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Creating blog posts to promote the cycling routes in Uusimaa Region

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The topic of this product-based thesis is blog posts related to the cycling routes in Uusimaa Region. The thesis is commissioned by Outdoors Uusimaa project where the author worked before starting the thesis process.

The purpose of the thesis is to create marketing content for the commissioner and improve the online visibility of the cycling trails in Uusimaa Region. The thesis focuses on a blog and three objectives were set for the blog posts: visually pleasant, good on-page search engine optimization and a link to route descriptions on outdooractive.com -portal. The blog posts are targeted for British adventure travellers, and more specifically cycle travelers.

The theoretical framework begins with placing adventure tourism and cycle tourism in the industry and discussing megatrends and trends related to adventure and cycle tourism. Secondly, different blog post types are presented and the writing process of succesfull blog posts is explained. In addition, the theoretical part elaborates the traget group, Visit Finland's FinRelax elements and search engine optimization.

The outcome of the thesis is five blog posts which were created with a help of one step-based guide and a SEO checklist. The development process of the blog posts is described by utilising the same guide and plenty of examples. The posts are briefly described in the text and appended at the end of the report.

In the last chapter, the posts are assesed and the completion of the objectives is discussed. To sum up, both the general objectives for the thesis and the objectives for the blog posts were accomplished partly. The main reason for not achieving all the goals was various difficulties with the brand-new Outdoors Finland website.

Finally, suggestions for further development are provided and the report ends with evaluation of the thesis process and the author's own learning.

| **Keywords** |
| Blog post, cycle tourism, adventure tourism, content marketing, SEO |

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1   Introduction

The topic of this product-based thesis is blog posts and it is commissioned by Outdoors Uusimaa project. In a nutshell, it is a project for developing the main cycling routes and mapping potential riding routes in Uusimaa region. It brings local entrepreneurs together and analyses the highlights along the trails to improve the attractiveness. The project aims to help entrepreneurs and businesses to network, use the nature better as a pull factor, as well as create service products around the routes, targeted for international travellers. Furthermore, a goal is to generate content for digital marketing channels in order to promote the trails among Central European and British travellers. The project is done in collaboration between two universities of applied sciences, Haaga-Helia and Laurea, the latter being the coordinator. The project started in autumn 2016 and was scheduled until the end of 2017 but will be continued until the 31st of March 2018. The project is financed by European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. (Laurea ammattikorkeakoulu.)

In Uusimaa region, there are five key cycling routes: Mustijoki River Valley, Lake Tuusula, Lohjanjärvi Lake, Helsinki West Region and Helsinki East Region. Beginning in Hyvinkää, Mustijoki River Valley is a 103 km long trail. It goes via Mäntsälä and Pornainen and ends in the town of Porvoo. It is divided into three stages and it is recommended to cycle one stage per day. The route goes along a country road and hence, it is not suitable for children. (Outdoors Uusimaa 2017.) As the name of Lake Tuusula route suggests, it goes around the lake. It is a 25 km long trail and easily cycled in one day, even with multiple stops. The route has a separate pedestrian and bicycle way, making it safe also for children. (Grönroos 2017.) Route Lohjanjärvi Lake is 313 km long and divided into five daily stages. It is moderately difficult and does not serve families with children (Iiskola 2017).

Helsinki West Region route goes from Helsinki to Hanko and by using different roads back to Kerava where it joins to Helsinki East Region route. The first part to Hanko is about 160 kilometres and is divided into six stages. The returning part has four stages and is approximately 177 kilometres. Due to the easiness of the trail and the number of stages, it can be cycled with children. Yet, it is not recommended for small children because instead of separate bicycle way, cycling is done on the shoulder of the road. (Salomaa 2017.) Following the King's road, Helsinki West Region route goes from Helsinki to Loviisa. It covers 209 kilometres and consists of four stages. The trail includes a returning part via different towns which is less than 180 kilometres. It is an easy route, but the daily stages

are longer than in the western counterpart, so it does not work for children. (Karlsson 2017.)

The purpose of the whole thesis is to create content for marketing functions of Outdoors Uusimaa project. The thesis focuses on a blog, since the other main channels of the project, for example a portal called outdooractive.com, were already covered. Being only a sporadic project, Outdoors Uusimaa does not have its own website and social media channels, so the blog content was planned to be published on Outdoors Finland's website. The blog posts were actually desired to be written within the project but due to not being so high on the priorities, they were left aside during the main working period that lasted until November 2017. The blog posts themselves are aimed to boost up thematic route descriptions on outdooractive.com. Hence, the posts will include a link to the descriptions. Along with the renewed site, the same route descriptions will be shown on the Outdoors Finland's pages but on account of the higher number of visitors, linking to Outdooractive-portal is wiser. The target group for the blog is British adventure travellers, especially bicycle travellers.

I worked on content creation for the Outdoors Uusimaa project from March 2017 to November 2017. My area of responsibility was photos and during the spring I coordinated multiple photoshoots with local companies in the surroundings of Mustijoki River and photographed those sessions. The summer was mostly filled with editing but in the autumn, I participated in a few more photo shooting days on the Helsinki Region trails and in Lohja, being both in front and behind the camera. The process included also the selection of the best photos sent to the cooperating companies, although the final choices for the outdooractive.com were made together with another Project Worker and Haaga-Helia's Project Manager.

I heard about the topic in the autumn 2017, when working for the project. Thus, I was very familiar with the project: goals, what has been already done, what was still needed etc. On the other hand, blog posts or short articles offered a new perspective because in my job I had focused on producing only photographs, not text. Additionally, the platform for publishing the material was different. The content in the project was published on outdooractive.com and the features of that channel were kept in mind during the creation process. In this sense, a blog gives more freedom. To give examples, aspect ratio, number of pictures and layout depends on the writer's choices, rather than the platform. Thirdly, I am interested in digital marketing, and I see those skills valuable both now and, in the future, so the topic feels really suitable for me.

First of all, the blog will be beneficial for the commissioner, Outdoors Uusimaa Project. It is necessary to be present in various channels nowadays because the potential customers are also scattered in various platforms, channels and apps, and the marketer should be where the customers are. It is not only an opportunity to reach more customers but also to engage with them. Outdooractive.com has good thematic route descriptions but they were not promoted on social media at the time of publishing. The aim of promoting is to improve the visibility of the new content and thus, it is important to talk about the trails in another channel as well. Outdoors Finland has some social media channels, including Facebook and Instagram but they are updated by various people and have a very general approach. In other words, they are not used for the purposes of single region and promoting specific routes, or even the route descriptions on outdoorarctive.com portal. Secondly, Outdoors Finland's new website will have more content and especially the English version of the site will be richer. The blog will provide a new possibility to reach international customers, both for the thematic route descriptions and Outdoors Finland's website.

Separate objectives were set for the whole thesis and the product, i.e. the blog posts. The general objectives for the thesis are:

- to create marketing content for the commissioner
- to get more visibility for the routes

The objectives for the blog posts are:

- visually pleasant, i.e. a lot of pictures
- content with good on-page search engine optimization
- include a link to outdooractive.com

The objective of the thesis is to improve the online visibility of the trails by creating related content. Online visibility means the general presence of a brand or its offering in the customer environment (BigCommerce). The blog posts are based on the concept of content marketing. Content marketing is a marketing approach which differs from copywriting and product advertising. While copywriting aims to generate desired action in the target, mainly purchasing the product or service, just like advertising, the purpose of content marketing is to raise brand awareness among the company's target group. (Baltes 2015, 112.) That is to say, content marketing is communicating without selling. The idea is to create interest, engage prospects and gain trust. Content marketing is based on a belief that sharing valuable information, expertise and opinions will eventually produce leads, revenue and loyal customers. (Harad 2013, 18.)

Content marketing strategies include education, editorial and entertainment. Educating means explaining a complicated concept in an easily understandable way. Editorials are about a writer's own opinions. In a world of endless theories and approaches, editorials give a possibility to stand out. Besides, content can serve by entertaining the target audience. Enjoyment is one reason to come back again. (Harad 2013, 19.) Content can take numerous formats, like blogs, podcasts, videos and social media posts and it can be created by the blogger, curated from third party content or syndicated. It is important to use the channels and platforms where the target audience prefers to engage with you. (Harad 2016, 20.)

Another key concept is a blog. The term blog is a shortened version of weblog which originates from two words, web and log. There are millions of blogs on the internet and the scholars do not have consensus about how to define the term. Some consider a blog as a medium, while others see it as a genre. Similarly, the characteristics of a blog, the possibility to comment and hyperlinks to other web pages, among others, divide opinions. What is important is to define the term clearly and precisely for the specific situation, for example research questions. (Garden 2012, 483.)

For this paper, Oxford Dictionaries give a clear starting point. A blog is a frequently updated web page or website which is usually written by a small group or an individual and in a casual or interactive style (Oxford University Press 2017). To make the definition more precise, the author would like to include a few characteristics for this case. The blog posts, or articles as they are called on the Outdoors Finland website, are presented in reverse chronological order, meaning that the newest is seen first. The posts are written by multiple people and they are combinations of text and images. There is no comment box on the site.

Because the target group, the key concepts include adventure and cycle tourism. Compressed into a few words, adventure tourism is a trip that comprises physical activity, cultural absorption and nature environment, or at least two of the aspects (World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) 2014, 10). Simply put, cycling tourism is a form of adventure tourism which main motivation is cycling (Weston & al. 2012, 19; World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) 2014, 12). Both terms will be expounded in the second chapter.

2   Leisure tourism, adventure tourism and cycle tourism

This chapter provides a short overview of leisure tourism. It locates adventure tourism in the industry and presents definitions and characteristics of the segment. Additionally, the chapter defines the niche of cycle tourism which is followed by a trend analysis. The analysis starts with megatrends and industry-specific trends, later narrowing down to trends within adventure and cycle tourism.

The global tourism industry has continuously grown over the decades, surpassing the business volume of oil exports, food products or cars. At the same time, tourism has experienced more intense diversification. (The World Tourism Organization UNWTO.) There are multiple perspectives of approaching tourism phenomenon, for instance the supply perspective specifying tourism sectors or demand perspective classifying flows of visitors, characterising visitors and trips, as well as categorising tourism expenditure. Narrowing down to tourism trips, they can be distinguished by several characteristics, such as main purpose, duration, origin and destination and types of transport. The main purpose of the trip is related to motivation, it is the main reason to make the trip because without it the trip would not have happened. The purpose of the tourism trip is a significant factor in identifying the key customer segments for planning, marketing and promotional purposes as well as examining the expenditure. (United Nations 2010, vii-24.)

According to United Nations (2010, 24) the main categories for the purpose of the trip are "personal" and "business and professional", as shown on the table 1. on the next page. "Business and professional" encompasses activities of employees and the self-employed and it can take forms of participating in meetings, congresses, trade fairs, foreign Government missions, scientific research, professional sports activities, among others. "Personal" category comprises all the purposes that do not fit in the classification of "business and professional" and it has been divided in eight subcategories. (United Nations 2010, 24.)

Table 1. Tourism trips classified by the main purpose (United Nations 2010, 24)

1. **Personal**	
	1.1. Holidays, leisure and recreation
	1.2. Visiting friends and relatives
	1.3. Education and training
	1.4. Health and medical care
	1.5. Religion/pilgrimages
	1.6. Shopping
	1.7. Transit
	1.8. Other
2. **Business and professional**	

The first subcategory, "holidays, leisure and recreation" include, for instance, sightseeing, taking part in cultural or sport events, sport activities in a non-professional way and using any entertainment and recreation facilities. The second is "visiting friends and family" and the third "education and training", meaning for example attending a program of study or skill-specific courses. However, on-the-job training belongs to the "business and professional" category. The fourth subcategory is "health and medical care", specified as using services of health and social institutions. The fifth subcategory is "religion/pilgrimage" and the sixth "shopping", covering purchasing for personal use, not for resale or other business purposes. The last two subcategories are "transit", referring to a stop on the way to the actual destination, and "other" which consists of all activities not belonging to any other subcategory, for instance voluntary work. (United Nations 2010, 25-26.)

United Nations' classifications present a general framework for conceiving tourism from the perspective of why people travel. Nevertheless, the classifications have been developed primarily for statistical functions and more elaborate categories need to be examined for the purposes of this thesis (United Nations 2010, iii). Under the leisure tourism can be found a category of adventure tourism. Adventure tourism is defined as a trip involving at least two of the following components: physical activity, natural surrounding and cultural immersion. It is illustrated in a figure on the next page. Anyway, trips which include all the three elements are likely to provide a fuller experience of adventure travel. Even though not so precise, another way to describe adventure tourism is by what it is not: mass tourism. Mass tourism is characterised by economies of scale, standardised products and minimisation of costs. Cultural immersion or education is scanty in mass tourism, contrary to the adventure tourism. Like all travel, adventure travel can be international or domestic and it has to incorporate an overnight stay and last less

than one year. Adventure tourism is one of the most rapidly growing categories of the tourism industry. (World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) 2014, 10-14.)
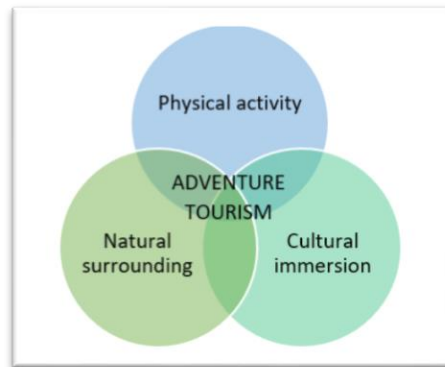

Figure 1. Elements of adventure tourism

Adventure travel has a few specific characteristics. Firstly, it is resilient. Adventure travellers seek off the beaten tracks and pursue authentic experiences. They take risks and may be even interested in places recovering from political or environmental setbacks. Secondly, adventure tourism draws high-value customers. According to adventure tour operators, the average expenditure is USD 3,000, the average trip length being eight days. In other words, adventure travellers are ready to pay for authentic and exhilarating experiences. Thirdly, adventure tourism supports local economies. The percentage of the tourism expenditure which stays in the destination is a lot higher in adventure tourism than in mass tourism. In most package tours only around 5% of the money spent goes to the local economy while the same number of an adventure package is around 65%. Moreover, adventure tourism encourages sustainable practices. Policymakers and practitioners in the sector know that both the nature and the cultural aspects need to be taken care of in order to maintain the competitiveness and keep customers. That can be achieved by following sustainable principles. (World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) 2014, 10-11.)

Adventure tourism has two main categories, hard and soft adventure but categorising is not straightforward. Adventure is a subjective experience because everyone's comfort limits vary. One's adventure can be a normal activity to the other. It is frequently debated which activities are part of each category. (World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) 2014, 12.) Nonetheless, Adventure Travel Trade Association, ATTA, which is "widely recognized as a vital leadership voice and partner for the adventure travel industry around the world" has created a classification to make it easier to understand the market (Adventure Travel

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Trade Association 2017a). In the categorisation, cycling is considered as a soft adventure activity (Adventure Travel Trade Association & George Washington University 2013, 4).

