

**VIDEO AND STORYTELLING: THE COMPETITIVE EDGE
IN SUSTAINABILITY COMMUNICATION**
Investigation of small Finnish tourism businesses

Visit Salla

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Small tourism businesses are operating in an environment where consumers demand their practices to be sustainable and transparently communicated. At the same time there is increasing suspicion that information coming directly from companies is disingenuous. Especially small and medium sized businesses are struggling to balance growing demand with their limited resources.

This thesis was commissioned by Visit Salla with the aim to support small to medium sized businesses (SMBs) certified with Visit Finland's Sustainable Travel Finland (STF) label by analysing the current state of sustainability communication among them and providing tips of how storytelling and use of video can improve their efforts. This was achieved in five phases using a mixed method approach: preliminary investigation of STF companies, establishment of the theoretical background and best practices, creation and testing of evaluation matrices, analysis of STF websites and video content utilising matrices, and testing of results by means of semi-structured interviews and a survey.

This study highlights three common shortcomings in sustainability communication among Finnish SMBs: it is not specific to the company, insufficiently frequent and lacks evidence supporting sustainability claims. These three issues were identified for both content published on companies' web pages as well as in their video materials.

The practical implication of this thesis lies in its suggestions for concrete actions to improve sustainability communication among STF companies. In academia it can also be utilised as best practice example, or for comparison of either other destinations or future sustainability practices within the same region.

Keywords	Sustainable Tourism, Tourism Entrepreneurs, Visual Communication, Environmental Communication, Communication Strategies, Marketing Communication
Special remarks	Includes practical guide for SMBs to improve sustainability communication

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FOREWORD

We truly feel passionately about the subject of this thesis. As such, we wanted to make sure to do our part to contribute in a meaningful way. However, without the help and dedication of others, we would not have succeeded in our goals.

First and foremost, we want to thank Ulla Kangasniemi and Petra Paloniemi who were supervising the thesis process and guiding us at every step of the way. At this point we also want to say thanks to Teija Tekoniemi-Selkälä, who listened to our initial ideas and helped us crystallise what the focus of our thesis would be.

Secondly, we want to thank Paula Aspholm from Visit Salla who acted as the commissioner for this thesis. Despite her busy schedule she made time for us and shared details of Salla's tourism strategy and the Save Salla campaign with us.

To gain a better understanding of the context of the Save Salla campaign we took time to visit Salla ourselves. We want to thank Kimmo Kieski and Anja Hauer from the Salla parish (Sallan Seurakunta), whom we coincidentally bumped into upon arrival. They offered us cake, coffee and tea, made us feel welcome, and told us about their community while showing us around their church.

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Finally, we owe a big thank you (and perhaps an apology) to those nearest to us, our families and friends, who were witnesses to this enjoyable but also stressful process; and who have borne the brunt of our moods, especially in these last few weeks.

SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS USED

CTA	Call to Action
DMO	Destination Management Organisation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMB	Small to medium sized business
STF	Sustainable Travel Finland
UNDP	United Nations Development Plan

1 INTRODUCTION

Sustainability in general is a much talked about issue, the popularity of which has accelerated over the past two years (Google Trends 2023). Many countries have implemented environmental, cultural and economic issues in their strategies for tourism development (VisitFinland 2021, Lam 2023, Commonwealth of Australia 2023). In July 2020 the Sustainable Travel Finland (STF) label was made available to Finnish companies in order to drive responsible practices in the national tourism sector and since then over 300 companies have acquired this certification (VisitFinland 2023a).

Supporting VisitFinland's (2021) vision of becoming the world's leading sustainable destination, this thesis aims to help small and medium sized businesses (SMBs) by answering the question of how video and storytelling can be applied to make sustainability communication more engaging. This is achieved in five phases: preliminary investigation of STF companies, establishing the knowledge base and best practices, creation and testing of evaluation matrices, mapping of the current state of sustainability communication among SMBs with the STF label utilising the created matrices and testing of the practical application of the created materials. The intended outcome is to help small companies establish trust and increase engagement with potential customers.

Visit Salla was selected as the commissioner for this thesis as it is a Finnish community relying on small, independent businesses and because of its success with the Save Salla marketing campaign in 2021 (Aspholm 2023). The marketing video, which accompanied the campaign, was utilised as one of a selection of examples to analyse best practices in video storytelling. Furthermore, the Visit Salla website was used in establishing storytelling best practices for business websites.

The research results of this study were also tested on potential tourism consumers. Consequently, the theoretical framework established in this document has direct practical application. Small businesses can use the findings to evaluate and improve their own sustainability communication efforts.

2 VISIT SALLA AS THESIS COMMISSIONER

Visit Salla is a destination management organisation (DMO) for the municipality of Salla in Finnish Lapland. The slogan of the municipality “in the middle of nowhere” perfectly supports Salla’s tourism strategy; maintaining its market position as a destination off the beaten track surrounded by wilderness (Aspholm 2023, Visit Salla 2023a). Salla offers many of the quintessential experiences that bring visitors to Lapland: husky and reindeer safaris, northern lights excursions, and pure nature (Visit Salla 2023b). As a destination it offers a cross-section of Lappish landscapes in a condensed area (Aspholm 2023), has a low population density (Salla 2023), and is less accessible for day or weekend trips than Rovaniemi or Levi (Visit Salla 2023c, Visit Rovaniemi 2023, Visit Levi 2023). With unspoiled nature being Salla’s most attractive feature, sustainability has been prioritised by the destination for more than ten years (Aspholm 2023).

In spring 2021 Visit Salla released the Save Salla marketing campaign. Spearheaded by Agencia Africa and supported by the House of Lapland, the aim of the campaign was not to promote Salla as a tourist destination but to start a conversation about climate change. The video itself tells a simple story: an Arctic municipality which knows nothing of summer, sends its bid to host the Summer Olympics in 2032. The story is satirical: Salla, as an Arctic municipality, should never be in a position to be able to host the Summer Olympics. However, if climate action continued to slip down governments’ and businesses’ priority lists, this fictional scenario would likely become reality. The campaign went viral and, for three weeks following its release, Salla was the most mentioned destination on Twitter. (Aspholm 2023.)

The Save Salla campaign is a prime example of how storytelling and video can turn an uncomfortable topic into a heartfelt campaign. The learnings from the results of this thesis can in turn aid Visit Salla’s efforts to support SMBs which are struggling to communicate their sustainable practices. For these reasons Visit Salla was selected as the commissioner of this thesis.

3 EXPLORATION OF CORE CONCEPTS

3.1 Introduction to Sustainable Travel Finland

The focus of this research is companies certified with the Sustainable Travel Finland (STF) label. This certification was introduced in 2020 and is part of Visit Finland's tourism strategy (Visit Finland 2021). The aim is to provide users with a seven-step action plan to develop sustainable travel, increase knowledge around sustainability in business and to make it easier for consumers to identify companies which operate responsibly (Visit Finland 2023a). The steps are: commitment to continuous development, competence building, certification, sustainability communication, sustainable tourism indicator system (reporting practices), development plan and, finally, application which includes verification and an agreement to ethical use of the label. It is notable that communication is its own step, and that Visit Finland (2023b) has provided training materials specifically for the purpose of aiding businesses with their sustainability communication efforts.

Companies certified with the STF label were selected as the focus of this research paper for a number of reasons. Firstly, they offer a sufficiently large research sample of suitable companies; to investigate sustainability communication, it requires companies which are operating sustainably. Companies only qualify for the STF label if they have already acquired another recognised ecolabel beforehand (Visit Finland 2023a). This means, there is a high likelihood of certified businesses operating sustainably. Secondly, despite the geographical limitation of the label, a variety of businesses and operating environments are represented. The coastal regions of Finland likely have a different approach to tourism compared to Lapland. Thirdly, the limited scope increases the likelihood that the learnings from the results of this thesis have practical application for businesses as they were based on STF companies' specific needs. Finally, the majority of businesses certified with the label fall into the categories of micro, small and medium sized; those are the companies with most limited resources and therefore with greater need for the materials produced by this thesis.

3.2 Sustainability communication defined

Sustainability communication is at the core of this thesis. However, there does not seem to be a general definition for the concept as a whole. Instead it needs to be broken down into its component parts, starting with the concept of sustainability of sustainable development.

The perhaps most cited definition related to sustainability is that from the so-called “Brundtland Report” in 1987 (Bogren & Sörensson 2021, Tiago, Gil, Stemberger & Borges-Tiago 2019, Genç 2017). According to this report, for development to be sustainable it needs to “meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (United Nations 1987). Despite the age of the document, its continued use in sustainability related discussions indicates its relevance even in the present day. Portney (2015, 4) elaborates on this core idea, indicating that, while there does not seem to be one generally agreed upon definition of sustainability or sustainable development, it appears to come down to continued economic activity which does not endanger humans, animals and plants. As such sustainability is often reduced to three main factors which are commonly referred to as “three pillars” or “three dimensions” of sustainability: social, economic, and environmental/ecological (Purvis, Mao & Robinson 2019). These are often represented visually as concentric circles, a Venn diagram, or literal pillars (Figure 1). Purvis, Mao & Robinson (2019) further point out that while there does not seem to be a single point of origin for the three pillars concept, it is widely accepted in the field of sustainability research. Finally, it has become impossible to discuss sustainability issues without mentioning the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations Development Programme in 2015 (UNDP) (UNDP 2023). These 17 goals were adopted with the aim to inspire people to take action to solve global challenges (UNDP 2023).

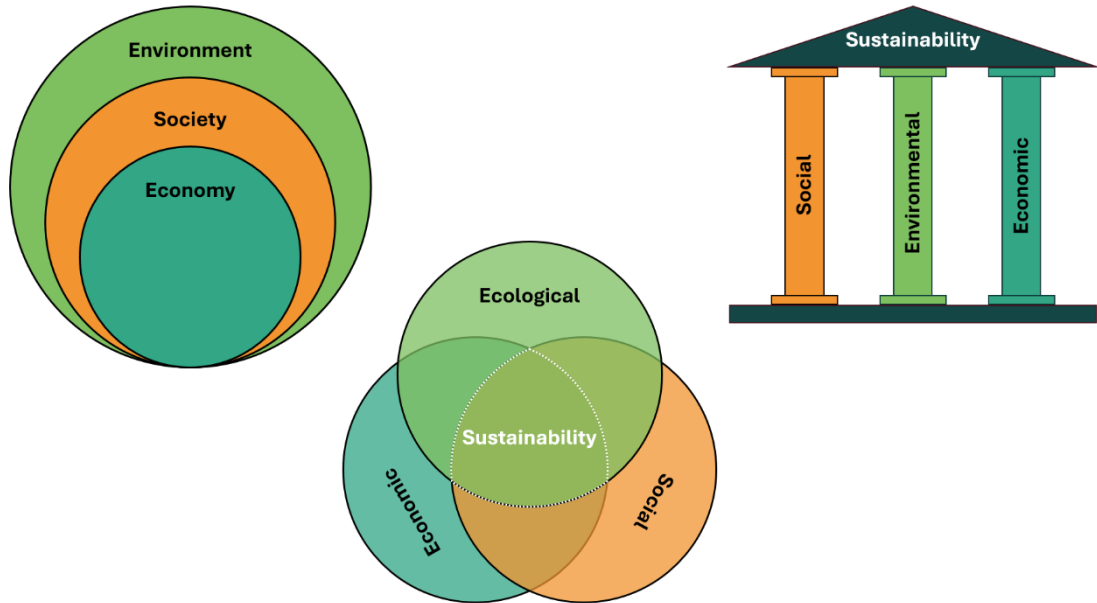


Figure 1. Common visual representations of the three dimensions of sustainability (Purvis, Mao & Robinson 2019).

The aim of communication is to establish understanding (Raydu 2009, 2). In its simplest form it involves a sender, a receiver and a message (Barker 2002, 11–13; Hakala 2003, 6; Raydu 2009, 3). The sender has an idea or meaning they intend to communicate (Raydu 2009, 2). This meaning is encoded into a message, passed on and decoded by the receiver (Barker 2002, 8, 10). If the intended meaning and the received meaning are equal or a close match, the communication process is considered successful (Barker 2002, 13; Hakala 2003, 8). However, there are two primary sources of disruption which can interfere with understanding: no or limited overlapping field of experience and noise. “Field of experience” is a term introduced by Barker (2002) to refer to issues which shape a person’s perception such as language, values, beliefs, attitudes, and life experiences. The more overlap there is, for example in values between the sender and receiver, the more likely understanding can be achieved (Barker 2002, 12–13). Noise refers to external disturbances such as poor-quality transmissions or literal external noise, which may interfere with the successful delivery of the message (Barker 2002, 11).

There are different models for communication, some of which include a response from the receiver. In the case of marketing, the receiver's response back to the original sender may be more likely to occur in the form of customer behaviour

rather than an immediate and direct response (Barker 2002, 12). The following visualisation (Fig. 2) of a circular communication model is based on Barker's descriptions (2002, 11–13).

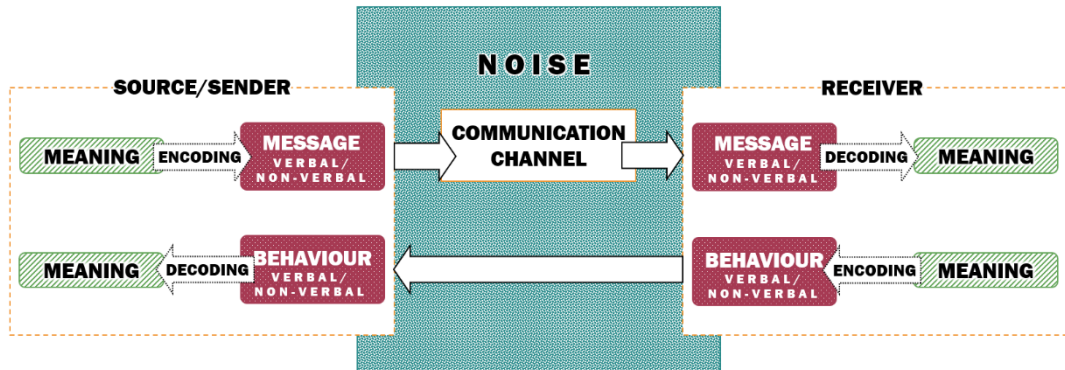


Figure 2. Visual representation of a circular communication model (Barker 2002).

