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Increasing service accessibility of international tourists by digitalization

Case Vuojoen Kartano Oy

DEGREE PROGRAMME IN INTERNATIONAL TOURISM
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Title of publication Increasing service accessibility of International Tourists by digitalization: Case Vuojoen Kartano Oy		
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Abstract Increasing digital findability and buyability of a tourism attraction is a way of being more available for international tourists. This thesis introduced Vuojoen Kartano as a tourism attraction and tourism service provider. This thesis was implemented as a practical thesis making the tourism services of Vuojoen Kartano available for tourists understanding English language. The theory study for the background of the practical project consisted of international tourism buying behavior, current state of international tourism in Satakunta region, tourism language barriers, tourism findability, visibility, and digitalization, search engine optimization, and tourism buyability. As a part of the background on the case company's situation prior to the project the online findability of the case company in English, as well as the customer satisfaction of the previous visitors in the case company were studied. The practical part of the project included translations and creation of a Johku -based web shop in English language, In English page on the company website, and a booking.com automated message for the international hotel guests of the case company. As a result of this thesis the English web shop and website are visible for the tourists online, and the online findability and buyability of the case company have increased.		
Keywords Vuojoen Kartano, practical thesis, service digitalization, online buyability, tourism digitalization, online findability		

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1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis is focusing on the importance of digitalization in the international tourism industry, from the point of view of the case company Vuojoen Kartano Oy. International tourism is one of the largest industries in the world, and constantly growing (UNWTO, 2021). Digital accessibility of the tourism destinations and services is incredibly important in the digital world we live in, but it needs to be further developed and the digital solutions implemented more widely (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, 2020, p. 46).

The area of Eurajoki is very international by the effect of Olkiluoto nuclear power plant. 13000–15000 visitors visit the power plant each year, making it one of the most popular visitor attractions in the area (TVO, 2022). When searching for the *Olkiluoto visitor center* in Google search (n.d.), it provides Vuojoki Mansion as one of the attractions “people also searched for”. Vuojoki Mansion is the closest nearby attraction, restaurant, and hotel from Olkiluoto, and it is a good indication on the fact, that there could be hundreds, maybe thousands of potential customers, that should be somehow directed to visit Vuojoki too.

Unfortunately, neither the information on the tourism services of the area, or of the Vuojoki Mansion, are accessible for people that are not fluent in Finnish language. There are some printed tourism brochures in English, German and French, but paper versions are difficult and expensive to update. Digital information would be more accessible for the tourists before even entering the country and could help them to include more local attractions on their visit to Eurajoki. For that reason, the increased digitalization in form of English translation of the website and web shop of the *crown jewel* of tourism in Eurajoki, can provide more reachability and buyability for Vuojoen Kartano internationally.

I did my practical training of five months in Vuojoen Kartano Oy during summer of 2021 and have continued to work there since august 2021. This has given me good insight on the existing customer-base, and ideas for future development, which this thesis will be a part of. I have noticed a need for English tourist information on site, but even higher need is to get the international tourists to be able to come across Vuojoen Kartano online, to make them interested in travelling there. Vuojoki has a lot of international potential in the peaceful surroundings and the architecture combined and I believe this thesis to be able to help increase the international interest and availability of the tourism services for the future international customers.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Purpose, aim and research task

This thesis is a project-based thesis, with an end product in a digital form. To be able to create the end products, some research must be done. The research task of this thesis can be divided into three parts. The first task is to find out what is the current state of English basic information available about tourism services Vuojoen Kartano Oy is in the digital landscape, including the online findability of the mansion. Second research task is to find out how the actual services and their marketing is presented for international tourists in the digital landscape. The third research task is to find out how satisfied the previously visited international visitors of Vuojoen Kartano Oy have been with their visit.

The purpose of this thesis is to increase the international accessibility and online findability of information on Vuojoki Mansion. By doing so, the international visits can be increased in the long run. When the basic information of the mansion is easily available online, it will be complemented with reachability and buyability of the tourism services of Vuojoen Kartano Oy, hopefully leading to increased international tourism visits, and larger sales.

The end product of this practical thesis is tourist information in English language to be used online on the website of vuojoki.fi. This will be done by gathering all the most important information from the Finnish website, and to create a “briefly in English” site to serve the international tourists. The selection of most important parts to translate will be selected together with the CEO of Vuojoen Kartano Oy, so the thesis project will be most beneficial for the case company.

Another part is to create service products in English, for them to be available in web shop vuojoki.johku.com. Customer messages on the web shop platform will be complementing the products. The message templates for customer communication in the booking.com platform will also be updated to cater the right seasons.

These actions together will enhance the buyability of international tourists, by giving them information on the available services before their arrival to the mansion. In addition to this I will gather information on how similar tourism attractions market to international tourists, what platforms they use and give managerial suggestions based on the findings, so the international visibility could be maximized cost-efficiently.

The thesis is very topical, as the tourism industry is trying to recover from Covid-19 pandemic, and the international tourism is needed to get the tourism business back to what it used to be before it's beginning in 2020. By increasing the accessibility of information, Vuojoen Kartano Oy could gain more international tourists. Higher customer satisfaction is also possible for the international tourists, as they can be more aware of the existence of the services they can book before arrival, and the information and history of the mansion is more familiar to them.

To reach the aim of increasing international tourism in Vuojoki Mansion I need to do theory research on international tourist's buying behavior, how international tourists wish to book and buy tourism services while visiting other countries. Is booking done before travelling, on the way from a destination to another, when checking in to a hotel or during their stay at the accommodation and so on. Other matters in the theoretical framework are the importance of lowering the language barrier in tourism, well done search engine optimization, tourism and digitalization and overall findability and buyability of tourism services online. Furthermore, I will study what other online platforms could be suitable for use in Vuojoen Kartano to get the best visibility to international tourists coming to Finland. I will also prepare suggestions on the perspective of international tourism to make the best possible decisions in preparing the English versions of the website and web shop of Vuojoen Kartano.

2.2 Practical thesis

This thesis will be implemented as a practical thesis. This practical thesis is development project, as the aim is to produce digital material for tourists in the form of English translations of the website Vuojoki.fi and web shop Vuojoki.johku.com to increase the availability of tourism services to international tourists. The purpose is to

increase the availability of the services of completely new international tourists, and to be able to do that, according to the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (2020 p. 46) the findability and reachability online and the buyability of services in English need to be increased.

As Vilkka & Airaksinen (2003, pp. 9–10 & 47–48) describe, a practical or project-based thesis is a thesis, that is done by combining a practical project that makes a concrete product to the client, and a report of the actions in the form thesis to be read after the project has been completed. Project-based thesis can be done in very different ways, depending on the needs of the client. Even this kind of thesis should be practical, work-life oriented, done by leaning to factual theories and able to present the professional abilities and capability of the student in producing a good quality report on the course of the project. The project-based thesis' product can be many things from orientation material for new employees to a computer program to be used in the client company (Hakala, 2004, pp. 21–28). In this thesis the product will be English marketing and information material that can be used side-by side with Finnish equals.

The end product for the case company is the English materials on the web shop, website and booking.com automated messages. They are all concrete things, that will benefit the case company in the future. The thesis report will consist of the introduction of the case company and the state or phase of digitalization in their sales and marketing channels, theory background, conceptual framework, and the practical part, which will be then reported in the thesis report in as much detail as is relevant, to be able to show my professional competence. The final product is then also available online, as the website and web shop will then be functioning tools for the case company.

2.3 Delimitations

No other material, than the online marketing material including customer communication templates on the hotel booking platform, “briefly in English” site on the vuojoki.fi website and English service products in the web shop vuojoki.johku.com will be created or to translated into English during this thesis process for the use of the client. It will give the foundation to possible other languages, like Swedish and/or

German, but they will not be a part of this thesis. There will neither be other than the material agreed upon making the agreement. No social media profiles/updates, or other new platforms will be translated or created.

3 CASE COMPANY, VUOJOEN KARTANO OY

Vuojoen Kartano Oy is a limited company founded in the year 2005 to run the business operations in the Vuojoki mansion after it had been restored to its former glory. Vuojoen Kartano Oy operates in the hospitality industry and has a guest house of eight rooms with 15 beds, a restaurant and different meeting and festivity spaces in the 1836 built stone manor and its side buildings. The manor is a popular venue for family occasions and company get-togethers. They offer enlivened guided visits with themes from the ghosts of the manor, to children's tours about the children of the Björkenheim family, murder-mystery dinners, and different events all year round. (Vuojoen Kartano Oy, 2021.)

