

## **Destination image of Porvoo on travel and lifestyle blogs**

Sonja Pennanen

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<p><b>Author or authors</b> Sonja Pennanen</p>	<p><b>Group or year of entry</b> Tobba 11</p>
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<p><b>Teacher(s) or supervisor(s)</b> Johanna Heinonen, Eva Holmberg</p>	
<p>User generated content on social media can have nowadays a prominent impact on consumers' behaviour and purchase decisions. This thesis aims to examine the destination image of Porvoo as a tourist destination on Finnish and international travel and lifestyle blog entries. The thesis is commissioned by Porvoo City tourism and marketing unit.</p> <p>Firstly, the thesis will provide a literature review about relevant concepts related to the topic. Definitions of destination branding, brand and image are provided and discussed through theory. Also a brief introduction of social media and its various platforms is provided including a more concentrated definition of blogs as a part of social media. Furthermore impact of social media on travel and tourism industry and its relevance to destination management organisations will be discussed. In the end of the theoretical part there is an introduction about Porvoo as a tourist destination.</p> <p>Secondly, the methodology of the research is presented. Qualitative research methodology was chosen in order to acquire a wider perception about the destination image of Porvoo as a tourist destination. Thematic analysis is conducted to the chosen data set of blog entries. Emerging themes from both Finnish and international travel and lifestyle blog entries are presented and discussed with comparative perspective to Porvoo's destination brand and its main attributes.</p> <p>Findings indicate that the overall image of Porvoo as a tourist destination is a positive one. Porvoo is considered as a charming destination with historical atmosphere. Themes related to Old Porvoo, shopping, restaurants and cafes were found to be a common pattern among the bloggers. However certain attributes such as nature, archipelago, music, art and events were quite poorly presented among the blog entries.</p> <p>Lastly, the thesis suggests that certain kind of implications are recommended in order to enhance the visibility of themes such as nature and archipelago on blogosphere. Monitoring and integrating user generated content is highly recommended for the commissioner.</p>	
<p><b>Keywords</b> Porvoo, Porvoo City tourism and marketing unit, destination branding, destination image, social media, travel blogs</p>	

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# 1 Introduction

Consumer behaviour especially on travel and tourism has been notably changed due to the extensive use of technology and social media. During the recent years social media has strengthened its role in consumer's travel information search and decision making process as more and more consumers turn to social media while planning their travel. Web 2.0 technologies and social media have encouraged today's consumers to both actively generate and consume information on social media. The experiences and reviews shared by other consumers on social media are highly utilized and valued. Social media including for instance social networks and blogs are widely accessed during various stages of travel purchase decision making process. In addition the user generated content (UGC) on social media can influence other online consumers' attitudes and behaviour. Consumers are not anymore only passively receiving information from traditional channels but instead are also having a voice, which can be heard by a wide audience. Therefore it is also extremely important for destinations to monitor the attitudes and experiences of their consumer markets.

The purpose of the thesis is to identify the image of Porvoo as a tourist destination by examining the online reputation of Porvoo on travel and lifestyle blogs. The thesis aims to acquire a perception of Porvoo's destination image on both Finnish and international travel and lifestyle blogs. The thesis intends to answer the following research questions: 1) which are the emerging themes about Porvoo as a travel destination? and 2) how is the destination brand of Porvoo delivered on travel and lifestyle blogs?

The thesis is commissioned by Porvoo City tourism and marketing unit. The commissioner has also recognised the impact of social media and user-generated content on tourism and travel industry and is thereby interested in the destination image of Porvoo represented on social media. The theoretical part of the thesis intends to define the relevant concepts and discuss the important role of social media on travel information search and travel decision making process. All in all the thesis will provide the commissioner with topical and relevant information about the image of Porvoo as a tourist destination represented on both Finnish and international blogosphere. The findings

will provide a chance to examine the current online reputation of Porvoo as well as can be utilised in further branding of Porvoo and positioning the destination brand. Possible implications and developments concerning the use of user generated content (UGC) will be suggested according to the findings.

## **2 Destination branding**

The following chapter discusses destination branding as well as provides definitions of destination brand and image. Relevant theories regarding the empirical part of the thesis will be introduced. In addition the literature concerning destination brand and image will be later reflected while presenting the findings and conclusions of this research.

### **2.1 Destination brand**

Brand is an impression of a product or a service, which is perceived in the mind of a consumer and can include both tangible and intangible elements (Moilanen & Rainisto 2009, 6-7). A name, symbol, source of promise, distinctive value, personality and consumers' perceptions are according to Baker (2007, 22-23) common elements of a brand. Similarly, Anholt (2007, 4) describes brand as a combination of product, service or organisation's name, identity and reputation.

Four kinds of brand aspects are recognised by Anholt (2007, 5): 1) brand identity, 2) brand image, 3) brand purpose and 4) brand equity. Brand identity communicates the principal concept and core values of a brand for instance in a form of logo and slogan. It is developed and expressed by the brand's owner. Strong brand identity aims to deliver the right message to the consumers. Brand image, in turn, refers to the consumer's perception of a product or service, which is developed according to the received messages from various sources. Anholt (2007, 5) compares brand identity to reputation and notes that it is possible that certain gaps between the brand identity and image can exist. Brand purpose can be defined as an external purpose of the brand, which derives from strong mutually shared internal objectives and goals for instance of an organisation or a destination. Having a strong internal culture will assist to establish a positive destination reputation. (Anholt 2007, 4-7; Moilanen & Rainisto 2009, 6-7; Swarbrooke 2006, 164.) The concept of brand equity refers to the value of the brand. Brand awareness and image are common dimensions of brand value. Destinations can gain a valuable asset and increase revenue when possessing a strong and positive reputation. Quality of service as well as consumer satisfaction and loyalty are also dimensions affecting

the brand equity and tourism revenues. In addition to behavioural indicators e.g. repeat of visiting the destination, word of mouth and expressed intention to visit the destination can be also considered as indicators of consumer loyalty. (Tasci 2011, 124-126.)

Places and destinations can likewise be considered as brands (Moilanen & Rainisto 2009, 7). In this research destination is considered as “an amalgam of tourist products and services, offering an integrated experience to consumers, in a geographical and physical setting, which its visitor understand as a unique entity” (Moilanen & Rainisto 2009, 112). Destination brand can be defined as the core assets and characteristics of destination, which differentiates the destination from the others. According to Baker (2007, 26) destination brand is “a totality of perceptions, thoughts and feelings that customers hold about a place”. Anholt (2007, 4) describes branding as a process, which consists of designing, planning and communicating the name and identity of the product or service. Branding can be valuable and competitive advantage in today’s competitive environment among the inclusive amount of destinations. Thus destination branding, being nowadays a vital tool for tourism marketers, aims to differentiate the identity of destination from others by emphasising the uniqueness of the destination and adding value to the destination. Successful long-term branding initiatives will assist to make the destination to be emotionally appealing and desirable for the consumers. (Moilanen & Rainisto 2009, 111.)

Two distinguishing factors of destination branding are pointed out by Moilanen & Rainisto (2009, 113-114). Firstly, differing from the single product brand, destination brand is established and managed by several stakeholders and actors, who all contribute in establishing and managing the brand. Secondly, consumers will acquire brand contacts from several sources in the destination and consider all the stakeholders and actors as features of destination’s brand promise. Thus branding a destination can be found occasionally challenging. In order to establish a competitive identity, it is important that the brand is consistently implemented among the destination management organisation (DMO) and all the stakeholders (Tasci 2011, 115). However it is not possible for destinations to have the total control of the brand, which makes managing and marketing destination also challenging. (Moilanen & Rainisto 2009, 111-115.)

Destinations are required to establish a branding strategy of their own due to the destinations' distinctive features (Tasci 2011, 116). In order to be able to build up a successful destination brand and stay competitive, both the supply and demand sides of destination should be extensively researched (Tasci 2011, 125). Destination brand tends to evolve over time and therefore it should be carefully monitored, maintained as well as modified when required (Tasci 2011, 118-120). The understanding of market segments and acknowledging the perceived images held by the consumers will assist to determine what is desired and expected from the destination. In addition the images of destination's competitors should be examined. This will assist destination marketers to point out the relevant attributes of brand and position the images in the desired direction. All things considered, a successful destination brand is distinctive, possesses quality and trust as well as enables consumers to develop affective ties to the destination by providing the promised value. (Tasci 2011, 118-119, 122-125.)