Based on the above exploration of the two connected concepts it follows that sustainability communication refers to any messaging which concerns itself with issues related to the continued prosperity of the environment, society, and economy. Though often sustainability seems to be talked about in a business context; Genç (2017) considers communication an integral part of a sustainable strategy, stating that, without communicating the company's goals internally, it will fail to achieve them, and without communicating achievements externally, it will lose out on sales of goods and services.

3.3 Video in marketing

Video marketing and its influence on consumer behaviour is another crucial theory to introduce for a better overall understanding of the research topic. The reason for involving video marketing in this analysis is the increasing popularity and success that it can bring to companies, considering that the use of video marketing has increased by 20% from 2016 to 2023 (Wyzowl 2023). As the demand for video has grown over the years, it has become an essential medium with the ability to reach people worldwide. Moreover, as video creation has become more accessible, the costs involved have decreased. When in the past the services of a videographer would have been required, now a simple phone camera can suffice, if used innovatively. (Stanimirovic 2020.)

The use of videos in marketing is a creative approach to market a business, which is more likely to build trust as it targets not only the eyes, but also ears and ideally lets the viewer feel emotions through the created atmosphere (Stanimirovic 2020 & Renderforest 2020). Moreover, the presence of videos in daily life is visible by looking at how frequently tutorial videos are used, for instance in schools or in the free time, in order to understand a certain topic better than straight from a textbook or article (Wyzowl 2023).

Video has also become the preferred medium for mobile users. A survey by Wyzowl on the State of Video Marketing in 2023 found that 89% of respondents stated they had previously been convinced to purchase an item after watching a video and 51% stated they were more likely to share videos than any other type of content (Wyzowl 2023). With the continued increase in popularity of video content it can be surmised that its importance in marketing will continue to grow as well.

Additionally, studies on the effects of video as opposed to text show that video viewers remember 95% of a message whereas it is only 10% for the text readers. This makes video more engaging and interactive, which then again supports the process of building a relationship with the audience. (Danganan 2023.)

3.4 YouTube videos as research focus

There is a very wide variety of video formats in marketing nowadays, specifically made possible through social media platforms as additional distribution channels. Whereas videos on social media platforms like Instagram tend to be between 30 to 45 seconds long, a video platform like YouTube sees generally longer videos from 5 to 15 minutes. (Sahni 2023.)

As shown in Figure 3 below, the popularity of YouTube specifically has increased from 0.2 billion monthly active users in 2010 to 2.68 billion in 2022 (Ruby 2023). Those numbers give an idea of how far the reach of a video can go, but they also showcase how much competition can be expected, which emphasises the level of innovation and creativity a video would need in order to stand out.

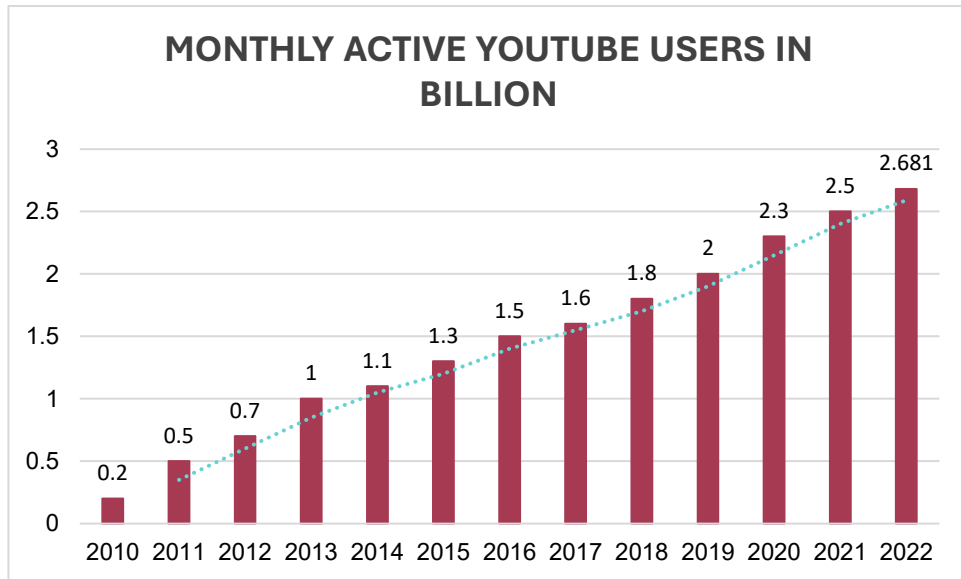


Figure 3. Monthly Active YouTube Users in billion from 2010-2022. Ruby 2023.

The thesis research is aimed to aid SMBs to market their sustainability actions through storytelling in video. YouTube with around 2.7 billion active users is currently the second biggest social media platform in the world (Ruby 2023), following Facebook with around 3 billion users (Datareportal 2023), which makes it a perfect platform for companies to introduce their business, reach a great amount of potential customers and increase traffic to the company website (Danganan 2023).

Moreover, the ideal length of a company culture introduction video lies between 2 and 4 minutes (Sahni 2023) for which YouTube, targeting people of any age, is better suited as a platform than other video social media channels like TikTok, which currently ranks as sixth most active social media platform in the world and focuses on short and engaging videos for a younger audience (Datareportal 2023 & McDonald 2023).

By familiarising oneself with the companies holding a STF certificate it becomes noticeable that many of them start to adopt or try to adopt video as a marketing tool. However, due to a possible lack of knowledge or experience in video marketing they do not make use of its full potential, which subsequently makes them waste their resources on it. This research paper focuses on YouTube content in order to introduce a simple way for SMBs to control the success of their video marketing with a free and accessible platform.

Consequently, whenever the term “video” is used in this paper, it is in reference to a company’s introduction video communicating their unique selling points, which includes their sustainability actions in the case of STF companies. The purpose of this type of video is to be displayed on the company’s website as well as on YouTube with the aim to aid with a more innovative approach of communicating sustainability and possible corresponding certificates.

3.5 Storytelling as strategic communication tool

Hopkins (2015 ,17) describes stories as a fundamental element of the human experience, arguing that "human beings are essentially storytellers, telling stories about themselves into worlds they constructed by means of storytelling". With stories being deeply ingrained in the human experience, there are many theories with regard to the DNA of stories. One theory describes the following four structural elements that make up traditional stories. “Images”, i.e. themes, are the main element of stories. They evoke strong emotions, and can be disguised and fantastical but are generally universal such as the theme of family. “Narrative” is commonly linear, though this is not a requirement, and is typically confused for the main element of a story. “Patterns” describe the repetition of themes to reinforce the core message. Finally, “metaphors” are messages concealed at the core of stories, supported by the themes, narrative, and pattern. Combined the above four elements result in a story that has a relatable setting and characters, a familiar base story (e.g. the story of an underdog being triumphant), a core message which resonates with the audience long after, and is perceived by the audience as relevant. (Scheub 1998, 14–15.)

However, the aim of this thesis is the application of stories in sustainability communication. As such, a more narrow view on stories may be appropriate. Dolan and Naidu (2013, 6) argue that business stories are different from the regular stories described by Scheub in that they have a purpose, are based on data, and are specific to the company’s goals. Arguably, the inclusion of a purpose and data is crucial in communicating sustainability especially when doing so through storytelling; firstly, because businesses should be working with a well-considered strategy – in other words a purpose – any story communicated either internally or externally should support the overall brand story (Fog, Budtz, Munch

& Blanchette 2010, 50–51). Secondly, sustainability needs to be integrated in the business model first (ERM 2023), only then should related efforts and practices be communicated. Additionally, to avoid accusations of intentionally miscommunicating sustainability, published information should be based on facts and “tell the whole story”, i.e. disclosing the full impact of a service and how different actors can impact on it (Vollero, Palazzo & Siano 2016).

Another approach to storytelling in a business context highlights the following four elements: message, conflict, characters, and plot. However, in this instance each element is attached to the business model and strategy. Loosely, the message relates to the unique selling point, the conflict to the vision and mission statements, the characters to the stakeholders, and the plot is the glue that ties the previous three elements together. The result of this model is a core business story which is firmly integrated in the business’ strategy. This kind of core story helps customers understand what the business is really about, more so than minor and superficial differences in products from one competitor to another. (Fog, Budtz, Munch & Blanchette 2010.)

To summarise, stories have the potential to evoke emotions but they also aid humans to make sense of the world, stories conjure images in the mind of the audience and allow them to empathise with the business. Despite being a creative expression, stories, in the case of business communication, should be based on hard facts and data.

3.6 Context in the current global operating environment

Sustainability is a topic of increasing importance within the travel industry (Tiago, Gil, Stemberger & Borges-Tiago 2019) and sharing sustainability efforts with potential customers has become a necessity for businesses to stay competitive. While estimates of the current and projected market value of sustainable tourism vary greatly, the general trend is a rapid growth. Even conservative compound annual growth rates (CAGR) predict that the market value will quadruple in the next decade. Market Research Future (2023) and Future Market Insights (2022) are the only sources roughly agreeing in their projections; both value the current market share of sustainable tourism to be around 1 trillion Dollars and predict the

CAGR in the coming nine years to be 23.5% and 23.4% respectively. Their forecasts for the market value of sustainable tourism in the year 2032 diverge due to differing time spans (9 years and 10 years, respectively) but both land in the ballpark of 7.6 trillion Dollars (+/- 0.8 trillion). As detailed information about the nature of the above statistics was unavailable, they should be considered with caution. At a bare minimum they indicate a steep growth in popularity of sustainable travel over the coming decade.

Consumer trends also indicate the increased market value of sustainable travel. According to Expedia Group Media Solutions (2022), 90% of consumers are looking for sustainable alternatives when travelling and as much as 70% tend to avoid a destination or transport option due to lack of trust in the sincerity of sustainability information. Booking.com (2022) lists more conservative statistics indicating that 71% of travellers intend to make a greater effort to travel sustainably in the coming year. However, Glenn Fogel – CEO for Booking.com – also highlights the fact that the awareness and importance of sustainable travel has been increasing over the past seven years since they started conducting research into related trends (Booking.com 2022). Both sources suggest that a majority of travellers have the intention to make more sustainable choices now and in the future, and that in general awareness of sustainability issues is on an upward trajectory.

However, sustainable development and operation, as well as acquiring and maintaining eco-certification also comes with its challenges. Especially small and micro sized business seem to struggle in making sustainable practices worth their while. In a study conducted by Dolišek, Kulusjärvi, Ojala & Tervo-Kankare (2021, 24) respondents note that only limited information is available related to sustainable practices and that certification processes are complicated and costly. Margaryan & Stensland (2017) agree; in their study they set out to identify reasons why businesses did or did not adopt eco-certificates. They found the most common obstacles to obtaining certification were lack of confidence in the effectiveness of certificates, the belief that certification was only profitable for “larger” companies, and that they were redundant, i.e. entrepreneurs believed to already be more sustainable than was required by the certification programmes.

Nevertheless, growing demand by consumers has likely increased pressure on businesses to follow suit in communicating sustainability so as to remain competitive. As a result of this pressure some companies have taken to misrepresenting information in order to seem more sustainable. The practice of communicating more sustainable actions than are being executed by the company is referred to as “greenwashing”, a term originally coined by Jay Westerveld in 1986 (Orange & Cohen 2010).

Greenwashing, however, is not the only means of miscommunicating sustainable actions anymore. Due to the contrast in tourism between the hedonistic desires of tourists and the sobering connotations of sustainability (Tiago, Gil, Stemberger & Borges-Tiago 2019), some companies have applied a new strategy: the intentional withholding of sustainability information. This practice is commonly referred to as “greenhushing”, a term attributed in academia to Font, Elgammal, and Lamond (Ettinger, Grabner-Kräuter, Okazaki & Terlutter 2022).

A study conducted by Font, Elgammal, and Lamond (2017) finds that reasons for greenhushing relate to a disconnect between business owners’ values and those values they perceive their customers to have. Interviews as part of that study reveal that many business owners feel customers are not sufficiently committed to traveling sustainably; a notion which stands in direct contrast to what is suggested by contemporary tourism trends data, as quoted earlier in this document. Businesses therefore feel pressured to neglect communicating aspects of their sustainability efforts, especially those which do not positively impact on the customers’ experience (Font, Elgammal, and Lamond 2017). However, Font, Elgammal, and Lamond (2017) argue that failing to inform customers of those sustainability issues which are less convenient promotes the idea that travelling is a harmless activity and perpetuates unsustainable tourism consumption. In the report they go as far as to indicate that even the usage of storytelling to communicate sustainability is a form of greenhushing as it disguises the true nature of the information and makes it more palatable to the customer.

Beyond competitiveness, there is also legal incentive to communicate sustainability accurately. Whilst not yet applicable to SMBs, the European

Commission is currently in the process of introducing legislation that requires large companies and listed companies to disclose social and environmental risks related to their activities. The so-called Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive was introduced as a draft in January 2023. The deadline for adopting the directive has been postponed indefinitely in autumn 2023 and for the time being SMBs are not affected by this legislation but it is conceivable that this or similar legislation could be expanded to include all size businesses in the future. (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment 2023.)