So according to ATTA, cycling tourism is adventure tourism which primary activity is cycling (World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) 2014, 12). Sustrans, a charity organization from UK which advances sustainable transport, provides a quite similar but broader definition. They describe cycle tourism as "recreational visits, either overnight or day visits away from home, which involve leisure cycling as a fundamental and significant part of the visit". (European Cyclists' Federation.) In the both definitions, cycling is an essential part of the trip but according to Sustrans, it does not necessarily need to be the number one activity. As ATTA's description is derived from adventure tourism, it includes only trips with an overnight stay while Sustrans regards also day visits as cycle tourism. However, Sustrans divides cycle tourism into three sub-concepts: cycling holidays, holiday cycling and cycle day excursions. Cycling holidays include at least one overnighting elsewhere than at home and the most important purpose of the holiday is cycling. (Weston & al. 2012, 19.) Therefore, ATTA's idea of cycle tourism is almost equivalent to Sustrans' definition of cycling holiday.

2.1 Megatrends and trends in tourism industry

This subchapter analyses global megatrends affecting the whole tourism industry but from the perspective of adventure tourism sector. Changes both in demand and supply are examined.

As mentioned in the beginning of the main chapter, tourism is one of the biggest and fastest-growing industries in the world. In 2015, the number of international tourism arrivals, that is overnight visitors, was 1186 million globally, generating a growth of 4.6% from the previous year. In their long-term trend report UNWTO predicts that the number of international tourist arrivals will increase over 3% annually by 2030, resulting in 1.8 billion overnight visitors worldwide. (World Tourism Organization UNWTO 2016, 2-3.) Anyhow, factors like who travels, to which destinations and why, are influenced by megatrends which are complex combinations of economic, social, political and technological movements modifying all aspects of society (Mittelstaedt, Shultz, Kilbourne & Peterson 2014, 254).

Globalisation has made the world smaller and traveling easier. The destination can be reached faster and at the same time with economic growth, millions of people have the

possibility to travel. Consequently, an increasing number of travellers are looking for alternative destinations instead of traditional, mass tourism destinations, and there is growing consumer interest in authentic, transformative and customised experiences. For adventure tourism, which experienced a growth of 195% in the global value between 2010 and 2013, it means a great demand in the future too. (World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) 2014, 6-20.) Secondly, the global population is aging. In 2013, the share of over 60-year-olds was 12% and it is calculated to amount to 21% by 2050. This makes the older population a very quickly growing segment in tourism. Senior population has good purchasing power, time to travel and comparatively good health. Silver-haired tourists are more active and have a stronger interest to see the world compared to previous generations. Silver-hair segment prefers personalised service and want experience-driven travel products. One product type can be soft adventure fulfilling the needs of young at heart. (Tutek, Gebbie, Chan & Durand 2015, 3-5.) In a nutshell, senior population will likely become a lucrative segment for adventure tourism.

On the other hand, Millennials are predicted to form half of all tourists by 2025. They emphasise interaction, exploration, emotional experience and technology. After Millennials, there is Generation Z. That generation wants real time information and concise messages in the format of images and videos. Interaction, co-creation and sharing will become even more important. Stickers and emoticons will replace text and service providers need to speak their language in multiple channels. (Tutek & al. 2015, 5-6.) Resulting from technological revolution, Konu & al. (2017, 17) recognise the phenomenon of being always online and digitally available. Hjalager & al. (2016, in Konu & al. 2017, 17) describe that nature travellers want to monitor routes and physical activity, share the experience on the spot and even find likeminded people in the area. On the other hand, some people want to break free from constant stimuli and being on alert all the time (Konu & al. 2017, 18). Digital detox can be part of any kind of holiday but Fuggle (2015, in Konu & al. 2017, 18) remind that special trips around the concept do exist. According to Fuggle (2015), Mattila (2014) and Speight (2016), 72% of British travellers got away from mobile devices as much as possible during their holidays in 2013 and this trend is foreseen to grow in the future (Konu & al. 2017, 18).

Nowadays three out of four international travellers use online information in trip planning, making the internet the most popular source of information. To compare, travel agencies are used by approximately one third of travellers. In 2014 World Travel Monitor studied also the most common internet information sources among these online-oriented travellers, and social media ranked third, only with a slight difference to websites of

destinations and accommodation. Consequently, social media was part of the information gathering for 235 million international trips in 2014. Breaking down social media, the most influential are review sites, travel blogs and travel forums and they affect especially on the destination and accommodation choices, not that much on the type of the holiday (IPK International 2015, 34-36). In adventure tourism, the technological evolution and rise of online information has led to disintermediation. The term signifies removal of an intermediary, such as travel agent or tour operator. Since the traveller has access to information and reliable reviews online, he can easily go directly to the provider. Hence, the traditional link between the customer in the source market and the service provider in the destination is not needed. For example, 71% of adventure travellers from USA make their travel arrangements only by themselves. The trend of disintermediation is more outstanding in mature markets but it is likely to change the supply chain also in developing markets. (World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) 2014, 21.)

To continue with the trends modifying the supply, health and healthy lifestyle must be mentioned. Improving health is becoming more important and naturally sports and recreation are part of health tourism product spectrum. On the other hand, traditional sports, like hiking, cycling and running are likely to get rivals from new fitness programs. What will be crucial for destinations, is the combination of services and constant, innovative development. Sustainability is another trend which is anticipated to grow its significance in the future. (Tutek & al. 2015, 12-15) For instance, three out of four British holidaymakers think sustainability is important, and generation Z considers sustainability as a standard (Tutek & al. 2015, 15; World Travel Market 2017, 40.) In the field of tourism, adventure segment is rather sustainable because it supports local economies and encourages sustainable practices. Anyway, sustainable tourism pays full attention to its economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts, both in short- and long-term, and balances between the needs of travellers, the industry, host communities and environment (World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) 2014, 15). That being said, adventure tourism can be fully sustainable with relatively small changes, comparing to many other forms of tourism.

All in all, the growth in demand for adventure tourism is expected to boost the supply of the segment. Destinations are increasingly identifying travellers' need for unique, perspective-changing experiences. This can be seen for instance in destination slogans, which are now developed adventure travellers in mind. To give some examples, New Zealand promotes its wildlife, mountains, hiking and culture with a tag line "100% Pure New Zealand" and Slovenia aims to attract travellers with a campaign "I Feel Slovenia",

highlighting mountains, caves and hiking. To put it differently, destinations are integrating adventure into their brand identity. Another phenomenon in the adventure tourism sector is an increasing number of companies with adventure as their main brand identity. Service providers are recognising that their existing service offering can be advertised as adventure products. Besides, new products are developed by modifying and expanding the offering to respond to increasing market demand. (World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) 2014, 22.) The growth in supply will likely mean increased competition between destination and companies.

2.2   Trends in adventure and cycle tourism

This subchapter narrows down to the trends related to adventure and cycling tourism. To get timely information on what is going on in the industry, ATTA surveys adventure travel tour operators every year. According to their latest study, the hottest trending activities, i.e. activities with high levels of demand, are hiking, eco-tourism, cultural and environmentally sustainable activities. Cycling is a "warm" trending activity, surpassing categories of "cold" and "cool", although not reaching the level of "hot". When trending activities are ranked separately in every region, cycling comes to the fifth place in Europe, right after hiking, cultural, environmentally sustainable and eco-tourism activities. The hottest trending destinations are Scandinavia, Southern Africa, South America, and Mediterranean. (Adventure Travel Trade Association 2017b.) The report does not tell if Scandinavia is seen as the common combination of Sweden, Norway and Denmark, or an extended concept including Finland. From the Finland's perspective it is good that there is high demand in the region but if Finland was not included in the trending countries, it may mean that Finland is not well-known enough in international adventure tourism market.

What comes to cycling tourism market and its current volume, there are no precise numbers available because the niche is not reported in Eurostat tourism statistics. Nonetheless, there is a model to estimate the volume and value of cycle tourism. In 2012, the annual volume of European market was estimated as 20.4 million overnight tourists resulting in a flow of 9 billion euros. If day visits are included, the estimated number of annual cycling tourism trips is almost 2.3 billion and the expenditure 44 billion euros. (Weston, R. & al. 2012, 13.) According to World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (2014, 23), cycling tourism, which contains mountain and road biking, as well as attending and spectating events, is growing globally.

The increasing interest in cycle tourism was noted by World Travel Market and is discussed in their Global Trends Report 2014. Likely factors boosting cycling tourism are spreading enthusiasm in fitness and experiential travel, and cycling is said to rival golf as a pastime for middle-aged men in Americas and Caribbean. Between 2012 and 2013, the number of cycling enthusiasts in the US has grown from 3.5 million to 3.8 million. Likewise, the demand of DuVine Cycling + Adventure Co, an American tour operator specialised in bike trips, has increased 70% since 2009. (World Travel Market 2014, 11-13.) In a global scheme of tourism trends, the rise of cycle tourism is placed in Americas and Caribbean but in a European scale, the biggest outbound markets are Germany and UK (Weston, R. & al 2012, 13). Michelle Duffy from DuVine + Adventure Co points out that cycling trips combined with other activities, such as hiking and kayaking, will be key to fresh experiences and appealing to new customers. Newer destinations have a chance to become more popular if they provide cycle-friendly services and robust infrastructure, for instance convenient roads (World Travel Market 2014,11-13.)

3   Creating successful blog posts

This chapter identifies the main types of blog posts, how they work and how they should be used. Secondly, it examines existing knowledge on how to write good blogs. Normally, when starting to blog, one must ponder factors from the theme to the platform and from the webhost to the domain name (Goodwin). In this case, the theme and site come from the commissioner, so it is relevant to move on to the post types and vet what writing good blog posts require. After raised in the writing process, target audience, possible blog post topics and search engine optimization are taken up more separately.

3.1   Blog post types

Roy (2016) introduces four post types underlining the generated traffic and leads. Ries (2016) has created a list of nine different types, keeping in mind not only visits and leads but also overcoming writer's block and increasing reader engagement with the help of variety. Van Marciano (2017) shares the idea of helping bloggers to write and get creative, including also the perspective of results: traffic, engagement, social shares and authority. However, he doubles the amount of types to 18 (Van Marciano 2017).

The first type on Roy's (2016) list is a long-form post. Van Marciano (2017) talks about the same phenomenon but calls it cornerstone content or massive value posts, referring to the value delivered to reader. The one or the other, they are comprehensive and detailed posts that really dive deep into a certain topic. They can consist of various forms of content, such as text, presentations in PDF, screenshots, graphs, charts and other visuals. Naturally, they take lots of time and effort to create. The recommendation is more than 2,000 words because they rank more easily on the first result page in Google, resulting in organic traffic and social media shares. (Roy 2016; Van Marciano 2017). According to data compilation and research by CoSchedule, posts with 2,250-2,500 words rank best in Google (Bergstrom 2018.) The Write Practices (in Bergstrom) agrees with the high number of words needed for optimal ranking in Google but reminds that the ideal length depends on the goal. Posts aiming for comments should have about 275 words and posts targeting to get social shares should have 600-1,500 words (The Write Practices in Bergstrom 2018). On the other hand, Moz (in Bergstrom 2018) suggests that bloggers should check their own data to see the specific post length preferred by their audience.

The second type is expert round-up posts, which have a specific topic and gather opinions of several well-established influencers within the niche. When the experts share the blog post on their profiles, they guide their loyal readers and social media followers to the blog. (Roy 2016.) Van Marciano (2017) presents another type that involves industry influencers: interview posts. The difference is that there is only one person answering the questions, but they work rather similarly with expert-round ups. Influencers draw a lot of attention and they are likely to share the post in their networks, boosting the visibility of the content (Ries 2016; Van Marciano 2017). Ries (2016) points out that interviewee can be also a customer or anyone relevant to the ideal customer and Van Marciano (2017) reminds about engaging the audience by podcast or video interviews. In fact, Van Marciano (2017) place emphasis on videos and podcasts also as their own post types because they have gained huge popularity in blogosphere. Apart from interviews, videos can be, for instance, screen casts, tutorials or reviews. What comes to podcasts, Van Marciano (2017) advises to utilise existing online tools and services in the set up and list the podcast in iTunes, which is largely used as a search engine.

Apropos of connecting with new audience, both Ries (2016) and Van Marciano (2017) take up guest posts. They bring a fresh perspective to the blog, increase networking opportunities and frees the blog owner from the writing for a while (Ries 2016; Van Marciano 2017). Usually the guest blogger benefits also from the cooperation and the situation is win-win (Ries 2016). The blog can have a specific guest post information page or bloggers can be invited individually (Van Marciano 2017). In any case, the guidelines of the blog must be made clear to the guest in order to maintain the tone of the blog (Ries 2016).

According to Roy (2016), infographics are one of the types that work, and they are deliberated also by Ries (2016) and Van Marciano 2017). Infographics are unique and grab the attention easily (Roy 2016; Van Marciano 2017). On top of that, they are informative and at the same time and entertaining and easy to digest (Ries 2016). Ries (2016) says that infographics are not the best method for generating leads, but they can drive visits and Roy (2016) states that infographics are shared three times more likely compared to other content formats. Ries (2016) recommends putting an embed code close to the infographic so that it is easy for others to embed it on their sites. It can increase the shares and lead to valuable backlinks (Ries 2016; Van Marciano 2017).

After infographics, list-based posts tend to perform the best in social shares, influencing also in traffic, backlinks and even email subscribers (Ries 2016; Roy 2016). Lists provide

information in a digestible form and they are easily scanned by busy readers who would not read other kinds of blog posts (Ries 2016; Van Marciano 2017). Van Marciano (2017) expresses another benefit; lists are easy to create. Nevertheless, he reminds that the longer the list, the better (Van Marciano 2017). As a separate type, Van Marciano (2017) presents data-driven posts which are defined as "a list of tips or methods for achieving a desired result" and the list is supported with statistics and data.

Ries (2016) and Van Marciano (2017) deem more post types useful, one of them being how-to tutorials. How-to posts are based on the fact that people go online to find instructions on basically everything, so the topic can be almost anything in the blogger's niche. If the blogger thinks the post will provide a solution to someone's problem, it is worth writing about. Sharing the industry knowledge will make the writer appreciated. (Ries 2016; Van Marciano 2017.) Van Marciano (2017) states that there cannot be too many how-to posts because the level of readers' expertise varies. Ries (2016) affirms that the more the blogger helps the audience, the more they will download the content, and adds that videos are a great, visual way for delivering tutorials. From how-to posts, Ries (2016) separates checklists and cheat sheets. Checklists are a step-by-step breakdown which work as a quick reference guide and do not leave any room for interpretation. When the checklists are useful for the readers, they want to devour and download more content. (Ries 2016.)

