

Deniz Karaburcak

Street Marketing in Ruka-Kuusamo

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Abstract

Author: Karaburcak Deniz

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The objective of this thesis was to gain understanding of the marketing decisions of activity providers in the Ruka-Kuusamo area with a focus on street marketing. Understanding the marketing mindset and applicability of street marketing can aid to improve Ruka-Kuusamo as a tourism destination in the ever more competitive world.

The theoretical framework was based on defining the concept of street marketing, Ruka-Kuusamo as a tourism destination and the people who visit the destination. Data collection of the thesis uses qualitative research method. Interviews were conducted by interviewing seven service providers and the head of marketing of Ruka-Kuusamo Tourism Association. The interviews were semi-structured including open-ended questions. The interviews were recorded and decoded for analysis.

The study results showed that companies have varying experiences and motives for doing or abstaining from street marketing. Street marketing was implemented as a way of communicating company values, collaborating, and differentiating from competition. The reasons against street marketing included a lack of resources, more suited marketing methods and contentment with the current situation.

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1 Introduction

Businesses tend to be constantly looking for new methods of communication that will allow them to make their brand and products stand out from the competition. Traditionally marketing is conducted in mass media outlets, which can become relatively saturated and expensive for some businesses to operate on. In order to diversify, marketers have started implementing unconventional marketing strategies to their marketing mix. These unconventional methods are alluring for their lower average cost compared to conventional communication methods. (Levinson, 2007)

Street marketing is an unconventional marketing tactic used in populated urban environments. The street marketing phenomenon is visible in Finland, seen in forms of pop up tents (Räsänen, 2020), street fundraisers (Kärki, 2018) and flash mob events (Keskiuomalainen, 2015), for example.

The purpose of this paper is to explain the current role of street marketing in activity tourism companies of Ruka-Kuusamo. A series of interviews will explain companies' perceptions, assumptions and actions regarding street marketing. A goal this study sets is to answer the following research question "Why activity providers do or do not utilize street marketing?". In order to fully answer the research question, a set of open-ended sub-questions were asked. A list of the interview questions can be found in the appendix.

The aim of this research is to provide a brief assessment of street marketing's appeal, viability and possible issues in the activity tourism sector. The author wishes that this study will help marketers, entrepreneurs and researchers operating in their respective fields by providing useful insight to the use of street marketing, as well as provide solutions to possible problems.

The research is conducted as a final thesis for the author's bachelor's degree in tourism studies in Kajaani University of Applied Sciences. The topic of this thesis came to be a culmination of the author's favourite subjects from his tourism studies at the Kajaani University of Applied Sciences. The author has a decade of experience in winter sports, interest towards Lapland as a whole and ever-growing interest in unusual marketing methods. The forementioned subjects were taken into consideration when coming up with this research paper. Additionally, solidifying this topic was the time spent living in Ruka and the author's interest towards street marketing, and how he wishes it was used more in the tourism sector.

2 Theoretical background

The following sections will introduce the relevant theories related to the study.

In 1984 Jay Conrad Levinson published his first book called *Guerrilla Marketing*, which would be a start to a series of pioneering publications that would popularize guerrilla marketing and street marketing. These books are either directly cited or indirectly cited through newer publications and studies that have followed. (Markethink, 2017)

Street marketing being a relatively new phenomenon, it does not have extensive research behind it. While the relevant concepts have been written about for a long time, the actual effectiveness and viability in different markets has not been researched.