## **2.2 Destination image**

Brand image is acknowledged to be a prominent influencer in consumer's behaviour, thus also being a valuable concept for tourist destinations (Anholt 2007, 5). Numerous researches concerning destination image has been conducted since its appearance in the middle 1970s (Shani & Wang 2001, 130). Brand image refers to how the brand is perceived in consumer's mind (Anholt 2007, 5; Baker 2007, 44; Moilanen & Rainisto 2009, 7). According to Tasci (in Shani & Wang 2001, 133) "destination image is an interactive system of thoughts, opinions, feelings, visualisations, and intentions toward a destination". There are certain characteristics, which represent the unique nature of destination image (Shani & Wang 2001, 130). Firstly, the concept of destination image is quite a controversial one and there is no such a commonly agreed definition available. The complexity and multiply of destination image is also pointed out. The destination image consists of various features, which are representing destinations identity. In addition various information agents are involved in the formation process of destination image. Lastly, destination image is a subjective and dynamic nature since it tends to evolve both over time and from person to person. (Shani & Wang 2001, 130.)



Gartner (in Shani & Wang 2001, 133) presents the three hierarchal interrelated components of destination image: 1) cognitive, 2) affective and 3) conative. Cognitive component of destination image emphasises primarily the physical attributes of a destination and deliberates the common knowledge and beliefs about the destination. Consumer's feelings and emotions held towards the destination, which can usually be either positive, negative or non-existing, are part of the affective component of destination image. Conative component refers to the behavioural intentions consumer has in relation to the particular destination. Tasci (in Shani & Wang 2001, 133) suggests that the following three components indicate "what is known about an object (cognitive), how people feel about what they know (affective) and how they act on that information (conative)". Especially the cognitive and affective components have been recognised to have an impact on the overall image of the destination. (Shani & Wang 2001, 131-133.)

The typology of destination image formation presented by Gartner (1993), which is based on Gunn's (1972) work, is according to Shani and Wang (2011, 139-141) one of the most cited and comprehensive one. Gartner's typology presents eight information agents, which can influence the image formation either alone or jointly:

- 1) Overt induced I
- 2) Overt induced II
- 3) Covert induced I
- 4) Covert induced II
- 5) Autonomous
- 6) Unsolicited organic
- 7) Solicited organic is formed according to word of mouth (WOM)
- 8) Organic

The overtly induced information agents are fully controlled by destination promoters and marketers whereas covertly induced ones are only partially controlled by the destination promoters. Overt induced I agents consists of traditional forms of advertising such as television, print media and brochures. Overt induced II agents include external sources e.g. travel agents and tour operators, which are in a way or another contribute

in marketing the destination. Covert induced I agents are often famous spokespersons such as athletes or actors, who are paid for e.g. advertising the destination. In turn so called familiarisation trips designed for media representatives are examples of covert induced II agents and aim to spread the desired destination image. Books, movies and news articles are examples of autonomous agents, which are sincerely independent sources and primarily stem from news and popular culture. Unsolicited organic image agents e.g. friends can as well provide voluntary and unrequested information about the destination during natural conversations. Similarly word of mouth information is an example of solicited organic image agents, which can be defined as knowledgeable sources providing information without vested curiosity and clear request. Shani (2010) has noted the emerging importance of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and has predicted that social media will be even more important source and tool for destination management organisations (DMOs) in communicating a positive image (Shani & Wang 2011, 141). Organic image is gained through personal experience when the destination has been earlier visited. Autonomous and organic images tend to be harder to change than the induced ones. (Shani & Wang 2011, 139-141.)

Altogether, destination image is a vital concept for tourism marketers as destinations generally compete through the images held by the consumers (Munar 2011, 293). In other words consumers often base their travel purchase decisions on their destination images. Thus understanding of existing images and factors influencing the image are extremely important for destination management organisations (DMOs). By monitoring consumer attitudes and opinions DMOs are able to position the images and conduct effective destination marketing. Furthermore destination brands and images are nowadays also built on social media as electronic word of mouth (eWOM) can influence both image formation as well as consumers' behaviour and travel decisions. In fact consumers can be considered as co-creators in branding destinations (Uysal, Harrill & Woo 2011). Therefore communicating the brand on social media and utilisation of user generated content are vital approaches for today's destination marketers. Managing naturally occurring UGC and stimulating consumers to generate content on Web 2.0 platforms can assist destinations to gain attention and visibility in today's competi-

tive marketplace. (Burmann 2010, 2)

### **3 Impact of social media on travel and tourism industry**

The beginning of third chapter provides a brief definition of social media and its various platforms. In addition chapter three defines blogs in deeper and presents four major types of blogs in travel and tourism field. The latter part of the chapter will concentrate on discussing the impact of social media and user generated content (UGC) on travel and tourism industry. Firstly, the role of social media and travel blogs in travel planning and travel decision making process are explained. The impact of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) influencing other consumers' behaviour will be also pointed out. Lastly, the importance of monitoring destination's online reputation will be discussed in addition to how the user generated content (UGC) could be exploited in tourism marketing initiatives.

#### **3.1 Social media in general**

Since the introduction of participative web 2.0 and social media around the year of 2005, the use of various social media platforms have been widely flourishing. There is no such a permanent definition of social media available since the field of social media is continuously evolving and changing. However there are certain common aspects in social media when comparing to the traditional media. Social media can be defined as two-way media in which both organisations and consumers are participating. Social media offers a possibility to voluntary generate and consume content. Internet users are encouraged to generate and exchange content in form of words, pictures and videos as well as to interact with each other on social media. (Leino 2010, 252; Lietsala & Sirkkunen 2008, 19, 25; Safko & Brake 2009, 6-7.)

According to Leino (2010, 251) social media consist partly or completely of 1) user generated content, 2) social networks, which are consuming the content and 3) technology, which enables generating and sharing content as well as interaction. There are many kinds of social media platforms available, which differ according to their main practices. Social media includes discussion boards, blogs, social network sites, customer review sites, experience and photo sharing functions (Goeldner & Ritchie 2009, 551). Lietsala & Sirkkunen (2008, 13-14) present likewise several genres of social media in-

cluding content creation and publishing tools (e.g. blogs, podcasts), content sharing (Youtube, Flickr), social networks sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn, collaborative productions (e.g. Wikipedia), virtual worlds and add-ons.

Social media offers wide opportunities for both consumers and organisations operating in tourism and travel industry. Organisations are able to communicate their brands to large amount of consumers through various platforms on social media whereas consumers can gather and share information about the travel products and services. The importance of presence and participation on social has been widely recognised by travel and tourism industry. However the opportunities brought by the exploitation of user generated content (UGC) for instance in organisations' marketing and product development would deserve more research and attention from the industry. (Sigala, Christou & Gretzel 2012, 1.)

Weblogs, commonly known also as blogs, are websites, which are updated in regular basis and include postings about writers' experiences, thoughts and opinions (Goeldner & Ritchie 2009, 551; Lietsala & Sirkkunen 2008, 31; Poynter 2010, 163; Safko & Brake 2009, 167). Blog postings are usually written in personal style and displayed in reverse chronological order and can include written text, images and videos as well as links to other websites. (Akehurst 2009, 3-4; Lietsala & Sirkkunen 2008, 33; Poynter 2010, 163; Safko & Brake 2009, 167.) In addition, blogs enable further discussion since the blogger, referring to the person holding the blog, can also interact with the blog readers through commenting functions. Blogs can be available for public audience or accessed only by a closed group. (Lietsala & Sirkkunen 2008, 31-34.)

Blogs can be easily created almost by anyone by using even free blogging tools e.g. WordPress and can be utilised for both personal and corporate use. Individual blogs, also described as online diaries, enable user to share their personal opinions and experiences. Corporate blogs, in turn can focus for instance on promoting products and services as well as having one-on-one conversations with customers. The forms blogs can vary between written blogs, photo blogs and video blogs (vlogs) and concentrate

on specific category topics such as music, fashion, travel, lifestyle or marketing to name a few. (Lietsala & Sirkkunen 2008, 31-34; WP Virtuoso 2013.)