Newsworthy posts rely on timeliness (Ries 2016). They can be original news posts breaking current events or newsjacking posts combining an existing news story and writer's own opinions about it (DeMers 2014). People want to stay updated and when the blogger informs them about the latest trends in the niche, they see the expertise and start to trust. The more they trust, the more likely they buy (Ries 2016). In terms of newsworthy posts, Van Marciano (2017) talks about personal insight posts. If the blogger is commenting a hot topic, it is almost like a newsjacking post. Anyhow, personal insight post can also be a clarification to a phenomenon discussed on another blog or basically expounding personal knowledge, experiences or points of view on a certain topic. (Van Marciano 2017.) To continue with the trust aspect, Ries (2016) brings in personal story posts. The purpose is to be educational but at the same time bring a human aspect to the blog and strike a chord with the audience. Van Marciano (2017) writes about story telling posts as well but calls special attention to motivational aspect. Motivational tips or touching stories demonstrate to the readers that the blogger cares about them and their ambitions. Besides, inspiring posts can sometimes push traffic and comments as such. (Van Marciano 2017.)

As the last type Ries (2016) declares case studies. Instead of telling the readers something, case study posts show real life examples. The examples are a way for convincing the audience of the blogger's professionalism and that is why case studies are remarkable for lead conversion. (Ries 2016). Also Van Marciano (2017) takes up case study articles, laying stress on the value to the reader. When they are carefully crafted, they embody all important information, statistics, insights and additional resources about the topic. Resource posts are another type that can be valuable to the audience. Simply said, they are lists of beneficial links to other blog posts and articles on a given topic, but a great post requires a bit of bloggers own content sprinkled throughout the post. Having the best articles is important and tools like Ninja Outreach can help with that. (Van Marciano 2017.)

Van Marciano's (2017) list continues with online reviews, Q&A posts and progress reports. The logic behind the online reviews is that online shoppers are apt to be affected by blogs. Anyhow, blogger needs to stand behind the products or services. To make professional looking reviews and achieve better search engine rankings, it is recommendable to use review plugins. Question and answer posts are wonderful because they really respond to the audience's needs and interests. The first step is to listen the readers and ask what they want to know. Then the post is created using Q&A model. The posts focusing only one topic work normally better than posts discussing a variety of topics. Progress reports are posts where the blogger tells everything he or she has done to reach a particular goal with the business. Timeframe can be for instance a month and topics income or traffic generation and strategy implementation. (Van Marciano 2017.)

Van Marciano (2017) defines blog series as one type. Blog series give possibility to break down one topic and discuss it really in detail. Another benefit is that series can be stretched out in the editorial calendar and one or two posts published weekly. At least for a while, the blogger does not need to be concerned about new topics. The ultimate way to get people congregate to the blog, are blog contests. Over and above the traffic, they can spark comments and social media shares. If the prize is appropriate, the contest can unify the reader community and strengthen the relationship with the audience. (Van Marciano 2017.)

3.2 The writing process

Many marketing professionals have broken down the process of creating blog posts and it seems that there are almost as many models for it. Ellering (2016) presents a 5-point checklist with 10 subpoints. Longacre (2017) uses also 5-step guide but includes around 20 rules underneath the main steps. Leist (2017) sees the process as nine steps, while Morrow (2017) takes a tip list approach and introduces six points.

The first step in Leist's (2017) formula is to understand the target audience; what are they interested in and what do they want to read about. Likewise, Morrow (2017) talks about addressing a particular audience and highlights that the audience and its needs must be clear before developing the content. According to Leist (2017), the second step starts with choosing a topic and she emphasises avoiding too wide, general topics. Scott (2015, 268) introduces another aspect. Besides paying attention to the target audience, the topic should be something the writer is passionate about. If the author is not excited about the topic, writing becomes a struggle and the end result will be stilted which can be noticed by the readers. (Scott 205, 268.)

Leist's (2017) second step includes also thinking up a working title. The author can have several alternatives for the working title because creating them and then selecting one help in finding the focus and narrowing down the topic (Leist 2017). Headline is the step where Ellering's (2016) and Longacre's (2017) guides begin and Longacre shares similar ideas with Leist. Longacre (2017) recommends developing 5-10 variations of one title and the best one will then guide actual writing. According to Ellering (2016), the purpose of the headline is to be hooking because that is the reason why people click, read and share in the first place. Scherer (in Morrow 2017) clarifies that 80% of people will read only the title and 20% the rest of content. The headline should also contain the topic and value proposition for the reader. If subtitles are used, the author should pay attention to them too, as they provide an extra possibility to hook the reader. (Ellering 2016.)

Ellering (2016) and Morrow (2017) lump writing an introduction together with the headline, while Leist (2017) and Longacre (2017) separates it as its own step. Either or, all of them say that it has to be captivating and keep the reader's attention to prevent them from clicking away. It can be done for example by starting with an interesting fact, statistic, story, joke, personal opinion, question or being empathetic. Additionally, a good intro discloses the purpose of the post and how it will solve the reader's problem without revealing the solution itself. To rephrase, reader will be given a reason to continue reading

and a hint of how the post will aid them to improve their lives. (Ellering 2016; Leist 2017; Longacre 2017; Morrow 2017*.)* Ellering (2016) adds that in this phase intro is initial and it can be edited later.

In the step-based models the next phase is to organise the content with the help of an outline and thus, make the post easy to digest (Ellering 2016; Leist 2017; Longacre 2017). Outline is needed especially when a post has a huge amount of content and information, because no author wants to frighten readers by lengthy or overwhelming posts. Anyway, organising can be used to make every post more approachable, pleasant to read and easy to consume. (Leist 2017.) In other words, it increases the reader-friendliness of the post (Longacre 2017). There are various ways to do the organising, for example forming sections and subsections, adding subheadings, making lists with key ideas and sub-bullets or including tips but it is recommended to follow one format throughout the post (Ellering 2016; Leist 2017; Longacre 2017). The outline will define which points will be discussed and in which order. In that sense, it makes the post less overwhelming for the author as well. (Leist 2017.)

Longacre (2017) discusses some content-related aspects in the same step with organising. She calls for authentic advices, unique perspectives and new information as well as balanced paragraphs. She urges to generously share all the knowledge on the topic to provide complete solutions and gain loyal reader and customer bases. (Longacre 2017). The useful information and building trust in the audience are also incorporated in Morrow's (2017) list. The idea is to keep the readers in mind and think if the content is informative for them, teaches them something or answers their question. That way they will find the content valuable and notice the author's expertise without bragging. (Morrow 2017.) Ellering (2016) and Leist (2017) remind that the author does not have to rely solely on their own knowledge and writing step can include supplementary research. The goal – to have enough information, data and examples to support the points of the post - is comparable to informativity and comprehensiveness demanded by Longacre and Morrow. Of course, external sources need to be referred properly. (Leist 2017.)

The conclusion part of the text is discussed by Longacre (2017) and Ellering (2016) while the other two, Leist (2017) and Morrow (2017), focus only on call-to-action which comes later in the process. According to Longacre (2017), the end of the post should be a pep talk for the readers. It means encouraging the readers, telling what they can accomplish and how their life will turn out when they have put the blogger's advice into practice (Longacre 2017). Another rule for conclusions is that they should not involve any new

information because instead of sealing the post it would leave the readers disturbed. Ellering (2016) acknowledges that for the most part conclusions are not given enough attention and explains their functions. A good conclusion solves the problem, summarises the content and suggests readers action (Ellering 2016). Longacre's idea of motivational speech as conclusion fits well in how-to posts, like her own, or tip list posts but may not the best option for all post types, for instance newsjacking or curated collection posts. Ellering's points as well as Longacre's rule of avoiding new information are more general and easily applicable to any kind of posts.

At this phase, it is time to give the post to editor or colleague who will review the post. They will ensure that it makes sense and flows smoothly which is essential for the reading experience. If the author does not have another person to help, the recommendation is to leave the post to rest for at least one day. When returning to the post, the author will have fresh eyes and it is easier to recognise the spots that require improvement. (Ellering 2016; Longacre 2017.) Another tip is to read the text out loud because it helps in noticing complicated wording, exhausting sentences and choppy rhythm (Longacre 2017).

According to Leist (2017), the editing step includes proofreading and fixing the format. When the grammar is checked, the author will select images (Leist 2017). Visuals are now more important in the blog world than ever before and CoSchedule has noticed that their best performing posts comprised an illustration every 200 words (Bergstrom 2018; Leist 2017). Along with the frequency, the author should consider relevancy of the images and follow the copyright law. Visual appearance is also about organisation of the post, like headers and sub-headers separating blocks of text and defined borders for screenshots to make them stand out from the background. All these visual choices must be consistent from post to post. Together they will create a visual style and the blog looks more professional. If the blogging platform supports topic tags, they should be used. Tags are specific keywords describing the post and categorising them. With the help of tags readers can easily find associated posts on the blog. All in all, one blog should have maximum of 20 tags that represent all the key topics. (Leist 2017.)

Ellering (2016) approaches editing somewhat differently. Visual appearance means the balance between the text and white space, sharing similar idea with Leist (2017). However, Ellering's concept is limited to layout of text, while Leist discusses also additional elements, like screenshots. If examined closely, Ellering (2016) recommends checking the visual appearance already before the post is given to someone else for review and the real shaping of the post starts after the logic and conclusions are

confirmed. While Leist (2017) starts with proofreading and moves to visual aspects, Ellering does the opposite. The first thing is to check if the post follows the style guide, assuming there is one. Not every blog needs a style guide, for example solo bloggers can do totally fine without it but when there are more than one author on the same blog, a style guide makes it simple to ensure that the style of the blog stays consistent from one post to another. Just a one-page guide can do the job. Some examples to involve in the guide are sub-headlines with sentence case or title case, use of italic, bold and underline, the word "and" or ampersands. After the style check, comes proofreading and checking sentence structure and length. (Ellering 2016.)

Morrow (2017) says nothing about editing but Longacre (2017) provides a 22-point checklist for it. The list contains many similar points with Leist (2017) and Ellering (2016), for example seamless flow of the text, balance with text and empty space and consistency. Nonetheless, Longacre (2017) mentions many aspects that are not covered in other guides. She pays attention to single word choices as weak verbs and adjectives, such as "go" and "good", should be replaced with more concrete, descriptive words. When communicating advice, it should be done firmly, not using expressions with uncertainty, like "might" and "possibly". Still, the author should not lecture, rather show that he or she is on the same side with the audience and motivate them. (Longacre 2017). Compared to Leist (2017) and Ellering (2016), Longacre (2017) applies herself to verbal expression and her checklist deliberates many methods for influential writing, not only applicable for blog posts but other genres as well.

In Longacre's guide, the editing step is the last one but Leist (2017) continues to insert CTA, that is call-to-action. According to Ellering (2016), call-to-action is created already in the draft step, together with all the content of the post but he does not discuss it any further. Morrow (2017) reminds that every blog post should be ended with something that drives readers towards desired action, but he warns about using posts to urge readers to buy. Leist (2017) elaborates that CTA can be subscribing the blog, downloading or reading extra material or registering for an event. Usually CTAs are created the marketer's benefit in mind, but it can and should provide value also for the reader. When the CTA suggests similar content with the post, it becomes a valuable resource for the reader. The reader continues reading and business gets a lead to cherish. It is a win-win situation which has a possibility to evolve in customership. (Leist 2017.) Sprung (in Morrow 2017) explains the same phenomenon; using various types of CTA's, in several formats and addressing distinct parts of the marketing funnel, increases conversions.

According to Leist (2017), the next step is to optimise the post for on-page SEO. Ellering (2016) places search engine optimization together with the editing step and Morrow (2017) mentions four basic SEO rules that posts should follow. The rules are keyword optimised title, keyword anchor text, a good keyword density and keywords in the first and the last sentences but Morrow (2017) does not amplify what they mean in practice. Ellering (2016) suggest that the editor may be the one responsible for search engine optimization and briefly names creation of SEO metadata, like title, description and keywords, and shortening of page slug to optimal keyword phrase. The keyword should be included in the page title, meta description and headline. Furthermore, the keyword or similar words should be found throughout the text. (Ellering 2016.)

Leist (2017) indicates partly same SEO elements than Morrow (2017) and Ellering (2016), such as meta description, page titles and headers and anchor text but adds also mobile optimization. In addition, she gives some practical advice for implementation. Although meta description does not matter anymore for Google's algorithm, it gives a summary to the searcher and can enhance the clickthrough rate from the search. The ideal length is 150-160 characters. In many blogging platforms the post title is also the page title. Headlines should include keywords naturally and be less than 65 characters. Anchor text means words that link to other pages, one's own or someone else's. Search engines takes those words into account when ranking the page for specific keywords and thus, they need to be chosen carefully. Moreover, it is important to ensure that the site is mobile-friendly. It is not only Google's algorithm who penalises not mobile-optimised sites but also readers click away fast. (Leist 2017.)

The final step in Leist's (2017) guide is to choose a catching title. The author goes back to the working title and starts editing. The basic rule is to keep the title clear and accurate. Nevertheless, it is recommendable to spice it up by literary tactics, for example strong language or alliteration. The aim is to have SEO keywords in the title, but they should fit in there naturally. If that is not possible, it is better to leave them out. The last touch is shortening the title, but again, not to the detriment of the message. The limit for Google is 65 characters, otherwise the title will be truncated on the results page. (Leist 2017.) After this, Leist's (2017) process is over, while Ellering's (2016) guide continues with two more steps.

According to Ellering (2016), between a ready post and publishing lies a step of creating associated content. This related content is for spreading the word about new post and it has various forms. One type is giveaway content. This is quite easy if the blogging team

has a graphic designer to create images and design infographics etcetera. Anyway, it can be also a checklist, template, guide or worksheet, whatever supports the post best. Editable documents like Microsoft Office or PDF are the formats to go for and they can be embedded to the posts with a tool, such as LeadBoxes. Moreover, content for social media is needed. Instead of creating posts from the scratch, for example quotes and summaries as well as images and graphics of the blog post can be used. Posts can be timed to make the publishing process easier and there are also tools to help in generating sharable quotes about the blog post. Finally comes publishing the post and promoting it. Besides the social media posts created and scheduled in the previous step, promoting means also sharing it to the email list. Furthermore, it is participating in conversations on social media, and naturally in the comment section of the post. Then it is time to think how the blog post can be repurposed later and incorporate it in the editorial calendar. (Ellering 2016.)

To sum up the similarities between four models, the importance of headline and introduction are acknowledged in everyone. Drafting and organising the content, as well as editing, are included in all three step-based guides. Search engine optimization is covered by three authors, Leist (2017), Morrow (2017) and Ellering (2016), although the extent varies. Call-to-action is mentioned by Ellering (2016), Leist (2017) and Morrow (2017), but only the latter two really discuss it. Leist (2017) and Morrow (2017) are also the ones who bring up the target audience, differing from Ellering (2016) and Longacre (2017) in that sense.