The above listed motivators for businesses to communicate sustainability have so far been mostly reactive to changes in the operating environment for the best interests of companies. However, there are also moral issues which can, or perhaps should, drive companies to communicate sustainably. Prior to the pandemic the tourism industry's share of the global GDP had been over 10% for four consecutive years (Statista Research Department 2023). After the impact of Covid-19 the industry is expected to recovery swiftly, with holiday destinations in the Middle East already exceeding 2019 arrivals by 15% and European destinations reaching 90% of pre-Covid levels (UNWTO 2023). Due to the size of the industry, there is also an opportunity to drive change (Nordic Council of Ministers 2021). In 1960 Vance Packard argued that the communications industry contributed considerably to popularising consumerism; later, in 1998 Lester Brown theorised that the same industry is the only one capable of educating the general public to the necessary extent and within the time constraints dictated by climate change (as cited in Ehmann 2012, 2). Considering the above arguments: the size and potential influence of tourism as an industry, and the historical impact of communication on consumer behaviour; it seems evident that the tourism industry not only has the ability, but also a moral responsibility to communicate sustainability issues with its customers.

However, adding sustainable values to a website or publishing an annual sustainability report may not suffice. Unerman (2000, as cited by Bogren & Sörensson 2021, 477) argues that businesses are taking plenty of sustainable actions, but annual reports do not go into sufficient detail to communicate all of them. A lot of information gets lost on the way. Dolišek, Kulusjärvi, Ojala & Tervo-Kankare (2021, 24) who conducted a study on Finnish businesses agree,

suggesting that sustainability communication is currently still at an insufficient level, especially compared to the high level of sustainable activity. Aspholm (2023) concurs, stating that in her experience businesses are intimidated by the sustainability communication and she would like to see them communicating their efforts more frequently.

Another reason why annual reports are insufficient is their language. Smeuninx, De Clerck & Aerts (2020) argue that sustainability reports have a much broader audience, including employees and concerned citizens, than financial reports, for instance. Yet, in their study they found that on average sustainability reports have a concerningly low readability score. Considering this fact, even those customers interested in sustainability issues may find it difficult to follow the industry jargon. Instead, Katherine Hayhoe (2018) advocates for personal stories as she argues that they are the only way to bridge national, political, or ideological differences and to affect change in people. The notion of sharing stories in order to establish common understanding, connects back to the previously mentioned “shared field of experience”. Berger himself argued that stories are the best way to achieve this shared field of experience in lieu of actually shared experiences. Moreover, by utilising storytelling in presenting ordinary and perhaps inconvenient data and facts, they become more memorable, relatable, and relevant to listeners (Dolan and Naidu 2013, 6–13).

While companies may see sustainability communication as either an inconvenient necessity or means to increase sales, the above exploration of the current operating environment shows greater potential. Rather than informing customers what goals have been set and achieved, companies should aim to create a shared field of experience through storytelling to engage customers and motivate them to take ownership of the company’s sustainability strategies.

4 MAPPING OF SUSTAINABILITY COMMUNICATION IN FINLAND

4.1 Research process and methodology

This chapter will focus on the research conducted as part of this study. This first section will outline the research process and methodology applied, while the following sections will focus on detailing the individual steps. Overall the process comprised seven steps which can be split into five phases: preliminary investigation of communication materials of all STF companies, review of relevant literature and qualitative content analysis to establish a knowledgebase as well as best practices, creation and testing of matrices, primary quantitative content analysis of selected STF companies and finally, testing of the usefulness of the matrices in practical application through interviews and survey responses (Figure 4).

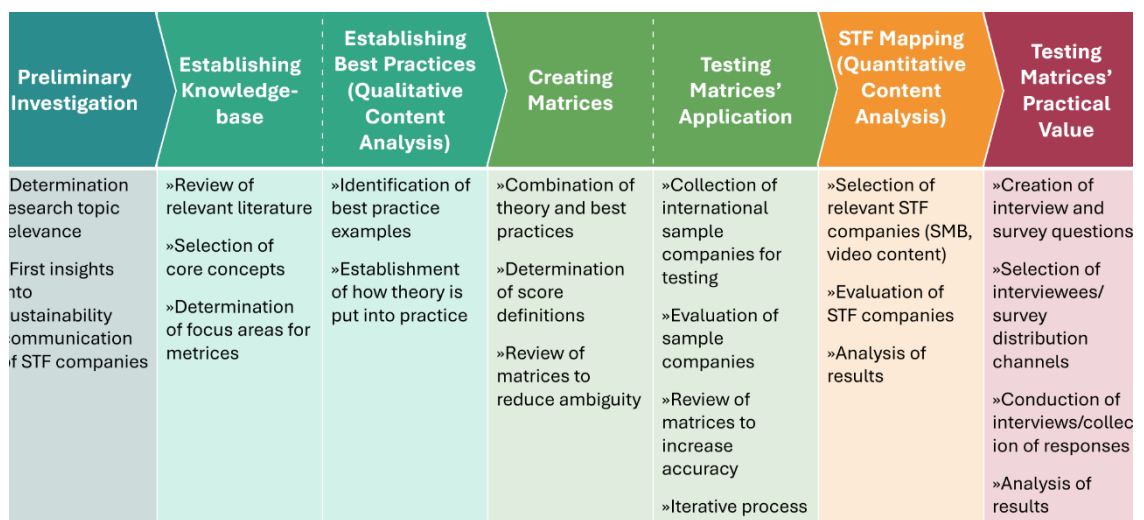


Figure 4. Overview of the steps in the research process.

In the preliminary investigation STF companies' websites were briefly examined for the existence of a sustainability subpage or any mention of sustainability. At the same time companies' YouTube channels were checked for existence of introduction videos and communication of sustainability content. In the establishment of the knowledge base, relevant theoretical frameworks were first examined and then put into relation of best practices. The purpose of this step was to understand how e.g. storytelling elements or authenticity could be recognised on businesses' websites and in their video materials. Next, two

matrices were created: one for evaluation of text content on websites and one for evaluation of video content. The matrices went through an iterative testing process until a satisfactory accuracy level was achieved. The matrices were then used in a quantitative content analysis of STF companies. In the final step of the process the value and practical application of the matrices was tested.

4.2 Preliminary investigation of Sustainable Travel Finland companies

To establish a basic understanding of sustainability communication among STF companies and to determine the relevance of the research topic, a preliminary investigation was carried out on companies which were certified with the STF label as of February 2023 (N=232). To ensure a stable sample size throughout the research study these companies were entered into a database. The websites were then briefly examined for their use of video, the existence of sustainability subpages, or mention of sustainability language, e.g. the word “sustainability”. The findings reveal that, while 86.6% of STF companies already communicate sustainability in some form on their website, only 1.7% use video to do so (Figure 5). Moreover, 12.6% of companies rely solely on displaying their STF certificates without elaborating on how sustainability is implemented in their daily operation.

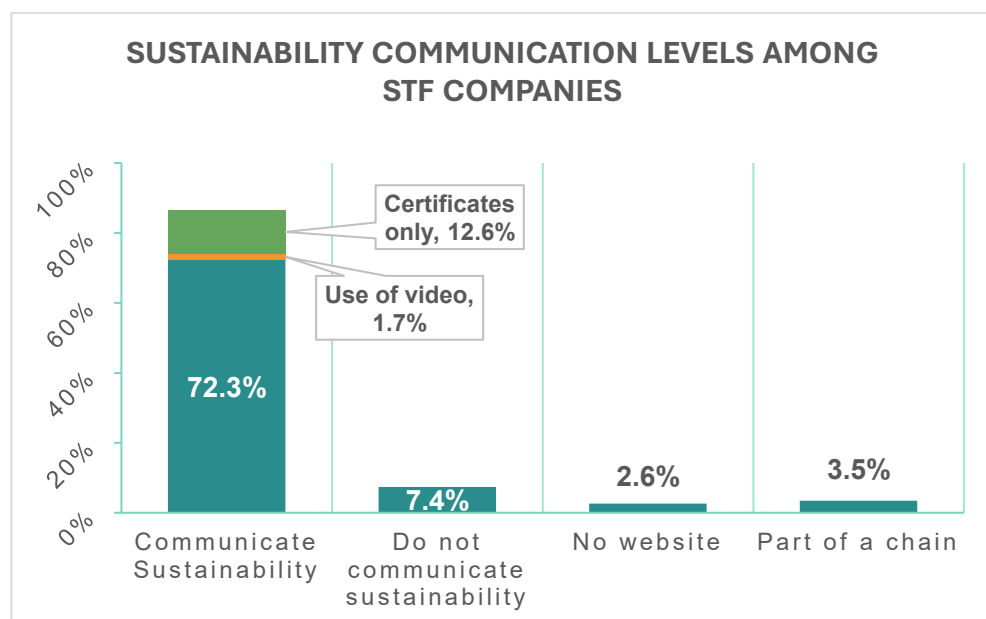


Figure 5. Breakdown of sustainability communication among STF companies following initial investigation.

With as many as 1 in 8 companies relying on certifications alone to communicate their efforts and only a marginal group discussing sustainability in their video materials, it seems evident that there is a need to better understand where sustainability communication is currently at. This understanding will then inform what changes businesses need to make in order to improve their communication efforts.

4.3 Qualitative and quantitative analyses

Before creating the matrices, best practice examples were utilised to understand how the practical application of theoretical concepts could be recognised in text and video materials, e.g. how authenticity, as an abstract concept, could be recognised in a company introduction video. A qualitative analysis was conducted to gain insights into these best practices. As samples the Visit Salla web presence was utilised together with five further randomly selected companies certified with the STF label.

The results of this analysis were immediately implemented in the creation of the matrices. An iterative testing process was applied; whenever a new section of the matrices was developed it was tested for its usability on the same best practice examples. Changes were made when necessary, until a workable first draft of the matrices had been achieved. The following chapters elaborate on the matrices' creation and content.

4.3.1 Creation of video evaluation matrix

Essentially, it can be said that marketing videos should first and foremost be entertaining and innovative. Videos that repeat already existing stories or are reduced to the purpose of presenting a new product, tend not to be remembered in contrary to those which stand out with their unique idea, story and visuals. (Holmes 2022 & Stanimirovic 2020.)

In order to evaluate the success of a video in regard to effective storytelling with a focus on sustainability, broad research on this topic was conducted for this thesis, which resulted in the creation of ten evaluation categories. A matrix was created and scores from 0 to 2 defined for each category. A score of 0 indicates

there are no signals that the company fulfils this point, a score of 1 indicates the company somewhat fulfils this point, and a score of 2 indicates that the company completely fulfils this point. Table 1 shows an overview on those ten categories, which are each described in detail below.

Table 1. Ten points for video matrix.

Video ...	
1	... is authentic
2	... evokes emotion
3	... utilises themes unique to the company/destination
4	... uses call(s) to action
5	... uses suitable music to support its message/story
6	... is short and compact
7	... focuses on visuals, not text
8	... uses humour OR turns boring activities into something exciting
9	... communicates sustainability
10	... has a purpose

Firstly, it is important that the video puts its story first, is non-commercial and non-promotional. That means the brand is initially absent from the video and appears after the story has been told in order to focus on this story and its message instead of the brand name. This helps sharing the brand's values, mission and vision in the first place to which the audience is then able to connect. (Holmes 2022.)

Second, the video establishes a connection with the viewer through emotional content, relatable characters and situations. Viewers are presented with emotional content, which can be supported by music, a heart-warming or heart-

breaking storyline; this presents them something to relate to and finally makes them likely to act on what they have seen. (Stanimirovic 2020.)

Third, the use of experiential themes, which are unique to the company or destination are crucial for an authentic narration of the company story. Moreover, there should not be repetition and reuse of stories that have already been told before by others without modifying them. (Holmes 2022.)

Fourth, by using one or several call(s) to action in a video, viewers are encouraged to learn more about the company or a topic by for instance getting redirected to their website. Calls to action can motivate an audience to act based on what they just saw through very simple statements such as “come and visit”, “check out our website” or “learn more” followed by the company’s website link. (Abdow 2021.)

As a fifth point, the video should use appropriate music (Stanimirovic 2020) that supports the story’s message through melody, lyrics or general mood creation rather than using generic music which serves no purpose. This is expected to support the company’s marketing goals, because music has the power to emotionally reach an audience and sets the right mood of the story (Stanimirovic 2020).

Sixth, because the attention span of people has been continuously dropping (Technical University of Denmark 2019) the video should be short and compact (Renderforest 2020 & Stanimirovic 2020). According to Abdow (2021) and Renderforest (2020) the ideal video length lies between one and four minutes. For videos introducing a company culture, as mentioned previously, the ideal length is considered to be between two and four minutes (Sahni 2023). Therefore, as this paper focuses on video marketing for SMBs introducing their business, one can combine both ideal lengths, one to four minutes and two to four minutes, which concludes into an approximate ideal length of one to three minutes.

Seventh, the use of words is minimised in the video and it focuses on visuals. This can be supported by text in the form of captions or subtitles, but should not stop the video from being versatile and visually entertaining (Renderforest 2020 & Stanimirovic 2020).

Eighth, the video should use humour or turn a seemingly boring everyday activity into something exciting, which can be especially successful in showcasing activities done by a company with sustainability practices. The activity or activities are visualised to look like an adventure and might even go to an unrealistic level in order to make it more entertaining for the audience. It also helps creating a memorable moment that lets viewers connect a certain product with this brand in the future. (Stanimirovic 2020 & Aspholm 2023.)

When it comes to humour, there are great benefits to storytelling, such as making it more interesting, entertaining and memorable which is crucial to stand out among the plethora of stories that are being told online on a daily basis. Moreover, it gives a realistic touch to a video, making it easier to connect to a story and characters as well as helping to approach difficult topics in a softer way and has a rather disarming effect. (Courage 2023.) Therefore, humour can be a great help to talk about more complex topics like sustainability and climate change.

Ninth, the video communicates sustainability. As stated previously in this document it is important to consider the three pillars of which sustainability consists: environmental, economic and social aspects (Purvis, Mao & Robinson 2019). A video successfully communicating sustainability comes with great benefits for the creator company, since they use a global topic to position themselves with their own values and visions (Aspholm 2023), as well as for the issue itself since it gets more visibility through a video shared all over the world.

