# Creating theme events: A Mamma Mia! - Themed Party

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**Abstract**

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This is a product- based thesis and therefore a theme party due on the 23 March was implemented during the process. The aims of this thesis were to learn about the event industry in order to gain experience in event planning and management, and to find tools in order to work as an entrepreneur in the business. One aim was also to promote the authors trade name and to make one.

The report consists of the theories of event planning including several aspects of it, a managerial part of the planning process of the event, the evaluation part and last but not least the theme event in the appendix. The theoretical part of this thesis consists of desk- research and online search of current information in the business. The evaluation of the success of the project is based on the theory presented, self- assessment and different methods of collecting guest feedback. An event page was made on Facebook in order to give information and keep up the mood until the party. The event page also worked as a platform to share pictures and videos on social media and other guests after the party.

The party was themed according to the Mamma Mia! – Musical, which consists of ABBA songs. The event was implemented as a surprise party for the author's sister for her 50th birthday. The author planned and implemented the party that took place at a rented farmhouse in Pornainen. The party had two themes: one that was based on the Mamma Mia! - Musical, which is an all-time favourite movie of the birthday hero and an other based on her favourite colours pink and gold. Adding her favourite colours to the table- setting took the old farmhouse up a notch and gave it a glamorous vibe. The décor and programme played big parts at the event: there were games, different props, karaoke, sauna and a bathing barrel for the guests. The menu was implemented potluck- style and all of the guests brought in something.

The event was almost a complete success: the props, décor, cake and atmosphere being the highlights of the party. The potluck- style menu had its difficulties and downsides to implement and did not go as planned. The learning outcomes came mainly of the managerial sides of event planning, budgeting and delegating tasks. The event reached its main goal, which was to glad and surprise the author's sister with a party she had never experienced before. She was completely surprised, shocked and had tears of happiness in her eyes. She and the guests noticed many of the details put into the event and loved them. In order to get positive feedback the event had to include aspects of an experience, with this objective the author succeeded well. The average number on the scale of one to five was rated four point eight on overall experience, props and décor and the flow of the event according to the feedback.

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# 1    Introduction

Human society is complex and interactive. All human societies celebrate, whether they are modern or traditional. Sometimes events are spontaneous, like when friends at work throw you a surprise party when they just found out it is your birthday and within minutes found a cake and a hidden bottle of wine for you. These events strengthen social bonds and spread enjoyment around. Many events though are planned down at the last detail and have intense social implications, like weddings. They have a big impact on participants in emotional and intellectual outlook, social interaction and give stimulation to all senses ranging from the food and drinks to the music and atmosphere of the event. (Shone 2001, 51.) The event industry is connected strongly to the experience economy. The key difference that marks out experiences from goods, services and commodities is that experiences are meant to be memorable and therefore meant to move an engage us in a personal way.  In order to achieve these memorable occasions it requires for someone to actively create these experiences for us. In characterizing experiences, the attention must be drawn to engaging with individuals on emotional, physical, intellectual or a spiritual way. (Berridge 2007, 122).

This thesis is product- based and its purpose is to enlighten the basics of creating events and themed events. The project behind the thesis is planning and implementing a 50th surprise birthday party for the author's sister. The idea of a surprise party was born despite of the authors' sister refusal of celebrating her birthday. The backgrounds to her refusal lie in self – esteem problems and feelings of unworthiness, which are caused by depression. Therefore, the surprise party is only involving her closest friends.  The objectives of the event is to spend time together having fun, relaxed time together without a stressful environment. One important objective is to do something special and to cheer up the birthday heroin. The theme of the event is based on the movie "Mamma Mia" since it is the all-time favourite of the birthday heroine'. Mamma Mia! is a Hollywood- produced musical from 1999, which engages a lot of the Swedish 70s' band ABBA's songs.

The thesis objectives are based on planning and managing events, themed events, and touches a bit on the event business in Finland. The managerial part is covered in the part about event management. The theoretical part is combined and relevant with the project itself. Since there are so many aspects and details in planning an event and every each one of them is special, only the relevant parts that support the thesis project event are included to the theory in order to delimit the thesis. Marketing and finances are delimited

from the thesis whilst budgeting is handled only lightly. In the following parts of this chapter are key objectives, definitions, the project plan and the used methods presented in more detail before going into the theoretical part.

## 1.1 Objectives

The aim of the project behind the thesis is to plan, implement and manage an event to celebrate the authors' sisters' 50th birthday and to make something special for her. The events purpose is also to entertain and bring together friends and gain experience in the event planning industry. Feedback is going to be gathered during the party and afterwards in order to learn from the process. Self – assessment is going to be an important part of the whole and therefore critical assessment and things seen from different perspectives are going to be presented in the parts according the project implementation parts. The aim of the thesis writing process are to learn about the event market in Finland in order to work in the future in the business as an entrepreneur. The objectives are to get tools for the planning and managerial processes in order to develop professionally. It is going to be collected by desk research from several books written related to the market and within different ways of exploring the market via the internet in order to get current information. There is too a hidden focus on doing some marketing to the small group of persons attending. Since the party consists mainly of Party Lite consultants, who work at peoples' homes selling candles there might be a niche market in co- working or at least to spread out the word of the trademark "ELH juhlapalvelut".

## 1.2 Key definitions

The key definitions of this thesis are events and themed events, event management and details about planning an event. Personal parties and smaller projects are the main viewpoints of the theory since they support the smaller event project behind it. The event canvas and different customer journey maps in general are presented as tools for creating experiences in events; they are the basic information in the experience economy.