The municipality of Eurajoki is the owner of the Vuojoki mansion, and it is rented to Posiva PLC. for years starting from 1999. They had their office on the third floor until 2016, when they moved their offices to Olkiluoto. (Suni, 2017.) At the end of year 2021, there are two businesses renting the office space, and there is room for another two tenants. The restaurant and hospitality services are operated by the Vuojoen Kartano Oy itself. It employs one person full-time, and four to six people part-time in different tasks from kitchen to project activities.

As the picture 1 presents, the mansion is stone-built yellow building, with empire features of decorative ornaments on the white details, famous Könni-clock and painted false windows to maintain the symmetrical appearance. The second floor has the prominent arched window trims, as was built to serve as the festivity floor for hosting the guests of the Björkenheim family. It is still the most beautiful floor in the building.



Picture 1. Vuojoki Mansion from South (Author 13.11.2021)

The mansion area covers a large garden, spruce alley and side buildings, that act as the guest house and the gallery and auditorium building. On the south-eastern edge of the property is the greenhouse *Orangerie* that nowadays serves as one of the meeting- and celebration facility. There is also a sauna with two dressing rooms in the building. (Vuojoen Kartano Oy, 2021.)

Vuojoen Kartano Oy. has taken part in many different EU funded projects over the years, including the restoration project of the mansion which was partly funded by European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) (Vuojoen Kartano Oy, 2022). Up until the end of the year 2022 it is participating in *Energy and experiences - well-being tourism group project* that also involves Vuojoki Mansion as one of the destination businesses in the group. The project is aiming at improving profitability and increasing sales of the tourism, wellness and natural resource businesses involved in the project, by cooperation and creation of a high-quality wellness tourism product line, that will be sold through the web shop of Vuojoen Kartano Oy and funded by Leader Ravakka (Center for Tourism Business Development, 2022).

Vuojoen Kartano Oy has already quite extensive information on their website and some services available in their web shop, but they are only accessible in Finnish. Booking.com works in the language of the user, but with that platform Vuojoen

Kartano Oy has faced some issues in communicating with the tourists in other languages than Finnish, as the site does not always show the language choice of the tourist correctly, or there is some other difficulty in informing the arriving customers about how to check in if there is no staff on premises, or about for example the seasonally available services. (Nurmoranta, 2021.)

4 INTERNATIONAL TOURISM IN SATAKUNTA REGION

Satakunta is one of the 19 Provinces of Finland. It is located on the West-coast of Finland and consists mostly of rural areas on land and large archipelago. The two main cities in the province are Pori and Rauma. Pori has Yyteri beach, Kirjurinluoto and many historical buildings from Juselius' Mausoleum to Central Pori Church as the main attractions. Rauma has two UNESCO World heritage sites, Old Rauma and Sammallahdenmäki, Kylmäpihlaja lighthouse and other island attractions. Vuojoki Mansion is located in Eurajoki, between the two main cities. The other attractions in Eurajoki are the Olkiluoto nuclear power plant, Säppi lighthouse, Pinkjärvi lake area, and Liinmaa castle. (Satakunta Chamber of Commerce, 2019.; Eurajoki tourist office, 2018, pp. 4–20.)

Tourism strengths of Satakunta are the different natural environments from sea to forest, cultural environments and heritage, arts and culture life, UNESCO Geopark and world heritage sites, together with the well-organized events hosting international customers. Vivid experience economy in the region will cater the residents, but also host tourists and build the brand of the region as is visualized in the Satakunta region's Smart Specialization Strategy for 2021–2027 p. 11. Based on these assets, can be stated that Satakunta has potential to become more popular tourism destination in the future.

Satakunta is a part of the coast and archipelago area on the Visit Finland's region division. As the figure 1 below presents, the tourism in coast and archipelago area was 0,6 million international holidaymakers in the year 2018. The amount is -1% from the year 2017, and the lowest of Finland together with Lapland, but the change of Lapland is highly positive. Lakeland has had 0,7 million international holidaymakers, keeping a slight second-place, and the most visited is the capital Helsinki region, as a city destination that is the easiest to access. (Visit Finland, 2019a, p. 26.)

Holidaymakers



Figure 1. Breakdown of holiday tourists in Finnish destination regions in 2018 (Visit Finland, 2019a, p. 26).

5 INTERNATIONAL TOURISTS' BUYING BEHAVIOUR

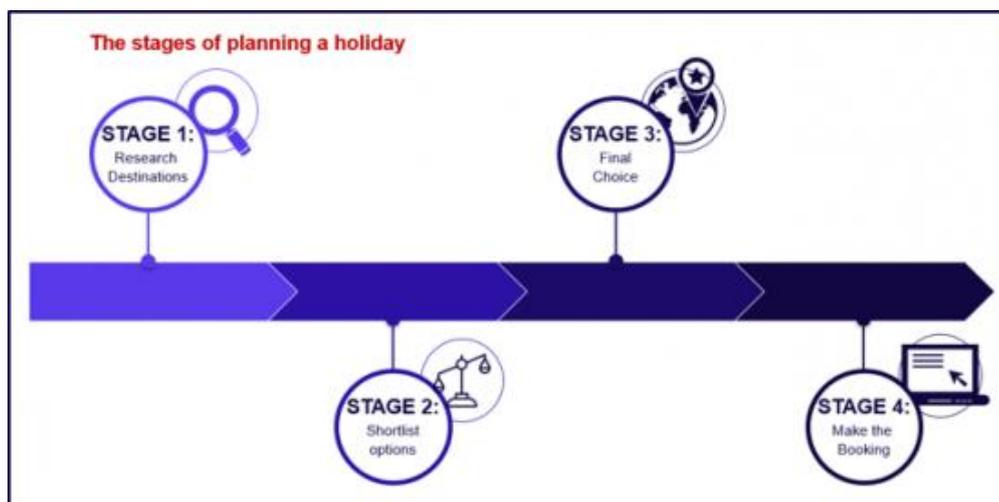
5.1 Tourism consumer behavior

Goodwin (2016, p. 136) states that international tourists decide and book their accommodation and activities, as well as the travelling means prior to entering the destination. Keeping that in mind, it is of high importance for them to know the availability of tourism services at the booking phase, not at the time of arrival, as then it might be too late to get them to change their plans.

Picture 2 presents the stages of planning a holiday as four stages. Stage 1: Research destinations, Stage 2: Shortlist options, Stage 3: Final choice, and Stage 4: Making the booking. In stage 1: Research destinations, the potential tourists browse through the destinations they are interested in, and this is the phase in which a tourism destination needs to be found and included in the research, for the tourists to be able to consider it as one of the possible options. In stage 2: Shortlist options, the potential destinations and their attractions are considered in more depth, and the most intriguing ones stay on the list to be chosen from.

Stage 3: Final choice, the destination most suitable and interesting gets chosen, and others are left to be considered again on the next time a trip is being planned, or completely dropped out of the list. In stage 4: Making the booking, the actual bookings for the trip are made, and the decisions on where to go and what to do on site are becoming reality. The stages 2 & 3 are often made with the possible travel companions, or even other people like friends or family to gain knowledge on their possible hopes for the trip or past experiences on the destination. Stages 1 & 4 are usually made by one individual, gender varying by country of origin. (Visit Britain, 2017, pp. 3–4.)

Due to Covid 19 and its effects on the tourism industry, the research on the holiday planning and purchase behavior are very different from what they used to be prior to the pandemic. I wanted to use the research material of the time prior pandemic, in hope of that becoming the normal again when the pandemic is over.



Picture 2. The stages of planning a holiday (VisitBritain, 2017).

In VisitBritain (2017, pp. 3–5) research on tourists’ research and booking behavior and attitudes when booking a holiday in Britain. The research was aimed at potential tourists in Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Denmark, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, UAE & USA.

70% of the respondents say *they want to plan their holiday carefully before they leave*. On the other hand, 54% said *they like to be spontaneous and decide on some of their itinerary at the last minute*. There are large differences on the behavior between cultures. Western tourists tend to give spontaneous choices more space, than Asians. (VisitBritain, 2017 pp. 20–21.) The respondents were also asked what the top five online influences are for choosing their destination, as presented in figure 2 below.