Last but not least, in addition to being entertaining, humorous and cinematic as such, a video needs to serve a clear purpose. Without a comprehensible message viewers might otherwise be left frustrated. Contrary to movies, which can be watched solely for entertainment reasons, marketing videos typically sell a product, introduce a company, or raise awareness of a topic or the brand itself. (Stanimirovic 2020.) Therefore, a good video needs to have a clear goal and tell a story in order to reach it (Stanimirovic 2020). Ideally, after watching a video, the viewer is aware of the message the company attempted to deliver.

4.3.2 Creation of website evaluation matrix

By combining the learnings gathered from literature and the findings from the qualitative content analysis, as described at the start of this chapter, a total of eight evaluation categories were identified for the website matrix: Certificates, Frequency, Language, Transparency, Integration, Facts, Imagery, Narrative. The five former categories correspond to sustainability communication while the latter three correspond to storytelling.

In each category companies can score between zero and three points. Zero points indicate that the company either does not satisfy this criterion at all, or that there are indicators of damaging practices, such as the aforementioned greenwashing and greenhushing. Three points, on the other hand, indicate that the company meets or even exceeds expectations for the criterion.

Table 2 shows an example section for the category “Transparency” within the matrix. In this case communicating sustainability without evidence is considered to be as poor a practice as not communicating sustainability at all. The complete matrix with all eight categories can be viewed in the appendix section of this document.

Table 2. Example of evaluation matrix from "transparency" category

CATEGORY	POINTS			
	0	1	2	3
Transparency	Website does not mention sustainability OR [does mention sustainability AND does not display sustainability goals or strategies AND has not delimited their sustainability efforts]	Business has any sustainability communication on their website AND either shows goals or a sustainability strategy OR has delimited their sustainability efforts	Business has any sustainability communication on their website AND both shows goals or a sustainability strategy AND has delimited their sustainability efforts	Business has any sustainability communication on their website AND shows goals or a sustainability strategy AND has delimited their sustainability efforts AND has proof on the website in form of specific actions taken/planned

There were two major challenges that impacted on the creation of the matrix. First, sustainability communication and storytelling are complex topics. For this reason they were considered separately in the matrix and evaluated as such. It was assumed that a website which has strong storytelling would also utilise it in their sustainability communication. The results of the research show that, while

this assumption does not necessarily perfectly reflect reality, there is a general trend that those companies which implement more storytelling elements on their website, are also more likely to utilise them in their sustainability communication. Secondly, sustainability communication appears to be at its best when buzz words and cliches are avoided (Radley Yeldar 2023). As such the matrix had to evaluate practices in a way that did not rely on specific vocabulary.

4.3.3 Testing of matrices

Once a complete first draft of each matrix was completed, both matrices were tested. Testing companies were selected based on the following criteria: companies from a variety of countries excluding Finland (testing if the matrices could be applied internationally), website available in English, certified with an internationally recognised environmental label (variety of labels needed to be represented), and connected to a video based social media channel. The accuracy of the matrices was determined through a custom process, the details of which can be found in the appendix of this document.

The quantitative analysis focused on small to medium size STF companies only. Companies were selected based on their number of employees, turnover, and balance sheet results as entered on Finder.fi. The values were defined as fewer than 249 employees, turnover of less than 50 million Euro and a balance sheet result of less than 43 million Euro. This definition was adapted from Business Finland's guideline of small to medium sized enterprises and midcap companies (Business Finland 2023). Once large companies had been eliminated the results were filtered for those companies who had created an account on YouTube. After filtering, 49 companies (21.5%) were left of the total number of the 232 certified companies.

The quantitative content analysis of the STF companies was completed within two weeks. This window was determined based on two competing factors: firstly, websites are dynamic, the more time passes the higher the chance that changes are made and results are not comparable. Secondly, the shorter the time period for evaluation the more samples will have to be viewed in a single day, likely impacting on the accuracy of results.

5 RESULTS OF ANALYSES AND CUSTOMER PERCEPTION TEST

5.1 Findings from quantitative content analysis

At first, an analysis was conducted in order to determine the current states of existing STF websites and company videos, which subsequently would help the further advancement and improvement of sustainability communication. Overall, three core issues were discovered across communication, both on website and in videos. First, there is a lack of content which is personal to the company. This is a trend across company communication and not necessarily limited to just sustainability issues. Second, there seems to be a neglect to provide evidence which would back up sustainability claims; while there is a potential that companies do provide evidence on other platforms or through other channels there has been little indication of this practice in the examined content. Finally, storytelling is vastly underutilised with companies either not communicating their core business story at all or only communicating disconnected story elements which do not result in a core theme. The results are discussed in more detail and specific to each medium in the following sections.

5.1.1 Results from STF video analysis

All 49 test companies were examined for their video materials. Seven videos had to be excluded for the following reasons: all available videos were related to the region rather than the company itself, they were only showcasing long webinars or they were vlog styled, meaning following along on a tour without any further explanations and introductions of the company.

The 42 remaining videos were chosen from the company's YouTube channel based on their suitability for introducing the company properly. Figure 6 shows the percentage of companies which achieved the highest score of two points for each category.

Authentic	Emotional	Unique Themes	Calls to Action	Music	Length	Visual	Humour/ Exciting	Sustainability	Purpose
55%	19%	52%	17%	29%	67%	40%	38%	12%	64%

Figure 6. Total two point scores by category of 42 evaluated videos.

The perhaps most important finding is, even though each assessed company is certified with the STF label, only 12% of the evaluated videos communicate the sustainability topic successfully based on the matrix. This means that the majority of companies do not communicate their unique selling point, making it an unused potential since possible customers cannot see the company's values, visions or sustainability efforts.

Moreover, a lack of calls to action (17%) and establishing of emotional connections (19%) could be identified. Both of them are important factors when intending to create relatable content which engages the target audience (Abdow 2021). Many evaluated videos make an attempt to introduce characters, but on a superficial level, which showcase faceless people rather than relatable characters which promote the company's values in a way that is understood by potential customers.

Another finding that came out of the STF company testing for the video matrix is that it is not necessary for them to reach the maximum score of 20 in order to be a successful video. In fact, it is nearly impossible for a video to be perfect in every category due to their individual styles and focus points; for instance a video which perfectly communicates sustainability and also scores highly on other categories, can still be considered a good video, even if it is missing a call to action. This is why a score of around 15 points in total can already be classified as sufficient. The findings from STF company videos support this since none of them reached 20 points in the end, with the maximum points reached being 18 by only one of the videos.

As previously mentioned, several company videos could not be evaluated due to their vlog style; the majority of them were activity companies. The Cambridge Dictionary defines "vlog" as a video blog on the internet that is a recording of filmed thoughts, opinions, or experiences (Cambridge Dictionary 2023). While they provide insights into what a husky tour for instance can look like, they should

not be the only kind of video. Instead, they would serve as an addition to videos that introduce the company, including their unique selling point, values and purpose. Without such videos, a vlog can seem rather pointless and does not stand out from the competition that offers similar activities.

Finally, many videos are called “company presentation” or in Finnish “esittely”, but only introduce the company superficially; they visually focus on aerial shots and show the location and premises, but entirely leave out company values, unique selling point or sustainability actions. In order to call a video “company introduction” or “company presentation”, it should not only focus on the visual part but go beyond the “moving image level”. While the visual part of a video is crucial, it is not sufficient in giving enough information on the business through several drone shots of the premises.

5.1.2 Results from STF website analysis

Overall, many STF companies are headed in the right direction in terms of sustainability communication, though there are still many areas which require improvement. 86% of the examined companies already have dedicated sustainability pages on their website. However, they have the appearance for being mere “tick-box exercises” for the businesses, as the content often only relates to standard sustainability issues. Many times companies ask their customers to recycle, to utilise re-usable water bottles and tap water, or to arrive by public transport. Typical actions taken by the business and highlighted on these pages include: usage of renewable energy, waste recycling, reduction of water usage, digitalisation, utilisation of ecologically safe cleaning agents, collaboration with other local businesses, sourcing local products and materials, and informing or educating customers about sustainability issues. While all the above are important issues that contribute to sustainable business operation, they are also those issues that are specifically discussed in Visit Finland’s tools for sustainability and communication (Visit Finland 2023b). This indicates that many STF companies strictly follow the guidelines given by Visit Finland and do not consider what sustainability means specifically for their business. This practice, however, could potentially be damaging for their company. A study conducted by Sparks, Perkins & Buckley (2013) found that communicating

sustainability information which lacks specificity is likely to raise potential customers' suspicion.

Only two thirds of the companies (66%) display their sustainability certifications on the front page (Figure 7). Roughly a quarter of companies (24%) either neglect to display their certification all together or place it in locations where it is unlikely to be discovered by visitors casually browsing the website. Studies show that, while eco-certificates on their own may not be able to sway undecided customers, they do legitimise whatever other sustainability claims a business is making on their website (Sparks, Perkins & Buckley 2013, Karlsson and Dolnicar 2016). Moreover, businesses invest a large amount of resources in acquiring certification and should therefore display them.

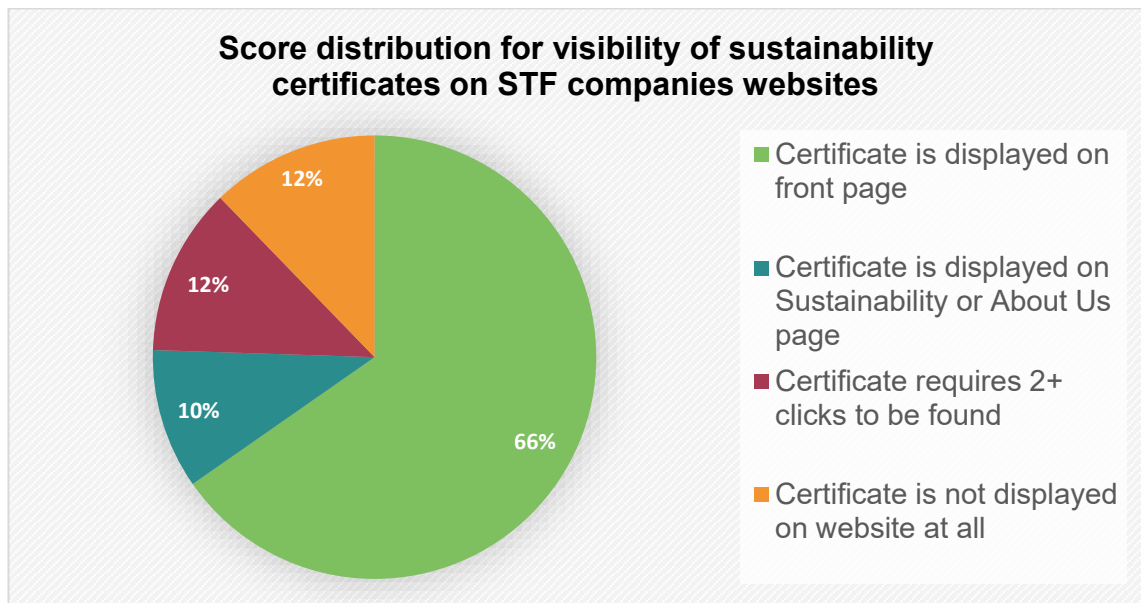


Figure 7. Score distribution for sustainability certification visibility on STF companies' websites.

Overall, the categories with the highest frequency of 0- or 1-point ratings (lowest modus) were Transparency, Imagery, and Narrative (Figure 8). Transparency ratings were determined based on evidence provided on the websites. As mentioned above, many of the sustainability issues discussed on the websites are somewhat generic. Other claims are easy to make and difficult to prove on the website. For example, it is easy for a company to claim that they are recycling their waste but it is difficult to prove based solely on the website if the company really does recycle. In many of these instances at least one or two examples of

specific actions, accompanied by an image or video, would suffice to back up their claims. However, since this research is limited to websites only, it is conceivable that at least some of the businesses are communicating specific sustainable actions on their social media channels and hence, do not repeat this information on their website.

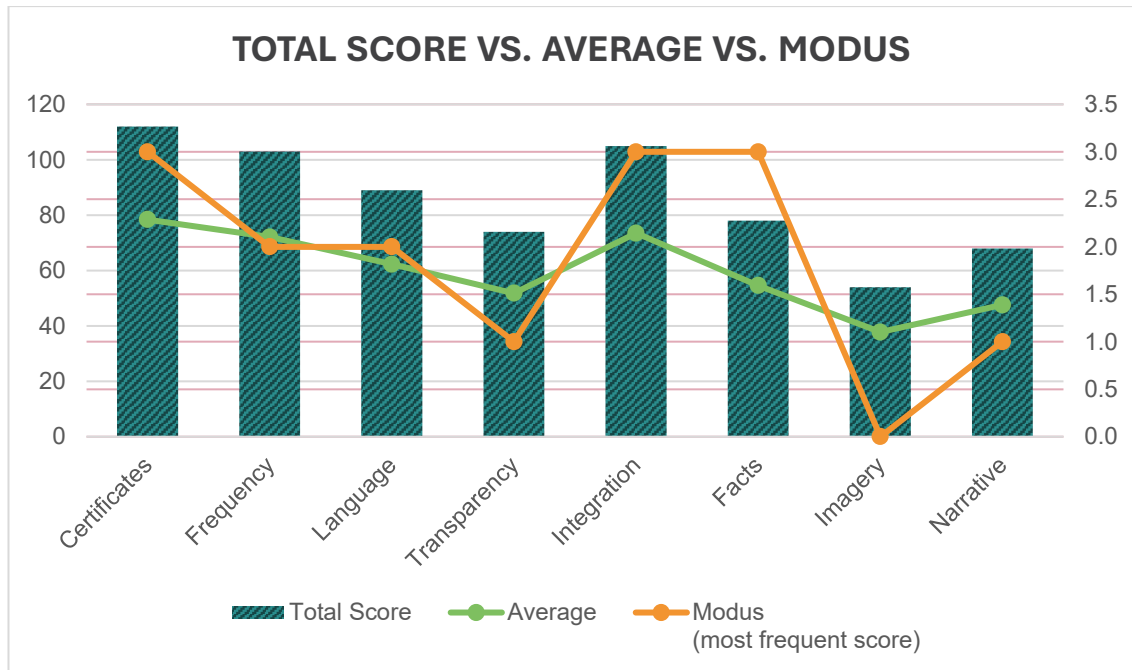


Figure 8. Breakdown of total scores, average and modus per evaluation category.