2.1 Ruka as a Destination

Rukatunturi (Ruka) is a 490-meter-high fell in the municipality of Kuusamo in Finland. Ruka and Kuusamo are often referred together as Ruka-Kuusamo. Kuusamo is visited by around a million tourists every year. (Ruka, 2022)

Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Ruka-Kuusamo area has enjoyed growing number of visitors. In 2021 there were 663 800 registered overnight stays, which is 20% more than in 2020. (Visitory, 2022)

Ruka is the most popular ski resort in Finland when measuring skiing days and ticket sales. In the 2020-2021 season, there were a little under 483 000 skiing days and ticket sales of nearly 12,9 million euros. Levi was the most popular ski resort in Finland for nearly a decade, but since the 2019-2020 season, Ruka has taken the title. *See figure 1.*

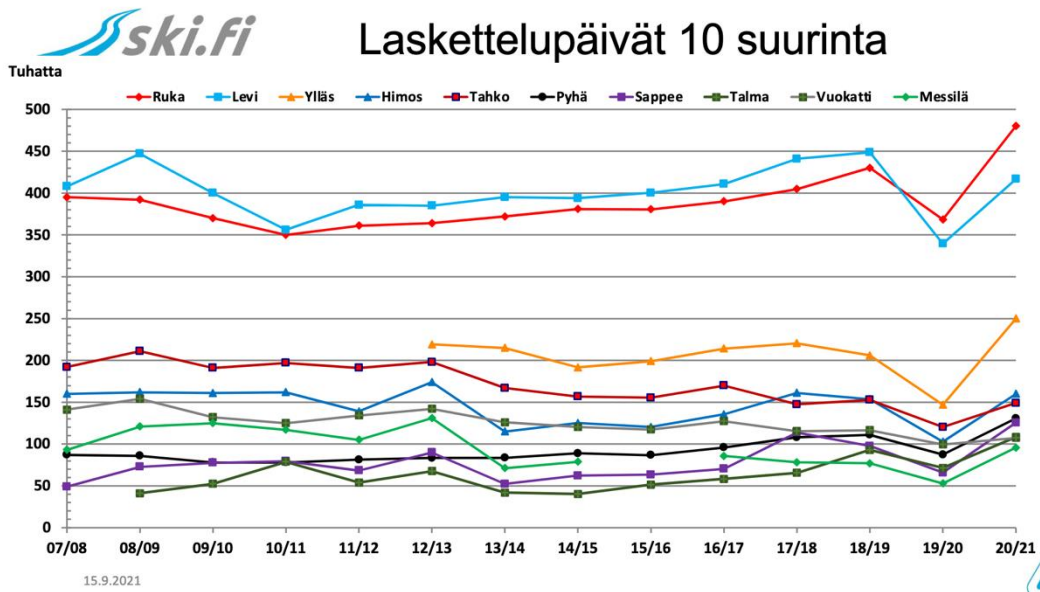


Figure 1: Skiing days in top 10 Finnish ski resorts. (Ski.fi, 2021)

The main attractions for Ruka are the ski slopes, Ruka village, outdoor activities and routes. There are about 2000 kilometres of outdoor paths in Ruka-Kuusamo, notably 300 kilometres of hiking paths, 240 kilometres of cross-country tracks and 600 kilometres of snowmobile routes. Ruka is the beginning point of the most famous hiking track of Finland, Karhunkierros. (Ruka, 2022)

2.2 Ruka Activity Providers

Ruka.fi website lists 24 independent activity providers that offer a multitude of activities to do around the year. The local activity providers offer safaris, excursions and other activities all around Ruka and Kuusamo. These activities include, but are not limited to, snowmobile safaris, husky safaris, snowshoeing, reindeer yoga, horse riding, climbing and rafting. (Ruka, 2022)

This study includes data from seven interviews conducted to activity providers from Ruka-Kuusamo area. The predominant services offered by the activity providers include safaris and excursions, so companies were chosen to roughly fit that description in order to keep results comparable. All interviewed companies offered safaris or excursions in one way or another. Interviewed companies were small in size, most run by families or just one or two people with additional seasonal workers.

2.3 Unconventional Marketing

Unconventional marketing, also known as guerrilla marketing, generally refers to communication done outside of mass media outlets, such as newspaper, television and radio. Guerrilla marketing strives to surprise and evoke emotions in the consumer, increasing the engagement with the brand, product or service. By creating buzz and memorable experiences, there is an increased chance for word of mouth to give the campaign more reach than originally anticipated (Levinson, 2007). It is not unusual for successful guerrilla marketing campaign to make headlines in mass media outlets, further increasing the reach.