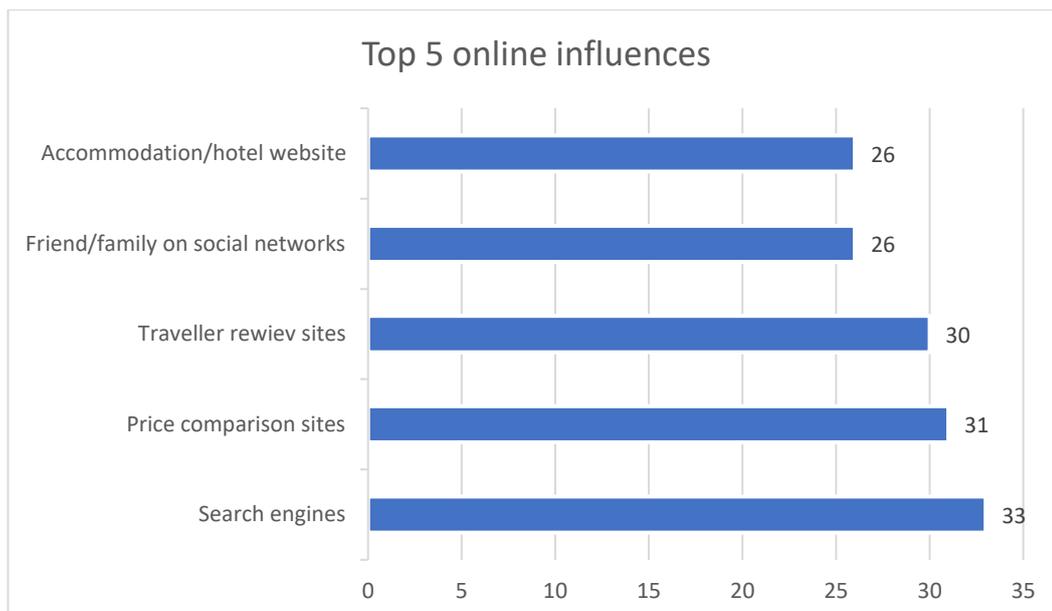


Figure 2, Top 5 online influences of potential GB tourists (VisitBritain, 2017, p. 23).

The results were divided into offline and online influences. The largest influence on destination choice is *word of mouth*, with talking to friends and family key for 40% of tourists and potential tourists. Reflecting the results of table 1. to the case company, it seems to be very important to have a reliable, up-to date online presence when trying to get more international tourist, as the word of mouth from this kind of small tourism attraction is not yet on international level. *Research options* phase is the one in which this becomes visible. If the *search engine* does not bring the attraction and information considering it easily available, it will not be chosen. The *customer review* and *price comparison sites* also play a large role, as it can be seen as a part of the *word-of-mouth* recommendation, even if it read online and not by someone you personally know.

In a survey by MMGY Global (2022 p. 31) online travel agencies, tourism destination sites and review sites like TripAdvisor were the most important means of finding information on international destinations. The lower the age of the respondents, the more they rely on solely digital information. Older generations also use traditional brochures, and depending on the country of origin, the word-of-mouth is also important.

5.2 Language barrier in tourism

In international tourism language barriers are bound to happen. Tourist's visit different countries, and not all languages can be learned before each trip. For that reason, it is important, that a destination wishing to greet international tourists would invest time, money, and effort into having information available in at least English beside the local languages. (Marinović Matović & Simić, p. 282.) This can be done by translating the website, by having social media communication in English, and using reservation platforms, which have the ability to use multiple languages.

English is seen as the most understood and spoken language in the world, and it is almost crucial to use English in the communication with customers who have origins in another country. If English is not utilized efficiently on websites, web shop and on the destination itself, the tourists are more likely not going to visit the destination. (Maulidiyah, 2019, pp. 43–44.)

5.3 Tourism findability, visibility, and digitalization

In the modern world the importance of the digital findability accessibility and eventually buyability of services of a tourism company are indisputable. The digital accessibility, findability and buyability can be identified as pre-encounter marketing. The efficient and up-to date use of the website of a business, together with different web-based platforms such as hotel reservation app, web shop to sell services before the tourists arrive, is very important in the communication with the potential customers. Social media channels, with Instagram and Facebook as the most important ones, have had a large impact on the ease of interaction between the tourists and the tourism businesses. (Bowie & Buttle, 2011, pp. 243–244.)

Googling has become the most important mean of finding information. A Finnish person makes tens of Google searches every day. Globally, larger a purchase of a product or a service the customer has in mind, the longer they spend time looking up information online, and the largest part happens before making the buying decision. (Liimatainen, 2020, pp.17–18.)

Digital marketing is marketing done using digital medias and technology. In digital marketing, the possibilities of making the marketing communication available for the whole world instead of the some-thousands of traditional medias. Online presence of a tourism business is important. It includes for example the social media profiles, newsletter lists and websites, and can referred as *owned media* as the company has a strong power over what is available for the customers through these medias. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016, p. 11.) In a small local tourism business like the case company Vuojoen Kartano Oy, digital marketing is the only way to reach the international tourists before they are in the country, therefore it is highly important to have the suitable marketing communication channels in use.

5.4 Search engine optimization

Findability of services can be effectively managed by search engine optimization (SEO). The most important, and easiest way of doing search engine optimization is coming up with a key phrase, that is relevant for the page, and that is most likely the phrase people would be using when searching for the information you provide. In terms of SEO the key phrase should occur on the page for several times, and on different levels of headlines, body text and alterative image text. External links are also one of the most important things what comes to SEO. They link your website to other websites and give a sense of relevance. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016, p. 491–494.)

Google and Bing, the two most popular search engines in the western countries have become the most important way of customers to find different businesses and their products and services. In search engine use, the customer writes the search term in the search field, and the engine gives back the most related results. The first page of the results is the most viewed, and for that reason your company should appear on the first page, and the higher the better. By having the customers find you on the very top of the page is the most efficient and practically free of charge. To reach that the SEO on your website needs to be up to date and relevant. (Choat, 2017, p. 51.)

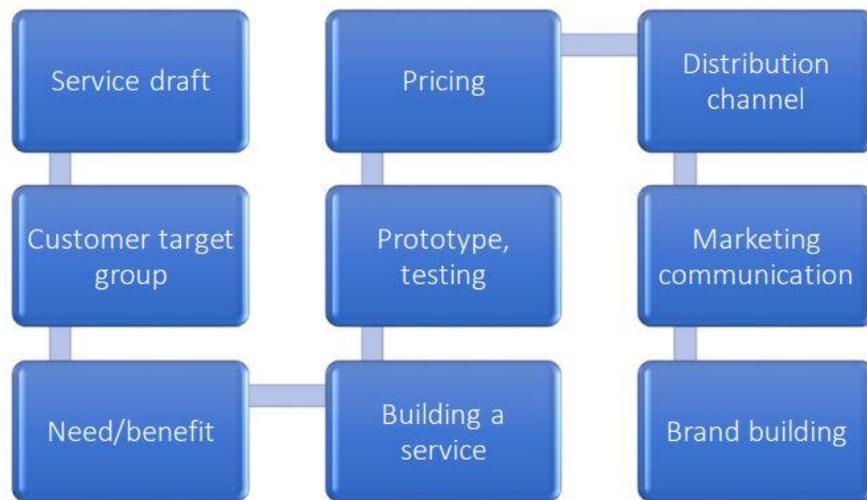
5.5 Tourism buyability

Tourism services have traditionally been sold through tour operators. It has been changed in the 2010's as internet has given the possibility for the tourism service providers to sell directly to customers. (Holloway & Humphries, 2016, p. 683.) Tourism buyability is a self-explaining term, which means the ease of making a purchase of tourism services. There are two sides in it: the way available tourism services can be purchased (for example web shop or tour operator) and then the fact that there should be some services that the tourists can buy. (Visit Finland, 2019b, p.5)

If the productization has not been taken care of well enough for the tourists to find products and services to buy in destinations and attractions, no money is left to the destination, as the possible experiences have not been developed into buyable services. This includes many destinations with nature as the pull-factor, and it can even be a case of a debate, whether it can be used into business purposes or not. Digital channels provide easier ways of weighing two or more options and provides possibilities to choose more sustainable destinations and experiences. The best way to make sure international tourists can buy services in Finnish tourism industry is multichannel marketing on different platforms, to gain the best possible findability. (Visit Finland, 2019b, pp.10 & 15.)