Imagery and narrative are both categories which fall in the storytelling section of the evaluation matrix. They are more subjective than most of the sustainability related categories but efforts have been made to reduce ambiguity as much as possible. The two categories received both the lowest total scores and highest frequency of low scores. This indicates that storytelling elements are severely lacking among the majority of evaluated websites. However, it is interesting to note that, while the most frequent score in the Imagery category is 0, the average score is at 1.1. This result indicates that there is a non-neglectable amount of 2- and 3-score rating in this category. In other words: there is a high number of companies which fail this category but there are also a significant amount of companies which perform decently.

In terms of narrative the most common element missing is a character or characters to whom the reader could relate. Oftentimes information is presented

in a factual way, for example: “the company was established in 1999”. Only a handful of companies embrace their core business story and use language which is personal and which guests can empathise with: “In 1985 our grandparents bought a farm near Helsinki and so starts our business’ story”. The above mentioned are examples from real companies’ websites, however, adapted to ensure anonymity.

There are also those companies which reference for example the history of a building or by stating the number of generations of the same family who have worked in the business, indicating that a larger business story exists. However, often these bits of information are not picked up again anywhere else on the website. Only a handful of companies manage to fully commit to their core business story. In these instances the story is visible on the front page in text and images but also repeated throughout the product pages and in justifying their sustainable action.

Not one of the tested companies is 100% consistent in their messaging but there are those which are clearly making an effort. One such example is a museum stating that they encourage customers to arrive by alternative transport rather than by car. On their sustainability page they then admit that as a private company they cannot impact on public transportation but that they have instead implemented a shuttle bus from the nearest transport hub. On the “how to get here” page the same sentiment is emphasised by displaying the shuttle bus option prominently at the top of the page followed by cycling directions and only then providing instructions to arrive by car. However, this is a rare example as on many companies’ websites the messaging is less consistent. It should be highlighted that, while inconsistencies are frequent, outright contradicting information is almost non-existent. The only contradiction that a handful of companies make, is stating that they are committed to educating customers about sustainability when there is no educational content on their website. Again, in this instance it is likely that those companies use other platforms than their website to deliver educational content.

5.2 Testing effectiveness of matrices

After the quantitative content analysis, testing of both matrices took place in the form of a survey with 41 respondents for the website matrix and an interview with ten interviewees for the video matrix. Respondents were sourced from within the tourism field and beyond. The goal of this testing phase was to ensure that the matrices were not only based on theoretical concepts, but that they had practical application as well.

Three companies were selected from both the video and website analysis: the top scoring company, a medium scoring company, and the bottom scoring company. The video evaluation matrix was tested for its usability by conducting semi-structured interviews, while the website matrix was tested for its accuracy of predicting consumer perceptions by running a survey.

5.2.1 Usability of video matrix as determined by feedback interviews

In order to test the functionality of the video matrix, ten interviews were conducted in which the interviewer presented three videos to be scored by the interviewee based on the matrix. Up to the sixth interview, several changes had to be made to the matrix based on interviewees' comments and feedback during usage, but the last four interviews confirmed the changes to be successful as they described the matrix's usage as easy to understand and clearly instructed.

Initial comments about overlap in scores 0, 1 and 2 in several categories resulted in a first update of the whole matrix with the aim to increase the distinction between the scores. After only three interviews it became clear that, despite having researched the point "humour" to be a crucial factor in video marketing, the actual testing phase and comments from interviewees showed that humour does in fact not play as important a role as previously assumed, but rather can be an optional addition if it suits the video theme or company's intentions. Therefore the eighth point "boring activities/uses humour" got reduced to only "boring activities" as shown in Table 3 and was used as such throughout the remaining seven interviews.

Table 3. Ten updated points for video matrix.

Video ...	
1	... is authentic
2	... evokes emotion
3	... utilises themes unique to the company/destination
4	... uses call(s) to action
5	... uses suitable music to support its message/story
6	... is short and compact
7	... focuses on visuals, not text
8	... turns boring activities into something exciting
9	... communicates sustainability
10	... has a purpose

A second and very crucial update throughout the whole matrix took place after the sixth interview. Up until then, it was commented that the matrix still lacks clarity in certain points. In addition to using colour coding (red being bad and green being good) it was commented that visually highlighting keywords by formatting the font would be beneficial as well. This resulted into the second update of the matrix, paying special attention to clear descriptions, easy wording and, most importantly, highlighting certain words and phrases by using underlines, italics and bold text in order to differentiate between a category's point visually as shown in Figure 9. After this step, a clear improvement could be seen in the following interviews, resulting in interviewees' positive comments on the use of the matrix.

0	1	2
The video is promotional, does not share a story or message with the viewer and does not highlight the business'/destination's uniqueness. The brand is displayed throughout the video and its identity and values are not introduced.	The video shares a story/message with the viewer, which does not support the business'/destination's story. It seems promotional due to brand presence throughout the video. However, it may still show the business'/destination's uniqueness without a story/message.	The video tells a story that suits their own unique business/destination story, identity and values; it is non-promotional. The brand is only presented once the story has been told. The video is unique to its author (business/destination)
0	1	2
The video is promotional, does not share a story or message with the viewer and does not highlight the business'/destination's uniqueness . The brand is displayed throughout the video and its identity and values are not introduced .	The video shares a story/message with the viewer, which does not support the business'/destination's story . It seems promotional due to brand presence throughout the video. However, <u>it may still show the business'/destination's uniqueness without a story/message</u> .	The video tells a story that suits their own unique business/destination story, identity and values ; it is non-promotional . The brand is only presented once the story has been told. The video is unique to its author (business/destination)

Figure 9. Point one of video matrix before and after visual update.

The remaining interviewees commented in similar ways about the use of the matrix as shown in Figure 10 below. Both the average accuracy and the total score matched consistently after the improvements made to the matrix in the first half of the interview phase. This demonstrates that the interviews and changes which were made subsequently were successful.

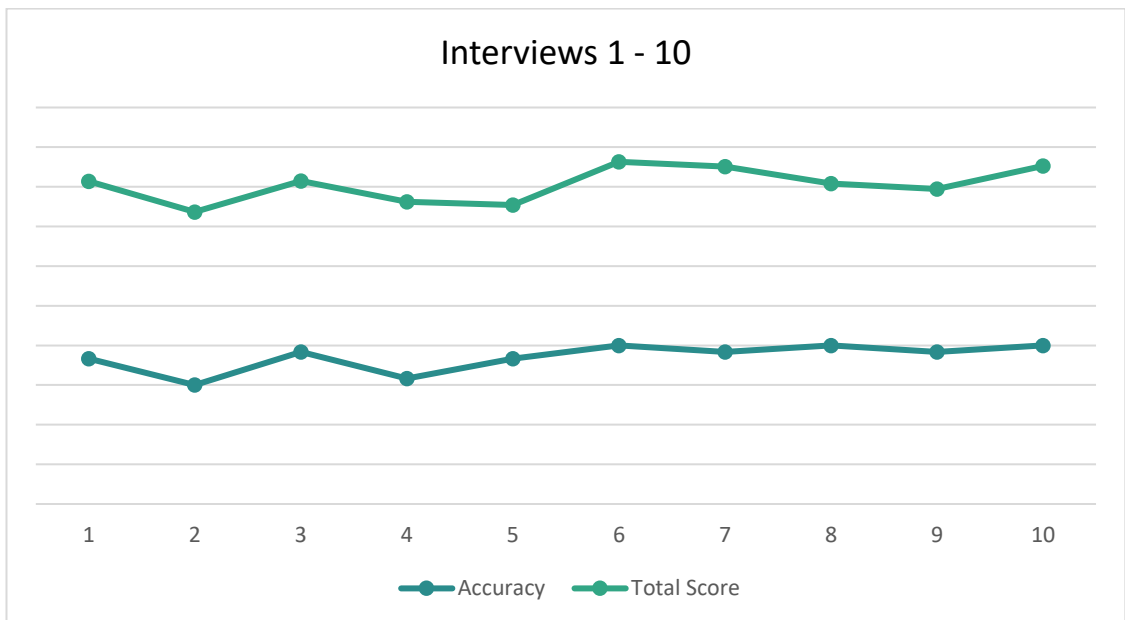


Figure 10. Average accuracy and average total score match with authors' scores from interview 1 to interview 10.

Overall, despite the variety of comments throughout the ten interviews, all interviewees agreed on the same evaluation order by placing video 2 first, video 1 second and video 3 third, proving the matrix's general function to be successful.

From that it can be concluded that viewers perceived the selected videos in similar ways, and agreed with the evaluation.

An observation made throughout all interviews was the different perceptions of the fourth point: Call(s) to Action. In very few cases, the interviewee knew and understood what was meant by the term Call to Action but in most cases it was either misunderstood or perceived as something negative. The actual meaning of the term, however, describes the next step that the viewer is expected to take as a reaction to seeing this Call to Action, which can even be connected to a website link or booking button (Kenton 2022). In more simple words, a call to action is something like “Book now”, “learn more” or “get to know the team”, which was not used in any of the three videos, yet six out of ten interviewees gave scores for this point due to their very personal understanding of and feeling about the term. A very common explanation for doing so was for instance the inviting feeling the interviewee personally received and interpreted as a call to viewers taking actions. However, they did this rather than looking for actual tangible calls to action in the video such as “visit our website” or “book now”.

Learning this from the interviews it appears to be beneficial that the manual for SMB's provides a definition for a term like Call to Action in order to avoid confusion. Moreover, the manual should present the goals of a good video in a compact and comprehensive way since throughout the interviews it could be noticed that occasionally interviewees would not see “promotional” as something bad. Through further elaboration on why it is seen as such it became noticeable that the interviewees were not familiar with storytelling as a tool used in video marketing, therefore the association they would have with marketing is first and foremost the promotion of something, may it be a business, new product or campaign. Due to this finding it is crucial to highlight the storytelling tool in the manual as something that should be aimed for instead of promotional marketing, which does not introduce the business character, story and values to the viewers.

Finally, despite having only positive comments in the last interviews, it can be concluded that a 100% accuracy of authors' scores and interviewees' scores does not have to be reached in order to be successful; similarly to the matrix, where 20 points do not have to be reached to be a good video either. Instead,

around 15 points in the matrix and an accuracy of 70% in interviews suffice since personal opinions and preferences can always influence the given score even if it only makes up one or two points of the final score in the end. The complete finalised matrix that has been improved throughout the ten interviews with an average accuracy score (each category's score match with the author's score in the same category) of 74% and an average total score match (the percentage for each video's total score match of interviewees and author) of 87% (Figure 11) can be found as an appendix.

	Video 1	Video 2	Video 3	Total
Average Accuracy	65 %	79 %	78 %	74 %
Average total score match	86 %	92 %	82 %	87 %

Figure 11. Average accuracy and total score match for each video and the average of all three videos as total.

5.2.2 Website matrix evaluation results versus customer perception

The aim of the survey was to determine if the website matrix, which is based on theory and best practices, reflects the perception of potential customers visiting companies' online presences. While the respondents were given the companies' real names and websites, in this document – to ensure anonymity – they will be referred to as Company A (high-end spa hotel), Company B (high-end self-catered log cottages and guided walks) and Company C (high-end golf resort). The survey was shared with as varied an audience of travellers as possible, to represent a cross section of potential customers. The respondents were gathered from LinkedIn, universities and offices, as well as through personal networks.

Questions in the first section related to the demographic and travel priorities of respondents. In a further three sections, each pertaining to one of the selected companies, the participants were asked about their interest in the activities offered by the respective company, their emotional connection to, or investment they felt in the company, as well as how they perceived the company's commitment to sustainability issues. In the final question the respondents were asked to organise the companies in a hierarchy from most liked to least liked, based on personal preference (Figure 12). A full list of the survey questions can

be viewed in the appendix section of this document. 41 respondents participated in the survey (N=41).

Sort the companies in hierarchical order from most liked to least liked based on your examination of their websites *

	Most liked	Intermediate	Least liked
Company A	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Company B	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Company C	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Figure 12. The hierarchy question in the form of a radio button question type.

In the hierarchy question Company A is rated the highest by respondents; It receives both most “most liked” ratings and fewest “least liked” ratings. This result is surprising as the evaluation with the website matrix assigned a medium score to Company A (14/24), Company B received the highest score (23/24), and Company C scored the lowest (2/24). The scores the companies received in the evaluation matrix were converted to the scoring scale used in the survey. Figure 13 below shows the two hierarchy results in comparison to each other.