Blogs have also gained their popularity among the travel and tourism field. According to the leading blog search engine and directory Technorati, there were in 2007 over 70 million blogs with a total of 120 000 new blogs created on daily basis (Sifry Alerts 2007; Technorati 2014). As presented by Schmallegger and Carson (2008), there are four major types of travel blogs: 1) consumer-to-consumer blogs (C2C), 2) business-to-business blogs (B2B), 3) business-to-consumer (B2C) and 4) government-to-consumer (G2C). C2C blogs are personal blogs, which are these days widely utilised and enable e.g. sharing travel experiences information with others. C2C blogs are often also used for keeping in touch with family and friends. The main use of business-to-business blogs, also called knowledge blogs, is the networking among the industry's stakeholders for example tourism organisations, professionals and academics. Particular blogs are often utilised for communicating "latest industry trends, technological developments, research findings or marketing tips" (Schmallegger & Carson 2008, 102). Corporate blogs belong to the B2C blogs. Nowadays many organisations operating in travel and tourism industry utilise business-to-consumer blogs for promoting their products and services. Government-to-consumer blogs, similarly to B2C blogs, are often used by destination marketing organisations (DMOs) for communicating about the destination with their target markets. Inviting professional bloggers, possessing "opinion leader" status, to participate in destination blogs is nowadays a common practise among destination management organisations. (Schmallegger & Carson 2008, 101-102.)

### **3.2 Blogs as an information source**

Social media is having a huge impact on travel information search and travel decision making process due to the experiential nature and intangibility of travel and tourism products (Yoo & Gretzel 2012, 189). In other words consumers are not able to sample the tourism products and services in advance. Therefore during the pre-consumption stage of travel decision making process, information about the destination is searched and compared by consumers in order to be able to assess the products and services as well as plan the travel. (Pan & Crotts 2012, 149; Pizam & Mansfeld 1999, 213.)

Word of mouth has been acknowledged by several authors to be one of the most influential sources concerning travel planning and travel decision-making process (Pan & Crofts, 2012, 76; Schmallegger & Carson 2008, 100-101). Sernovitz (2009, 2) describes word-of mouth as ‘natural conversations between real people’. Word of mouth is commonly communicated by friends and relatives and is related to extremely positive or negative experiences with a certain product or service. Word of mouth communicated by friends and relatives has been commonly agreed to have a prominent position in travel decision making (Carvao 2010, 222; Lee & Hu in Mills & Law 2004, 172).

However social media has provided new channels for word of mouth. The emergence of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) has already obtained emerging interest among the researchers. There are studies, which suggest that WOM and eWOM differ according to their communication channel and are argued to possess similar kind of influence while choosing destinations (Tham, Croy & Mair 2013, 146-147). Consumer to consumer travel blogs, being a form of electronic word of mouth (eWOM), are nowadays a popular channel for sharing and consuming content among the consumers. Travel blogs are accessed while planning the travel mostly due to the information intensive and intangible nature of travel and tourism products. Online opinions and experiences with certain tourism products and services are sought in order to acquire an idea what could be expected from them. User generated content (UGC) on social media can thus assist consumers to evaluate the destination and decrease insecurity of travel and tourism products as well as have an impact on the brand image (O’Connor, Wang & Li 2011, 236; Volo 2012, 153).

UGC is considered to provide current, detailed and reliable information, which is created for non-commercial purposes (Volo 2012, 151; O’Connor, Wang & Li 2011, 236). Thereby consumers also find the content generated by the fellow consumers often valuable and creditable. Consumers are able to share both their positive and negative experiences in contrast to the positive and even biased blog contents created by the travel marketers. Yet positive eWOM has been considered to have more influence on other consumer’s purchase decisions whereas negative eWOM when being generated for e.g.

venting anger, is considered to possess lower credibility and influence (Burgess, Sellito, Cox & Buultjens 2009, 224-225; Carvao 2010, 222.)

Travel blogs are expected to even increase their role in tourism and travel industry as discussions about social media altering or even supplementing the traditional tourism marketing and media have occurred (Sigala, Christou & Gretzel 2012, 149-154). In fact, there are indications that nowadays consumers seem to rely heavily on the experiences and reviews, which can be found on social media compared to the professionally produced content (Rheem, in Conrady & Buck 2010, 299; Sigala, Christou & Gretzel 2012, 175-176; Burgess, Sellito, Cox & Buultjens 2009, 222). For instance a Google survey (2011) indicates, that “about 40% of travellers said social network comments influenced their travel planning while 50% actually based their travel plans on other people’s reviews and experiences” (ITB Berlin 2012, 27). The research conducted by IPK International also highlights the role of Internet and social media in travel planning (figure 1). Figure 1, displaying the main factors influencing the travel destination choice, indicates that more than half of the consumers in Europe, China, Japan, Brasilia and USA are using often or sometimes travel blogs, travel forums and review sites in their travel planning stage.

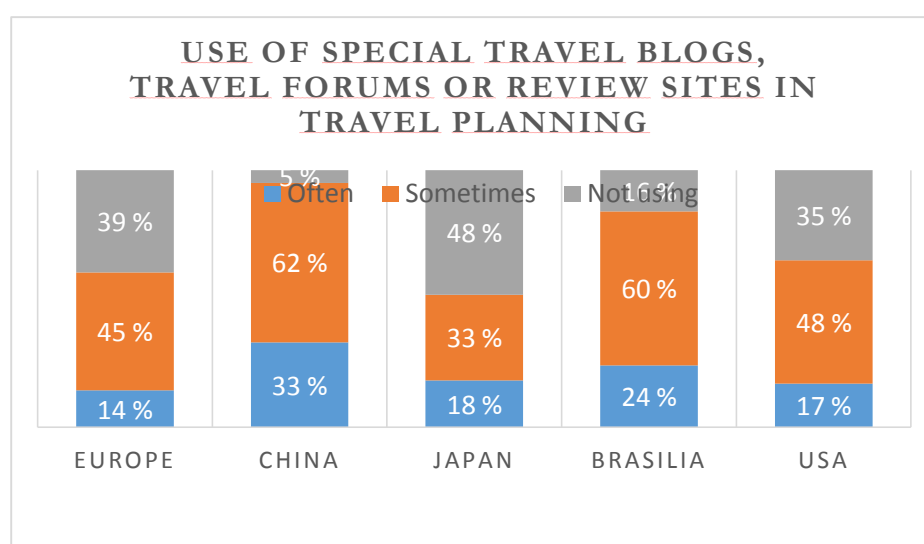


Figure 1. The use of travel blogs, travel forums and review sites in travel and holiday planning. (ITB Berlin 2013, 26.)



Similarly, the TRAVELSAT© benchmarking survey results advocate the role of electronic word of mouth in destination choice. As table 1 indicates, friends or relatives recommendations are having the highest influence in choosing the travel destinations (38%). Information on the web, with its 22 percent share, was the third influencing factor in choosing travel destinations. Thereby can be said that blogs, as a contemporary form of electronic word of mouth, and information on the internet including various social media platforms can have today a prominent impact on choosing travel destination.

Table 1. Top ten factors influencing travel destination choice. (Aboutourism 2011.)

<b>Top ten factors influencing travel destination choice</b>	
<b>Friends or relatives recommendation</b>	<b>38%</b>
<b>World renowned must see destination</b>	32%
<b>Information on the web</b>	<b>22%</b>
<b>Cheap deal/special offer</b>	15%
<b>Geographically close destination</b>	14%
<b>Travel agency recommendation</b>	8%
<b>Article in magazine/newspaper</b>	6%
<b>Movie realized in the country</b>	5%
<b>Appealing advertising in it</b>	5%
<b>Heard about in the TV news</b>	2%

Consumers are also eager to share their travel experiences, opinions and views about certain destination both during and after travelling. Consumers often share information and images online during the consumption stage of the travel. After travelling the consumer tend in turn to share their experiences on social media, which can then in turn inspire or motivate other potential consumers and influence their decisions. (ITB Berlin 2012, 27; ITB Berlin 2013, 25.) Thereby the user generated content provided by other consumers can increase the destination awareness among the others and influence image creation (Munar 2011, 292-293).