Regarding differences, more than the list type, amount of points and the order of them, can be found. Morrow (2017) focuses more on telling what is needed for great blog posts than describing how to do it in practice. He presents statistics or quotes from industry professionals to back up is points but otherwise the topics are passed relatively fast. On the contrary, Longacre's (2017) guide seems very extensive at first. A closer examination reveals that it concentrates only on text, although doing that comprehensively. Apart from 22-point checklist for editing and 20 writing rules under the steps, Longacre (2017) provides practical examples and gives extra tips for every step, covering numerous literary tactics and the structure of the post.

The other guides are more all-round. Ellering (2016), for example, recognises associated content and promotion as essential parts of blogging process. Still, his guide may not be enough for individual bloggers, because many of the steps, like SEO and creation of related content, are discussed very briefly, relying on the assumption that many writers

have a team of colleagues, editor and graphic designer behind them. Leist's (2017) guide starts from an earlier situation where the needs and interests of the target audience are identified, then guiding the selection of the topic. In a way, Leist's (2017) model is more suitable for individual writers because she elaborates every step with practical advice. Besides, she talks about visual elements, like images more than any of the four writers. Those are also the reasons why Leist's (2017) model, as illustrated in the figure on the next page, was chosen to usher the writing process of the blog posts.
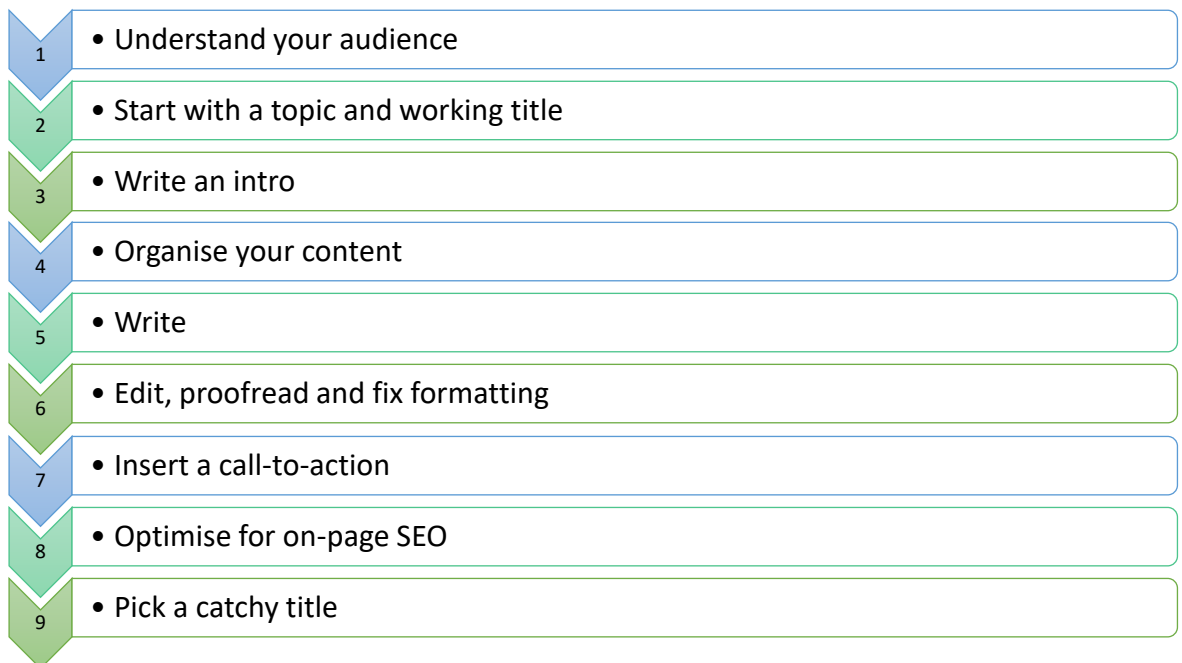
1	• Understand your audience
2	• Start with a topic and working title
3	• Write an intro
4	• Organise your content
5	• Write
6	• Edit, proofread and fix formatting
7	• Insert a call-to-action
8	• Optimise for on-page SEO
9	• Pick a catchy title

Figure 2. The selected model for writing the blog posts, adapted from Leist (2017)

3.2.1 Target audience

This subchapter describes the target group of the product. According to Leist (2017), the first step in blogging is to understand the audience. Basically, the main target group for whole Finland in tourism marketing is a group called modern humanists. The definition of the target group lays on two dimensions: modernity and variety of life, and humanism and caring. In a nutshell, modern humanists value quality of life, responsibility and pure nature. They have seen many destinations already and are looking for new, different options. (Visit Finland; Visit Finland 2010.)

Regarding Finland, modern humanists find unique and beautiful nature appealing. They consider Finns as friendly and hospitable. They are interested in combining activities with relaxation and visiting neighbouring countries, like Sweden and Norway, on the same trip. On second thought, they have scruples about high price level, distant location and

unpleasant climate. In marketing, it is meaningful to highlight the appeals and try to overcome the doubts. To give an example, connections to Estonia, Russia and Scandinavia and the variation of four different seasons can be communicated. (Visit Finland 2014, 12-13.)

Modern humanists are a very broad group which can and should be segmented. Visit Finland (2014, 39) has distinguished three important segments for Finnish businesses: culture fans, active families and modern humanist couples. Active families, including a subsegment of young nature adventurers, is the most interesting segment for this paper (Visit Finland 2014, 39). Therefore, the emotional profile of adventure traveller is specified. Adventure travellers consider themselves kind, imaginative and intellectuals. They search for new experiences and see traveling as enriching knowledge. They put effort in having a healthy body. They are interested in cultural traditions and indigenous communities and enjoy cultural immersion. They do not care much about owning luxurious products. Rather, they are moderately altruistic and give sometimes to others (Yli-Piipari 14 November 2017.)

What can be said about demographics and habits of adventure tourists? To begin with the gender, different studies show different percentages for men and women. In 2013, Adventure Tourism Market Study stated that 57% are men and 43% women. The following year, a worldwide trade study turned shares around saying 53% are female and 47% male. Nonetheless, differences are rather slight and simply said, around a half of adventure travellers are men, or similarly, women. More than one third holds at least a 4-year-degree and 11% professional degree. Adventure tourist earns annually on average 37,600 euros. 37% of adventure tourists travel with their partner, 30% with family, involving children, 21% with friends and minor portion alone. The most commonly mentioned reasons to do adventure travel are relaxing, exploring new destinations, spending time with family and learning other cultures. When selecting their most recent destination, three most important factors were beautiful nature, activities, and climate. The three most common methods for preparing the last trip were researching online (69%), consulting friends and family (64%) and booking a flight ticket or hotel online (36%). (World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) 2014, 15.)

The target group for the thematic route descriptions are bicycle travellers. The general profile of a bicycle traveller is quite similar to the one of adventure traveller, but some factors vary, and therefore it is presented separately. 60% of the cycling travellers are men and 40% women. The majority have secondary education and some of them

university education or professional status. The half travels in pairs, 20% alone and 20% in small groups, meaning three to five people (Weston & al. 2012, 37). This division is based on the number of the traveling party, not making a distinction the between partners, family members and friends, like seen on the adventure traveller profile. The annual household income is on average 24-36,000 euros and the average age 45-55 years. The most common motives are nature and landscape, joy in cycling and relaxation and leisure. The average length of stay is 5-8 days and the main season for cycling travel is from May to August, covering almost 80% of all trips. (Weston & al. 2012, 37-41).

Some of the cycling travellers devote their holidays only on bicycling and they are called as dedicated cyclists. The biggest segment is interested also in other activities, like canoeing, hiking or fishing and they are called participant cyclists. (Räsäsnen, 6-7; Weston & al. 2012, 37). All bicycle travellers need services at the destination or along the trail, for example accommodation and food. Notwithstanding, other requirements, wants and interests vary and thus, they can be segmented for example to four different categories: occasional cyclists, short stage cyclists, long stage cyclists and active cyclists. (Räsänen, 6-7.)

Occasional cyclists ride slowly, less than 10 kilometres per hour and the trip length is maximum couple of hours. They stop often and may have children with them so easy bicycle paths are preferred. They travel with family and friends and cycling is a social activity. They are motivated by spending time and doing something together outdoors, in the nature. Short stage cyclists ride 30-40 kilometres in a day. They stop often and like to visit attractions along the route. Their main motivations include sociality and enjoyment of exercise and outdoor recreation. Long stage cyclists ride over 40 kilometres in a day stopping only a few times. They enjoy varying ground and riding as a physical activity. The attractions are mostly visited in the evening, after the cycling. Active cyclists ride very long distances in a day, even over 200 kilometres. They ride fast and want trails to be challenging, for example hilly, or even dangerous. They are competitive thrill-seekers who want to keep fit. Nutrition and bike maintenance are highly important. (Räsänen, 8-11.) The routes included in Outdoors Uusimaa project are regional and hence, serving the first three categories. They are also on the focus of blog posts.

Cycling is part of the soft adventure activities included in Visit Finland's development strategy for summer nature tourism. The main target group for summer nature tourism and its activities are modern humanists from Europe, especially Germany, France, United Kingdom, Benelux countries, Austria, Switzerland, Italy and Spain. (Matkailun

edistämiskeskus 2014, 8-28.) At the same time, Germany and Great Britain are the biggest countries of origin of bicycle travellers (Räsänen, 7). The author does not speak German and to be able to produce the content in the language of the target audience, Brits were selected. No information was found specifically on the British cycle travellers' wants, but British modern humanists are more interested in the local food culture and the combination of activities and relaxation during the holiday. Some examples of interesting summer activities are fishing and canoeing. Adventures in nature and Finnish sauna experience are considered appealing, while the culture offering and interaction with locals are less important. (Visit Finland 2014, 18-38.)

3.2.2 FinRelax elements as possible topics

This subchapter unfolds Visit Finland's FinRelax elements. They were a quintessential part in the development of the thematical route descriptions in Outdoors Uusimaa project and thus, provide possible topics for the blog posts.

FinRelax as a whole is one of Visit Finland's themed growth programmes. Briefly, the purpose of the programme is to make Finland the leading wellbeing travel destination. The FinRelax programme is mainly targeted for Russian, German and Japanese markets but United Kingdom is a market under monitoring. (Visit Finland 2018b.) The ideology behind the FinRelax concept is that Finland is mostly know from its nature-related pull factors, such as forests, lakes and peace. Finnish people live close to the nature and nature-related activities, for example picking berries and mushrooms are part of the everyday-life. (Visit Finland 2018c.)

The FinRelax holiday consists of six elements, the first being Finnish sauna and sauna traditions. The sauna experience is at its best when the health benefits are communicated with the help of cultural stories about sauna. The second element is cottage holiday, which actually combines many other elements, sauna, nature, peace and pure water. Pure water is not only about beautiful landscapes relieving stress but also about water activities that promote both psychological and physical wellbeing. Forests as such are important places for Finns to wander and sooth the mind but they provide berries and mushrooms which are real Finnish super foods. Nowadays mindfulness is closely linked to wellbeing travel and silence and peaceful nature provide optimal circumstances for loading the mental batteries. Finally, the significance of the food is highlighted on wellbeing holiday. Healthy, locally produced, food from pure ingredients is what the wellbeing traveller wants. (Visit Finland 2018c.)

3.2.3 Search Engine Optimization

In this subchapter search engine optimization is discussed further. SEO was mentioned by Leist (2016) Ellering (2016) and Morrow (2017) in the writing process guides, communicating its significance in the process. Anyhow, Ellering (2016) and Morrow (2017) passed it rather quickly and hence, the topic is discussed in detail.

Research suggest that there are over 250 elements scrutinised by search engines when they rank websites and for instance Google's algorithm changes constantly (Keaney Anderson 2017; Shenoy & Prabhu 2016). Thus, it is extremely challenging to keep up with all the factors and many professionals recommend focusing on the SEO basics (Cleary 2015, 292; Keaney Anderson 2017; Shenoy & Prabhu 2016; Wilson 2016) SEO factors can be divided for example to on-page, on-site and off-page categories. On-page SEO is relevant to individual pages and it involves title tags, meta keywords and description, headings, engaging content, image optimization, interactive media as well as outbound and internal links (Cleary 2015, 292; Shenoy & Prabhu.2016).

What comes to page titles, the best practice is to create them to educate readers about the page content. The best titles are simple, precise and concise, not sensational. (Shenoy & Prabhu 2016.) Anyway, humour and questions can be good generators for clicks and social shares (Keaney Anderson 2017). The sooner keywords appear in the title tags, the greater effect they have (Keaney Anderson 2017; Wilson 2016). Meta keywords and descriptions do not influence Google's ranking anymore but when the description is informative and apt, it can attract readers and thus work like a free ad for the page. (Shenoy & Prabhu 2016.) Heading tags refer to h1, h2, h3 and so on until h6. The most important is the first level; it has to be relevant for the content on the page. (Shenoy & Prabhu 2016; Wilson 2016.) Heading levels should always be used in order (Shenoy & Prabhu 2016). Along with facilitating skimming and content digestion, headers provide precise information for search engines (Wilson 2016). Like in title tags, keywords placed at the beginning of a heading tend to generate better results, but spamming and irrelevant words impact negatively (Shenoy & Prabhu 2016).

Engaging and meaningful content is a crucial factor (Cleary 2015, 290; Shenoy & Prabhu 2016; Wilson 2016). The aim of valuable and unique content is to stimulate buzz around the content, for instance social shares (Wilson 2016). Sharing can be made fast and easy for the readers by integrating social sharing icons (Keaney Anderson 2017). Google has a

preference over updated and fresh content, so besides relevant content, pages need updating and blogs new content regularly. Bad-quality content will lead to higher bounce rate, i.e. the number of people who leave the site after visiting only one page, which will then have a negative effect on the visibility. SEO is not only text-based anymore, so images, videos, audio and infographics need attention. (Shenoy & Prabhu 2016.) Descriptive file names, captions and alternate text around those media will make them more understandable for the algorithm. Recommended image formats are JPEG and PNG and to reach the optimal loading time, the size should not be more than 80-90 kB. (Shenoy & Prabhu 2016; Wilson 2016.)

Internal links are links to other pages on the site. All the pages on the site should be reachable by three clicks from the home page and breadcrumbs are a good tool for providing that. Good link structure means smooth access and pleasant experience for the user as well as easy crawl for the search engine. Outbound links lead to another sites or domains. Outbound links are a possibility to provide user a more information on a topic without the need of creating the content by yourself. It can help in building credibility of your site, but the quality of the linked sites must be checked. Otherwise it will only harm the site, both in the eyes of the users and search engines. (Shenoy & Prabhu 2016.) Related to links, significant component is anchor text. It presents the destination to both users and search engines, but it should be created the user on mind. Anchor text should be as descriptive as possible and generic calls-to-actions, like click here, should be avoided. (Wilson 2016.)