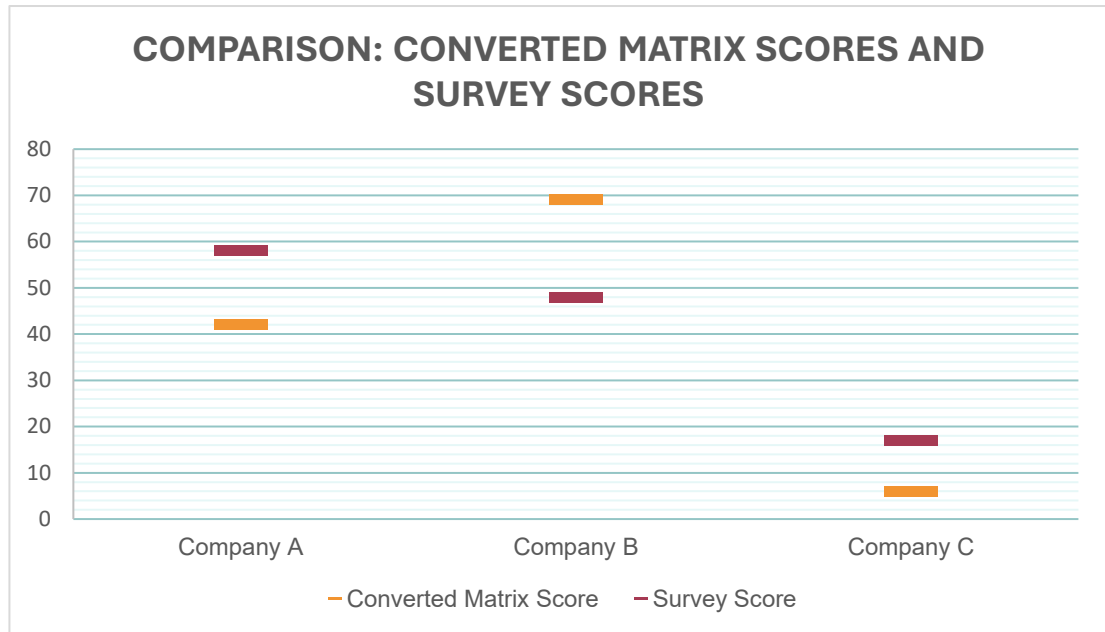


Figure 13. Breakdown of hierarchy placements by company.

A closer inspection of the more detailed questions fails to explain this discrepancy between survey results and evaluation matrix. Overall, Company B continuously receives the highest scores. When asked if generally interested in the product or service, 33 people responded with “Yes” to Company B, compared to 29 and 9 “Yes” votes for Company A and Company C respectively. In response to whether the visitors felt invested in the companies, Company B also took the lead (Figure 14). Over 80% of respondents stated that they felt somewhat to very invested in or emotionally connected to Company B, compared to just over 60% for Company A.

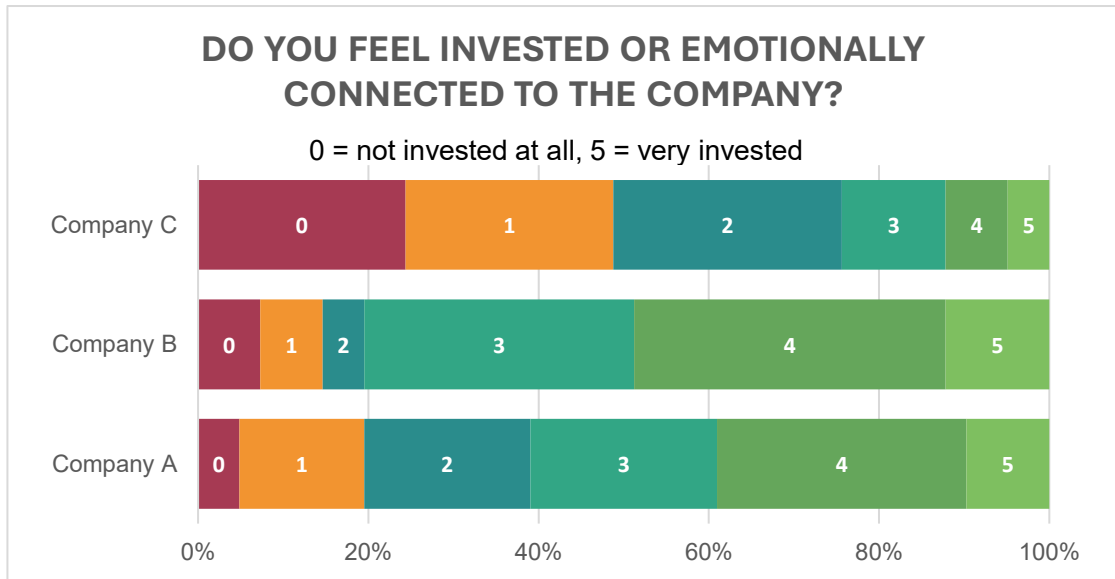


Figure 14. Breakdown of responses regarding level of investment in or emotional connection to sample companies.

The results also indicate that sustainability information is easier to find on the website of Company B; it received 8 more “Yes” responses than Company A (34 versus 26) to the question if relevant information could be located. Furthermore, the sustainability information presented on the website of Company B seems more trustworthy than that of Company A, as indicated by Figure 15 below.

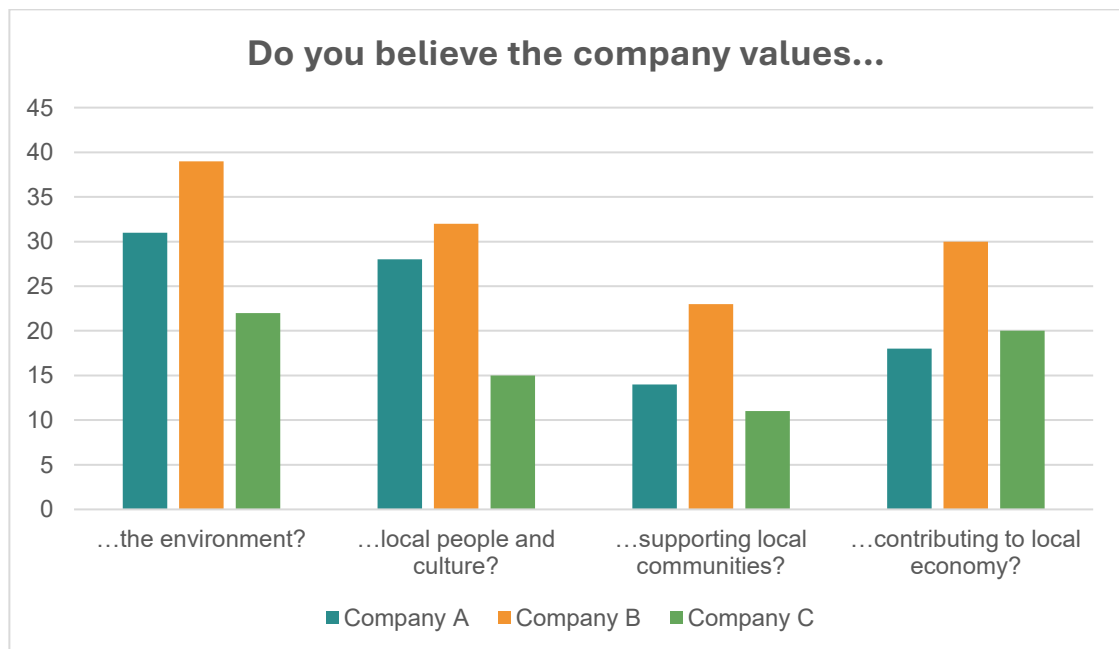


Figure 15. Number of positive votes each company received in relation to whether the customer believes they value a certain sustainability issue (N=41).

Despite minor discrepancies, overall the results from the survey match with the findings from the website evaluation conducted with the matrix. Respondents agree with the results of this study, confirming that Company B has better integrated storytelling elements and communicates their sustainability efforts more effectively on their website than both Company A and C. Moreover, Company C, which received a very low score in the evaluation matrix, is consistently placed in lowest position by the survey respondents. Yet, when asked to sort the companies in a hierarchy based on personal preference, the respondents deviate from the matrix evaluation by placing Company B in second position and Company A in first.

A possible cause for this discrepancy can be found when breaking down respondents' interest by the positioning they gave Company B in the hierarchy (Figure 16). It is notable how many of those respondents who place Company B in the last position (least liked) in the hierarchy, initially responded "Yes" when asked if they were generally interested in the type of service offered by the company.

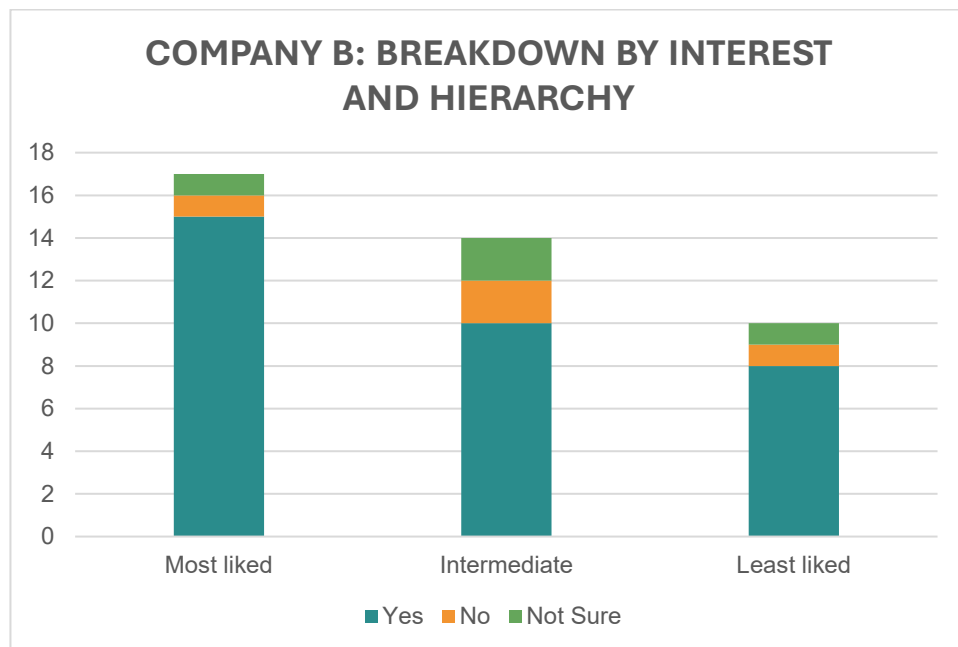


Figure 16. Breakdown of respondents' interest in Company B's activities and hierarchy placement.

This seems to indicate a disconnect between the type of service offered and the actual offering of Company B. The suspicion becomes more evident when

comparing the breakdown by interest and hierarchy of Company B to that of Company A. Figure 17 shows that respondents who said they are generally interested in the activities offered by Company A place them either in the first (most liked) or middle (intermediate) position, never in last.

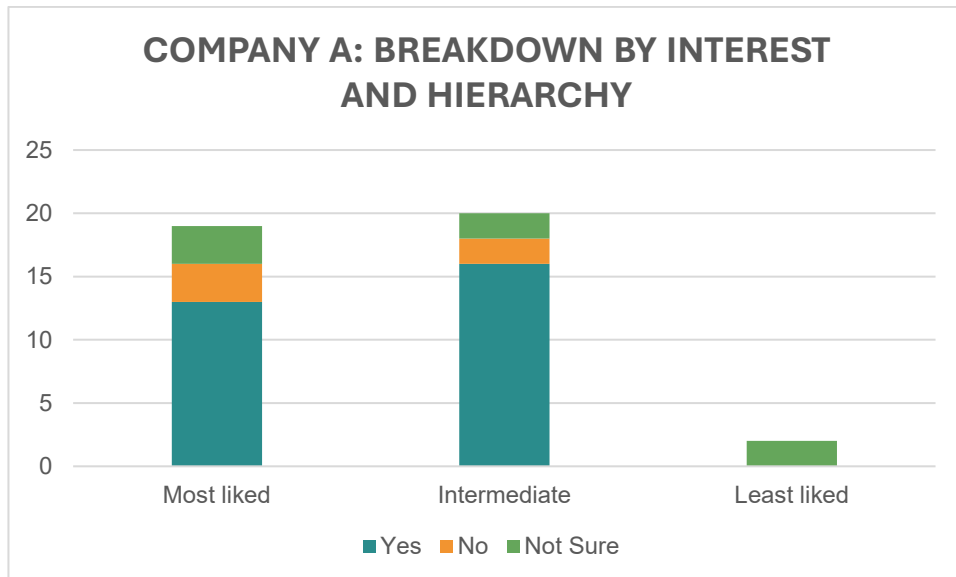


Figure 17. Breakdown of respondents' interest in Company A's activities and hierarchy placement..

One explanation for this disconnect is that there is not a sufficient representation of the market segment targeted by Company B present in the survey respondents. While efforts have been made to reach a diverse group of travellers, only one of the respondents states eco-tourism as their primary motivation for travelling. Furthermore, 44% percent of respondents were between the ages of 25-34. Those at the younger end of this spectrum are likely to be more interested in the services offered by Company A which is catering more to couples, while Company B is highlighting their special focus on families. Moreover, Company A may be considered to have a better price-quality ratio. The price for two nights' accommodation for two in a hotel room, including breakfast and one day access to a high-end spa, as offered by Company A, costs visitors less than two nights' accommodation for two in a high-end log cabin, excluding breakfast, as offered by Company B. Company B does offer added value in the high level standard of their cabins, the family friendly services, and the pristine and private location. However, it is likely that these factors are not resonating with the audience reached by the survey.

To conclude, within the limited scope of this study, the evidence suggests that the matrix is able to accurately predict the perception customers have of a company's sustainability communication on their website. As such, the survey has highlighted the potential of the matrix as a tool for owners of small to medium tourism companies. However, discrepancies between the matrix and the survey results indicate that, while customers may be able to recognise good sustainability communication, that alone is not enough to convince them of purchasing. Other authors have come to similar conclusions; Kollmuss & Agyeman (2010) found knowledge of sustainability to be an unreliable indicator of sustainable behaviour; and, in their literature review, Ettinger, Grabner-Kräuter, Okazaki & Terlutter (2020) found there is general agreement in academia, that even environmentally conscientious consumers are likely to act more unsustainably on holidays than they do at home.