As stated, productization is an important part of the buyability. It is the process of creating the product, or in this case a service, for the tourists to buy. Picture 3 describes the process of productization. It starts from the draft of the planned service, setting the target group to whom the service is intended, the need it fulfills or the benefit it produces to the customer. Next step is to build the actual service so that the prototype can then be tested, and the price of the service can be set. Decision of the distribution channel, marketing communication and brand building being the last three stages of the productization process. (Kokoshyna, 2022.)

Productization process



Picture 3. Productization process. Adapted from Kokoshyna, I. (2022).

To tourists to be able to buy services from Vuojoen Kartano Oy or any other tourism business, all the stages of productization need to be gone through to have a service to sell. After the productization is finished, the buyability needs to be ensured by making the service available for the tourists in a digital platform, in this case the English web shop in Johku and the other sales channels linked to it.

6 ONLINE FINDABILITY OF VUOJOEN KARTANO OY

6.1 State of online findability of Vuojoen Kartano Oy in English before

I did a Google search (n.d.) *Vuojoki mansion* by changing my location to Great Britain, to have more realistic results on how the international tourist might find the mansion. It is the most likely search term used, if the mansion is already familiar to the tourist. Search results of the first page of google results are listed below.

The first result was a website of SpottingHistory.com. Spotting History's (2022) own explanation on why the website exists:

SpottingHistory.com is an independent site to provide reliable traveling tips to historic sites and sights all around the world. The site is made by individuals interested in history and historic places all around the world. The purpose is to provide an easy-use, map-based service to help people find interesting places to visit on their journeys.

The English website presents Vuojoki Mansion well, in quite short detail, but offers the core information. It is listed as *Palaces, manors and town halls in Finland* and by the period *Russian Grand Duchy (Finland)*. The site has tourists' comments and reviews and direct link to the mansion's own website vuojoki.fi. It also has a Google map directly embedded, so it is easy for tourists to put on their navigator, all of these are brought to the website by Google. When surfing further on the website, it is incredibly hard to find the mansion again, so there is something that could be further developed, and it can be done by signing into the website.

The Mansions' own website vuojoki.fi (2022) and its *Info* page was the second result, which is a very good indication on well done SEO on that page. There is no information in English however, so it will not provide much to an international tourist. It is good, that it is the *Info* page, as there is the contact information, phone number and e-mail available, so some contact can be received through that.

The third search result in DiscoveringFinland.com. It is a website run by a limited company Discovering Finland Oy (n.d.). It has widely listed attractions, hotels, and restaurants in Finland, by categorizing them by destinations (Helsinki region, Southern Finland and archipelago, West coast, Lakeland, Finnish Lapland and Åland archipelago), things to see & do and accommodation. Again, it is exceedingly difficult to find the Vuojoki Mansion again when surfing on the site, and there is old contact information. However, the search function on this page works well, and it is easy to find back by keyword Vuojoki. There is a mention *featured* in many attractions, which means they have paid for their visibility on the site and for that reason are more visible than those who have not paid.

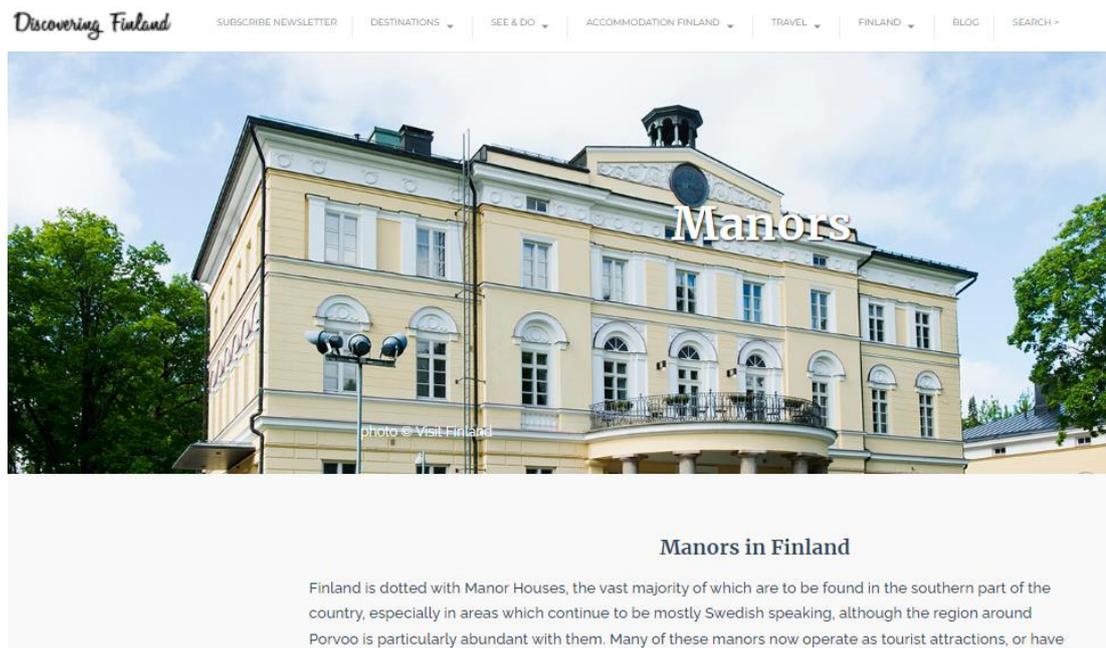
Tourists are able to list their favorite attractions by area in TripAdvisor. When searching for *things to do in Satakunta* in TripAdvisor (n.d.), the results contain 107 attractions, and Vuojoki Mansion is not one of them. Vuojoki Mansion is listed in the hotels of the area, but not as an attraction, nor as a restaurant. According to Nurmoranta (2021) the restaurant and meeting services are the most important business angles, alongside large tourist groups.

The last result on the first page of google search is booking.com page of Vuojoki Mansion (n.d.). It is the most important channel of hotel bookings for Vuojoki (Nurmoranta 2021) and it is very easy to use in any language, as the information for the tourist's is built up by ticking boxes, not in writing. TripAdvisor and booking also work well together, so the booking.com prices and link to book a room is visible on the TripAdvisor site too, providing good findability and easy access.

There are many websites presenting the very basic information on the history of the building, many beautiful pictures can be found in Google, Wikimedia commons and social media platforms. The search results give a sense of the building simply being a historical building, that you can spend a night in and look around in the garden. The ancillary services Vuojoen Kartano Oy offers, the role guided tours, restaurant, escape room, bike rental and sauna are not available for the international tourists at the time of this research, in May 2022.

6.2 Search terms if Vuojoki Mansion is not familiar before

When thinking mansion attractions in Finland, the most common search term used would be *Finnish mansion*. I did another Google search (n.d.) using that search term, and the first search result was website of Discovering Finland (n.d.), and it's listing of Finnish Manors. As the picture 4 below presents, Vuojoki Mansion is in the header picture of the listing. However, the Vuojoki Mansion is not mentioned in the listing at all, nor even named below the picture.



Picture 4. Screenshot of listing of Manors in Finland in discoveringfinland.com featuring Vuojoki Mansion as the header picture (Discovering Finland, n.d.).

Second search without mentioning Vuojoki was *Finnish manor* which delivered the same Discovering Finland result, but also the SpottingHistory.com (n.d.), that was mentioned in 3.2. In this case Vuojoki Mansion is listed on a list of “Most charming manor houses in Finland” as the 7th manor out of 12, which seems a very good list in eyes of a tourist searching for a manor or mansion to visit in Finland.

7 ONLINE CUSTOMER REVIEWS OF VUOJOEN KARTANO

Tourists can give feedback to Vuojoen Kartano Oy in different platforms. Hotel guests can leave feedback and ratings on booking.com for the future customers to see, and to support their accommodation selection. Google reviews can be given by just about anyone, who comes across the business online, whether they have visited there or not. TripAdvisor is a tourism platform, through which anyone can give a review based on their experience on a destination, attractions, and different tourism services. TripAdvisor has a form for the reviewers to fill, so the reviews should be relevant and informative, to help the other tourists making their travel plans.

This feedback is from the time before English website and web shop content, on Google, Booking.com, and TripAdvisor. The information is something that can be classified as secondary data as it is not gathered for this purpose but is submitted the tourists' own intention (Baggio & Klobas, 2017, p. 5) into the digital Booking.com, Google or TripAdvisor platforms.

