is "*Lappeenrannan Villimies*." The matter is that there are several versions of the appearance of this "hero" on the emblem.

One version is started to form from the forthcoming of the Lappeenranta. In the 1652 year, the mentioned city got the official name "*Vilmastrand*." ("Coast of the savage"). The seal of that included the savage on a bank of a lake. Moreover, the first seal, saved from the 1656 year, also consisted of the man, who wore the loincloth of leaves and held the club, which was put on the ground.

Another version represents the character as a "good hero." In the South West of England, located a figure of the man, quite similar to Lappeenranta's savage. He personifies Hercules. The man used to be on Roman's coins as well.

In 1541, the year emblem was showed with two savages (man and woman) in Sweden. One of the most famous poems was also called "Hercules." It was invented by one of the first Swedish poets and included the text about the savage with the bank in a company with three goddesses: Virtue, Passion, and Drunkenness. The amour angel watched them from the sky.

It is very challenging to understand which of the versions was the proofed one. But the fact that the savage is quite an interesting personage for producing the story is obvious. It would be interesting to perform the savage as the main character of a narrative.

Basing on the historical aspects, it would be suitable to come up with the other facts and create a legend about this personage. The legend can represent a brave man, like Hercules,

who would have his own living story. The savage is already representing the city. "VisitLappeenranta" can consider his figure and even take him as its representation. Telling the stories about this hero can attract more people to the city.

7.5 Fortress in Lappeenranta

Historic Fortress (Linnoitus) is situated between the East and West. Many tourists can be interested in this Fortress. It used to be the part of defensive fortifications, included in the "Suomenlinna" Fortresses in Helsinki and Hamina. (Managers of Lappeenranta official site.)

The Fortress is one of the most beautiful heritages in Lappeenranta, and people who have never been here having to visit this place. In the quarantine period, it is more than hard to come to that place. Fortunately, technologies provide humans many other alternatives.

One of them is video-recordings. For example, organizing the video tours, telling the facts and the legends about this place. It can be recorded as a stream-videos, which are quite popular nowadays. "VisitLappeenranta" can post on all the platforms, that in a particular time and date - internet users could watch this video. It may raise the attention to the organization and the place in general.

7.6 Season activities

Finland has a charming nature. The fact is that it is amazing in any of the seasons. "VisitLappeenranta" shares the pictures on Social Media, where the persons admire and comment on it. The organization offers different types of trips.

As was mentioned above, many Finnish people are fond of natural tourism, so it would be suitable to create more tours, with all the year's seasons. The tours can also be connected with the stories.

7.7 Stories for Children

Another subject can be "storytelling for children". The tales should be adapted with Finnish, English, and Russian languages. They can introduce the Finnish feature with the help of the narratives.

The personage of the stories can be anyone, for example, the savage mentioned above. The tales can also include different places in Lappeenranta and some interesting historical aspects. It may increase users' interest because these narratives have to be available on the "VisitLappeenranta" platforms.

7.8 Alternative of “Doerz”

The author thought it would be suitable to post the trips with prices and descriptions on digital platforms. An example of the platform calls “Doerz”. It allows to post and find trips and events of the destination. “Doerz” is a high-quality and large platform, which includes a variety of countries and cities. Other people got to know about the business’s services’ better and faster with its help. (Team Doerz.)

This idea was provided to the workers, but they said they already had an alternative to the “Doerz”. It calls “Lakeland experiences sales channel.” The channel is placed on the official site of “Visitlappeenranta” and provides information about different trips there. It is a suitable alternative to the “Doerz,” but, probably, if they would use this platform, more people would know about Lappeenranta’s activities.

7.9 Summarizing the recommendations

Monitoring the case organization’s operations, the author concluded that the brand managers are thinking correctly. They use stories for attraction, people’s feedbacks (blogs). Even though many travelers can’t come to the place, managers still post information about the Lappeenranta quite often. Thus, tourists do not forget the destination.