6 DISCUSSION

This study is timely as the conversations around sustainability – as demonstrated in this document – are still growing in popularity. The findings and proposed outcomes presented in this paper have the potential to aid Visit Salla, as well as other regional and national DMOs in Finland by providing insights into current sustainability communication practices, as well as aid SMBs to improve such practices.

The primary aim was to answer the question of how sustainability can be communicated through video and storytelling in a more engaging way as well as recommending steps which STF businesses could take to implement storytelling and video and, as such, improve their communication efforts in general. This goal was achieved by establishing a theoretical foundation, combining qualitative and quantitative analyses, and producing evaluation matrices. Finally, the practicality of the matrices was tested in two different ways. Semi-structured interviews were utilised to test the usefulness of the video matrix and surveys were used to test the accuracy of the website matrix in predicting consumer perceptions.

The matrices were created based on theory and best practices to ensure a consistent evaluation of video and website content, since they largely removed personal opinions. To increase reliability of this study the matrices went through several testing phases, both, before and after the analysis of STF companies. Testing before the analysis was done by the authors of this document. The later testing ensured the reliability of the results. While some changes were still made to the video matrix, viewers of the videos did intuitively place the videos in the same hierarchy as resulted from the quantitative analysis in this study. The website matrix was not tested in its full version post content analysis, however, survey respondents agreed with the findings of this study. This indicates a reasonable, if not satisfactory, reliability of this study.

The exploration of sustainability communication, video marketing and storytelling as theoretical concepts as well as their relevance in the current operating environment highlights a number of opportunities and challenges. Sustainability is a complex topic in general and it is easy for businesses to fall

into the trap of under- or overcommunicating. Storytelling as a medium, as well as the entertaining nature of marketing videos, has the potential to downplay the severity of sustainability issues. Some may go as far as to consider both of these practices forms of greenhushing. However, storytelling and video are also powerful tools to communicate a brand's sustainability values with customers in a way that engages them on an emotional level. As such, this study has highlighted that it is important for businesses to use storytelling and video in an ethical way which gets consumers to care about their impact when travelling, not to conceal their negative impact.

The results of the analyses indicate that, at this point in time, the majority of STF businesses only satisfy the bare minimum of sustainability communication on their websites and that video and storytelling are vastly underutilised as tools for communication. Overall, three core issues were identified.

Firstly, sustainability information is not specific to the company. Wherever video and storytelling are applied, they often seem to be an afterthought rather than being implemented into the larger business strategy. Company introduction videos, for example, focus primarily on showcasing the location. The same time and effort could be used for a video which goes beyond what customers can see upon arrival and introduce the business' character, values and story authentically. Therefore, the video matrix places emphasis on authenticity through storytelling, sustainability communication and highlighting unique characteristics.

The second issue which was highlighted by this research is a lack of frequency in sustainability communication. In the majority of instances sustainability mentions are limited to the dedicated subpage and perhaps a single mention on the website's front page. Even the use of certifications to signal potential customers about their sustainable practices is not as commonplace as expected. This can also be seen in video content; businesses make the effort to create a video but do not take this opportunity to communicate their values and their company story. Messaging should be frequent and each piece of communication, whether video, images, or text, should fit into the larger business story.

Finally, across the majority of websites, there is a lack of evidence provided by the companies. Even when sustainability actions are listed on a subpage, they

often appear to mimic the list of requirements published by Visit Finland to acquire the certificate in the first place. Videos use drone footage of the premises or similar “moving images” styled footage but only a handful of companies mention any sustainability issues at all. Customers could potentially read this discrepancy in communication as being disingenuous.

It appears that the priority should be to affect customers’ behaviours on any level. Overall it seems that, counter to entrepreneurs’ beliefs, consumers are ready to hear the inconvenient truths even if they are not yet ready to pay the cost of more sustainable alternatives. Businesses can use video storytelling to lure customers in but should be cautious not to use them to misrepresent or romanticise issues. Authenticity and transparency are highly valued key words that should guide every company’s website content and video creation process.

Changing consumer behaviour is a long-winded process and will likely take many years. However, small companies with their personal stories do have the potential to get customers invested and then influence them over time. Together they can contribute towards Visit Finland’s (2021) vision of becoming the world’s leading sustainable destination by being truthful and communicating their unique character through video and storytelling in order to be heard by the world and stand out from their competition. Potential customers will remember unique stories and ideas, but first they need to be made aware of them.

This study contributes to answering the initial question on how the potential of video and storytelling can be applied in sustainability communication to make it more engaging. The quantitative analysis of the STF companies provides insights into the current shortcomings in terms of sustainability communication. The matrices, on the other hand, produce checklists with issues that should be mentioned, based on theoretical and practical research conducted in the thesis, and introduce the criteria that are necessary for their successful communication.

In conclusion, this study has direct implications for SMBs in Salla – but is not limited to this municipality and can be applied all over Finland – as they can utilise the tools developed as part of this research to evaluate their own sustainability communication and implement the necessary changes. The commissioner Visit

Salla can make use of its position as a DMO and share the findings of the STF analysis as well as the finalised manual with SMBs in its municipality.

Within the scope of this thesis it was only possible to scratch the surface of how sustainability communication, storytelling and video work together, therefore this study could be seen as a “proof of concept” validating further research of the same type. Further interviews and surveys, especially investigating the connection between theory and best practices, and actual customer perception could prove to be invaluable. In general there seems to be a lack of research into customer perception of sustainability communication, especially on specific social media channels. Since social media was not part of the scope of this study it could be an interesting continuation of this subject matter.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1.	Initial version of Video Evaluation Matrix
Appendix 2.	Final version of Video Evaluation Matrix
Appendix 3.	Website Evaluation Matrix
Appendix 4.	Combined results
Appendix 5.	Detailed testing process of matrices
Appendix 6.	Video Evaluation Sheet for Interviews
Appendix 7.	Complete Survey Questions

Appendix 1 1(3). Initial version of Video Evaluation Matrix

The video...		0	1	2
1	...is authentic	The video is promotional, does not share a story or message with the viewer and does not highlight the business'/destination's uniqueness. The brand is displayed throughout the whole video without any further explanation or introduction of its identity and values.	The video shares a story/message with the viewer, but it does not support the business'/destination's story. It seems promotional due to brand presence throughout the video. OR the video does not share a clear story/message but still highlights the business'/destinations' uniqueness	The video tells a story that suits their own business/destination story, identity and values; it is non-promotional and shares a message with the viewer, which is unique to the business/destination. The brand is only presented once the story has been told. The video is unique to its author (business/destination)
2	...evokes emotion	The video is not successful in establishing a connection with the viewer at all. No characters are introduced in the video.	The video is partly successful in establishing a connection with the viewer, but the connection is not deep enough to influence their actions. The characters introduced in the video are shown as "a man and a woman walking" rather than people with stories and therefore fail at creating a deep personal touch towards the video.	The video successfully establishes a connection with the viewer through emotional content, relatable characters, situations or supporting elements like music. The viewer gets to know the characters in the video on a personal level as they are introduced as humans like the viewers themselves rather than just "a man and a woman walking"
3	...utilises themes unique to the company/destination	The video reuses story themes that have already been told by others and do not fit the company/destination.	The video utilises story themes that fit the company but have been told by others already and hence are not unique/innovative.	The video utilises innovative story themes that are unique to the company/destination.

Appendix 1 2(3). Initial version of Video Evaluation Matrix

The video...	0	1	2
4 ...uses call(s) to action	The video does not use any call to action.	The video uses at least one indirect call to action, e.g. "You are welcome here", "you have to find your vision" or "You want to visit us, you just don't know it yet".	The video uses at least one clear call to action, e.g. "Join us now!" or "Come and visit!"
5 ...uses suitable music to support its message/story	The video does no use music at all.	The video uses music, but it does not support the video's message or the company's/destination's character and could be replaced with any other or similar styled music.	The video uses music, which supports its message through culturally/geographically suitable melodies, lyrics and their meaning or a general mood creation (e.g. A fine dining restaurant could use soft piano music one would expect in the restaurant itself and which therefore suits the restaurant's character).
6 ...is short and compact (ideal length between 1-3 min)	The video is 30 seconds and under or 5 minutes and over.	The video is under 1 minute long or 4 minutes and over.	The video is over 1 minute and under 3 minutes long.

Appendix 1 3(3). Initial version of Video Evaluation Matrix

The video...	0	1	2
7 ...focuses on visuals, not words (but captions)	The video strongly focuses on words and text and barely uses visuals, for instance it only shows one shot of a person talking about a topic or the company.	The video focuses on visuals, but still relies on text or a narrator since the message would not be understood through visuals only OR the video focuses on visuals only, but would need some text or narration in order to understand what the video wants to tell.	The video strongly focuses on visuals and is only supported by captions, subtitles key words and phrases, with which the message perfectly comes across.
8 ...uses humour and/or turns boring activities into something exciting	The video does not use humour at all / it uses humour in the wrong moments with an unsuitable topic OR the video does not communicate the company's/destination's everyday practices.	The video uses humour partly or approaches to it, but is not focusing on it OR it shows the company's/destination's everyday practices, but does not present them as something special or unique	The video uses humour successfully and focuses on it throughout the video OR it highlights the uniqueness of the company's/destination's everyday practices and presents them as something special
9 ...communicates sustainability	Sustainability is not communicated in the video.	Sustainability is communicated through environmental, economic and social factors, but is not the core message of the video. (Mentioning sustainability is not the same as communicating sustainability) OR the sustainability label is being mentioned	Sustainability is successfully presented as the core message of the video, putting environmental, economic and/or social factors in the centre of attention. (Mentioning sustainability is not the same as communicating sustainability)
10 ...has a purpose	The video does not have a goal and can seem rather pointless after watching.	The video tries to follow a goal but does only partly succeed; the approach is noticeable but it does not conclude successfully.	The video follows a clear goal that can be identified successfully.

Appendix 2 1(3) Final version of Video Evaluation Matrix

The video...		0	1	2
1	...is authentic	The video is promotional, does not share a story or message with the viewer and does not highlight the business'/destination's uniqueness . The brand is displayed throughout the video and its identity and values are not introduced .	The video shares a story/message with the viewer, which does not support the business'/destination's story . It seems promotional due to brand presence throughout the video. However, <u>it may still show the business'/destination's uniqueness without a story/message</u> .	The video tells a story that suits their own unique business/destination story, identity and values ; it is non-promotional . The brand is only presented once the story has been told. The video is unique to its author (business/destination)
2	...evokes emotion	The video is not successful in establishing a connection with the viewer at all. No characters are introduced in the video.	The video is partly successful in establishing a connection with the viewer, but the connection is not deep enough to influence their actions. The characters introduced in the video are presented as " nameless faces " rather than people with stories . Therefore, they fail at creating a deep personal touch towards the video.	The video successfully establishes a connection with the viewer through emotional content, relatable characters, situations or other supporting elements like music. The viewer gets to know the characters in the video on a personal level as they are introduced as people with stories like the viewers themselves rather than "nameless faces" .
3	...utilises themes unique to the company/destination	The video reuses story themes that have already been told by others and do not fit the company/destination .	The video utilises story themes that fit the company but have been told by others already and hence are not unique/innovative .	The video utilises innovative story themes that are unique to the company/destination .

Appendix 2 2(3) Final version of Video Evaluation Matrix

4	...uses call(s) to action	There are no calls to action in video.	In the video, there is at least one indirect call to action , e.g. "You are welcome here", "you have to find your vision" or "Find your path".	In the video, there is at least one clear call to action , e.g. "Join us now!" or "Come and visit!"
5	...uses suitable music to support its message/story	The video does no use music at all.	The video uses music , but it does not support the video's message or the company's/destination's character and <u>could be replaced with any other or similar styled music.</u>	The video uses music, which supports its message through culturally/geographically suitable melodies, lyrics or a general mood creation (e.g. A fine dining restaurant could use soft piano music one would expect in the restaurant itself and which therefore suits the restaurant's character; or a hotel in Thailand uses traditional Thai music).
6	...is short and compact	The video is =30sec, <30sec or =5min, >5min.	The video is <1min or >4min OR the video is 1min-4min, but feels repetitive and does not use the time efficiently.	The video is =1, >1min and <3min long and uses its time efficiently as it does not feel repetitive and hence too long.

Appendix 2 3(3) Final version of Video Evaluation Matrix

7	...focuses on visuals, not text	The video strongly focuses on words and text and barely uses visuals , for instance it only shows one shot of a person talking about a topic or the company.	The video focuses on visuals, but lacks a narrator/explanation since the message can not be understood through the visuals only.	The video focuses on visuals and is - if at all - only <u>supported</u> by captions, subtitles key words and phrases; the message perfectly comes across .
8	...turns boring activities into something exciting	The video does not communicate the company's/destination's everyday practices .	The video shows the company's/destination's everyday practices , but does not present them as something special or unique .	The video highlights the uniqueness of the company's/destination's everyday practices and presents them as something special .
9	...communicates sustainability	Sustainability is not communicated in the video.	Sustainability is communicated through environmental, economic and social factors, but is not a core message of the video . (Mentioning sustainability is not the same as communicating sustainability) <u>OR only the sustainability label is being mentioned</u>	Sustainability is successfully presented as the core message of the video, putting environmental, economic and/or social factors in the centre of attention. (Mentioning sustainability is not the same as communicating sustainability)
10	...has a purpose	The video does not have a goal and can leave the viewer wondering why they watched the video.	The video tries to follow a goal but does only partly succeed; the approach is noticeable but it does not conclude successfully .	The video follows a clear goal that can be identified successfully .