Unconventional marketing methods appeal to marketers for it is relatively inexpensive and focuses more on reach rather than frequency. Instead of using financial means, unconventional marketing requires imagination, time and energy.

2.4 Street Marketing

Street marketing is a subset of Guerrilla marketing, where promotion of products or services are conducted in an unconventional way in public places. Street marketing strives to meet any combination of the following objectives: 1) to communicate with a particular (and often moving) target in its everyday environment; 2) to generate word of mouth around a product, brand, cause, or institution; 3) to create links between the brand and consumers through real-life participation in memorable experiences.

Street marketing can be used as a general term encompassing six principal types of activities mentioned below.

- **Distribution of flyers or products**
- **Product animations** (the redressing of a high-traffic space using brand imagery)
- **Human animations** (creating a space in which the brand's message is communicated through human activity)
- **Roads shows** (a mobile presentation, often using atypical transportation such as a taxi bike or a Segway)
- **Uncovered actions** (the customization of street elements, such as murals)

- **Event actions** (spectacles, such as flash mobs or contests. The idea is to promote a product, service, or brand value through organization of a public event)
(Bernard Cova, 2014)

Street marketing has a limited immediate reach, as it will reach a finite amount of people at a certain place and time. While word of mouth will increase the reach of the street marketing campaign, it can be further induced by creating a video production around the campaign. As an example, the Coca Cola Company is known for creating viral videos from their street marketing campaigns. One of their videos is called "Coke Hug Machine" where people hug a Coca-Cola machine for a free soda. (Coca-Cola, 2012)

2.5 Risks Management in Street Marketing

Since street marketing campaigns take place in public places, there can be regulations and restrictions that need to be taken into consideration. A marketer might be obliged to apply and pay for authorization to go forward with the campaign. It is vital for companies to consider the following three dimensions when deciding whether to break regulations. (Saucet, 2014)

- 1.) A legal dimension including calculations of the legal risks with the probability of being caught and the penalties that would follow. These risks are weighed against the cost and time of authorization.
- 2.) An economic dimension weighing the interest in breaking the rules against the ease of organizing, investment of time and money, increased word of mouth and potential impact on the proposed target.
- 3.) An ethical dimension yielding the system of justification, which can be economic, ecological, rudimentary, etc.

Breaking regulations does not always equate to an unethical campaign, it really depends on justifications and public's perception. For example, Green Peace is an organization known for illicit campaigns that can be deemed ethical for the environmental concerns they bring up.

Another important factor to consider is the clarity of the message. The intended message must be clearly communicated, and thought must be put to the ways people might perceive it. As with any form of communication, there is a chance for the message of the marketer to be lost and to be interpreted as something else. Once a misunderstood message spreads it will be hard to correct. An extreme example of this happened in 2007 when Cartoon Network attempted to promote a new series by planting flashing electronic devices around United States. These devices were mistaken for bombs and landed Cartoon Network a two million dollar fine. (Story, 2007)

2.6 Ruka-Kuusamo Tourism Association

The Ruka-Kuusamo Tourism Association (Ruka-Kuusamo Matkailuyhdistys) is a destination management organization (DMO) and was founded in 2002 by the area's biggest tourism providers of the area together with Kuusamo municipality. The association is owned by around 150 companies that represent more than 90% of the region's tourism revenue.

The purpose of the association is to develop the operating environment of companies operating in the Ruka-Kuusamo tourist area, to increase the international and national attractiveness and awareness of the area, and to increase income and employment from tourism so that the interests of tourism companies are considered in a sustainable manner.

To support its activities, the association raises funds in the form of membership, membership, sponsorship and sponsorship fees, selling various advertising spaces, publishing activities, concluding sponsorship agreements, applying for grants from public entities, accepting donations and owning and maintaining real estate and shares. The purpose is not to generate profit or other financial benefits.