### **3.3 Use of blogs for destination management organisations**

Social media has provided tourism and travel industry with new opportunities in the areas of marketing and research. Internet is found to be one of the most valuable media for destination management organisations (DMOs). Thus presence on social media is nowadays an obligatory for organisations in order to efficiently attract and engage consumers. However, in order to add more value to the consumers and gain competitive advantage, the utilization of user generated content (UGC) on social media should be also taken into account. (Carvao 2010, 376; O'Connor, Wang & Li 2011, 225.)

UGC as market research source can enable destination management organisations to gain insights into market's perceptions about the destination. Social media including blogs provides an access to a wide amount of qualitative data and can indicate what kind of images consumers possess about the brand. Organisations can utilize available blog search engines such as Google's blog search and Technorati blog search engine for locating relevant blog contents, screen other travel related UGC on other forms of social media e.g. Trip Advisor and use RSS feeds of those websites in order to ease locating of user generated content (Schmallegger & Carson 2008,105). User generated content on social media provides destination management organisations with a chance to monitor what is recorded about the destination and to discover consumers' experiences and opinions (Leino 2010, 254). UGC can be also utilized in developing and enchanting products. Destination marketers are encouraged to join the communication on blogs and make sure that any incorrect information is corrected. Monitoring the perceptions and attitudes can help to adjust marketing and branding strategies in the required direction. Blogosphere monitoring can in addition assist to locate influential bloggers and form co-operation with them in order to maintain favourable images with a rather wide audience. (Schmallegger & Carson 2008, 104-105; Carvao 2010, 376-379; O'Connor, Wang & Li 2011, 232- 233)

Social media, being a popular channel to inquire information among the consumers, has also altered destination marketing and forced destination management organisations to rethink their destination branding (Marchiori, Cantoni & Fesenmaier 2013, 171). Consumers are nowadays active and important co-creators of contributing con-

tent on social media related to travel. As discussed earlier, there are indications that content generated by fellow consumers is even considered as more truthful and less biased than content provided by DMOs. In addition UGC can influence other consumers as well as establish and modify the image of destination (Carvalho 2010, 379). Thus also DMOs are encouraged to integrate UGC for instance in their e-marketing initiatives in order to add more value and gain competitive advantage. Stimulating and integrating UGC can be found to be an effective way for increasing brand awareness and enabling travel decision makers to access experiences of the consumers. (Carvalho 2010, Tham, Crou & Mair 2013.)

There are several tourism destinations and companies initiatives exploiting the content generated by the consumers by adding UGC or links to other platforms on social media on their websites or even by creating specific platforms for users. Similarly corporate blogs could be as well utilized for stimulating and encouraging consumers to generate content. The tourism promotion board of the city of Madrid has for example a promotional blog “Blogging Madrid” (<http://blog.esmadrid.com/blog/en/>), which includes UGC features and enables sharing content in several kinds of forms. Another example of emphasizing the value of UGC is travel company Thomson, which has established a web platform “Holiday Reviews” (<http://www.thomson.co.uk/holiday-reviews/holiday-reviews.html>) for consumers to share their holiday reviews consumers with an opportunity to for instance discuss or share their experiences. Similar kind of implications could also benefit DMOs and also ease the monitoring of consumer experiences. (Carvalho 2010, 379.)

The utilization of UGC is still in quite experimental stage among the DMOs and more research concerning the impact of social media on brand image and how to embracing the UGC is required (O’Connor, Wang & Li 2011, 241; Carvalho 2010, 379). However instead of ignoring the potential of UGC, destination management organizations are encouraged to pay attention to the opportunities offered by UGC and integrate it into their business strategies for instance in the areas of research, marketing, management and communication (Schmallegger & Carson 2008, 105). Finding valuable and effective

ways for integrating user generated content will benefit DMOs as the role of social media and UGC continues to evolve.

## 4 Porvoo as a tourist destination

Porvoo is located in southern coast of Finland approximately 50 km east of Helsinki and is a part of eastern Uusimaa region. It can be easily reached due to its near location to Helsinki-Vantaa airport and motorway E18. Summertime Porvoo can be also reached easily by boat and cruises between Helsinki and Porvoo are arranged nearly on daily basis. The population of Porvoo is about 48 700 inhabitants and the city is bilingual. The town consists of centre area, bigger suburbs and smaller urban areas in addition to an inclusive rural and archipelago area. (Porvoo 2013; Visit Porvoo 2014a; Visit Porvoo 2014b; Visit Porvoo 2014c.)

Porvoo is the second oldest town in Finland and is a popular daytrip destination among both Finnish and international tourists. There are about 1, 2 million day visitors arriving to Porvoo yearly (Backman, J. & Peisala, T. 7 Jul 2014). A notable amount of international cruise tourists are also arriving in Porvoo. Due to the increasing competition between daytrip destinations represented by tour operators, it is important that tourism in Porvoo is constantly developed in order to remain the position as interesting daytrip destination. (Backman, J. & Peisala, T. 7 Jul 2014; Visit Porvoo 2014b.)

Porvoo is marketed as a diverse destination in which tourists can experience history, culture, archipelago and country side. The main attributes of Porvoo's destination brand are history, culture, art, nature and archipelago, food, music as well as events. Especially historical Old Porvoo, the small size of the city and location near to Helsinki are found appealing by the tourists. The historic and idyllic Old Porvoo with its colourful buildings and red shore houses is one of the most well-known attractions in Porvoo. Cafes, restaurants, delicacy and home interior boutiques in addition to charming atmosphere are often stressed in marketing Porvoo as a daytrip destination (Visit Finland 2014; Visit Helsinki 2014). Moreover Porvoo offers wide range of premises and amenities for meetings and celebrations. For instance the Art Factory, relatively new culture and congress centre, is an idyllic venue for meetings, conferences and other kinds of events (Taidetehdas 2014). The archipelago and countryside, which are as

well some of the main elements of the brand and are continuously developed. (Backman, J. & Peisala, T. 7 Jul 2014.)

The busiest tourist season in Porvoo focuses on summer and Christmas time, which can be also seen in marketing campaigns. For instance there are also different kinds of campaigns on both printed and social media such as “Summer is in Porvoo” and “Christmas is in Porvoo” highlighting the current events and attractions. There is also content related to the campaigns actively shared on other platforms of social media e.g. on Instagram and Pinterest. At Christmas time also events and attractions such as Christmas markets, concerts, theatre plays and Christmas openings are emphasized on campaigns e.g. on Facebook. However there are tourists arriving in Porvoo all around the year, which is vital for the destination since tourism industry is one of the city’s main trades. Therefore so called off seasons of tourists are taken into consideration in marketing Porvoo as tourist destination since experiences and sights, which are worth to experience in more silent/peaceful time, are emphasized. (Backman, J. & Peisala, T. 7 Jul 2014.)

The thesis commissioner’s, Porvoo city tourism and marketing unit, main tasks are marketing and developing of Porvoo as a tourist destination. In addition the unit is responsible of the city branding and producing tourism information in Porvoo. The city branding includes for instance marketing of Porvoo as potential place of residence as well as marketing of residence property and municipality recruitment. The unit is also participating in marketing The Art Factory Culture and Congress Centre together with its other stakeholders. (Leppälä, O. 22 Apr 2014; Visit Porvoo 2014)

The business idea of Porvoo city tourism and marketing unit is based on the innovative and productive co-operation with municipalities, organisations and other actors in the travel and tourism industry. The most important stakeholders of the unit are city of Porvoo, development units of nearby areas, travel agencies, Visit Finland, Posintra Oy, Helsingin markkinointi Oy as well as other destinations, sights, organisations and educational institutions. In addition, both domestic and international tour operators, transportation providers, representatives of media, bloggers and marketing organisa-

tions are marked as valuable cooperation partners. (Leppälä, O. 23 Apr 2014) Porvoo city tourism and marketing unit is for example doing a lot of cooperation with Visit Finland, which enables wide marketing of Porvoo as a tourist destination in all around Europe and nearby areas such as Sweden and Germany. Direct marketing in Russia is also conducted for instance through electronic channels and by distributing brochures. In addition media representatives and bloggers around the world are visiting Porvoo throughout the year. Tourists are also reached through various channels of electronic and social media. (Backman, J. & Peisala, T. 7 Jul 2014.)