On-site SEO features affect the whole website and they consist of URL optimization, site maps, domain trust, localization, mobile site optimization and responsiveness and site-loading speed (Shenoy & Prabhu 2016).

Off-page SEO means external factors and comprises of social media, blogging, localization and local citations and inbound links (Shenoy & Prabhu 2016). Shenoy & Prabhu (2016) discuss blogging as an external function for the site and in that case links from the blog to the site can improve the page rank. Nevertheless, in the case of this thesis the blog is one part of the website, so linking to the site would be internal. Localization and citations can work for local businesses but not for blog articles (Shenoy & Prabhu 2016). So far Outdoors Finland has not shared blog updates on their social media, but it would be relevant if it would become part of their social media practices. Inbound links are links to your website which originate from other domains. If they come from sites with high page rank, they enhance your credibility and boost your ranking (Shenoy &

Prabhu 2016). One of the best ways of link forming is earning them naturally (Cleary 2015, 293). Since the scope of this thesis is limited, the author focuses on quality content, resulting in referral links or not.

To conclude the on-page SEO elements that can be affected in this thesis, the following list was created. Combining Ellering (2016), Keaney Anderson (2017), Leist (2017), Shenoy & Prabhu (2016) and Wilson (2016), the most important on-page SEO practices for a blogger are:

- Including the keyword or keyword phrase in the title, meta description and headers, as well as mentioning it every now and then in the text, if it goes there naturally.
- Creating precise headline and keeping it under 65 characters.
- Keeping meta description between 150 and 160 characters.
- Adding images descriptive file names, captions and alternative text.
- Creating more descriptive anchor texts than "click here".

4   Practical process

This chapter describes the thesis process and its progress in practice. To begin with, the background of the project is elaborated, and a project plan is presented. In addition, the product development is disclosed with multiple examples, and the outcome of the project is demonstrated.

4.1   Background and the project plan

In this subchapter, the background of the project is clarified and a project plan for the thesis is displayed. As referred in the introduction, the possibility of writing blog posts for Outdoors Uusimaa as a thesis was discovered in September 2017. The decision to take it as a thesis topic was made during the same month.

Due to the author's rather busy work situation and the commissioner's wish to clearly separate the thesis from the project work, the thesis process was properly started at the end of October. To define the topic, the commissioner was met in November. At that time, both the author and the commissioner were in a belief that new Outdoors Finland site was almost ready and just about to be launched and a commissioning agreement was made.

Later, when the thesis process had been already started, it was found out that the website project was only at an application stage and there was no estimation about the completion of the site. The alternatives, suggested by the commissioner, were to write posts for the future site, possibly leaving the posting for the company or to find a totally different platform or channel for the posts. Both options were contemplated, and the author mapped out other platforms by going through Visit Finland's analyses of distribution channels for summer adventure tourism in the British market, among others.

The channels discovered were mainly targeted for companies to sell their products or private people to share their own, personal travel experiences. In some cases, the content was created by one blogger or small administrator team and users were only able to comment. Since a suitable platform was not found, the author decided to keep the original perspective and create the posts for Outdoors Finland's future website. At the end of November, the thesis outline was finished, including a timetable plan for the thesis writing. The same chart is shown on the next page.

Table 2. Planned timetable for the thesis project in a form of Gantt chart

TASK	WEEK NUMBER																	
	48	49	50	51	52	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Theoretical framework	░	░	░	░		░	░											
Planning the methods	░	░	░	░		░	░											
Developing the product and describing the process								░	░	░	░	░	░	░	░			
Writing the report																░	░	░

Theoretical part of the report was planned to be written until mid-January 2018. The eight following weeks were reserved for creating the product and describing the process. Writing the rest of the report and finalising was scheduled in the latter half of March. In January, when the presentation days were published, the closest options for the thesis presentation were the end of February and the beginning of April. The author knew that the end of February would be too early so the 5th of April was selected and the initial deadline for completing the thesis was moved to the end of that week, that is week number 14.

4.2   Product implementation

This subchapter explains the creation process of the blog posts by using a lot of examples. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, Leist's (2017) guide was chosen to guide the writing process. The first step, understanding the audience, was described in the subchapter 3.2.1. Thus, this subchapter focuses mainly on the remaining steps.

4.2.1   Selecting topics and working titles

The second step was choosing a topic and working title. Topic formulation was a multi-phased process. Some possible topic ideas, such as Visit Finland's FinRelax elements, were shortly presented already in the thesis outline and more ideas were developed along the writing of the theoretical part. When an idea sprang to mind, it was written down on the thesis document immediately. When the theoretical part was finished, the author already had a quite long list of possible topics developed from various perspectives. However, based on the theory, a few more possibilities were added. The approaches were

- Megatrends and trends related to adventure tourism, for example multigenerational routes, technological applications or digital detox
- Visit Finland's general marketing themes, such as silence, adventures and culture
- FinRelax elements, for instance sauna, forest, water and food
- modern humanists' interests and doubts related to Finland
- British modern humanists' special interests
- miscellaneous ideas deriving from the author's own experience on the project and the trails, as well as the existing photo material, for example points of interest.

Coming up with the ideas was very easy but selecting the themes and narrowing them down to specific topics turned out rather difficult. Multiple aspects had to be considered. The topics had to be interesting for the target group but also for the author, to avoid affected posts. The posts had to be linkable to the cycling trails to fulfil the objective of including a link to outdooractive.com but not repeat the same things as the thematical route descriptions. To find touchpoints but avoid exact similarities, route descriptions were read thoroughly on outdooractive.com. Besides, during the topic formulation process it was found out that also the project team was writing posts for the same site, so it was necessary to make sure none of the posts would overlap with each other. The photo material produced in the project was looked through to see which topics could be matched with photos and which not. To give an example, the topics emanated from the trend analysis did not have much suitable photos and hence, were left out. The uniqueness of the topics was tested by checking Google's search results because some of the topics were already addressed a lot, while others had barely any content about them, especially in English.

In the end, the author decided to focus on British modern humanists' interests, FinRelax elements and points of interests along the trails. The interests of British modern humanists were seen as a must factor in order to produce interesting content for the target group. FinRelax elements were selected because they were also emphasised in the development of thematic route descriptions and therefore, the photos fit to them perfectly. By using FinRelax themes as an inspiration, the existing photo material could be put in use.
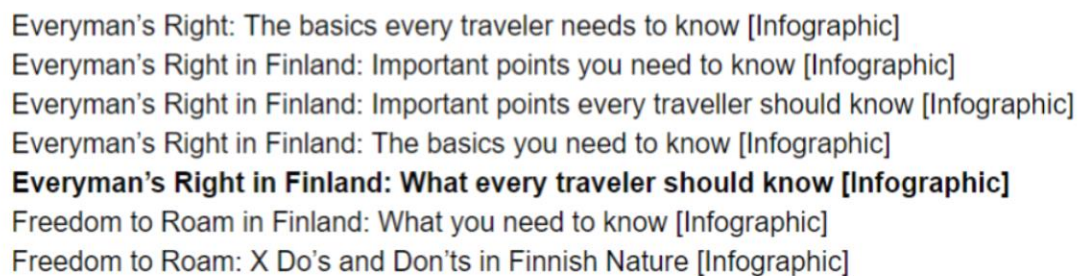
Additionally, it was noted that two remarkable points of interest were lacking comprehensive content in English, and as the author had a personal experience of visiting them, they were pleasant topics to write about. Not to mention the participant cyclists' want to visit attractions and experience varying activities along the cycling trail. Besides, the preferred approaches had many touch points with each other. For instance, the Dagmar Park was firstly selected as a point of interest but the place is largely all about pure water, manifesting one of the FinRelax elements. Furthermore, although the trend-related topics were not chosen as such, the health trend later impacted the defining of one topic and the principle of combining multiple activities is clearly seen on the water activity post. To put it differently, the posts reflect the trends indirectly, as they have been taken an account by Visit Finland's FinRelax concept and the Outdoors Uusimaa project team.

At that point, the topics on the list were still quite broad. To give examples, there were sauna and Everyman's Right. That is when the different post types were brought in the

picture and ideas were moved from the thesis document to Google Docs for further processing. Google Docs was selected because it was easy to access the document everywhere, with different devices. Based on the theory, suitability to Outdoors Finland site and the framework of this thesis, list, how-to, infographic, video and long-form posts were contemplated. Long, massive value post was left out because sauna was the most interesting topic for the author to write about but due to aiming for visual posts, there were not enough photos for over 2,000-word long post. Creating a video of the existing photo material would have been an intriguing task for the author but videos were not really discussed in the theory, so it was excluded. Besides, Mustijoki's activities was basically the only topic for which there was enough photos, but the activity companies did not have websites or social media channels in English. Presenting the activities without being able to provide further information was not thought to be meaningful and valuable for the readers. As a result, list, how-to and infographic were the optimal types for these posts.

Basically, many of the posts were possible to do in multiple ways, for instance the food post could have been a list and a how-to post. The author did not want to do many posts of the same type, so it was challenging to pair up post topics and types, because one selection always affected the rest of the decisions. Everyman's Right and infographic made an exception because relatively much information about it was found but it was largely text-based so a visual representation made sense. Despite the challenges and time used in it, pairing topics and post types helped to narrow down the perspective of the post at the same time.

Before nailing down the decisions, more research was done. As an example, it was noted that a lot has been written about Finnish sauna culture and traditions and how to act in a sauna. Health aspect occurred from the trends and the author noted that health benefits of sauna were discussed moderately but almost always regarding frequent sauna bathing. Stepping in the shoes of British cycling traveller, the author chose to clarify the benefits they can get from one sauna session while on an active holiday in Finland. What comes to the working titles, multiple options were created and the chosen one was bolded. This is shown in the image on the next page by using the Everyman's Right post as an example. The alternatives were kept on the document for the last step, finalising the headline.

Everyman's Right: The basics every traveler needs to know [Infographic]
Everyman's Right in Finland: Important points you need to know [Infographic]
Everyman's Right in Finland: Important points every traveller should know [Infographic]
Everyman's Right in Finland: The basics you need to know [Infographic]
Everyman's Right in Finland: What every traveler should know [Infographic]
Freedom to Roam in Finland: What you need to know [Infographic]
Freedom to Roam: X Do's and Don'ts in Finnish Nature [Infographic]

Image 1: Screenshot of the alternative headlines for the Everyman's Rigt post

4.2.2   Writing introductions and drafting

The next step was to write an introduction. As referred in the theory, the post can be started in multiple ways, and those were made good use. The Dagmar Park post was started with a story, the sauna post with a proverb, the water activity post with a fact and the Everyman's Right with a personal opinion. Mainly the author found writing introductions smooth, but the last one, for the food post, was not straightforward. Revising the theory furthered the step and a question was elected to begin the post. Moreover, the purpose of each post was included in the introduction.

The fourth step was to outline the post and lists were used in that. For shorter posts, very simple lists were enough. The outlines of the longer posts, such as the sauna post, required more work. First, all the benefits were listed and then grouped for physical and mental. That division was not sufficient, so stretching-related points were separated as one part. As the general tips for optimising the benefits did not really fit in under the other subheadings, they got their own section at the end. To sum up, drafting the longer post was more complicated but also more helpful considering the next steps.

The infographic was created between drafting and writing. The author tested three different sites, venngage.com, visme.com and canva.com. The author knew Canva beforehand and had used it for social media posts but the templates for infographics were checked. At first, Canva seemed promising but the author noticed that many nice illustrations cost. That is why the author checked Venngage and after finding a great template, started creating the infographic. Venngage had much more visual illustrations

available for free but when testing downloading, it was noted that the free version allowed to publish the infographics only in the community and downloading it for website use required paying.

Then the author briefly explored Visme and decided to go back to Canva as Visme's free template and illustration options were even worse. As the Canva's illustrations did still not satisfy the author, she decided to use photos instead of graphic illustrations. Naturally, the infographic is not so graphic but on the other hand, Outdoors Uusimaa's photo material was put in the use in the infographic. A couple of pictures, for example the tent, had to be taken from Canva's photo material because there was no such in the project's photos, which was the preference.

4.2.3   Writing and researching

The next step was to write and research. Research was mostly needed for the sauna and Dagmar Park posts but also for the water activities post, in terms of the linkable service providers. The author had saved some resources already when mapping the uniqueness of the topics, so the research in this phase was supplementary but finding activity companies with websites in English turned out more difficult than expected. In relation to a couple of companies, the author had to link the Facebook page because no service provider with site in English was found. Writing was rather time-consuming but most of the time enjoyable. Every now and then came a frustrating, the moment of writer's block as creativity was needed all the time. In those cases, the author tried to overcome it by moving on to another post.

When the writing was in full swing in the beginning of the March, Outdoors Finland's Project Manager Pirjo was met together with the commissioner. The purpose of the meeting was to get the credentials for the website and go through together how to post and utilise all the features. Unfortunately, the site was still not ready, and the author did not get a user ID. Besides, the template for the articles was not ready either and Pirjo could not show the layout nor all the functions. Both the template and the credentials were promised for the author and the project team in a few days but it took eventually two weeks.

4.2.4 Editing and inserting CTAs

Despite the delay of the site, it was time to edit, proofread and fix formatting. Proofreading was actually done three times, but this was the first time for it. The texts were read out loud as there was no other person related to this thesis process to check them. Images were selected initially from the hundreds of options but not added to the text, as there was no sense in adding them to the Google Docs. In this phase, visual consistency was considered only as the paragraph length and the rhythm of the text because the Outdoors Finland site was not ready and the author had no idea about its layout and features. Topic tags were also left aside, to be added on the ready site.

The seventh step was inserting a call-to-action. In some of the posts, the related content was actually decided earlier in the process, for example together with drafting or writing and researching. Notwithstanding, the text for the CTA was always created in this step. For some of the posts adding the CTA came naturally, as the ability to link to the cycling route descriptions was pondered when selecting the topics. On the other hand, including the trails to every single post, felt a bit unnatural and pushy in some cases, for example the Everyman's Right post. To make it flow smoothly from the conclusion to CTA, the last, italic paragraph was added. To avoid repetition in CTAs, different verbs were used.

4.2.5 Optimising for on-page SEO and finalising titles

Adding call-to-actions was followed by on-page SEO. Anchor texts were created together with CTAs, or those located in the middle of the text in the writing step, so they were already ready at this phase. All of them were more creative than "click here" or "read more". Keywords were chosen with the help of Neil Patel's Ubersuggest, as it is one of the most comprehensive of the free and open keyword tools. The author paid special attention to volume and competition. Keywords with great search volume but low competition were the ones to go for. The keywords were sprinkled throughout the text, included in the title with the exception of the food post, and sometimes headers as well. Anyhow, the quality of the content and naturality were kept as a priority. These were the on-page SEO practices performed in this point, as for image-related features and meta descriptions it was wise to wait for the completion of the website.