The author’s main recommendation is to continue their job as they already produced because it works. The ideas mentioned in the previous sections can also help attract customers and make them aware of the brand. The list with suggestions presented again, but in the short version:

- Using the savage as a main “positive” personage and create stories in which he is in the central role. (by the requirements of using the storytelling, written in the theoretical and empirical parts of the thesis). The savage can also represent the case organization.
- Recording the “online trips” of Lappeenranta. (It can also be organized as stream-videos).
- Producing more tours with the seasons, which can also be connected with the stories.
- Creating the stories for children, posted on Social Media and other digital platforms.
- Using “Doerz” as well.

It was realized that the best assistant for the organization would be creating the story for it. Because of the lack of time, it was impossible to perform it during the thesis writing process. It was discussed with the managers that the author would do it after all if they would need this kind of help from her.

8 Conclusion

The stories are part of a human being. People are seeking emotions. The companies can use them for achieving their goal in attraction of new customers. Storytelling allows people to interpret data and understand the meaning more clearly.

Nowadays, technologies are playing one of the most important roles in the market. It allows individuals to tell stories via different digital platforms, helping to spread them faster and efficiently.

Before creating the story, the company's obligation to understand what kind of goal it has, what kind of focus group it wants to attract, and what kind of emotions it needs to generate. All the aspects should be clarified and understood beforehand. Each part of the story makes it significant.

Storytelling is a suitable tool in the tourism industry. It supports in providing the experience for the customers by narratives. The technique in South Karelia had been started to be used. Some businesses practice the stories in their advertisements but do not pay a lot of attention to the structure and other important aspects of the story.

The case company employs narratives as well. The additional aspect for it would be to utilize storytelling more as a tool with all the requirements mentioned in the thesis. The research's main question was solved by the theoretical part's knowledge, empirical parts results, and slight monitoring of the case organization's operations.

The author provided the recommendations and ideas about "saving the customer's attention", which can be suitable and used for "Lappeenranta Region Tourist Information" and their brand "Visitlappeenranta". The perceptions were also based on the theoretical and research aspects and own observations of the writer.

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Appendix 1. Interview's questions

Interviews

Questions for Anne Kalliomäki:

1. Why the stories are important to tell (in your opinion)?
2. What are the basic components of a story?
3. What is the difference between "Storytelling" and "Storyfication"?
4. What makes the story a "great" one?
5. Which aspects do need the company to consider before it would like to create a story for itself?
6. What kind of questions can be asked before the creation of the story (e.g. for the company)?
7. What kind of methodology can be used to create the story (In your opinion)? What kind of methodologies do you know?
8. How does popular "telling the stories" as a marketing tool in Finland (your opinion)?
9. What kind of stories are welcomed in Finnish culture?
10. What is your favorite story about and why?

Questions for Anne-Mari Ruotsi:

1. Why to tell stories (in your opinion)?
2. What are the basic components of a story?
3. What does make the story "great"?
4. On which topic/s does it better to create the stories in the South Karelia region (Lappeenranta)?
5. What kind of aspects should the company consider, before creating the story for itself?
6. What kind of questions can be asked before creating the story?
7. How does popular storytelling in south Karelia (your opinion)?
8. What kind of stories are welcomed in Finnish culture?
9. What is your favorite story about and why?

Appendix 1. Interview's questions

Questions for the case organization's managers/workers:

1. What do you know about "Storytelling"? / Have you ever heard about "Storytelling"?
2. Do you think, if it is popular in Finland, what about (South Karelia?)
3. How will it help your organization (In your opinion)?
4. What kind of stories you think will be suitable for your organization?
5. If you already tried to tell the stories to customers, what kind of results did you get?
6. Do you think, if it would be useful for your organization (Storytelling)?
7. What kind of stories are welcomed in Finnish culture? (And Russian culture also, if the interviewer will be Russian)