## 5 Methodology

Qualitative research was chosen as a research methodology in order to be able to obtain a more extensive perception of the destination image of Porvoo on travel and lifestyle blogs. Examining user generated blog content enables to gather knowledge about brand image as well as about consumer loyalty. The following chapter will discuss the chosen research methodology and provide a description of the research process.

### 5.1 Qualitative research

Research methodologies can be divided into quantitative and qualitative research methods. Qualitative research has been commonly defined by comparing it to quantitative research and by describing how it differs from the quantitative research (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 13). Silverman (2011, 4) presents the assumed characteristics of both kinds of research. Qualitative research commonly uses words and is concerned with meanings whereas the quantitative research focuses on using numbers and is more concerned with behaviour. Moreover, characteristic to qualitative research is that hypothesis is not required whereas quantitative research commonly begins with an establishment of hypothesis. In quantitative research the researcher will not have expectations either about the research topic or the findings, which could limit the research. In quantitative research the hypothesis is generated later on from data analysis. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 19-20; Silverman 2011, 60, 67.) However this kind of comparison can be as well seen as unnecessary and misleading while discussing the suitability of research methodology. (Silverman 2011, 4, Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 13.)

Qualitative research aims to provide a simple understanding of a certain phenomenon and to describe the researched topic in greater depth often by answering questions what, why and how (Silverman 2011, 17). According to Silverman (2011, 42-43) there are four main methods used in qualitative research: 1) observation, 2) analysing texts and documents, 3) interviews and focus groups and 4) audio and video recording in addition to other visual material. The particular methods tend to be often combined and can be utilised as well in quantitative research.



In qualitative research the data can be recorded either with or without the intervention of the researcher (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 15; Silverman 2011, 229). The data can be in the form of text, visual or audio data. According to Silverman (2011, 230) textual data possess several advantages. Texts are naturally occurring data and can be easily accessed and collected. However is important to limit the data since the amount of qualitative data available is large. Thus it is possible to work with the data more effectively. In fact the data sample is commonly smaller in qualitative research. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 18.)

This research utilises qualitative research methods as it aims to acquire a simple and wide understanding of Porvoo's destination image presented on travel and lifestyle blogs. Qualitative methods were also mutually agreed with the commissioner to be a more suitable method for this research.

## **5.2 Thematic analysis as a research method**

In this research, the data was analysed by conducting a thematic analysis with comparative perspective to the destination brand of Porvoo. In thematic analysis themes, which are found relevant to the research problem, are raised from the data. That enables the researcher to compare the occurrence and expression of themes. (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 175-176.) In the beginning of this research the author started to acquaint herself with the existing literature concerning social media and its impact on travel and tourism industry before defining the final topic of thesis. The topic of the thesis was chosen due to personal interest and the relevance of social media in travel and tourism industry.

Finnish and international blog entries concerning Porvoo as a tourist destination were located by the author meanwhile working with the theoretical part of the thesis. Blog entries can be seen possessing the real opinions of consumers since they are produced in non-artificial setting without any intervention of the researcher. The data utilised in this research is naturally occurring data and consist of written text and visual images. The data sample consists of consumer to consumer (C2C) blogs written in Finnish, English and German. Altogether 17 blog entries, which were published between 1st of

September 2012 and 18<sup>th</sup> of May 2014, were collected. Topical entries, which have been published quite recently, were chosen in order to examine the current state of the brand image. The blogs were identified by searching blogs entries, which concentrated mainly on travel experiences in Porvoo. However also blogs belonging to lifestyle categories were chosen, since they often also cover the topic of travelling in certain extent. Furthermore the author aimed to choose blogs, which represent the different consumer segments e.g. according to age and gender. Google blog search engine was used for locating the blog entries. The Google blog search provided for instance over 160 000 links when searched with keyword Porvoo. However the provided links included also a lot of irrelevant links for the research. Blogilista.fi and Bloglovin.com websites, which both enable following favourite blogs as well as discovering new ones, were also accessed while searching the blog entries. Certain blog entries, which have already been integrated on the commissioner's website ([visitporvoo.fi](http://visitporvoo.fi)) were also utilised in the research.

In total of 12 Finnish blog entries were collected for the research. Table 2 indicates the Finnish blog entries, which have been examined in this research. Table 2 provides the following information about the blog entries utilised: link to the entry, title of the entry as well as the publishing date of the entry. All the Finnish blog entries were accessed on 3<sup>rd</sup> of May 2014.

Table 2. Finnish travel and lifestyle blog entries collected for the research.

Table 2 Finnish travel and lifestyle blog entries	
<b>Blog 1</b>	<a href="http://annajasebastian.indiedays.com/2014/03/02/paiva-porvoossa/">http://annajasebastian.indiedays.com/2014/03/02/paiva-porvoossa/</a> Date: Mar 2, 2014 Title: Päivä Porvoossa
<b>Blog 2</b>	<a href="http://www.lily.fi/blogit/anna-vihervaarasta/wanhan-porvoon-joulu">http://www.lily.fi/blogit/anna-vihervaarasta/wanhan-porvoon-joulu</a> Date: Dec 5, 2013 Title: Wanhan Porvoon Joulu
<b>Blog 3</b>	<a href="http://www.rantapallo.fi/daysofv/2012/12/19/paiva-porvoossa/">http://www.rantapallo.fi/daysofv/2012/12/19/paiva-porvoossa/</a> Date: Dec 12, 2012 Title: Päivä Porvoossa
<b>Blog 4</b>	<a href="http://dearmomentsandme.blogspot.fi/2014/04/porvoo-ennen-paasiaista.html">http://dearmomentsandme.blogspot.fi/2014/04/porvoo-ennen-paasiaista.html</a> Date: Apr 23, 2014 Title: Porvoo ennen pääsiäistä
<b>Blog 5</b>	<a href="http://ewoklife.wordpress.com/tag/old-town-of-porvoo/">http://ewoklife.wordpress.com/tag/old-town-of-porvoo/</a> Date: Apr 16, 2014 Title: Visiting the Old Town of Porvoo, Finland
<b>Blog 6</b>	<a href="http://www.lily.fi/blogit/isyyspakkaus/kaunis-ja-herkullinen-porvoo-pikavisiitti-gumbostrandissa">http://www.lily.fi/blogit/isyyspakkaus/kaunis-ja-herkullinen-porvoo-pikavisiitti-gumbostrandissa</a> Date: Jul 7, 2013 Title: Kaunis ja herkullinen Porvoo & pikavisiitti Gumbostrandissa
<b>Blog 7</b>	<a href="http://josecret.blogspot.fi/2013/12/christmas-in-porvoo.html">http://josecret.blogspot.fi/2013/12/christmas-in-porvoo.html</a> Date: Dec 6, 2013 Title: Christmas in Porvoo
<b>Blog 8</b>	<a href="http://lillatirlittan.bellablogit.fi/2013/11/jouluinen-porvoo/">http://lillatirlittan.bellablogit.fi/2013/11/jouluinen-porvoo/</a> Date: Nov 25, 2013 Title: Jouluinen Porvoo
<b>Blog 9</b>	<a href="http://www.lily.fi/blogit/prinsessa-retrovauva/pyorahdys-porvoossa-ja-fuusioruokaa">http://www.lily.fi/blogit/prinsessa-retrovauva/pyorahdys-porvoossa-ja-fuusioruokaa</a> Date: Nov 11, 2013 Title: Pyörähdys Porvoossa ja fuusioruokaa
<b>Blog 10</b>	<a href="http://www.rantapallo.fi/veerabianca/2013/06/25/that-perfect-summer-day/">http://www.rantapallo.fi/veerabianca/2013/06/25/that-perfect-summer-day/</a> Date: Jun 25, 2013 Title: That Perfect Summer Day
<b>Blog 11</b>	<a href="http://venlasavikuja.fitfashion.fi/paiva-porvoossa/">http://venlasavikuja.fitfashion.fi/paiva-porvoossa/</a> Date: Sep 1, 2012 Title: Päivä Porvoossa
<b>Blog 12</b>	<a href="http://uskotai pois.blogspot.fi/2013/10/pikareissu-porvooseen.html">http://uskotai pois.blogspot.fi/2013/10/pikareissu-porvooseen.html</a> Date: Oct 19, 2013 Title: Pikareissu Porvooseen

The international blog entries examined in this research are presented below in table 3. The amount of the international blog entries utilised in this research was five. All the blog entries presented in the table 2 were accessed on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2014. Identifying in-

ternational blog entries concerning Porvoo as a tourist destination possessing a noteworthy relevance to the research was found by author harder than expected and the amount of international blog entries was lower when compared to the Finnish ones.