After this step, the website was finally ready, and the credentials were received on the 16th of March. All the posts were read through again to spot possible mistakes and copied from Google Docs to WordPress. After inserting the post text, it was time for the ninth step:

choosing a title. That meant finalising the working title and checking the length of it. All of the post titles fit to 65 characters or less. When the titles were ready, it was time to go back to the tasks that had been challenging or not reasonable to implement on Google Docs.

4.2.6 Revising some steps

According to on-page SEO checklist, images needed to be resized. The author tested both WordPress' resizing feature and Photoshop. By using the default settings there was no visible difference in image quality, but the file size varied. While WordPress lets the user define only the dimensions of the image and the file size will depend on them, Photoshop lets the user influence the file size also by adjusting the quality. Hence, Photoshop was used to resize the images.

As recommended in the theoretical part, the file size should have been less than 90 kB to reach the optimal page load time. For some images it was possible but in some images the quality deteriorated visibly. In those cases, compromises were made between the quality and size, but in the end the quality was determined more important because blurred photos would be inconsistent with one of the goals, visuality. Of course, the bigger file size slows the page down, which then again affects the SEO rank and good on-page SEO was also one of the objectives for the blog posts. However, the image size is only one of the many on-page SEO elements while sharp, beautiful photos are one of the most important factors, if not even the most important, to visually pleasant posts. That is why the quality of the content was put as the priority.

After resizing, the image files were renamed to be descriptive. Originally the names were such as IMG_2399 so they were changed for instance to "Supping on Lake Lohja". The final selection of the photos was done when adding them to the posts on WordPress. 34 photos were uploaded to WordPress and altogether 21 were used in the posts. When inserting the images, alt texts and captions were added to describe them. Producing a meta description was not possible as the article page did not have a place for it. The author's credentials did not allow installing of plugins or extensions, as they were only for writing posts, not for administering the site. Regarding this and many other challenges and restrictions on the site, the creator of the website was contacted by email but he did not answer at all. Outdoors Finland's Project Manager was not able to do anything about it either, so meta descriptions had to be left out.

A few days later, the author received more information saying that the site would not be fixed in the near the future. After that, the author decided to leave the posts as drafts on the site. Among other issues, the site was not optimised for different devices and if the posts were visually designed for computers, they were basically unreadable on mobile phones and vice versa. Especially the lack of mobile optimisation was considered crucial and without it there was seen no point to publish the posts. Of course, that decision made the measuring of some objectives more complicated, but mobile optimisation is really important nowadays and publishing non-optimised content would not make the organisation look good.

When the photos and captions were in place, the author returned to the sixth step, proofread the posts one more time and edited the visual appearance. The author went through all the posts one by one and rearranged some paragraphs and added spacings to reach a balance between texts, photos and white space. The blockquote feature was tested and the author concluded to use it in the beginning of the posts to grab the readers' attention and ease them in with more digestible introduction. Even though the author had checked the preview countless times during the editing, the visual consistency of the posts was doublechecked after the changes.

Subsequently, topic tags were added. All the existing tags had been in Finnish so the author could not select the words among them. English tags needed to be written first and then added. Included tags were for instance cycling, canoeing, fishing, Helsinki Region and local food, every post having 4-6 of them. That was viewed as a good, natural amount, especially when considering the advice of maximum 20 tags per blog, yet there was no sign of this principle in the Finnish side because there were almost 50 different tags. However, it gives more reasons to make the English version better. In principle, the site had also a possibility to categorise posts, but they were only in Finnish and adding them required administrator credentials, so the category feature was not useful in practice.

One of the final steps was adding the author's name to the end of the posts. When working on the site, it was noted that the name of the author was not automatically shown on the post. Indicating the author would have been wise because there were various writers. Besides, Outdoors Finland provided no style guide or any other specification in terms of the style of the posts. Thus, it would be good to show the reader that there are multiple people behind the posts and that is the reason for variation. It would save the reader from greater confusion. Moreover, the author had written the posts from her own perspective, by using expressions such as "I listed my favourites", "I recommend" and

"when I lived", and they would have been rather weird if the posts were left anonymous. Anyhow, the author wanted to make sure that anonymous posts were not specially wanted by Outdoors Finland. When no objection was received, the author wrote her name at the end of the posts.

At this point, the author thought that the work regarding the blog posts was done and started to screenshot them for the report. Nonetheless, it become clear that the font was too small, because when the screenshots were appended to the report, the text was unreadable. It had been rather small in the posts was well but still readable. The author had considered making it bigger just for the posts, but it was kept small as that way the photos came into their own's better. Yet, attaching the posts to the report document was necessary so the font size was changed to the bigger one. Frankly, it also made the blog post text more easy-to-read. The visual appearance of the posts was checked after the change and a few paragraphs needed to be split. After that, the posts were finally ready, and the screenshotting began again.

4.3 Five blog posts as an outcome

This subchapter presents the product developed in this thesis, meaning five blog posts. The posts can be found on the appendix 1, although the visual appearance is slightly different compared to the webpage. The webpage is wider than this document, so everything looks smaller in the appendix. Anyhow, the posts are briefly introduced in this subchapter.

The blog posts were created for Outdoors Uusimaa project and they are related to the cycling trails in Uusimaa Region. The list below specifies the posts by six different factors: the type and the length of the post, number of the pictures, the keywords, tags and links. The factors are derived from the objectives and the theoretical background.

1. **Everyman's Right in Finland: What Every Traveller Should Know [Infographic]**
   - post type: infographic
   - length: 314 words
   - number of pictures: 1 (= the infographic, which includes 5 pictures)
   - keywords: everyman's right
   - tags: camping, cycling, everyman's right, fishing, hiking
   - links: everyman's right on nationalparks.fi and all the cycling trails together

2. **Top 5 Water Activities Combined with Cycling in Helsinki Region**
   - post type: list

- length of the post: 986 words
- number of pictures: 5
- keywords: water activities
- tags: canoeing, cycling, fishing, Helsinki Region, nature
- links: Finnish Lakeland on visitfinland.com, all 5 routes separately, at least one service provider for every activity and at the end of the post all the cycling trails

3. **Sauna Benefits for Cycling Travellers**
   - post type: (no special type)
   - length: 1188
   - number of pictures: 5
   - keywords: sauna benefits
   - tags: cycling, experience, health, sauna
   - links: concept of sauna yoga, sauna yoga service provider, Lake Lohja route and two saunas along it

4. **How to Eat Like a Finn? Meal Recommendations for one Cycling Day**
   - post type: how-to
   - length: 768 words
   - number of pictures: 5
   - keywords: Finnish food
   - tags: culture, cycling, local food, nature
   - links: Finnish food on finland.fi and all the trails together

5. **Dagmar Park and the Best Spring Water in the World**
   - post type: (no special type)
   - length: 1114
   - number of pictures: 5
   - keywords: Dagmar Park
   - tags: cycling, destination, Helsinki Region, nature
   - links: 360° video on fiskarsgroup.com and Helsinki West Region route

The posts were presented in the planned publishing order and they will be published on the Outdoors Finland's website as soon as the site functions properly and is optimised for different devices.

5   Discussion

This chapter dissects whether the general objectives of the thesis and the blog posts were met and assesses the usefulness of the theoretical framework. The subchapters focus on the feedback received from the commissioner, improvement ideas for the future and last but not least, evaluation of the thesis process and the author's learning outcomes.

The goals set for the whole thesis were achieved partially. The first of the objectives, creating marketing content for the commissioner, was fulfilled completely by creating five blog posts related to the cycling routes. The second, getting more visibility for the trails is more complicated to analyse. According to the definition presented in the introduction, online visibility is the overall presence of a brand or its services and products there, where the customers are. Becoming present also on another site than outdooractive.com was aimed by publishing content on Outdoors Finland's site. The content was created and on the behalf of the author, it was ready for publishing, but Outdoors Finland did not get the site function properly, so it was meaningless to publish it. In fact, the Outdoors Uusimaa project team noticed that publishing was impossible. There was an option for publishing but clicking it did not make the post visible on the website. Because the posts were not published, the online visibility of the routes did not increase during the thesis project. On the other hand, it is only a few clicks away and can be done as soon as the site is fixed.

To provide a deeper analysis on the improvement of the online visibility, the author had also planned to check the analytics of the articles published so far, meaning probably one or two, as well as the analytics of the thematical route descriptions on outdooractive.com. The analytics on outdooractive.com show where their traffic comes from, so it would have been possible to see if the blog posts had boosted it. Anyhow, as the posts had to be left unpublished, it goes without saying that there is no analytics on the traffic.

The objectives of the blog posts were achieved partly. In the author's opinion, the posts are visually pleasant with one exception. That is the alignment of the infographic on the Everyman's Right post. All in all, the author is content with the infographic, especially regarding the limitations of the free version and the fact that it was the first infographic ever created by the author. Now the infographic is aligned to the left, but it should be in the middle. Unfortunately, the author was unable to affect it, as it was the only option for the photos on the site. Hence, the only reasonable procedure with the photos was to make them as wide as the text, except the infographic which would have been huge. A reasonable size for it was the half of the width of the page.

In principle, more photos could have been included but in many cases, they would have been rather similar compared to selected photos and would have not brought much value. On the other hand, for some posts there would have been more suitable photos but only for some parts, resulting in an unbalanced structure. For example, there were tens of pictures for canoeing but for swimming only one, so it was seen better to have only one picture for every water activity. Moreover, as some of the photos had to be kept over 100 kB to maintain the quality, inserting more pictures would have slowed the page more.

After noticing the restricted dispositioning of photos and text, the author decided to use the blockquote feature to make the posts more visual. As referred in the previous subchapter, the blockquotes had the function of keeping the reader's attention but they were also a visual element. Considering the limited possibilities of the layout, the author thinks that the visual pleasance was carried out well.

In terms of the goal of on-page SEO, it was known from the beginning that the indexing of new articles can take up to a month (Ysasi 2016). Thus, it was very likely that SEO could not be measured by the ranking of the pages and that is how it turned out. Still, the author had wanted to involve it in the objectives as it would be a good feature in the long run. To somehow analyse the completion of on-page SEO, the checklist presented in theoretical framework and implemented actions are discussed. Based on that, the objective of good on-page SEO was not accomplished completely. The keywords were included in each title except the food post because it did not go there naturally, and the quality of the text was always prioritised. In some posts, for instance, the Dagmar Park post, the keywords were also included in the headers. In every post, the keywords were mentioned every once in a while. In fact, the author had planned to check the keyword density on WordPress but it required a plugin and installing it was not possible with author's credentials.

In terms of the headlines, all of them were managed to get to the limit of 65 characters. In the author's opinion, they were also precise, communicating the topic of the post. The meta descriptions were unfortunately not created due to the lack of that element on the site. Again, the author was not able add to add the needed plugin. On the other hand, image related practices were completed. As mentioned in the previous subchapter, images got descriptive file names, captions and alternative texts. Last but not least, all of the anchor texts were more creative than "click here". To give some examples, "Try sauna yoga in Helsinki", "Find all Helsinki Region's cycling trails here" and "Experience Dagmar Park virtually" were used. The easiest of the objectives to measure was the linking to

outdooractive.com. That was accomplished in every post, some posts including even various links.

To sum up, the first goal, visually pleasant posts was not reached as well as the author had originally wanted but regarding the circumstances, it was achieved as well as possible. The measuring of the second objective, on-page SEO changed from the plans. By scrutinising the checklist, three out of five points were completely attained. One of the points, the keyword-related, was completed partly and one, the meta description, was not carried out at all. The last objective, including links to thematical route descriptions was fully achieved.

What comes to the usefulness of the theoretical framework, it was mainly good. A shorter overview of the industry and the trends would have been enough for the implementation of the blog posts because they were not chosen as the topics as such. Of course, that was not known when writing the theoretical part and some of the trends were considered as possible post topics before noticing the lack of suitable photos. On the other hand, thanks to thorough discussion, the trends were freshly in the authors mind and it influenced for example the defining of the topics. Furthermore, the overview may provide additional value for the readers. Generally, the third chapter was very useful. Discussing the different types of blog posts made the author think the types from more various points. For example, the infographic would most likely not have been made without that part in theory. As mentioned it the previous chapter, matching topics and post types took quite a lot of time and sometimes the author felt that it slowed down the process. On the other hand, it helped to narrow down the topics which was necessary to do one way or the other.

The step-based guide for the writing process provided good guidelines. Of course, as described in the product implementation, the writing process did not flow exactly in the same order as instructed. However, that was due to the incomplete website and the guide included an assumption that the posts are created directly to a ready, well-functioning site, as the case normally is. All in all, the guide made the writing process more structured, and it is always better to have some guidelines and apply them according to the situation than to have no instructions at all. Exploring the target group's interest was useful and those aspects were put into practice in the topic formulation. The knowledge gained from SEO was not utilised so much as some of the practices introduced were not possible to execute on the site, and for instance the file size had to be compromised for the sake of decent quality.

5.1 Feedback

In this subchapter, the commissioner's feedback on the blog posts is presented. A feedback request was sent to Haaga-Helia's Project Manager Leena Grönroos and Laurea's Project Manager Merja Iiskola by email. In the same week, the project team had a final meeting to celebrate the ending of Outdoors Uusimaa project and it was a common decision to discuss the feedback at the meeting. The reasons were to save time and a possibility to get more detailed feedback.

According to the feedback, the selected topics were to the point and nicely reflected the FinRelax elements. The FinRelax themes represent what the nature experience is all about and that was successfully incorporated into the blog posts. Both commissioner's representatives praised especially the post about Finnish food. They pointed out that the food post was a great way to utilise the pictures of food because using them in the middle of the cycling photos in their cycling trail related posts or thematical route descriptions was not so relevant. Additionally, one detail in the sauna post received a particularly favourable mention and it was very apt captions.

Only one, really minor improvement idea aroused, and it was the headline of Dagmar Park post. The commissioner had thought that including "Dagmar Park" in the title was not necessary but when it was discussed, they understood that it was there largely due to the search engine optimization. All in all, the commissioner was content with the blog posts. Naturally, the real benefit can be seen after the publishing but as the project team had experienced the issues with the site themselves, it was clear that the author could not affect it.

5.2 Conclusions and development suggestions

This subchapter provides recommendations and development suggestions based on the theory and author's own experience in the thesis project. Usually the development suggestions are given to the commissioner but as the Outdoors Uusimaa project finishes in the end of March, only a few days after writing this subchapter, the author focuses on the recommendations for Outdoors Finland.