Appendix 3 1(4) Website Evaluation Matrix

	0	1	2	3
	Sustainability Communication			
Certificates	Certificates are not visible on the website	Certificates are displayed but the visitor has to click 2+ times to find them OR certificates are displayed but not in the expected places (header, footer, body text on front page or sustainability sub page, about us page)	Certificates are not displayed on the front page but on either the sustainability sub page or about us page	Certificates are displayed on the front page (user might be required to scroll but no clicking through to another page required)
Frequency	There is no mention of sustainability or responsibility on the website	There is one mention (one sentence, one paragraph, one subsection) of sustainability somewhere on the website (except sustainability sub page or home page)	Website mentions sustainability on the home page OR sustainability issues are mentioned alongside relevant products or operations (when applicable) OR there is a subpage dedicated to sustainability where customers can get more information	Website mentions sustainability on the front page AND sustainability issues relevant to specific products or operations are mentioned alongside them (when applicable) AND there is a subpage dedicated to sustainability where customers can get more information

Appendix 3 2(4) Website Evaluation Matrix

Language	There is no mention of sustainability OR the website only uses the term "sustainability" without elaborating on what it means specifically to the business	Website uses a variety of standard sustainability terms (e.g. carbon neutral, green, eco) but does not elaborate on how these apply to or are interpreted by the company	Website uses standard sustainability terms AND elaborates on how these are interpreted by the company (e.g. How is carbon neutrality approached? What does sustainability mean to the company?)	Website uses standard sustainability terms only in a limited way and elaborates on how key terms are interpreted by the company. A wide variety of vocabulary is used to describe how issues related to the three pillars of sustainability are met within the company rather than focusing on standard terminology.
Transparency	Website does not mention sustainability OR [does mention sustainability AND does not display sustainability goals or strategies AND has not delimited their sustainability efforts]	Business has any sustainability communication on their website AND either shows goals or a sustainability strategy OR has delimited their sustainability efforts	Business has any sustainability communication on their website AND both shows goals or a sustainability strategy AND has delimited their sustainability efforts	Business has any sustainability communication on their website AND shows goals or a sustainability strategy AND has delimited their sustainability efforts AND has proof on the website in form of specific actions taken/planned

Appendix 3 3(4) Website Evaluation Matrix

<p>Integration</p>	<p>There is no mention of sustainability on the website OR sustainability is mentioned but there is no direct connection to the business products, processes, or story</p>	<p>Sustainability is mentioned once and has some connection to the core business i.e. a direct line can be drawn between the sustainable practice and at least one of the business' products, services, or operations.</p>	<p>There are 2 separate mentions of sustainability (min. a paragraph) both of which have some connection to the core business OR there are >2 mentions of sustainability, a portion of statements can be traced back to the business' sustainability strategy and/or core story.</p>	<p>There are >2 separate mentions of sustainability (min. a paragraph). Any mention of sustainable practices can be traced back to the business' sustainability strategy and/or core story.</p>
<p>Storytelling</p>				
<p>Facts</p>	<p>There is no core story on the business' website</p>	<p>The website shows ANY ONE of the following pieces of information: mission statement, vision statement, values, dreams, goals, owners' background or passions, business' establishment, business' timeline/history OR there is more than one piece of information but only passive language is used</p>	<p>The website shows ANY TWO of the following pieces of information: mission statement, vision statement, values, dreams, goals, owners' background or passions, business' establishment, business' timeline/history OR there are more than two pieces of above information but only passive language is used</p>	<p>The website has ANY THREE of the following pieces of information AND the information is displayed either the front page or a dedicated About Us page: mission statement, vision statement, values, dreams, goals, owners' background or passions, business' establishment, business' timeline/history AND at least some of the information is communicated using personal language (language fitting the business identity)</p>

Appendix 3 4(4) Website Evaluation Matrix

	<p>Imagery</p> <p>None of the text and language used on the website conjures imagery or evokes emotions in the mind of the reader</p>	<p>There is ANY text using language which conjures images (description of a scene, landscape, environment, activity).</p>	<p>Some of the facts (see row above) are expressed through language which conjures images and those images have the potential to evoke emotion in the target customer (there is or are characters, e.g. business owner or employee, which are described in sufficient detail for the target customer to be able to relate to them, e.g. there are details about their likes, dislikes, hopes, dreams, values etc.)</p>	<p>Each of the facts (see row above) is expressed through language which conjures imagery and evokes emotion AND the imagery and emotions are relevant and consistent with the business' core story (see row below)</p>
	<p>Narrative</p> <p>There are no story elements or story elements are isolated/not connected to each other to form a core business story</p>	<p>There is a SINGLE paragraph anywhere on the website which communicates ONE ELEMENT of the business' core story: a message (USP) OR characters (introduction of specific stakeholders, e.g. business owners, employees, etc.) OR conflict (mission, vision, what is the company's purpose? What are they fighting for or whom are they fighting against?)</p>	<p>The website communicates some or all elements of the business' core story: a message (USP) AND/OR characters (introduction of specific stakeholders, e.g. business owners, employees, etc.) AND/OR conflict (mission, vision, what is the company's purpose?)</p>	<p>The front page, About Us page or similar clearly communicates the business' core story: a message (USP) AND characters (introduction of specific stakeholders, e.g. business owners, employees, etc.) AND conflict (mission, vision, what is the company's purpose?) AND the themes of the cores story are repeated throughout the website both in text and through visual elements (images, font, colour scheme)</p>

Appendix 4 1(1). Combined results

Code	Category	Website 1	Website 2	Video	Total
		Sustainability Communication	Storytelling	Video	
01	Travel Agency	14	6	10	30
02	Accommodation	4	2	6	12
03	Accommodation	10	4	9	23
04	Guided Services	15	8	4	27
05	Accommodation	8	0	15	23
06	Guided Services	14	6	10	30
07	Travel Agency	13	3	11	27
08	Outdoor & Sports	12	6	16	34
09	Guided Services	13	7	9	29
10	Accommodation	10	6	8	24
11	Accommodation	7	4	11	22
12	Accommodation	14	9	11	34
13	Ferry Service	8	2	7	17
14	Events	11	5	-	16
15	Guided Services	12	8	11	31
16	Other	11	8	13	32
17	Outdoor & Sports	9	5	13	27
18	Accommodation	11	6	6	23
19	Accommodation	11	8	13	32
20	Accommodation	3	0	-	3
21	Accommodation	14	7	17	38
22	Accommodation	12	3	-	15
23	Accommodation	1	1	6	8
24	Attraction	9	2	13	24
25	Accommodation	10	6	9	25
26	Guided Services	13	8	12	33
27	Guided Services	8	4	-	12
28	Outdoor & Sports	10	0	13	23
29	Guided Services	10	1	-	11
30	Transportation	9	1	14	24
31	Guided Services	6	0	9	15
32	Guided Services	12	7	11	30
33	Accommodation	13	7	16	36
34	Accommodation	9	6	-	15
35	Guided Services	6	3	18	27
36	Guided Services	10	2	15	27
37	Accommodation	15	7	9	31
38	Outdoor & Sports	7	0	14	21
39	Attraction	10	7	14	31
40	Travel Agency	9	3	11	23
41	Ferry Service	5	2	9	16
42	Attraction	11	6	11	28
43	Accommodation	10	1	17	28
44	Events	10	1	14	25
45	Guided Services	7	0	16	23
46	Travel Agency	8	2	17	27
47	Tours & activities	11	3	16	30
48	Tours & activities	9	3	-	12
49	Accommodation	9	4	8	21

Appendix 5 1(3). Detailed testing process of matrices

The same two coders were involved in the testing of the matrices and the conduction of the quantitative quality analysis. The coders tested both matrices independently of each other, i.e. the individual companies were not discussed until both coders had completed their testing. Accuracy was determined by comparing scores given to each company for each category. Discrepancies were weighed differently depending on how severe they were. For the website matrix this was expressed as follows: same scores given by both coders received an accuracy value of 1 (i.e. 100% accuracy), scores which differed by 1 point received an accuracy value of 0.67 (i.e. 67% accuracy), scores which differed by 2 points received an accuracy value of 0.33 (i.e. 33% accuracy), and scores which differed by 3 points received an accuracy value of 0 (i.e. 0% accuracy). The individual accuracy values for each cell were added together and divided by, the number of categories in the respective matrix multiplied by number of companies, to attain the average accuracy for the test. Below is a visual representation of the formula used, with a corresponding to the accuracy of one category for one company.

$$\text{Accuracy Score} = \frac{a_1 + a_2 + \dots + a_x}{\text{Number of Categories} * \text{Number of Tested Companies}}$$

It was determined that an accuracy score of 95% would be suffice to move from the testing to the research phase. The first test of this type for the website matrix resulted in an accuracy score of 99.31% (Figure 18). Since the disagreement was a minor discrepancy, the matrix was deemed sufficiently reliable. No adjustments were made at this stage and no further tests were conducted for the website matrix.

	Accuracy								Score
	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4	Category 5	Category 6	Category 7	Category 8	
Company 1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Company 2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0.67	
Company 3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Company 4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Company 5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Company 6	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	99.31%

Figure 18. Table depicting accuracy scores per question per company.

Appendix 5 2(3). Detailed testing process of matrices

The first test of the video matrix resulted in an accuracy score of 73% (Figure 19).

Accuracy											Score
	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4	Category 5	Category 6	Category 7	Category 8	Category 9	Category 10	
Company 1	1	1	1	1	0.5	0.5	1	1	0	0.5	
Company 2	0	0	0.5	1	0.5	1	0.5	0	0.5	1	
Company 3	0.5	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	
Company 4	1	1	0.5	1	0.5	1	1	0	1	1	
Company 5	1	0	0.5	1	1	1	1	1	1	0.5	
Company 6	1	0.5	0.5	1	0.5	1	1	0.5	1	1	73%

Figure 19. Table depicting accuracy scores per question per company, first testing.

Following the first test, issues with the video matrix, such as overlapping score definitions, were discussed, and adjustments were made. The discussion of each company increased the accuracy of the first testing phase by 8% for a total of accuracy score of 81% (Figure 20). Further adjustments were made before proceeding with the second test.

Accuracy											Score
	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4	Category 5	Category 6	Category 7	Category 8	Category 9	Category 10	
Company 1	1	1	1	1	1	0.5	1	1	0	0.5	
Company 2	0	1	0.5	1	1	1	0.5	0	0.5	1	
Company 3	0.5	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	
Company 4	1	1	0.5	1	0.5	1	1	0	1	1	
Company 5	1	1	0.5	1	1	1	1	1	1	0.5	
Company 6	1	0.5	0.5	1	1	1	1	0.5	1	1	81%

Figure 20. Table depicting accuracy scores per question per company, updates after first testing.

In the second and final testing round resulted in an accuracy score of 96% (Figure 21), exceeding the minimum satisfactory accuracy. The testing phase was concluded and preparations were made for the primary quantitative content analysis.

Appendix 5 3(3). Detailed testing process of matrices

	Accuracy										Score
	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4	Category 5	Category 6	Category 7	Category 8	Category 9	Category 10	
Company 1	0.5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Company 2	1	1	1	0.5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Company 3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Company 4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0.5	1	1	1
Company 5	1	1	1	1	1	1	0.5	1	1	1	1
											96%

Figure 21. Table depicting accuracy scores per question per company, final testing.

Appendix 6 1(1). Video Evaluation Sheet for Interviews.

TEMPLATE

Interviewee:

Date:

Video X: Company Name

Link: ...

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Authenticity	Emotion	Uniqueness	CTA	Music	Length	Visuals	H./E.	Sustainability	Purpose

Total:

Notes:

Our evaluation video 1:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Authenticity	Emotion	Uniqueness	CTA	Music	Length	Visuals	H./E.	Sustainability	Purpose

Total:

Appendix 7 1(3). Complete Survey Questions.

--- Section 1 ---

Q1: Age

- under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65 and older

Q2: Gender

- Male
- Female
- Other
- I rather not say

Q3: Which of the following elements is most important to you when travelling for pleasure?

- *Adventure* - On my holidays I expect to discover new places and participate in adrenaline filled experiences
- *Culture* - I want to get to know the culture of the country I am visiting. E.g. through workshops led by locals or participating in cultural festivals
- *Eco-Tourism* - When travelling I like to experience nature. I am willing to invest more time and money to ensure my trips are as sustainable as possible
- *Relaxation* - I mostly travel to get a break from everyday life. I enjoy lying on the beach and reading a book, or getting pampered in a spa
- I don't usually travel for pleasure but for business, education, or to visit family
- I don't travel at all
- Other

Appendix 7 2(3). Complete Survey Questions.

--- Section 2, 3 & 4 ---

Q4: First look at the following website, then answer the questions below:

[new section for each company]

www.link-to-one-of-the-testing-sites.com

Q5: Are you generally interested in the types of activities offered by this company?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure

--- Section 5 ---

If respondent answered “Yes” to the previous question, they would be asked the following next:

Q6: How likely would you be to book them from this company?

Rate from 0 – 5, 0: Not likely at all, 5: very likely

If respondent answered “No” to the previous question, they would be asked the following next:

Q7: How likely would you be to recommend this company to a friend who is interested in these types of activities?

Rate from 0 – 5, 0: Not likely at all, 5: very likely

If respondent answered “Not Sure” to the previous question, they would be asked both Q6 and Q7.

Q8: Based on the website, do you feel invested in or emotionally connected to the company?

Rate from 0 – 5, 0: Not likely at all, 5: very likely

Appendix 7 3(3). Complete Survey Questions.

Q9: Based on the website, do you feel you have learned something personal about the entrepreneurs or staff?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Q10: Based on the website, do you believe the company values the following:

[Respondents were able to select one option per row]

	Yes	No	Not Sure
The environment			
Local people and culture			
Supporting local communities			
Contributing to local economy			

Q11: Were you able to locate sustainability information on the website?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

--- Section 6 ---

Q12: Sort the companies in hierarchical order from most liked to least liked based on your examination of their websites.

[Respondents were able to select one option per row AND column, i.e. each position (Most liked, Intermediate, Least liked) could only be assigned once]

	Most liked	Intermediate	Least liked
Company A			
Company B			
Company C			