Table 3. International travel and lifestyle blog entries collected for the research.

Table 3 International travel and lifestyle blog entries	
<b>Blog 13</b>	<a href="http://lagrancostanza.wordpress.com/2014/05/18/finland-2014-porvoo/">http://lagrancostanza.wordpress.com/2014/05/18/finland-2014-porvoo/</a> Date: May 18, 2014 Title: Finland 2014: Porvoo
<b>Blog 14</b>	<a href="http://www.travelandlifestylediaries.com/2013/09/getting-my-bearings-around-old-porvoo.html">http://www.travelandlifestylediaries.com/2013/09/getting-my-bearings-around-old-porvoo.html</a> Date: Sep 16, 2013 Title: Getting my bearings around Old Porvoo and my discovery of Finnish Cider
<b>Blog 15</b>	<a href="http://www.travelandlifestylediaries.com/2013/12/the-new-town-of-porvoo-finland.html">http://www.travelandlifestylediaries.com/2013/12/the-new-town-of-porvoo-finland.html</a> Date: Dec 17, 2013 Title: The New Town Of Porvoo, Finland
<b>Blog 16</b>	<a href="http://sandrafyianderson.com/2013/10/02/porvoo-ticked/">http://sandrafyianderson.com/2013/10/02/porvoo-ticked/</a> Date: Oct 2, 2013 Title: Porvoo: ticked
<b>Blog 17</b>	<a href="http://sophiekunerbunt.blogspot.fi/2013/06/travelguide-finnland-helsinki-und.html">http://sophiekunerbunt.blogspot.fi/2013/06/travelguide-finnland-helsinki-und.html</a> Date: Jun 30, 2013 Title: Travelguide Finnland (Helsinki und Umgebung)

After the data collection, the emerging themes related to the brand attributes discussed in chapter four were defined by manually coding the data set. The author began the data analysing by reading through all the blog entries couple of times. Then the author was able to begin to outline emerging themes. Emerging themes, which are found relevant to the research and are related to the brand attributes, are discussed according to the similarities and patterns in bloggers' experiences on the chosen set of travel and lifestyle blogs. Common attitudes and themes concerning Porvoo as a tourist destination are emphasized while presenting the findings. Common pictures of Porvoo represented on the blogs are likewise briefly analysed in this research.

### 5.3 Validity and reliability

According to Silverman (2011, 360) reliability of qualitative research “refers to the degree which the findings of a study are independent of accidental circumstances of their production” whereas validity refers to the accuracy of represented phenomena (Silverman 2011, 360, 367). Reliability of qualitative research can be increased by explaining the research process and methods in depth and by showcasing the connections between the theory and interpretations (Silverman 2011, 360). Qualitative research has gained certain criticism due to the fact that it highly relies on the interpretation of the researcher. In order to increase the reliability of the research, the author aimed to make the research process transparent and utilised the main brand attributes of Porvoo as a framework for discovering the relevant emerging themes on the chosen data set of blog entries. Thus the risk that data analysis relies too much on author’s own interpretation was decreased and also validity of the research increased. Furthermore quotations of blog entries are included in order to validate the author’s interpretations.

As mentioned already earlier, the amount of data sample is commonly smaller in qualitative research compared to the data in quantitative research. A total of 17 blog entries, which were contemporary and possessed value for the commissioner, were utilised in this research. Since the findings represent only a small scale about the content available on blogosphere, more research focused on the blogosphere could take place also in the future. It might be for instance beneficial for the commissioner to gain insights from certain specific markets for example from the Russian market. In addition valuable information could be also gained by further researching blogosphere according to the consumer segments. By conducting further research the commissioner could obtain even a more extensive perception about the brand image of Porvoo.

## 6 Findings

In this chapter, the emerging themes found on the chosen blog data will be discussed according to the main attributes of the destination brand of Porvoo. As discussed in chapter four, the main attributes of Porvoo's destination brand are history, culture, art, nature, archipelago, food, music and events. The findings from both Finnish and international blog entries are presented jointly. The findings will also include a discussion about common pictures used on blog entries and discuss shortly the commentary of the entries.

A total of 12 Finnish travel and lifestyle blog entries were analysed in this research. According to the available blogs' information about the bloggers, the blogs were written by people between in their early twenties and late thirties. Most of the blogs were held by females. One of the blogs was held by a couple and another by a male blogger. The Finnish blog entries represented mainly bloggers' day trip experiences in Porvoo during summer, spring and Christmas time. Five entries represented travel experiences at Christmas time, three entries in summer and rest of them either during spring or autumn. The pattern of discussing travel experiences on blog entries was similar despite of the time of year the visit took place.

The amount of international travel and lifestyle blog entries utilised in this research was five. All of the blogs were held by females. All of the international blog entries provided descriptions about travel experiences, which took place during the summer time. Some of the international entries also addressed over night travel experiences in Porvoo.

### 6.1 Old Porvoo

All of the blog entries included descriptions about Old Porvoo and most of them focused mainly on discussing Old Porvoo as an attraction in addition to its supply of boutiques, cafes and restaurants. Old Porvoo was found to be the most emerging theme among both Finnish and international bloggers. Adjectives such as charming,

idyllic and beautiful were commonly used while describing Old Porvoo and its atmosphere: for example in blog 5 was stated:

Porvoo, which is the second oldest city in Finland by the way, has an amazing and very beautiful, historic old town which I was visiting on a nice spring day last week.

History was as well commonly reflected by Finnish and international bloggers while describing the buildings and scenery in Old Porvoo, which was seen also in blog 6:

Vanha Porvoo on kyllä vaikuttava, ja on uskomatonta, että kaikki sen rakennukset on säilyneet näihin päiviin asti. Jokaisen suomalaisen – ja tietysti myös Suomeen eksyvän ulkomaalaisen – on ehdottoman suositeltavaa käydä katsomassa, miltä Suomi näytti silloin joskus ennen.

Similar to the quotation of blog 6 above, several Finnish bloggers also recommended Porvoo for both domestic and international tourists. As discussed in chapter four, summer and Christmas time are the busiest tourist seasons in Porvoo. The bloggers also often considered Porvoo as a worthwhile destination during summer and Christmas time: as seen from the example of blogger's thoughts in blog 2:

Vuodessa on kaksi hetkeä, joina on melkein pakko käydä vähän nuuhkimassa jonkun kuvauksellisen pikkukaupungin tunnelmaa. Kuljeksia vanhojen puutalojen lomassa ja astella samoja mukulakivikatuja kuin ihmiset kauan sitten. Silloin, kun kaupungin keskellä kohoava kirkko oli sen sydän, kun talot lämmitettiin puilla ja valo saatiin kynttilöistä. Ensimmäinen hetkistä on kesä. Toinen on tämä, nyt kuluva hetki. Aika ennen joulua.

In addition to Porvoo being a favourable summer and Christmas time destination, blogger's interest to revisit Porvoo was expressed in blog 3:

Reissu oli tosiaan omalla kohdallani ensimmäinen laatuaan, mutta ensi kesänä on kyllä pakko mennä tutustumaan kaupunkiin kesäisenä versiona... Joka tapauksessa, oli se idylli sitten joulusta tai kesäistä, suosittelen pistäytymään kumpana tahansa.

One of the international blog entries also emphasised the beauty of Porvoo in summer time (Blog 17):

Ein super hübsches kleines Fischer-und Urlaubsstädchen – eine absolutes Sommerreiseziel.