The author knows that it is uncertain who will take care of the Outdoors Finland site in the future, but it is extremely important that there will be someone doing it. First of all, the features of the site would need more attention so that the created post drafts can be

published, and the work done so far will not become useless. To sum up, the site has to be optimised for different devices, the categories need to be added in English and more theme and layout options must be available for the authors. In addition, SEO plugins would improve the search engine optimization possibilities. After the changes and publishing the drafts, the person is still needed to administer the site because digital marketing, including the website as one of the channels, should be a continuous process (Zastrow 2017). In other words, it is not enough to set up a website and just leave it there. The website needs administering and updating, and in a case of blog, new content needs to be created regularly, which leads to more suggestions.

If more posts will be written on the site, as it should be, a style guide will be needed. A style guide, or at least some kind of instructions regarding the tone of voice and style of the posts would have needed already in this thesis project and also by the project team to create coherent posts. In principle, the author could have produced a style guide in this thesis project, but it had affected only the posts in the future because the project team had already created their posts at that point. The main reason for not making the guide was the uncertain future of the site. The author did not know if there is anyone to create posts in the future and how the site will be fixed or how the changes will eventually impact the features and layout. Hence, it is important to develop the style guide as soon as the site is completely functional and there are people to write posts. The style is not crucial only for harmonious posts, but it will influence readers' image of the organisation; whether the readers consider the organisation professional and trust it (Ellering 2016; Ries 2016).

Thirdly, the publishing of the posts should not be the last step in the process, as Ellering's (2016) guide demonstrates. According to Fernandez (2017), bloggers should use even 80% of their time to get people to read their posts. Probably the easiest action is to promote the blog posts on social media. Outdoors Finland uses Facebook and Instagram and they are channels which fit the purpose but sharing the posts also on groups, forums and communities the target audience uses, is recommended. Anyway, many other successful post-publishing practices have been recognised and they include for example participating in the conversations in social media, sharing the teaser of the posts to the email list, repurposing the post, encouraging influencers to spread the word, searching great backlink possibilities, adding internal links, updating the best-performing posts and boosting posts with paid campaigns (Cleary 2015, 293-295; Ellering 2016; Fernandez 2017).

Of course, the resources are limited but it would be wise to analyse the actions and decide which of them to use. In fact, the author noticed that there was a lack of strategy regarding the blog and social media in general. The author does not know if Outdoors Finland has some kind of overall marketing strategy but in terms of the blog and social media channels the strategy was lacking. Hence, the author recommends development of and online marketing strategy and then putting it into practice. Although creating the strategy may seem a lot, there should always be one to guide the actions. In any case, it would be beneficial to analyse the performance of the posts to learn which works and which not, and improve accordingly (Bergstrom 2018; Cleary 2015, 297).

5.3 Evaluation of the thesis process and learning

This subchapter asses the execution of the thesis process and author's learning from it. To start with, the thesis process has been a very chastening experience. The author has learned much and understands the multiple points where there was room for improvement. Still, the circumstances changed a lot from the situation when the thesis process was started and regarding those challenges, the author is content with her work. Nevertheless, it does not mean she would do the things similarly next time. On the contrary, she is sure that based on the lessons learned from this case, she will do things differently in a corresponding situation.

Firstly, the author has seen how project work goes in practice. The author had worked in the Outdoors Uusimaa project before the thesis, but she had mainly worked with the project team which was rather small, cohere and well-functioning. The author started the thesis process in the situation where Outdoors Uusimaa was the commissioner and the author knew that the co-operation with them was effortless. Also, the thesis topic was considered rather straightforward as both the author and the commissioner thought that the Outdoors Finland new website was ready. The reason behind it was the fact that Outdoors Finland had shown the layout for the commissioner already in the spring and asked for blog content. After starting the thesis process, it turned out that the website project was only at an application stage. Hence, the communicating with the commissioner was not enough and the author needed information also from Outdoors Finland. The communication with the Outdoors Finland's Project Manager was laborious and after multiple attempts by email and phone, the author settled for getting the information via the commissioner, even though it took more time.

All in all, the closer link to Outdoors Finland showed the author a bigger picture of these kind of projects. The projects have numerous stakeholders and many of them do not know much about each other, so it would be crucial that the information flows smoothly. Secondly, projects are rather uncertain and the collaborating one must prepare for delays and changes and cope with a lack of plans, schedules and information. Some kind of uncertainty is always present, as the funding may end and the future may change. Even when the projects end according to the schedule and have created something successful, there is always a dilemma of how to maintain the knowledge, skills and the benefits generated. Many times the projects have one or a few experts and when they continue elsewhere after the project, there is a risk that the advancements will not become well-established practices.

Anyway, maybe the most important lessons from this thesis project are related to project and time management. In terms of the project management, the risks could have been contemplated better and the planning could have been more precise. When writing the theoretical framework, the author had thought about alternative plans, such as setting a test blog to measure the objectives and giving the posts in a document for Outdoors Finland, if the site was not ready early enough. However, they felt very distant when the theoretical framework was in the very beginning, so the author focused on writing it. Concentrating on one thing at a time eased the overwhelming feeling of the whole thesis process but now when assessing later, the alternative plan should have been written down. Then it would have been more concrete, and it would have been easier to start implementing it when the Outdoors Finland site was delayed after a delay.

On the other hand, the posts were not ready on the point that the plan b should have put into the practice. Then again, it would not have been the end of the world to put not so fine-tuned posts to a test blog and edit them while waiting the feedback from the test readers. Basically, the author hates showing unfished texts to random people but rationally it would have been a good choice. Of course, there was no guarantee of actually getting any responses from the test readers but the possibility of not succeeding is not a reason to skip trying.

To continue with the time management, it could have been improved. Writing the theoretical framework took more time than it was originally planned but the author had reserved quite a lot of time for writing the posts. When the theory part was finished, the author thought that there was still enough time for creating the posts but it was surprisingly time consuming. It was the first time for the author to write multiple posts at

once so finding the creativity was a bit challenging every now and then. Besides, the challenges with communication and delays of the site diminished the author's motivation which then again reduced the time used in the project. Furthermore, if the posts could have been developed on the site from the beginning, the creation process would have been faster as the author would not have needed to return to many of the steps.

In fact, the challenges with the time management surprised the author as she has previously been very precise with deadlines. However, the thesis is definitely the biggest individual project she has carried out, so perceiving the time and amount of work was not so easy. At some point when writing the posts, the author realised that the time was scarce but especially when the credentials were not received against the promises, the motivation to use hours for finalising the posts was rather low.

In a way, the time-related challenges make sense, as the author is rather perfectionist and shows great attention to detail. For example, the author recognises that she could have fine controlled the posts basically for forever, as some possible changes occurred to her when she returned to the document and later to the blogging site. In smaller projects, it has been possible to be detail-oriented but still be nicely in the schedule. As big project as the thesis is, it would have been wise to make some compromises. To give a practical example, although Photoshop gave much more possibilities for resizing the photos, it could have been done on WordPress to save time. On the other hand, the author put on a spurt in the end of March and the empirical part and discussion were completed quickly. As a result, the author was able to present the thesis on the planned day. Then again, the spurt would not have been necessary if the time management would have been better earlier in the process.

Finally, to narrow down to more specific skills, the author must mention developing her writing skills especially related to the blog posts. Besides being the first time for writing multiple posts at once, it was the first time for really paying attention to the SEO in blog posts. Creating the infographic was also new for the author, and though it is no so "graphic" infographic, the author is content with the result and she enjoyed the creation a lot.

To summarise, the author learned about the nature of the project work as well as project and time management. The thesis process helped her to recognise the challenge stemming from her personality and time management and realised the importance of compromises for completing tasks on time. The author acquired a lot of information about

writing blogs and developed her content creation skills. Regarding the circumstances, the author is happy about her performance but would do some things differently next time.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. The blog posts

Everyman's Right in Finland: What Every Traveler Should Know [Infographic]

> In Finland, we have this thing called *jokamiehenoikeudet.* Literally, it translates to Everyman's Right.

And it's great. Ok, we Finns aren't the only ones in the world with these amazing access rights. Our fellow Nordic Countries, like Sweden, Norway and Iceland, as well as Scotland, among others, share the similar right of access. Maybe you've heard about freedom to roam? Almost the same thing.

Anyway, Finland has one of the broadest interpretations of Everyman's Right. So how to get the hang of it and make the most of Finnish nature? Here's what every traveler needs to know!

Everyman's Right in a nutshell

In Finland, Everyman's Right is nothing new. It's an ancient custom which forms today's code of conduct in natural environment. Basically, it gives everyone a freedom to access public and privately owned land for recreation and exercise. And the best thing? It doesn't apply only to Finnish citizens or people living in Finland but also to all tourists and visitors!

Check out this infographic for the points you need to know:

FINNISH

EVERYMAN'S RIGHT

IN A NUTSHELL

SOILI REINIKAINEN, OUTDOORSFINLAND.COM

ROAMING
You are allowed to walk, cycle and ski freely. You can swim, bathe and use boats on both inland waters and the sea.

PICKING
You're free to pick wild mushrooms, berries, herbs and flowers, with the exception of protected species.

CAMPING
You may camp out temporarily, and overnight in a boat or vehicle, as long as you don't disturb the landowner.

MAKING A FIRE
Recreation areas have designated campfire sites for lighting a fire. Elsewhere you'll need a landowner's permission.

FISHING
You can angle and ice fish without a fee. Other forms of fishing require a license from everyone who's 18-65 years old.

RESPECTING
With great freedom comes the responsibility. Don't go too near homes, disturb animals or damage the nature. It's all about respect!

Everyman's Right guarantees everyone an opportunity to enjoy Finland's immense forests and innumerable waterways with only few limitations. Amazing concept, right?

It's good to know the basics of Everyman's Right already when you're pondering destination options and planning a holiday. It becomes even more important, when preparing for the trip. When you're on the spot, you know your rights and responsibilities and can focus on enjoying the Finnish nature to the fullest!

Psst! To truly make the most out of Everyman's Right, I recommend a cycling tour. You'll see much more compared to hiking but still be close to the nature, unlike in a car. Besides, cycling routes in Helsinki Region provide various possibilities for water activities – you'll get the best of the both worlds!

Read more about Everyman's Right here and choose a cycling trail here!

Text: Soili Reinikainen

Top 5 Water Activities Combined with Cycling in Helsinki Region

Finland isn't only a land of thousand lakes but it has also a shoreline of over 300,000 kilometres. That's for example over 10 times longer than the UK's coastline! Thanks to the countless lakes, basically 10% of the total land area is freshwater.

> It'd be almost a crime to visit Finland without experiencing its waterways.

While there isn't an equivalent to Finnish Lakeland, the largest and most stunning lake district in Europe, Helsinki Region provides same activities with better accessibility. Besides, Helsinki Region is covered by five marvelous cycling trails and combining cycling with water activities is certainly the best way to explore the Finnish nature in the summertime. I listed my personal favourites of the water activities along the cycling routes in Helsinki Region.

1. Catch the dinner by yourself

Fishing in West Helsinki Region.   Photo: Panu Kosonen / Outdoors Uusimaa

According to Finnish Everyman's Right, everyone is allowed to fish with a rod and line free of charge in most inland waters and the sea. Fishing with a reel and lure requires a licence. Buy the fishing licence online or at kiosks called R-kioski. Also some village shops sell them.

The easiest option is to book a fishing tour and the company will take care of the license and gear. Some tours include preparing the catch to meal in the nature – what could be a better dinner than a self-caught fish prepared and enjoyed outdoors!

Fishing can be done for example on Helsinki West Region Cycling Route, and Guide-Matti and VMB Fishing are some of the guides providing fishing tours in the area.

2. Try a typical summer cottage activity

Rowing past birds on Lake Tuusula.   Photo: Panu Kosonen / Outdoors Uusimaa

Almost every Finnish family who has a summer cottage by a lake, has a rowing boat too. That is to say, rowing is a quintessential part of the cottage life. And no wonder, because it takes you closer to the nature.

On the water, you'll be surrounded by million shades of blue, glittering in the sun. The only sound you'll hear is the calm lap of the waves. Spotting various kinds of birds, like Finland's national bird swan, will be much easier on the lake. If you have a lot of energy, you can take rowing also as an exercise. It trains especially your arms, upper body and core – a great variety for cycling!

Rowing is a fantastic activity on Lake Tuusula Cycling Tour and boats can be rented from Halosenniemi.

3. Switch pedaling to paddling

Canoeing on springlike Mustijoki River.   Photo: Soili Reinikainen / Outdoors Uusimaa

Canoeing is also an activity that gives your legs a break from cycling but nicely strains your arms and upper body. Just like rowing, it provides you totally another perspective on the area you're exploring. Hop off the saddle and start to paddle!

It really is a different experience to observe the nature on the water level. You'll be able to catch sight of numerous flowers, like wood anemone and marsh marigold. When the river is lined by verdant forests, slender branches will bend towards you, creating a fabulous setting. The sooner you notice, you'll be surrounded by dramatic, grey cliffs. You'll continue gliding and after a bend, you'll be in the middle of a clearing – light shades of green and golden as far as the eye can see!

Mustijoki River Valley Cycling Trail makes a perfect combo with canoeing and Elämyksen Taika is one of the places to rent a canoe or get a guided paddling tour.

4. Stand up and paddle

Supping on serene Lake Lohja.   Photo: Soili Reinikainen / Outdoors Uusimaa

SUP, aka stand up paddling, is the newest water activity on this list but it has become extremely popular since spreading to Finland. SUP can be done on a lake, river or sea and normally lakes provide the easiest conditions for beginners.

Anyway, the SUP boards surprise many first-timers with their stability and falling is a rare thing. When leaving from the shore for the very first time, you may want to start on your knees, just in case. As soon as you get wind of it, go ahead and stand up. Breath in the fresh air, admire the scenery and enjoy tranquil strokes. Or take a playful race with your travel companion and make the most out of the exercise!

SUP is an ideal activity along Lake Lohja's Cycling Route and boards are rented for example in Café Aurlahti.

5. Take a refreshing dip

Swimming in the refreshing waters of East Helsinki Region. Photo: Panu Kosonen / Outdoors Uusimaa

Last but not least is swimming, the classic of water activities. It's the simplest option, no special equipment is needed, only a swimsuit and towel. In addition, it's possible almost everywhere! On account of the Everyman's Right, everyone is allowed to swim both in the sea and inland waters, as long as you're not on someone's yard.

The temperature of the Baltic Sea doesn't usually rise much over 18 °C but lakes can stretch to 20 °C and over, especially at the end of summer. Swimming will definitely refresh you after hours of pedaling!

Swimming is a splendid activity combined with any of the cycling routes but Helsinki East Region Cycling Tour provides exceptionally many places for swimming, for example Hasselholma beach at Lake Veckjärvi, Rönnäs beach on the coast, a small beach at Koskenkylä village, Lake Pyhäjärvi beach and two beaches at Lake Kotojärvi.

A cycling tour in Helsinki Region is a smooth way to enjoy the Finnish nature but combining it with water activities takes the experience to a whole new level. You'll get closer to the nature and the Finnish way of life. Which water activity is your favorite? A tough choice, I know. If you can't decide, include all of them in you trip! Lake Tuusula, Mustijoki River Valley and Lake Lohja routes provide a setting for all five water activities.