To meet their goals the association can:

- Organize information and consultation events between companies in the area, property owners, public administration, etc. to coordinate goals and operating models
- Disseminate information about the activities and services of its members, the livelihoods and natural conditions of the area, its history, current situation and future through the media and by organizing press conferences

- Develop and maintain the most important routes for the tourism industry and their maintenance as well as the skibus and other public transport in the Ruka-Kuusamo area.
- Coordinate and organize recurring and individual sporting and tourism events on an annual basis
- Develops and maintains tourist information services, central booking office operations and internet sites.
- Conduct and coordinate statistics, marketing and other research in the tourism industry and publishing activities in the industry
- Participate as a representative of the tourism industry in community planning in the area, e.g. For zoning and infrastructure projects, co-operates with other tourism companies in Northeast Finland

(RUKA-KUUSAMO MATKAILU RY, 2022)

2.7 Outdoor Marketing in Ruka

Mediateko is a Finnish marketing agency responsible for most of the visible outdoor marketing in Ruka. Brands can pay to have their brand shown, for example, on a board by the ski slope, on the back of a ski lift or on a digital pylon (Mediateko, 2021). These advertising spaces are generally filled with brand imagery of large companies, such as Kesko, Elisa and Ray. One large deterrent for smaller local businesses to advertise on these spaces is presumably the price, as an advertising slot on one digital pylon costs 500-950 euros per week. (Mediateko, 2021) There are some digital screens located at the Ruka village, which are run by the Ruka Village Association (Rukan Kävelykyläyhdistys). These screens are used by local companies to advertise on. As observed by the author during his time in Ruka, some local companies such as Rukapalvelu and Camp advertise on these digital pylons and screens of Ruka village.

2.8 Ruka Customer Profile

Ruka's predominant customer segment is families. These families often have multiple generations travelling simultaneously (children, parents and grandparents); this differentiates Ruka from similar destinations. Typically, the visitor base is 75% domestic and 25% foreign. Half of the foreign visitors come from Russia and the rest from around Europe. (Supanki, 2022)

Ruka is mostly visited by tourists during the winter season for skiing and other winter activities. (Visitory, 2022) According to the TNS Atlas study of 2017, the typical ski resort visitor is a 30–49-year-old man who lives with a spouse and children. This hypothetical man earns 50 000 to 85 000 euros per year and lives in a city. Regarding purchasing behaviour, skiers tend to shop online, spending money for better quality and to being devoted to products they know. Regarding attitudes towards media and advertising, skiers tend to use social media daily, prefer using smartphones and tablets over computers and are watching traditional tv less. Regarding self-image, personality and motivation, skiers tend to be content with their standard of living, want to be respected and want to pursuit challenges, new things and changes in life. (Mediateko, 2017)

3 Methodology

The qualitative research method involves the use of qualitative data, such as interviews, documents and observation, in order to understand and explain a social phenomenon. In order to answer the research question, a qualitative research method was implemented in the form of semi-structured interviews. A semi-structured interview is a data collection method that relies on asking questions within a predetermined thematic framework. Semi-structured interviews are a mix of structured and unstructured interviews. While some questions are predetermined, the others are not planned. (George, 2022)

3.1 Data Collection

Primary data was obtained from semi-structured interviews. Interviews were directed to the activity providers of Ruka and Kuusamo, as well as a single interview with the head of marketing of Ruka-Kuusamo Tourism Association. Interviews were recorded, transcribed and then analysed. The interviews were conducted either in person or over a video call. The qualitative research method was chosen due to the following characteristics:

- Qualitative interviews give a deeper depth of understanding, which is difficult to gain from a closed question survey. Respondents can freely disclose their experiences, thoughts and feelings without constrain. Generating conversation engages the respondents and allows for building on each other's comments and ideas.
- Fact and figures generated by quantitative research can leave the researcher looking for the "why?" behind the answers. This is where qualitative research is key, as respondents can freely elaborate their answers. This dynamic approach allows the researcher to introduce follow up questions to reach beyond initial responses and rationales. (onepoll, 2022)