The comments left by the blog readers of the particular Finnish blogs generally agreed on Porvoo as a charming city and considered it as a worthy daytrip destination. The amount of comments on Finnish blog entries was altogether over 200 by the date of data collection. Many readers also expressed their interest to visit and revisit Porvoo as well as stated that they found the entry interesting: for instance a particular comment was left in blog 8:

Kauniita kuvia! :) Pitäisi itsekin taas piipahtaa Vanhassa kaupungissa :)

Similarly one reader's comment in blog 6 justified, that user generated content can be found beneficial while planning their own travel:

Moi, Kiitos tästä postauksesta! Kotimaan matkailuun on hyvä saada vinkejä, kun ei tuon pienen kanssa viitsi (ainakaan vielä) ihan kovin kauas mennä.

Different to the Finnish comments, the amount of commentary on international blog entries was a notable lower. There were altogether ten comments left on the international blog entries by the date the data was collected. The comments also differed from the Finnish ones since there were no comments directly linked to Porvoo as a destination. The comments expressed blog readers' general interest to travel to Finland as seen from the comment left in blog 13:

I've only been to Finland once, ages ago when I was in high school, on a one day trip to Helsinki. I think I'd like to go back one day to see more of this country.

Common pictures used on the blog entries were also analysed as all of the entries were found to be quite visual ones. Majority of the Finnish blog entries included landscape pictures from the streets, boutiques and other buildings of Old Porvoo as seen from the below (Figure 2).





Tässä blogista löydät:

Aicles Aurinko Brunch  
 Elämäntavat Fashion kaas  
 Puhutus Fitness Forester Myyjä  
 Gym healthy lifestyle  
 Juhlminen Kauneus Kesä  
 Kuntosalit kaas kaas Lifestyle  
 Lihakset loma Muoti nike  
 Näyttelijä Outfit photoshoot  
 Punttisali Rakkaus Ravintola  
 Rentoutuminen  
 Ruoka Ruokailu  
 Ruokavalio siustus Suomi  
 Terveys Train  
 Treenaaminen  
 Treenivaatteet Tytöt Tyyli  
 Urheilu vapaa-aika venla  
 savikuja Viikonloppu work  
 out Workout Ystävät

Arkistot

heinäkuu 2014  
 kesäkuu 2014  
 toukokuu 2014  
 huhtikuu 2014  
 maaliskuu 2014  
 helmikuu 2014

Figure 2. Old Porvoo. (Blog 11)

In addition the red shore houses along the riverbank, which is recognised to be one of the most photographed site in Porvoo, was found to be a popular photography site among the bloggers (Figure 3).

Jouluinen Porvoo

25. marraskuu 2013

Jouluinen Porvoo on nyt koettu ja se oli juuri niin hurmaava kuin osasin odottaakin.  
 Lumipeite olisi tuonut sen viimeisen silauksen, mutta lumen puuttuessa ilma oli onneksi  
 pakkasen puolella eikä vesisateesta ollut tietoaakaan.

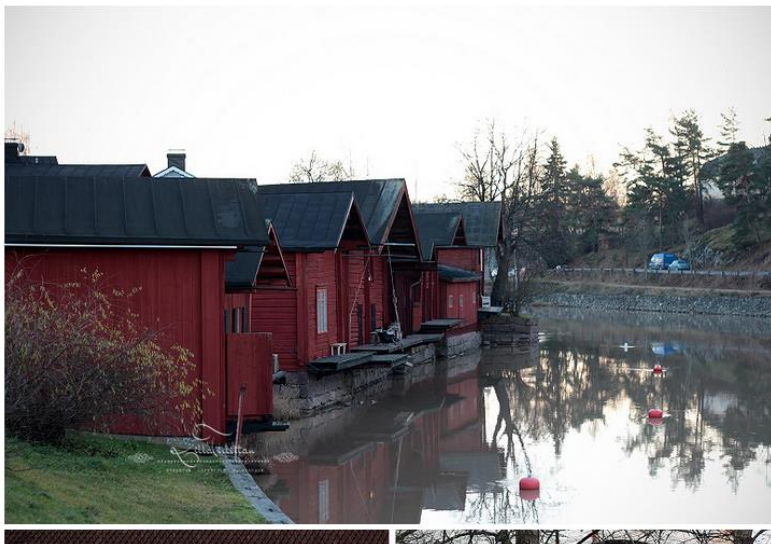


Figure 3. Riverbank with red shore houses. (Blog 8)

Pictures among the international bloggers were found to be similar to the Finnish ones. The streets and buildings of Old Porvoo, Porvoo Cathedral, red shore houses and riverbank side often performed as illustrations of blog entries (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Porvoo Cathedral. (Blog 14)

## 6.2 Food

Food is additionally one of the main attributes of the destination brand of Porvoo. Besides the general descriptions of Old Porvoo, majority of the blog entries discussed supply of restaurants and cafes in Porvoo, which was also discussed in blog 6:

Porvoossa olisi vierailun arvoisia ruokapaikkojakin niin paljon, että voisimme tehdä pelkästään niiden takia piakoin uuden reissun kaupunkiin ja yöpyä vanhassa kaupungissa. Tällä kertaa tutustuimme uuden Porvoon puolella sijaitsevaan Bistro Sinneen, josta olimme kuulleet kehuja.

Similar types of opinions were also presented on several entries. Additionally several Finnish entries included bloggers' specific delights and reviews about certain restaurants and cafes: below can be found an example from blog 7:

Kaupoissa kiertely alkoi jossain vaiheessa vähän väsyttämään ja päätettiin mennä Café Cabrioleen rauhoittumaan. Tilattiin isot kaakaot kermavaahdolla ja pari makeaa suupalaa sen kaveriksi. Toi kaakao oli varmaan parasta mitä oon ikinä juonut, kermavaahto tuli erikseen kupissa ja sitä sai laittaa siihen ihan oman maun mukaan.. Uus tuttavuus oli puolukka-kaneli macaron, tosi jouluinen ja raikas maku!

Couple of the international bloggers also shared their cafe experiences (Blog 13 and blog 14). Many of the Finnish blog entries comprised pictures displaying dishes in restaurant or cafe: the quoted blogger from blog 6 also shared his dining experience in restaurant Bistro Sinne in form of pictures (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Food in Bistro Sinne. (Blog 6)

### 6.3 Shopping

Shopping, which is an attribute of Porvoo's destination brand, was also reflected on the blog entries. Various Finnish blog entries comprised descriptions and experiences about shopping in Old Porvoo as seen from the quotation from blog 7:

Me oltiin koko ajan vaan Vanhan Porvoon puolella, joka oli täynnä pieniä sisustuskauppoja, kahviloita ja näin joulun alla joka puolella oli kaikenlaisia joulukoristeita. Kauppojen etuovilla oli lyhtyjä, joulukransseja sekä jouluvaloja, eikä tää tunnelmallisuus jäänyt vaan sinne ulkopuolelle.

Sisällä jatkui sama meininki, myyjät oli tosi ystävällisiä, antoi meidän kuvailla ihan rauhassa ja kertoi meille siinä samalla heidän omia jouluperinteitään.

Two international blog entries also discussed the shopping possibilities in Old Porvoo: blogger of blog 17 provided a description about the shopping amenities:

In der Stadt befinden sich eine Reihe von süßen, kleinen "Bloggershops", wenn ihr versteht was ich meine. Tolles Geschirr, süßer Kleinkram und allerlei tolle Patisseries, Chocolaterien und Bäckereien. Viele kleine Private Händler verkaufen dort ihre selbstgemachten Waren zu einem echt fairen Preis, der absolute Schrei für Touristen.

Another shopping experience of international blogger was shared in blog 13:

There are little shops selling souvenirs, antiques or sweets in most of these houses. It's pretty much torture to go into any of these because I wanted to buy everything and could afford nothing.

Detailed pictures from Old Porvoo's boutiques both from outside and inside were also attached in various Finnish blog entries. For example the blogger of blog 4 attached pictures from the goods of boutiques (Figure 6).