7.1 Booking.com reviews

Booking.com has been in use at Vuojoen Kartano from January 2020, and before that, all the accommodation reservations have been made through email and telephone (Nurmoranta, 2021). After the beginning of using booking.com in 2020 total of 220 reviews of Vuojoen Kartano have been submitted to the platform. (Booking.com, 2022.) As the figure 3 presents, the vast majority of the hotel guests in Vuojoen Kartano are from Finland. According to the reviews four guests have been from Germany, two from Sweden, and one from each of the following countries: Austria, Estonia, France, Great-Britain, Luxemburg, Russia, Ukraine, and United States. Some reservations have been made outside the booking.com platform, directly by email or phone, and those are not included in this listing. Based on the list of countries, a conclusion on the potential international customers to be German and Swedish, and other Europeans.

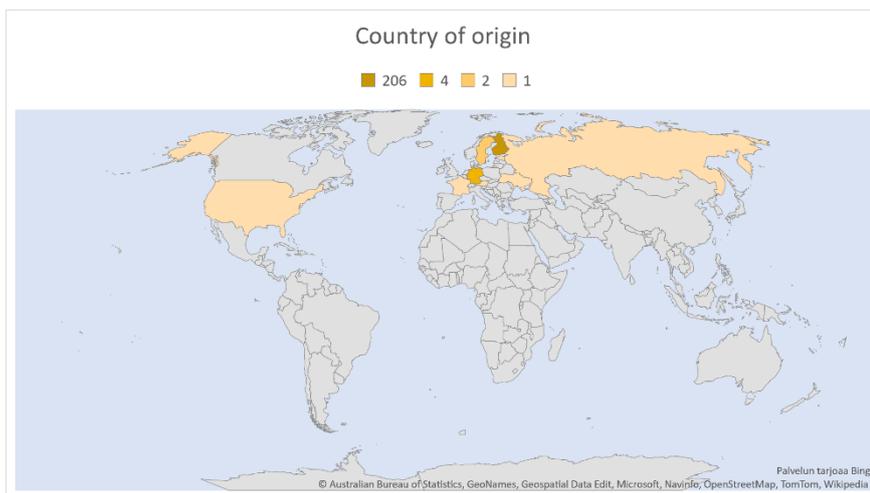


Figure 3. Country of origin of the reviewers on booking.com (September 10, 2022).

The total review points of Vuojoen Kartano on Booking.com is 9 of 10 in the total on 220 reviews (9/2022). The reviewers give a total score, and additional reviews on different basic and extra categories. Listed in figure 4 are the basic categories: cleanliness, staff, coziness, value for money, location, and services. Services is the lowest scoring category of these six with average of 8,2/10. This can be explained by the seasonality of the services. If the tourist is visiting in for example September, there is no breakfast or other restaurant services available.

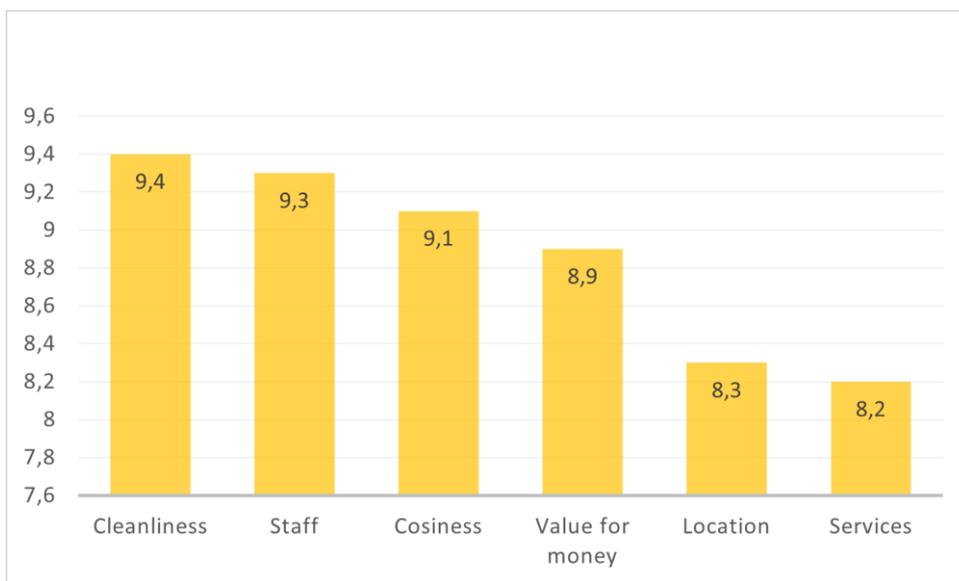


Figure 4. Regular categories on booking.com reviews. (September 10, 2022.)

In addition to the regular categories, the reviewers get to give a rating to extra categories including the following: Coffee, bed, Wi-Fi, room view, breakfast, and restaurant, as presented in the figure 5. Locally produced coffee gets the highest rating of 9/10, whereas the breakfast and restaurant services are the lowest of the extra

categories with rating under 8. Again, the same reason of seasonality is showing here, as the availability of the said services is limited to high season in July-August.

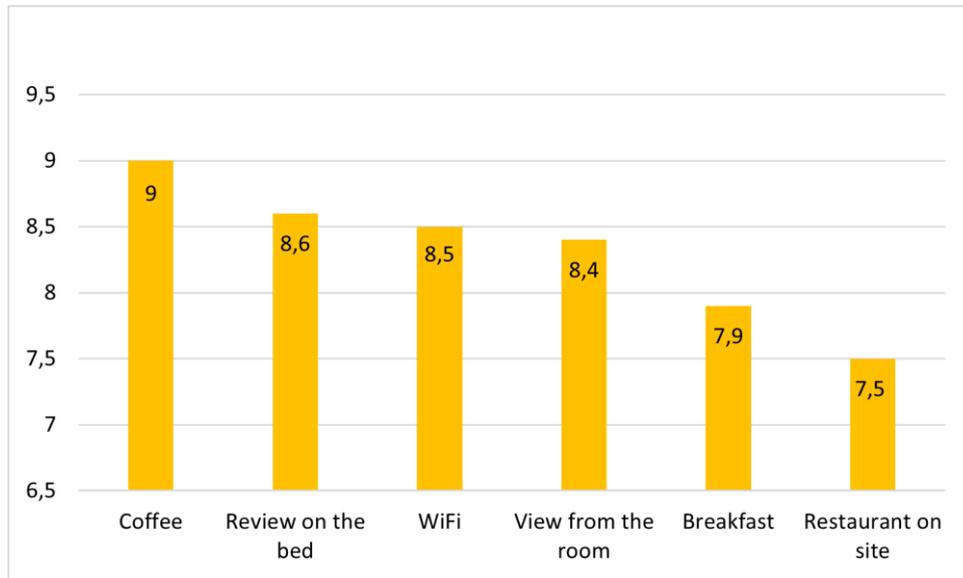
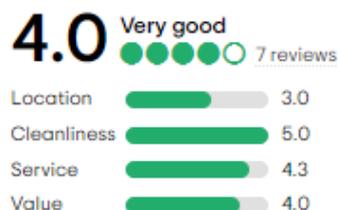


Figure 5. Extra categories on booking.com reviews. (September 10, 2022.)

7.2 TripAdvisor reviews

On TripAdvisor Vuojoen Kartano has only seven reviews, which makes it nearly invisible in the platform. Only two of the seven have been given during the current business Vuojoen Kartano Oy Both of the reviews give 4 points out of 5, which is also the average of all of the ratings as presented in the figure 6. Cleanliness of the rooms has the best reviews as did in the booking.co reviews, and again the location has the lowest of points, which is understandable, as it is located in a small municipality with a distance requiring access to your own/rental car, of you are not a biking tourist.



Rooms of the guesthouse Wuojoki are decorated tastefully in the way that suites to Mansions spirit. For example the wallpaper in the rooms is hand printed based on a pattern found in Vuojoki Mansion restoration.

Figure 6. Reviews on TripAdvisor (December 27, 2022).

7.3 Google reviews

Google reviews can be given by anyone, who has visited Vuojoen Kartano. In September 2022 a total of 323 reviews were given to Vuojoen Kartano in Google with an average of 4,4/5 as the figure 7 shows. Google reviews are given in stars out of 5 based on the experience. Google reviews have a possibility of written feedback too, and depending on the type of your business, also more accurate reviews on different categories alongside background information can be given. For example, the traveler type (business/leisure, solo/couple). In the reviews given to Vuojoen Kartano the categories have not been used, and only the total score stars are given with written feedback.