3.2 Data Analysis

Conventional content analysis is generally used with studies whose aim is to describe a phenomenon, in this case the use of street marketing. This type of design is appropriate when existing theory or research literature on a phenomenon is limited. The researcher avoids using preconceived categories, instead allowing the categories to emerge from the data. (Hsieh, 2005)

As all the data has been collected, analysis starts with reading the data repeatedly to become familiar with it and to obtain a sense of the whole. Then, data are read word by word to derive codes by first highlighting the exact words from the text that appear to capture key thoughts or concepts. As this process continues, labels for codes emerge that are reflective of more than one key thought. These often come directly from the text and are then become the initial coding scheme. Codes then are sorted into categories based on how different codes are related and linked. (Hsieh, 2005) Next, categories were analysed and connections between them identified based on their concurrence, antecedents, or consequences. Finally, the interpretation of the data reveals conclusions and possible solutions. Are the results tied to a trend, mindset or location. (Valcheva, 2020)

3.3 Reliability and Validity

Reliability is the extent to which results are consistent when replicated and an accurate representation of a total population. (Joppe, 2000) The sample size of 7 companies and one marketing specialist was determined by considering (a) the aim of the study, (b) quality of dialogue, (c) sample specificity and (d) target population. Within qualitative research the sample size is usually small primarily because phenomena only need to appear once to be a part of the analytical map. After a while there is a point of diminishing return when increasing the sample size no longer contributes to new evidence. (Ritchie, 2003)

As marketing and tourism sector are constantly changing, this study will only give information on the current state of these fields on a small area and within a defined group. If a similar study was conducted again or somewhere else, the results might differ. The author has been living in Ruka, and therefore has experience and knowledge of the local companies in addition to the data from the qualitative research. This experience increases the understanding of the business

operations in the Ruka area, allowing for more accurate analysis. Finally, reliability of this research was peer-reviewed by a supervising teacher to meet the standards of the Kajaani University of Applied Sciences

Validity determines whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are. In other words, does the research hit “the bull’s eye” of the research object? (Joppe, 2000)

Interviews were semi-structured, meaning that there was a short list of open-ended questions, which were followed by more specific questions as results of discussion. This form of interviewing allows the researcher to “probe” for relevant information. As mentioned before, this two-way communication provides an opportunity for the interviewer to learn the reasons behind the answers given, providing reliable qualitative data. In addition, having a conversation instead of an interrogation creates a comfortable environment and allows the respondents to articulate themselves as they are. (Lanteria, 2021)

The core interview questions are mostly not about street marketing specifically, which is the focus of this research. The purpose of these questions is to give a better understanding of the marketing mindset inside the company, which is ultimately the goal of this study.

Interview answers were objective, as participation in the research was voluntary and did not involve benefits for the interviewed parties.

4 Results

In the end 8 interviews were done, 7 with local service providers and one with the head of Marketing of Ruka-Kuusamo Tourism Association. Interviews lasted between 10 and 20 minutes and were mostly conducted in a face-to-face setting, some interviews were organised as a video call.

Five of the seven companies had some experience with street marketing, while two companies had no experience. From the five companies that had street marketing experience, two stood out by having recurrent street marketing campaigns. While only few had experience in street marketing, all had valuable opinions on it.

4.1 Ruka-Kuusamo Tourism Association

A re-occurring theme in the data was the collaboration with the Ruka-Kuusamo Tourism Association. Most of the companies interviewed are members of the association and therefore receive benefits relative to their membership fee. While the priority of the association is to market the Ruka-Kuusamo area, they do also provide their members with marketing opportunities. Visibility on the Ruka.fi -website and on the integrated booking service were the most important sources of exposure that companies mentioned. As customers have become more accustomed to buying services online, the importance of making booking activities easy is essential. The association offers additional visibility on seasonal brochures, events and social media.