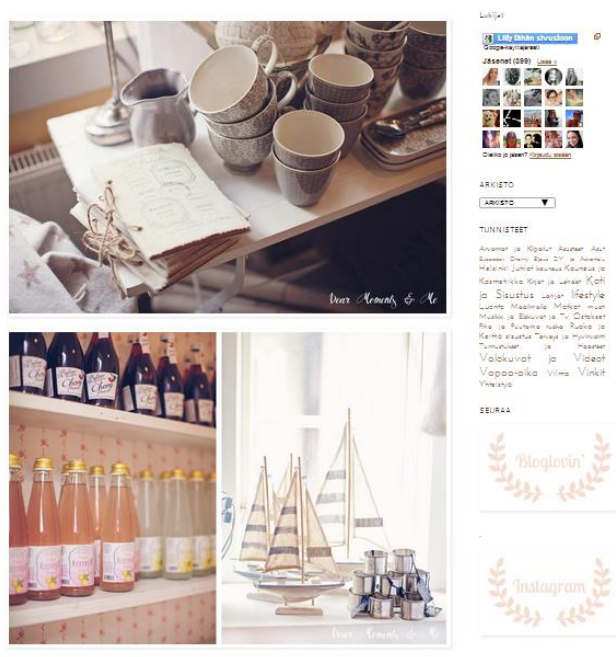


Figure 6. Goods of Old Porvoo's boutiques. (Blog 4)

Similarly one of the blog entries also exposed a detailed description and picture about blogger's shopping purchases from Porvoo (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Shopping purchases. (Blog 9)

Furthermore events gained attention from one of the Finnish bloggers as the Christmas market in Art Factory was quite well comprised in blog 3 and pictures of sold goods were included (Figure 8).

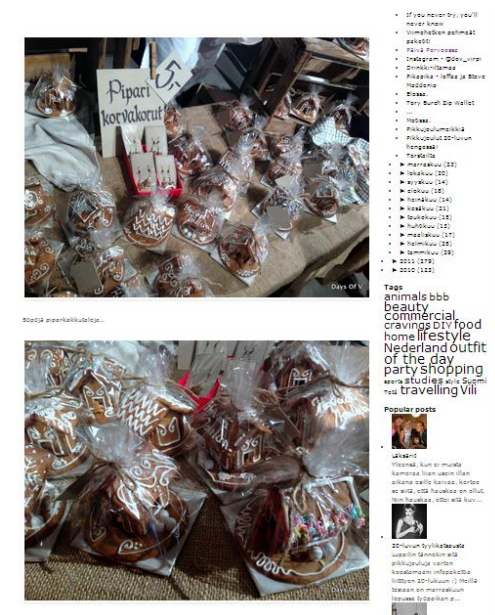


Figure 8. Goods at Christmas Market in Taidetehdas. (Blog 3)

## 6.4 Other emerging themes

Music, art, nature and archipelago did not obtain any mentions or were not reflected on the experiences among the Finnish blog entries. On the contrary, there were no descriptions related to the nature, archipelago, art, music or events present in the international blog entries. In addition to the themes presented above, the entries often discussed certain general topics concerning Porvoo for instance about location and accessibility. Especially the international blog entries included commonly a bit more general facts about Porvoo for example related to bilingualism and history.

Overall, both the Finnish and international entries reflected bloggers' positive experiences. The contents of international blog entries examined in this research were generally quite similar to the Finnish blog entries. There were no direct negative themes about Porvoo emerging from the blog entries but for example weather gained a few complaints. However especially a weather is a factor, which cannot be controlled by the destination and hence does not possess a high value for the research. Furthermore one of the international bloggers discussed in blog 14 the emptiness of Old Porvoo's streets during the evening time:

Porvoo for a first impression is a pretty charming town with colourful wooden houses, but I get the idea that its like an open air museum where people come to work and visit during the day and go back home after 16:00. It reminds me of Venice (on a smaller scale of course). When twilight comes the city becomes quiet and still because all the day tourists have gone back to their cruise ships and hotels located outside the city.

However the same international blogger considered the quietness and silence of Porvoo also as an asset in another blog entry (Blog 14):

I managed to do a little stroll as well, just along the river and on the main roads near the city centre and bus station. The town is not very busy, it supports the laid back lifestyle and there hangs an air of distinct country feel. Coming from relatively busy and bigger cities in the last few days. Tallinn and Helsinki, Porvoo was a breath of fresh air for this last leg of my Finland and Estonia journey last May. I am away from the crowds here.

## 7 Conclusions

This thesis aimed to provide a perception about Porvoo's destination image on blogosphere and to answer how the destination brand is delivered. According to the findings, the overall image of Porvoo as a tourist destination is considered as a positive one among both Finnish and international travel and lifestyle bloggers. There were no enormous differences in the contents of blog entries among Finnish and international bloggers. The positive images were mainly associated with culture and history as the blog entries encompassed experiences related to cultural and historical attractions. Old Porvoo was found to be the most discussed theme among both Finnish and international blog entries, which is not that surprising since its one of the most popular attractions in Porvoo. The findings also indicated that positive experiences concerning restaurants, cafes and shopping in Old Porvoo were also a common pattern among the blog entries. Similarly chapter four revealed that restaurants, cafes, delicacy and interior boutiques are often emphasised in marketing of Porvoo as a tourist destination. Porvoo was commonly considered as unique and charming destination due to its historical milieu and atmosphere. Both of the Finnish and international blogs seemed to be quite visual ones. Streets and wooden buildings of Old Porvoo along with Porvoo Cathedral and red shore houses along the riverbank were the most photographed scenes among the bloggers. Furthermore the main focus of shopping, restaurants and cafes was also visible in the pictures.

There were no direct negative images related to the destination brand of Porvoo. However, as seen from the findings, the experiences concerning shopping, restaurants and cafes obtained the main focus among both Finnish and international bloggers. Thus the findings suggest that the brand delivering focuses only on certain themes. The diversity of Porvoo as a tourist destination was ignored, as the experiences regarding nature, archipelago, art and events obtained either very little or no attention from the bloggers. That is found surprising, since for instance a wide amount of events are held during the year in Porvoo and there are also several art galleries and museums available. Furthermore many of the bloggers considered Porvoo mainly as summer and Christmas time day trip destination as only a few of the blog entries were written dur-

ing the so called off seasons. As archipelago and country side are also key elements in marketing, certain kind of actions could be considered in order to emphasise the diversity of Porvoo's offerings and to increase their presence also among the blogosphere. More attention could be paid to those non-existing attributes for instance while planning and conducting blogger trips. Therefore activities such as #TravelHousePorvoo, which invites bloggers to spend a weekend in Porvoo with diverse programme, are also encouraged in the future, since they can provide an opportunity to enhance the less known attributes of Porvoo's destination brand.

As discussed in the theoretical part of this thesis, user generated content including blogs can be a valuable source for inspiring other consumers. Therefore it was also interesting to pay attention into the comments left by the blog readers. Especially the Finnish blog entries gained quite an amount of comments and evoked discussion among the blog readers. The commentary showcased likewise a common interest towards Porvoo as a tourist destination and advocated positive destination image. In addition as the theoretical part of this research suggested, word of mouth (WOM) and intention to visit destination can be considered as indicators of consumer loyalty. Thus it could be assumed that Porvoo possess a certain extent of consumer loyalty.

The theoretical part of this thesis also highlighted the relevance and value of user generated content (UGC) for destination management organisations. Destination management organisations and other organisations operating in travel and tourism industry are encouraged to continuously monitor social media and adapt innovative ways in utilising user generated content (UGC). The commissioner of this thesis has understood its relevance and is for instance widely utilising various channels of social media as well as has already integrated blog entries generated by consumers on their website. As user generated content can have a high influence on other consumers, considerations about how user generated content could provide more value and about possible alternative ways for users to generate content could be proposed. In order to make the monitoring of online consumer experiences more effective and less time-consuming, the commissioner could consider the use of automated systems for locating and analysing user generated content. To conclude, even though the image of Porvoo as a tourist



destination is drawn to be a positive one, certain kind of implications concerning UGC could be considered in order to increase the brand delivering on blogosphere. Further monitoring and research concerning blogosphere and other platforms of social media could be moreover considered in order to discover a more extensive perception of the destination image of Porvoo on social media in general.

Thesis writing process has overall been a valuable and interesting process for the author. It has provided a chance for professional development and growth. The author has gained valuable knowledge concerning state and relevance of social media on travel and tourism industry as well as developed professional skills for instance regarding project management and planning.

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