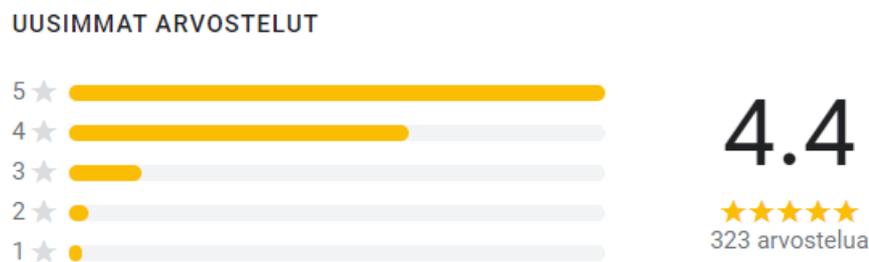


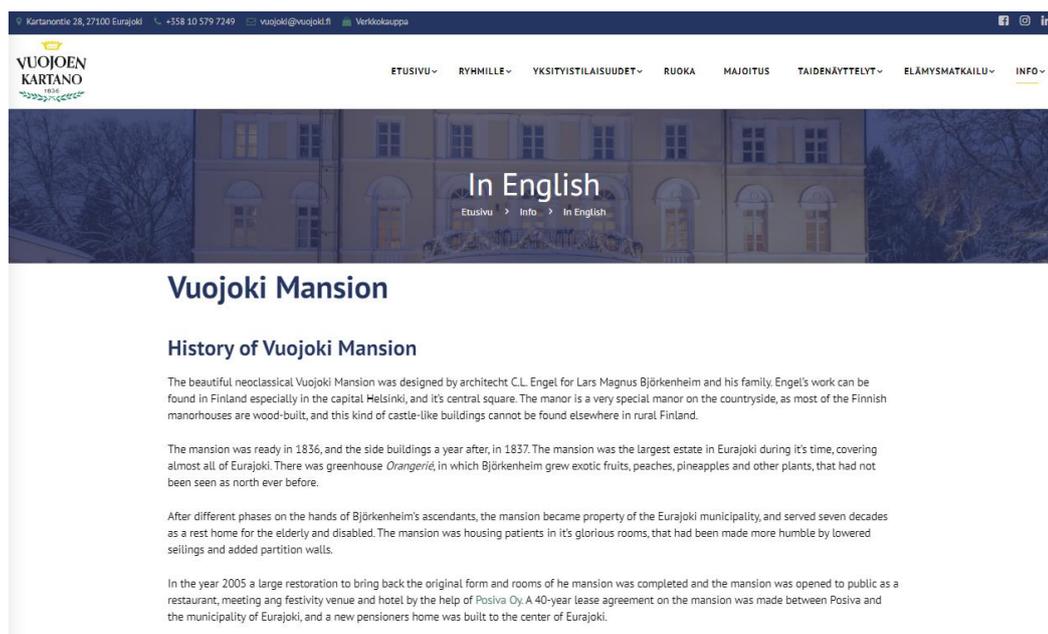
Figure 7. Google reviews of Vuojoen Kartano Oy (September 10, 2022).

8 DEVELOPMENT PROCESS & FINAL PRODUCTS

8.1 Website: <https://vuojoeki.fi/info/in-english/>

Vuojoki.fi website has all the essential information concerning the history, services, and contact information to Vuojoen Kartano Oy in Finnish. The following parts were decided to be included in the In English -page on vuojoki.fi: a short history chapter, present day at the mansion, widgets to the buyable services in Vuojoki leading to the web shop, driving instructions and distances to other cities and Olkiluoto, and Google map on the area. The last three are found also in Finnish on the Info -page.

The process of making the web page started in late spring 2022, by deciding on the name of the page. “In English” is practical and easy to find from the website, as seen in picture 5. Following stage was to start translating the history of the mansion, and to make it brief yet informative so it would be interesting and naturally increase the interest of the possible reader, so they would be more interested in travelling there to see it themselves. The header bar on the site was embellished with a beautiful winter scenery from the northern façade, having the balcony and Christmas lighting to show the different seasons we have in Finland.



Picture 5. Web page “In English” in vuojoki.fi. (January 4, 2023.)

After the history of the mansion, it was natural to include the present day and to list the services available in English, and the means of booking said services. The traditional yearly events were also included, so there is a possibility for tourists to ask for more, and perhaps book their visit on the time of the events.

Present

At the present day Vuojoki Mansion offers a variety of services from restaurant to accommodation and different experiences from guided tours to escape room, salsa and yoga lessons for groups upon booking.

We cater parties from small to large in our different rooms, for families, companies and friend groups.

During high season in July, the mansion has a summer restaurant services, and guided tours open for tourists.

We also arrange seasonal experiences, such as murder mystery dinners, ghost tours, guided mansion tours, that can be booked through our webshop vuojoiki.johku.com when available.

Vuojoki Mansion hosts several events during the year:

- *Mothers' day* lunch in May
- *Kartanon suviehtoo* -summer event in August
- *National Horse Ploughing Championships* in September
- *Mansion* videomapping contest in October
- *Fathers' day* lunch in November
- *Kartanon lasten joulu* -childrens christmas event and *Kartanon joulu* -Christmas market in November

Picture 6. "Present" in the web page vuojoiki.fi. (January 4, 2023.)

Below the listing of events and briefly explaining the available services, I included the web shop widgets, which make the buying/booking of the services quite easy. The website vuojoiki.fi is a WordPress based site, and the Johku -platform used in the web shop vuojoiki.johku.com has a practical feature to embed the shop into WordPress. The products can be added to shopping basket on the website, and when the final stage of Making the booking as described in the chapter 5.1 the basket is redirected to the vuojoiki.johku.com where it is finalized. In picture 7 all of the services available in English are embedded into the website as Johku -widgets using JavaScript. The process of adding the products and setting up the vuojoiki.johku.com web shop in English is described in the chapter 8.2.

Services in Vuojoki Mansion

Accommodation in Vuojoki Mansion

 <p>Accommodation in double room</p> <p>Accommodation in double room</p> <p>1 d €192.00</p>	 <p>Accommodation in single room</p> <p>Accommodation in single room</p> <p>1 d €96.00</p>	 <p>Accommodation in triple room</p> <p>Accommodation in triple room</p> <p>1 d €168.00</p>
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Guided tours



Private tour in Vuojoki Mansion

Private tour in Vuojoki Mansion

In our English tour you will get to....

Activities

 <p>Escape room - Secrets of Vuojoki Mansion</p> <p>Escape room - Secrets of Vuojoki Mansion</p> <p>Secrets of Vuojoki Mansion -escape...</p> <p>2 h €180.00</p>	 <p>Kahvitasting 10-20 hengen ryhmälle - Capri Coffee Small Batch Coffee Roastery</p> <p>Coffee tasting and the impact of origin, processing and preparation on coffee flavors.</p> <p>2 h €230.00</p>
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Giftcards



VUOJOEN KARTANO
1836

Giftcard, open value

Giftcard, open amount

Contact us on vuojoki@vuojoki.fi or +35810 5797249 to hear more about our services.

Picture 7. Services in Vuojoki Mansion embedded Johku -products on vuojoki.fi. (January 4, 2023.)

At the bottom of the “In English” page as the picture 8 shows, is a photo gallery displaying the different features of the mansion, changing seasons, events and real people. Below that are the driving instructions and map provided by Google maps, and the distances to most important cities in Finland as in picture 9.

Photo gallery



Picture 8. Photo gallery on the “In English” page. (January 4, 2023.)

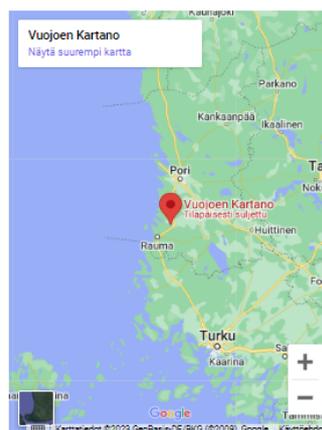
Distances from Vuojoki

- Pori 37 km
- Rauma 18 km
- Turku 107 km
- Tampere 142 km
- Helsinki 269 km
- Olkiluoto 15 km

Driving instructions

Place of departure

SHOW DIRECTIONS



Picture 9. Distances to cities and driving instructions and map by Google maps. (January 4, 2023.)