In order to be a part of the association, a membership fee is collected. The fee is either tier based or relative to the annual revenue of a company. If a company wishes to have more visibility on their desired channel, they can purchase it with ease. It came clear during the interviews that this relative membership cost can be a notable sum for some companies to pay up. Most of the companies find the cost justified for the exposure they get, and some were unsure. As membership is voluntary, companies need to evaluate the value to cost ratio of the cooperation. Some did not value their membership by the immediate benefits (exposure, increased traffic and more sales), but rather in the long-term benefits that the whole area will receive from collective contribution.

Another issue some companies seemed to have with the association was the infrequent and unequal representation of different tourism service sectors on the Ruka website and social medias. This topic has been brought up and is supposedly worked on. It is important to remember that

marketing through Ruka-Kuusamo is based on involvement, so equal representation should not be expected. Companies wanting to have more exposure on the Ruka -channels are free to purchase it through the association. (Supanki, 2022)

4.2 Street Marketing

A reindeer farm and a husky farm have collaborated with the ski centre of Ruka and brought some of their animals to the slopes for skiers to see. At the end of an adventure slope, it is possible to see two reindeers and two huskies. Alongside with the animals there are boards with information about the animals, respective companies and activities that they do. There are weekly events where people can come to feed the reindeer. This type of street marketing has brought in some customers, but it raises an issue. Once tourists can see the animals, they do not necessarily have a need to pay to see more of them or have experiences related to them. Once the pictures have been taken with the huskies and reindeers, there is not a significant incentive to go for a husky safari or visit a reindeer farm.

Both companies have been to multiple events in the Ruka-Kuusamo area, where they would bring one or more of their animals for people to see and hand out flyers. Both companies shared similar objectives when choosing to take part in these events. Besides increasing sales, these objectives were mainly value driven. Both companies want to showcase their authenticity, love for the animals and how they differentiate from the competition.

A representative from the reindeer farm describes reindeer (or any animals for that matter) to be “people magnets”, which makes it easy to engage in conversations with people. For this reason, they have gone in front of supermarkets that sell their meat to show where the meat comes from. This allows them to explain their story, way of working and more importantly about the reindeers themselves.

One safari company mentioned doing small outdoor events including grilling and free trials on a snowmobile. These events created positive experiences for the people involved and enhanced the brand image of the company. While these events were fun, there was a poor connection to increasing sales, which presumably was the original goal. Had the events been planned better with sales in mind, they would have probably been more successful.

All the street marketing examples that came up during the interviews were done in good faith and with permissions from the respective authorities. There were no signs of illicit street marketing campaigns being done.

While personally handing out flyers seem to be rare, most companies have situated flyers around the Ruka-Kuusamo area in hotels, stores and restaurants. This provides them with passive traffic over time. One of the companies chose not to place flyers around Ruka as using disposable paper violates their eco-friendly values.

For five consecutive years before the Covid-19 pandemic there was an event called 'Kansallispuistot Tunturissa', where local outdoor oriented service providers could show their services. Since domestic visitors tend to only use skiing related services, the goal was to increase awareness about the other activities in Ruka-Kuusamo. In 2022 the event was no longer held as requested by the local companies. The reasoning for the discontinuation has been the increased demand of activity services. It is hard to say if the increasing demand is a result of the event or a consequence of the outdoor trend that has been going on for many years now. In any case, the need for the event does not exist anymore.

4.3 Motives for Street Marketing

All interviewees who had experience with street marketing had coinciding motives for their marketing decisions. The most common motive for doing street marketing was communicating values in a face-to-face situation. This is not surprising as effective marketing communication can be demonstrated as communication of values. (Vancouver Business Journal, 2017) Tradition, authenticity, local, compassion and pride were some of the values that interviewees wanted to communicate in their street marketing efforts. It became clear during the interviews, that companies that were deeply invested in their values and experienced exceptional pride in their work were more likely to show it in the form of street marketing.