Find all Helsinki Region's cycling trails here!

Text: Soili Reinikainen

Dagmar Park and the Best Spring Water in the World

When I lived in Asia, people always asked me what I missed most about Finland. What do you think? Rye bread? Sauna? No, water!

> My answer always received surprised, even astonished looks. Wait, what? Water?!

Yep. Let me explain. Firstly, the tap water in Finland is drinkable so it saves you from the endless hassle of buying and carrying the bottles. Not to mention saving the environment.

Secondly, the quality of Finnish tap water is among the highest in the world. It's not only safe to drink but also a refreshing and pleasant experience. It tastes like pure water, nothing else. Because you don't need to go further than Denmark or Iceland, and the tap water will have a slight flavour of limestone or sulphur. Speaking from experience.

Best of all, you don't even always need a tap to get drinking water. You may find it in the nature and I'll reveal you one of these natural treasures – Dagmar Spring. There's an interesting story behind the name and the water is said to be the world's best spring water!

Dagmar Spring – the best spring water in the world!   Photo: Panu Kosonen / Outdoors Uusimaa

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The story of Dagmar Park – in the footsteps of an imperial couple

The name of the park dates back to the end of the 19th century and comes from a Danish-born princess Dagmar. Dagmar got married to Alexander, the crown prince of Russia and changed her name to Maria Feodorovna. 15 years later Alexander became the Emperor of Russia, and as Finland was an autonomous Grand Duchy in Russian Empire back then, also the Grand Duke of Finland.

The couple had liked the Finnish archipelago and sailed along the coast even before Alexander became the Emperor. The story goes that on the 1st of July 1884, the imperial yacht anchored to this place for the first time. Alexander and Dagmar drank from the spring using silver cups and Dagmar immediately fell in love with the place.

Drinking the spring water like Alexander III and Dagmar!   Photo: Panu Kosonen / Outdoors Uusimaa

After 3 years, the imperial couple returned to the same bay and the landowner heard about Dagmar's fondness for the place. He decided to regenerate the place and make it more like a park. Among other changes, a stone monument was put to track the visits. The following year, the landowner was welcoming the guests personally. Altogether imperial couple sailed to the bay six times before Alexander passed away.

The Empress, who was always known as Dagmar here, was also well-liked by the Finns. The fact that she loved the place so much, maybe even considering it as the most beautiful place on the coast, gave it a special meaning. In return, Finns named the place after her.

The nature of Dagmar Park – the world's best spring water

Hosting a special kind of nature, Dagmar Park is a nature conservation area. The spring can be found almost in the middle of the park, together with the memorial stone. In fact, the place is also known as Källviken which translates directly to Spring Bay. The spring water comes from the Salpausselkä ridge system which was formed by melting glacial in the last Ice Age, over 12,000 years ago. When groundwater is close to the surface of the earth, it creates a spring.

Dagmar Spring is located almost in the middle of the park.   Photo: Panu Kosonen / Outdoors Uusimaa

The water flow of Dagmar spring is about 5 liters in a minute but don't be fooled by the size. It's said to be the best spring water in the world! No wonder locals and people living even 100 km away often go for the water there.

Closer to the shore, there's a spot where the spring flows more briskly but it's made for boaters, to ease their access to the drinking water. I tried water at the both places and recommend the upper spot where the water surfaces for the first time. The taste is at its best and the temperature refreshing 4-5 °C.

Satisfy your thirst and fill all the bottles! Photo: Panu Kosonen / Outdoors Uusimaa

As wonderful as the spring is, it's not the only reason to visit Dagmar Park. The park is an area of natural beauty and it's enjoyed by many locals on day trips. The forest is thick and there's much more vegetation compared to surrounding, quite barren areas. A few short trails twine in the park, being perfect for exploring the nature by foot. The natural sand beach is a popular spot for swimming and sunbathing, as well as enjoying a picnic with friends and family. Climb to the rocks on the shore and admire the amazing sea view!

The directions to Dagmar Park – cycling recommended

Dagmar Park is nicely and conveniently located along the Cycling Helsinki West Region Tour and after some physical activity you'll appreciate the fresh water even more. Lying between Ekenäs and Hanko, the park is reached on the 4th stage of the route.

After cycling approximately 5 km from Ekenäs, turn left to Leksvallintie. Keep on pedaling for about 3 km and you'll see a sign *Källviken* and a small parking place on your left side. Cyclists can proceed a few hundred meters, arriving to a good spot to leave the bikes. A small trail will lead you to the spring.

If you come by car, use the address Leksvallintie 340, 10660 Raasepori. The place is accessible also by public transportation, and buses operating between Helsinki and Hanko will take you to the Leksvallintie intersection. From the stop, it's a 3-kilometre walk to the park.

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Cycling is the best way to reach Dagmar Park. Photo: Panu Kosonen / Outdoors Uusimaa

Dagmar Park offers something for every nature enthusiast. Drink from the same spring as Alexander III and her wife Dagmar, and taste the best spring water in the world. Let the twining trails take you deeper to the forest and breath in the fresh scent of pine trees.

Climb to the viewpoints and marvel at the varying landscape. Have a picnic on the rocks while listening to sounds of the sea. Lie on the beach and feel the warmth of the sun on your skin. A perfect stop for cyclists and a charming destination for everyone in the area!

Experience Dagmar Park Virtually – the 360° video takes you through the forest, under the sea and all the way to up in the air!

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Text: Soili Reinikainen

How to Eat Like a Finn? Meal Recommendations for One Cycling Day

Traveling is nothing without tasting the local food, is it?

> Besides being an interesting culinary experience itself, local food tells you about the culture and helps you to understand it.

Finnish food is influenced by east and west, reflecting the country's history as well as its geographical location between Sweden and Russia. We Finns value honesty, simplicity and functionality, which shows in Finnish cuisine as natural and local ingredients, pure flavours and nutritious, high-quality dishes.

Nutrition becomes especially important on active holidays, like cycling holidays. To introduce the cream of the crop of typical Finnish foods and keep you nourished, I gathered meal recommendations for one cycling day. This is how a Finn would eat!

The best boost for the morning

Rye bread, the national food of Finland. Photo: Soili Reinikainen / Outdoors Uusimaa

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Start your day with the national food of Finland, rye bread! It's high in fiber so it keeps hunger away much longer than wheat or oat, making it perfect for breakfast. If rye bread is to your liking, why not buy it also for lunchbox?

In case you need some time to get used to the taste of rye, porridge is another common breakfast dish. Most often porridge is made of oat and it's usually served with berry jams or fresh berries.

The easiest hot lunch ever

Grilling sausages over a camp fire.   Photo: Soili Reinikainen / Outdoors Uusimaa

Grilled sausage is Finns' ultimate summertime favourite. It's a simple option for a self-prepared lunch but still kind of a warm dish, which can be supplemented for example with sandwiches or Karelian pastries. Or basically anything you like!

If you go to a supermarket to get the sausages, you may be surprised by the plentifulness of different flavours. And vegans, don't worry, there are alternatives for you too. No matter which you select, it'll taste extremely good when grilled over an open fire and eaten in the nature!

Time for ~~tea~~ coffee!

Coffee break in Finnish style.   Photo: Student Project / Outdoors Uusimaa

Coffee is Finns' cup of tea. In fact, an average Finn drinks 10 kilos in a year, making Finland the biggest coffee consumer in the world. Do like a Finn and stop for a cup whenever you see a cute café.

However, without a bun, the cup is half empty. There's a term, *pullakahvi,* in Finnish language, and it means a bun and coffee enjoyed at the same time. Hence, to have the real and complete experience, take a bun, for instance a classical cinnamon bun, with your coffee.

Nothing like a fresh fish – or a creamy mushroom sauce

Finnish slow food dinner with fish gratin and mushroom sauce. Photo: Panu Kosonen / Outdoors Uusimaa

At least one fish dish is a must when in Finland. If you are interested in fishing, try to catch your own dinner! Experienced fishers can do it independently but for beginners I recommend a guided fishing tour which includes handling the fish and a meal outdoors.

Anyway, you can opt to have your fish dinner in a restaurant. It can be salmon, pike, zander, perch, vendace, Baltic herring… You name it! In summertime, the best accompaniment is early potatoes with a dab of butter on the top but mashed potatoes will do too.

For vegetarians, mushrooms offer nutritious and delicious dishes. Besides, they are many times local food at its best. Different mushroom sauces, stews and pies represent traditional Finnish cuisine.

Super snacks from the nature

Lingonberries ready to be picked! Photo: Panu Kosonen / Outdoors Uusimaa

In a need of a little snack? Good news! You can pick Finnish superfood, aka wild berries directly in the forests, thanks to Everyman's Right. Thus, always keep your eyes open when moving in the nature. Blueberry season starts usually in mid-July and continues to early September. Lingonberries you can expect to find from September to mid-October. Eat as you pick or if you happen to have some kind of box with you, feel free to fill it.

If you are on a tour out of the seasons or just don't find any in the nature, no problem. Buy them at a grocery or market stall. There you can find also Finnish strawberries, sweet garden peas and apples – the choice is yours!

Finland is an ideal destination for everyone who appreciates naturally nutrient-rich and energizing food. All these dishes, from rye bread to berries, represent Finnish food traditions that are still alive and well also nowadays. Without further ado, enjoy your meal! Or as we say in Finnish – *Hyvää ruokahalua!*

Learn more about Finnish food here and explore the cycling trails here!

Text: Soili Reinikainen

Sauna Benefits for Cycling Travellers

> ### "If sauna, vodka and tar won't help, the disease is fatal"

is an old Finnish proverb. For centuries, we Finns have used sauna to relax, purify ourselves and recover from hard work.

In recent years, researchers both in Finland and abroad have studied the health benefits of sauna. Regular sauna bathing has been connected with lower cholesterol, lower risk of dementia and better cardiovascular health. Additionally, it may enhance the immune system and improve performance in endurance sports.

Traditional Finnish sauna.   Photo: Panu Kosonen / Outdoors Uusimaa

But what exactly happens in your body when sitting in sauna? Can a single sauna session after a day of cycling work wonders? Let this post answer your questions!

A key to faster recovery

Sauna makes you sweat which leads to elimination of metabolic wastes. Together with intensified blood circulation, resulting from increased heart rate and dilated blood vessels, it helps muscles to recover from a workout more rapidly.

To make the recovery even more efficient, dip yourself in refreshing water between sauna sessions. It doesn't matter if it's a lake, river or the sea, and even a cool shower can do the trick. The chilly water contracts the blood vessels and the changes in temperature will cause a pumping effect. It'll boost blood circulation and waste products will fade faster from the tissue. The post-workout inflammation will abate and muscular strength will be restored more quickly.

Dipping in chilly water boosts the recovery! Photo: Panu Kosonen / Outdoors Uusimaa

If your muscles are already sore or you have a headache or pain in joints, a sauna session can bring you a relief. Besides the increased blood flow, the heat releases endorphins and these two factors relax strained muscles, reduce soreness, ease pain and improve joint movement.

Stretching in the warmth

As the heat loosens up the muscles and advances joint movement, sauna is a perfect place for stretching. We all know that stretching a warm muscle is safer and more pleasant than a cold one, don't we?

That's also the basis of hot yoga and a special Finnish concept of sauna yoga. In a nutshell, it's light yoga-based poses performed on a sauna bench while the temperature stays in mild 50 °C. Try sauna yoga in Helsinki before starting your cycling tour and learn all the best moves for the sauna possibilities coming along the route. Or take it as an ultimate restoration after your cycling tour!

Anyway, you can get the full benefit of the heat by yourself too. You just need to find a sauna – not a difficult task in a country of 3 million saunas! When inside, do your normal stretching exercises. In other words, the stretches you are used to and feel comfortable doing at that moment.

Sauna is a perfect place for gentle stretching. Photo: Panu Kosonen / Outdoors Uusimaa

Remember to follow the basic rules of stretching, they apply also in a sauna. If you are taking sauna right after the cycling, do only short, 10-30-second stretches. Long, 30-120-second stretches are worth doing when couple of hours have passed from the cycling.

A sauna state of mind

Sauna benefits aren't only physical. The relaxed body and recovering muscles affect the psychic state by diminishing the feeling of exhaustion. Other than that, sauna cherishes your mind directly. The endorphins don't only ease the pain but reduce stress hormone levels, and your mind gets calm. The tranquil mind will again further the recovery process of the body. A virtuous circle is ready!

The most common time to go to sauna is evening because the holistically relaxed state will guarantee a better sleep. After a night of deep sleep, you'll wake up rested and full of new energy. And who wouldn't like that?

Sauna relaxes you holistically.   Photo: Panu Kosonen / Outdoors Uusimaa

In case you've fallen in love with sauna, I recommend trying it in the morning as well. A quick, 10-minute sauna session warms up the muscles for the day's cycling and the bike will roll easily from the very beginning!

Optimizing the sauna benefits

As good as sauna does to you, keep the bathing in moderation. The best practice is to take breaks during the session. Even if you didn't go swimming, take a shower and go out to the fresh air every now and then. To maximize the benefits, altogether 30 minutes in a sauna is enough. However, it's more important to listen to your body than stare at the clock. If you feel uncomfortable, don't force yourself. Sauna isn't the place for challenging yourself!

If you are in a sauna for the very first time and want to stretch, pay special attention to your condition. You may want to start on the lower benches where the temperature isn't so high. At least, it's wise to be careful with throwing the water so it won't get too hot. Even though stretching is all about leisurely moves, yet you are doing something and your heat tolerance may be a bit lower than if you were just sitting still.

Last but not least, remember to drink a lot of water both during and after the sauna session. Sweating will make your body dryer and water is needed to balance it. Many Finns like to enjoy a cold beer or cider together with sauna but water isn't still forgotten. Again, listening to the signals of your body is a good rule of thumb – You don't need to worry about drinking, sauna will make you thirsty!

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Refreshment breaks are an important part of sauna bathing.   Photo: Panu Kosonen / Outdoors Uusimaa

While permanent health benefits of sauna require frequent sauna bathing, a single session works wonders in that specific situation. A day of cycling is hard work for your muscles and sauna helps them to recover faster. The post-workout inflammation will be beaten and the muscular power restored more quickly – extremely useful if you're on a multi-day tour, like Cycling in Lake Lohja's Cultural Heritage.

Additionally, sauna eases already developed soreness, reliefs pain and provides a pleasant place for improving flexibility. Released endorphins reduce stress and the mind unwinds. As a result, you'll sleep like a baby. As long as you listen to your body and act accordingly, you'll get the sauna benefits safely. Sit back and relax. Let the sauna pamper you!

Enjoy the Finnish sauna for example in Siuntio Spa Hotel and Martinpiha, located along the Lake Lohja's Cycling Trail.

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