8.2 Web shop: https://vuojoeki.johku.com/en_US

Johku is a Finnish e-commerce platform, which allows customers to book and buy online, and it is used in many businesses on tourism and restaurant sector (Aptual Commerce Oy, 2023). Johku has been in use in Vuojoen Kartano Oy form the year 2021. The Finnish side of the platform has been well utilized from the summer 2021 when the escape room, mansion tours and other services were sold through it. The English side has been available in the platform, but it was only taken into use during summer 2022.

To be able to create the English web shop for Vuojoen Kartano Oy in vuojoeki.johku.com, decision-making and productization had to be made. Only services that are available in English can be sold online for international customers, to ensure a good experience. As the services that would be offered in English already existed in Finnish language, the process could be speed up and some of the parts skipped. As in picture 3 in 5.4, the process starts from the draft, and goes through customer target group, need/benefit, building a service, prototype testing, pricing, distribution channel, and marketing communication ending in brand building. In this case the draft was made, and the target groups were identified as both tourist and international people living in the area, as a need had been identified before.

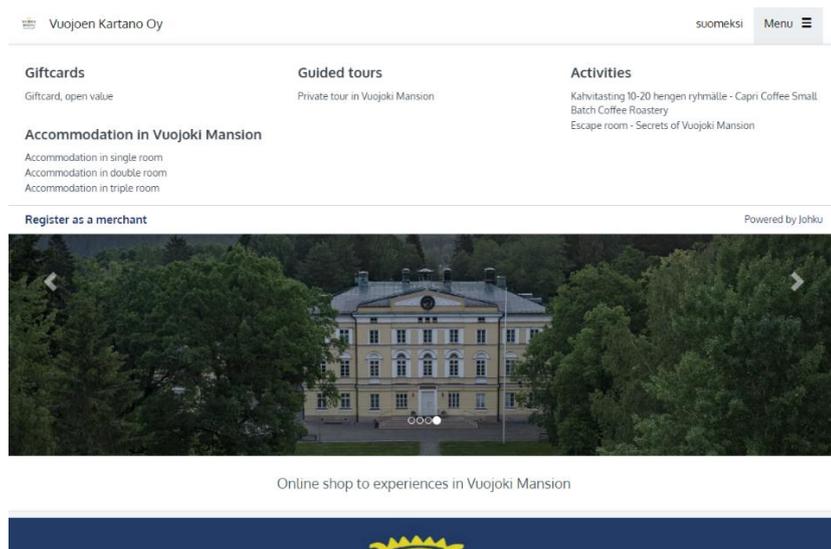
As a part of building the service, the authorized Eurajoki-guides were asked in the spring 2022, which of them can guide in English language. After finding that out, that the dates and times for the open guided tours were set, and I added the tours to the chosen distribution channel, the English web shop for the tourists to book. Prototype testing was not done, and pricing was set to be the same as the services already were in Finnish.

In terms of marketing communication, in addition to showing on the https://vuojoeki.johku.com/en_US -site, the tours were also available for booking trough the https://shop.visitpori.fi/en_US, which is the web shop of Visit Pori, giving the local tourism, restaurant, experience and event entrepreneurs a possibility to market their products by a companionship. (Visit Pori, 2023.) The English guided tours

were also marketed on paper flyers together with the Finnish services, on site and in an advertisement-newspaper delivered to all homes in the Eurajoki area, on the website vuojoki.fi, on paper posters at the mansion, on the online event calendar of Eurajoki municipality and on other event platforms, including Länsi-Suomi newspaper and Satakunta events, as well as in Facebook as both a post and event.

In the picture 10 is the front page of the web shop. The products and services were divided into four categories: Gift cards, Accommodation in Vuojoki Mansion, Guided tours and Activities. In Gift cards there is one gift card, which has an open value - feature, giving the customer the freedom of buying a gift card with preferred value. In accommodation are the three different room types available in the Guest House Vuojoki. They are not available through booking.com but only in Johku in January 2023, and the continuation with the booking.com platform is in consideration.

In Guided tours there is a private tour listed, and it was added to the web shop as only a showcase product, which gives the details of the service and contact information but cannot be booked directly from the web shop. Activities -category includes the escape room “Secrets of Vuojoki Mansion” and a coffee tasting by Capri Coffee, that can be booked as a group activity. Capri Coffee is one of the local merchants providing their services in Vuojoki through the option of cross-selling feature in Johku.



Picture 10. Front page of the Vuojoen Kartano Oy’s web shop vuojoki.johku.com (January 4, 2023.)

As mentioned, the fitting services are also sold through Visit Pori web shop by the same cross-selling principle. In picture 11 is the Experiences and activities category of the English Visit Pori web shop, which features two of the products of Vuojoki alongside six products from other service providers, including Muumaa, municipality of Merikarvia, Merikarvian Matkailu ry, Kala-Tommi tmi and Selkämeren veneretket.

VERKKOKAUPPA SUOMEKSI 🔍 HAKU MENU ☰

EXPERIENCES AND ACTIVITIES

You'll find something to do in Pori whether or not you just want to relax or build up a sweat. Let the feeling take you and find the best holiday experiences in Pori.



BOAT TRIP TO ISO-ENSKERI ISLAND
€45.00

Welcome to experience the magnificent Bothnian Sea National Park.

Selkämeren veneretket



BOAT TRIP TO SÄPPI LIGHTHOUSE
€45.00

Visit Säppi island in Bothnian Sea national park with the traditional wooden boat.

Kala-Tommi tmi



ESCAPE ROOM - SECRETS OF VUOJOKI MANSION
€160.00

Escape room - Secrets of Vuojoki Mansion Secrets of Vuojoki Mansion -escape room will make you...

Vuojoki



HYPNOOSIN SALAT - PAKOHUONEPELI
€80.00

Tule kokemaan Merikarvian kokeutumuseon uusi pakohuone, jonka kautta pääset tutustumaan...

Merikarvian Museo



MUUMAA TEEMALIPPU
€11.00

MuuMaa-landeteemapuistossa tapahtuu ympäri vuoden!

Muumaa



NOSTALGIATANSIT 6.1.2023
€17.00

Jalalla koreasti tanssivintillä!

Kala-Tommi tmi



PRIVATE TOUR IN VUOJOKI MANSION

Private tour in Vuojoki Mansion! In our English tour you will get to know the interesting history...

Vuojoki



SININEN JOULU - KONSERTTI

Tervetuloa tunnelmoimaan Elli-Noora Rintamäen ja Guido Kriikin esittämiä joululauluja...

Merikarvian Museo

Picture 11. Private tour and escape room in Vuojoki Mansion on Visit Pori web shop. (January 4, 2023.)

The process of setting up the web shop in English included also translating and scheduling of the automated messages, that are sent right after the customer makes a booking, before they arrive and as after sales marketing a feedback request after their visit to Vuojoen Kartano.

The project including both the English website and the web shop, was completed in January 2023.

8.3 Automated message on booking.com

Booking.com uses automatic communication with the customers. The property owner automatizes the messages, in this case Vuojoen Kartano Oy. During the summer season 2022 booking.com was the key portal for accommodation bookings in Vuojoen Kartano. As Vuojoen Kartano has no 24-hour service, it was very important to have all of the important information for the customers to arrive after the opening hours, including the driving and parking instructions, where to find the key box and how to open it, and where and when the breakfast is served. The message was sent to the customers a week before their check-in to make sure they receive it on time before arrival, as not all people are able to access e-mail while on holiday in a different country.

The message is attached as appendix 1.

9 ONLINE FINDABILITY OF VUOJOEN KARTANO IN ENGLISH AFTER THE PROJECT

In chapter 6.1 the Google search was done prior to the development of the In English website and the English web shop. After the project the results of the online findability have improved, when using the search term *Vuojoki mansion*. The first result is still the Discovering Finland page, and the second one the Spotting History, as prior to the development project. (Google, n.d.)

As a sign of a successful SEO the third result in Google is the front page of the English *vuojoki.johku.com* web shop. The fourth result is the In English web page in *vuojoki.fi* website. (Google, n.d.) Both sites help the possible international tourists to find the up-to-date information of Vuojoen Kartano Oy and to be able to make bookings in the web shop much easier than before the project started.