Street marketing is not only marketing, but almost always collaboration. Being a part of an event that aligns with the values of the company supports both the company as well as the event. For example, Oulanka Fest was an annual multi-day event in the Oulanka National Park, where companies from Ruka-Kuusamo area would show up and provide content to the event, while getting to advertise themselves at the same time. People coming to these events are likely to align with the values of the companies take part in them, making for a valuable target audience.

While it was not explicitly mentioned in the interviews, the point of street marketing is to create buzz around a product. When people see something unusual, like a reindeer in front of a grocery store, it is bound to create word of mouth, exposure on social media and even news coverage. Since street marketing is not a common practise, it is a good way to differentiate from the competition.

Another point that was not explicitly mentioned was the cost of doing a street marketing. While campaigning does require other resources, such as time and people, there were no monetary costs for permits or licenses. It would be wrong to measure a factor only by the monetary cost without taking to consideration the allocation of all the other resources.

4.4 Motives Against Street Marketing

All companies interviewed were small, usually having no more than five people working in them. Often there would be one or two people responsible for majority of the operations inside the company. When most of the time is spent running the company, it is hard to justify allocating resources towards marketing schemes like street marketing. The time allocated for marketing instead of working with customers is essentially money wasted. The best time to do street marketing would be during holiday seasons when there is an influx of people outside, coincidently these are the busiest times for companies, so all resources are aimed towards providing the service, not marketing.

With the lack of human resources comes the lack of marketing scope. None of the companies interviewed had a person dedicated only for marketing. In the rare case that there would be a person tasked with marketing, this person would not have the time to focus on marketing, as everyday tasks of the company take priority.

Working with limited resources forces companies to make efficient use of them. One company thought that reaching thousands of people with video content marketing beats doing street marketing to a handful of people. The company owner is probably right, especially as they are well off with their current marketing strategy. The question is whether resources are used to reach as many people as possible, or will resources be used to make a deeper impression on a smaller audience. The answer is not always clear, but a definitive disadvantage street marketing has is the lack of frequency. Studies have shown that a consumer must see a marketing message seven times before it sinks in. Digital marketing has the advantage of being seen repeatably, when street

marketing will most likely reach the same person only once. (Munro, 2017) Digital marketing has gotten so easy and fast to implement, that it outperforms other marketing strategies, like street marketing.

Another point that was brought up in several interviews was the “need to be big”, or rather the lack of it. Companies seem to be content with the number of customers they are already having, therefore having additional marketing is perceived redundant. More marketing would mean hiring more people to meet the new demand, which some companies were not interested in.

It is necessary for companies to evaluate their target market and how to reach them most effectively. One service provider had mainly international customers that booked their activities well in advance. Street marketing was not the ideal choice for them to reach their customers, therefore they never plan to do it.

Finally, it was mentioned once that a company does not want to push their products and services to events where they are not expected.

4.5 Other Forms of Marketing

All companies interviewed take part in some form of social media marketing. Generally, the social media marketing is unfocused and scattered, but few companies stand out with structured and frequent social media efforts. Main selling points for social media marketing were the ease of use and ability to target advertising. It is also easy to monitor social media marketing performance.

Sometimes local businesses would advertise on the local newspaper or radio during busy holiday seasons. However, the consensus was that these methods do not bring enough customers to be worth the investment. The decision to drop or reduce radio and newspaper marketing were done after customer surveys revealed that nearly none of their customers came from the said adverts.

Few companies would use google analytics and social media monitoring to determine their marketing performance and to determine where their traffic comes from. As mentioned before, Ruka.fi was one of the top sources of traffic, for the members of the tourism association that is.

5 Conclusion

Service providers of Ruka-Kuusamo are small, so they do not have disposable time or people to do time consuming marketing schemes. Marketing needs to be efficient, so it is generally outsourced to the Ruka-Kuusamo Tourism Association. With the convenience of easy online purchases and targeted digital marketing, it is hard to justify the use of street marketing in a destination like Ruka. Companies are content on the number of customers they are already having, so they do not see the appeal in increasing marketing just to hire more workforce.