However, in a search with the search term being *Finnish manor* or *Finnish mansion* there was no change to the previous state of the findability (Google, n.d.). This is something that must be further developed, and other keywords and the overall SEO needs to be developed to gain the best possible findability. This might require a charge to be paid, but if the findability would be further increased, it would pay itself back. The official website of Vuojoen Kartano should be the first one to be found online, and the web shop next. The additional sites like the Discovering Finland and Spotting History mentioned here, bring only a little value to the actual paying customers, and because of that they should not be the ones appearing first.

10 MANAGERIAL SUGGESTIONS

Vuojoen Kartano has large potential in becoming popular attraction for international tourists coming from Europe. By updating and expanding the digital services that have now been created, and adding social media content in English, the knowledge on the beauty could reach more international tourists. Vuojoki has now a few services available for the international tourists, but with the existing partners and some new service providers to provide ancillary services in the third-floor premises could increase the interest and perceived service level in the future.

According to a referenced study of “Score Path to Purchase Study 2017” in Trip Advisor, 74% of travelers visit TripAdvisor before making a reservation. Based on that the use of TripAdvisor should be taken to at least weekly practice in Vuojoen Kartano in terms of sharing the listing in social media and replying to possible customer reviews. Taking advantage of the possibility of adding a review widget to the In English site on vuojoki.fi could also be a good idea to be able to gather the reviews efficiently. The complete translation of the website in English would be a wise idea. However as we discussed with the CEO Elina Nurmoranta, it would require regular updating and is important to be as up to date as the Finnish website, and that could become challenging in the current situation.

In addition to the existing use of the own vuojoki.johku.com, and the shop.visitpori.fi it would be wise to take the Go Finland and Visit Finland Datahub as sales channels to use in Johku -platform. Via GoFinland it is possible to get Vuojoen Kartano to the national and international tourism market as an option for the big cities. Visit Finland Datahub will provide even more visibility in the international market in a very cost-efficient way, as it is free of charge for the tourism companies. Datahub is already partially set up, so only the products that are available through it should be gone through and decided to reach the international visibility in their channels.

11 CONCLUSIONS

11.1 Reliability and validity

In terms of reliability the research of the findability of the case company is not entirely failsafe. The determination of search terms and keywords in search engines are not easy to determine, and the SEO of Vuojoen Kartano needs further development still. Validity of this thesis is good, as the website and web shop are in use at the case company, and the set objectives have been met. They provide a channel for the tourists to be able to make bookings and purchases prior to their arrival, which may eventually create more satisfied customers, who can leave more turnover to the company.

11.2 Feedback from Commissioner

The thesis is extensive, and the review has been done from many different angles. The author has done good work for acquiring information and spent many hours on making the actual website and web shop. The best thing about this thesis is that it gives Vuojoen Kartano Oy real tools to serve international customers better, and I truly believe that this thesis and the work Elina has done will help us reaching out to new international customers. This work Elina has done for us will also give a good base for our future plans on expanding the languages of the website and web shop to cater the need of Swedish tourists, that are one of the most potential international tourist in the Satakunta region. (Nurmoranta, 2023.)

When considering what could have been added to this thesis is that it would have been good to study what kind of customer profile international guests of the Manor have and what they want to do on vacation. In this way, we could produce services suitable for the target group. I also wonder, what kind of after marketing would be good for our foreign customers. These two could be a good topic for another thesis (Nurmoranta, 2023.)

11.3 Reflection

This thesis project has been long, and at times rocky, but rewarding. The end products are in use, and hopefully during the summer 2023 the website and web shop together will produce more value to the commissioner Vuojoen Kartano Oy by making the international tourists more aware of the services and the mansion in general. I could have been more efficient in the process. However, I think it was good that this was not pushed through in a rush, but more time was taken to gain more insight on the functions of the Johku -platform to get the most out of it. I also had been working more with WordPress to create a better visual representation on the “In English” site, and to connect them by making the Johku -widgets there, to increase the buyability.

The result is what I wanted to reach when the project started, and I met the set objectives. I am incredibly happy having chosen to work on this exact project, and in the company that I have had a chance to learn very much about tourism, myself, and the business world in general. I think project based thesis was also the right choice for me, as working on something that will make a difference for the case company in practice is more “me” than a research or a study, that would require the company to start the actual development process in a later phase. By making this thesis I have pitched in for the future of the company, and the future of the international tourism in whole Eurajoki. I really hope it will give me other chances to get further in my career in the long run.

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APPENDIX 1

Hi [FIRST_NAME]

Thank you for staying in Vuojoki Mansion from [CHECKIN_DATE] to [CHECKOUT_DATE]!

Parking for guests can be found next to the red stable building.

If you arrive outside the manor's opening hours, you will find your room key card in the topmost key box next to the main door of the Guesthouse Vuojoki (marked with a red key on the map).

Key Box User Guide:

- lower the flap
- twist code XXXX
- with the thumb-middle finger grip, press the door open
- Get your own key, it has your name and the name of the room written on it
- close the door, and put the code back 0000 so that the keys for the guests arriving after you are safe

Keys can be left in the room upon departure.

Payment for the room must be made at breakfast in info desk at the main castle. Breakfast is available from 1st June until 30th September in the summer season 2022 at 8–10 am.

We also kindly ask you to fill in the passenger declaration in the room folder, which you can leave on the room table.

Please note that the cleaners are still at work between about 12 noon and 2 pm, when only luggage can be left in the reserved room.

If you have any questions, you can call us on +358 44 2424 085 and we will be happy to help. From 6 pm onwards and after that in case of problems, you can contact the Eurajoki Real Estate Service on call at +358 44 278 XXXX.

In addition to breakfast, the Manor serves lunch in June from Tue to Fri from 11 am to 2 pm, and from Tue to Sat from 1 July to 28 August. 11–15 lunch and 15–20.30 a la carte. Please make a table reservation at vuojoki@vuojoki.fi.

Other restaurants can be found in the center of Eurajoki, Rauma, Pori, and Luvia. In the center of Eurajoki there are also e.g. two grocery stores and a pharmacy.

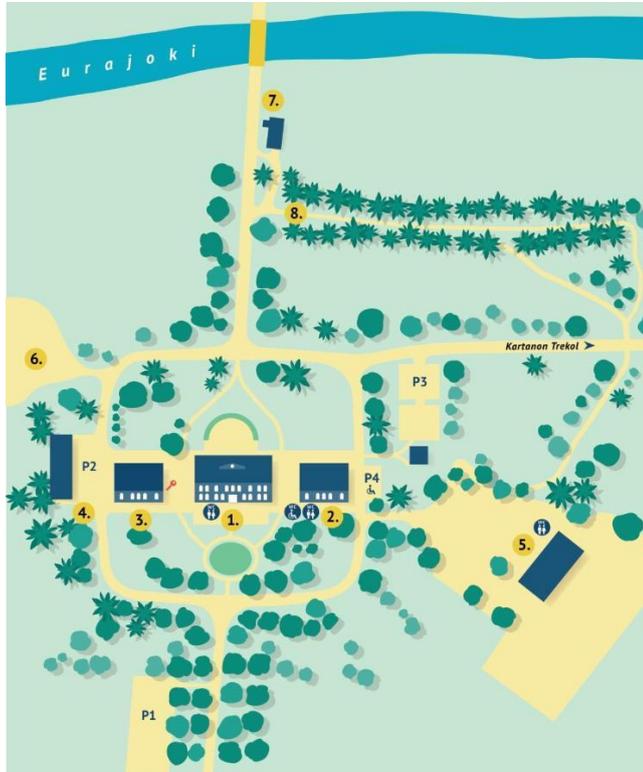
We always try to arrange for guests to have access to the Mansion's premises during breakfast, even if the Mansion is not open to the public.

Please let us know any special diets well in advance of your arrival. Thanks!

A warm welcome

The people of Vuojoki Mansion

P.S. Attached is a map of the Manor area.



VUOJOEN KARTANO

1836

Alueen rakennukset ja paikat

1. Päälinna - INFO, ravintola, putiikki, juhlasali
2. Itäinen flyyveli - auditorio, galleria, myyntipalvelu
3. Läntinen flyyveli - vierastalo, ullakko
4. Talli
5. Orangeria - mm. saunatilat, viikunahuone
6. Konserttipuisto
7. Silta ja siltavaaja
8. Kuusikuja

Paikoitus

- P1** paikoitusalue
P2 linja-autopaikoitus
P3 henkilökunnan paikoitus
P4 Invaparkki & esteetön kulku

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