Street marketing does have its place in a destination like Ruka-Kuusamo, and some companies have recognised that. Collaborating as a part of an event allows companies to differentiate by communicating their values in a unique way that digital marketing can rarely do. Not all companies are created equal, for some it is easier to come up and implement street marketing strategies. Companies with animal related services were more likely to implement street marketing as a part of their marketing portfolio. Animals are efficient “people magnets”, which works wonders in the context of street marketing.

With limited resources companies opt to social media marketing, as it has many benefits. Social media marketing allows for potentially limitless reach, positive word of mouth, opportunities for building relationships and customer loyalty. Social media marketing can be as cheap and frequent as wanted, so any company can implement it in their own way. (Anne Whiting, 2014)

Street marketing has been made accessible through the ‘Kansallispuistot Tunturissa’ National Parks on the Fell -event, where local service providers could show their services in person. The fact that the event has since been discontinued due to an increase in sales goes to show that either the event has been successful and street marketing works in Ruka, or that street marketing is not seen as a worthwhile marketing strategy.

In summary, answering the research question “Why activity providers do or do not utilize street marketing?” does not have a clear-cut answer, as companies are not built equal. When making marketing decisions, companies are limited by their size, time and resources. How these resources are utilized in marketing appears to reflect the values and perspectives of the companies. Street marketing is used as a collaborative way of communicating company values and therefore differentiating from the competition. Street marketing is seen as a novelty with limited reach that often pales in comparison to other forms of marketing. In most cases, street marketing is not

even considered due to lack of resources. With the increase of demand in the past few years, most companies are content with their current inflow of customers and therefore do not seek alternative marketing methods.

The use of street marketing as a part of a viral marketing campaign is something that has not yet been realised in the Ruka-Kuusamo area. Creating video production around a street marketing spectacle mitigates some of the shortcomings of street marketing, such as lack of reach, targeting and frequency. As the focus shifts from street marketing to viral marketing, the campaign can be done during the slow seasons. Then again, with the already limited resources the viability of this strategy is questionable.

In hindsight, some of the interview questions served the research better than others. For example, the question “How are the marketing decisions made in the company?” did not result in answers that differentiated from each other or had relevant significance answering the research question. This question was understood more as a “Who does the marketing decisions in the company?”, and since the interviewed companies were small, the decisions were always made by the owners. The interviewer should have followed the answer with a fitting follow up question or changed the phrasing of the question.

While the definition of street marketing was given during the interviews, there might have still been some confusion from the interviewee side. Occasionally the interviewer would have to reiterate what is considered as street marketing. The concept of street marketing could have been described more clearly with visual examples.

This research serves as a brief glance into the use of street marketing in the tourism sector. More research should be done on the effectiveness of street marketing regarding improving sales, brand image and other relevant metrics. The scope of this research was relatively narrow, only taking to account a small segment of companies in a limited area. Future research could increase the scope by increasing the focus area and the types of businesses involved.

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List of Figures

Figure 1: Skiing days in top 10 Finnish ski resorts – (Source: Ski.fi 2021)

Appendix

Interview structure for activity providers;

- What kind of marketing does your company do?
 - ➔ Has it been effective?
- How are the marketing decisions made in the company?
- What are the resources dedicated for marketing?
- How do you monitor your marketing performance?
 - ➔ How do you your customers find you?
- Have you done street marketing or outdoor marketing at Ruka-Kuusamo?
 - ➔ What are the motives behind doing/not doing street marketing?

Interview structure for Head of Marketing of Ruka Tourism Association;

- What marketing plan does the association follow?
- How are Ruka-Kuusamo visitors booking their holiday activities?
- What are the relevant customer segments for Ruka-Kuusamo?
 - ➔ Where do they come from?
- How do you ensure equal exposure for your members?
- How are you helping the local service providers to market their services?
 - ➔ Do you have collaborative events where local activity providers can show their services?
- How are you encouraging street marketing at Ruka?
- What do you think to be the biggest reasons for and against doing street marketing in Ruka?