What is the definition of an event? -An event is determined usually as a gathering of more than two people or a bigger group of people doing something out of the ordinary. There are different events from conferences to personal parties and all events can be themed. Theming creates a magical touch to the event and can also be helpful in coordinating the design, décor and food for example. Themes can be created with colour, by a certain decade of year or for example according to a movie like Alice in Wonderland or Peter Pan to

name a few. The relationship between events and design is often straightforward and at first glimpse applies to props, décor, food, backdrops, and floral arrangements, lighting and sound. Event design is a big part of theming in the event. There are authors, like Sonder who relate events design purely to theming. An event is often described as a once in a lifetime experience. The terms experience and event is also linked to the feeling or rarity, wow – factors, special and uniqueness. (Berridge 2007, 28, 30).

Event planning shortly put is planning the design and content of the event whilst managing events are more of on- site coordinating and working as a supervisor and boss. The event canvas in the other hand is a tool for creating design for an event and a customer journey map in general means the experiences a customer has from the beginning to an end of an event. (Shone, A & Parry, B. 2001, 4-6; Frissen 2016, 35; Smith 2002, 51; Capell 2013, 115).

The empirical part of the thesis pictures the implementation plan of the event and theme décor, venue and programme. It will also give a glimpse of the process step -by -step in choosing the venue, the budget and planning the décor and menu, which play a big part in the project. A big and important part of theming is the visualization of the venue. The implementation of the surprise party and the difficulties in keeping it a secret are also reported. The empirical part will also cover the limitations and risk of the thesis process and the evaluation of the event including guest satisfaction. Feedback from the event attendants will be collected by a questionnaire and by evaluating the atmosphere on the event day. The thesis ends commonly into the discussion part, which concludes the outcomes of the project and the evaluation of success part by part. The discussion includes also a part of thoughts around entrepreneurship and the possible market niches in Finland.

### 1.3  Used methods

This is a project- based thesis, with the empirical part written desk- research style from several book sources from the event business area. Some relevant information about events and the event industry in Finland will be searched online, since current information about it is yet harder to find. Customer and guest satisfaction is being evaluated with qualitative research methods tracking the mood and atmosphere on the venue day. Immediate feed- back is  collected on the premise and during the event. A questionnaire is also going to be conducted after the event for the guests. A qualitative research style was chosen because the wanted data is based on peoples' opinions and feelings. Quantitative research is based on numbers and there are no congruous numbers or statistics to compare them

to. (Capell 2013, 267-270). Quantitative validation is possible in order to evaluate the success or fail in sticking with the budget. An own customer experience journey map is being outlined from the base of experience and service blueprints in chapter 3. The Gantt- chart is used as a tool as a to- do list and scheduling. The choice to make an own journey map and for not using for example the event canvas, was made because of the projects nature. The project behind the thesis is a small event and the stakeholders are not familiar, therefore the canvas would be too complicated to use.

## 1.4 Project description and plan

The event was held 23-24.3.2018. The planning started eight weeks before the due date. The plan was to implement a Mamma Mia! – Movie themed 50th surprise birthday party in honour of the author's sister and to a number of 12 guests. The most important stakeholder of the event is the authors' sister; therefore, the event design and schedule were planned to her please. The other stakeholders in the event are her friends, emphasizing them was difficult, since the author does not personally know any of them.

The start of the project was launched with the help of relatives and a few friends in order to manage the guest list and some problems along the way. There were some secretive and detective – work done to get the project running. The budget was set at maximum of 50 euros per person including venue, accommodation and sauna including a bathing barrel. The menu was planned to be executed potluck – style in order to save money. The plan was to set up a hoax in order to get the birthday hero to the venue, whilst the guests were going to be there in advance. The programme included drinks, food and birthday cake. It was planned to have a photo booth, photo exhibition throughout the years and different games throughout the evening. The Mamma Mia- movie theme is implemented by having ABBA- themed karaoke and decorating the sitting area Cortina – style like in the movie. The ABBA –theme disco shows in the décor of the dining table and the colour scheme is conducted on the basis of the authors' sisters' favourite colour and style: rose-gold and pink with additional white. A taste of the style is shown in (picture 1).  The night was to be highlighted in the evening with sauna and outdoors bathing in candle light.

Picture 1. ABBA- theme. Pinterest collage Latvasto-Hyvärinen 2018.



An event has been set up in Facebook to invite and distribute information to guests. The venue was chosen by the following criteria: a budget set out per person, location, size, style and equipment. The author has set a décor plan, menu and planned a program for the event. The menu is implemented potluck style and therefore it is also about leading volunteer workforce.

In the next chapter, the reader is going to be introduced to the theoretical part of this thesis. The parts introduces the reader to different tools that can be used when parties and events are been planned and managed. There is also general information about the main parts, which need to be taken into consideration when planning events décor being a big part of it.

## 2 Planning and managing events

An event is an occasion set apart from the normal activity of daily life of a group of people. It is also characterized as 'non- routine' and unique. There are various kinds of special events and they can be categorized to leisure events, personal events, cultural events and organizational events. (Shone, A & Parry, B. 2001, 4-6). This thesis is focusing on personal events like birthdays, weddings and anniversaries. Special events vary in size and complexity from the simple and small to huge complex and international, such as the Olympic Games. With the help of the categorization of different events in (figure 1), one may understand better the comparative demands on different events and the need for organizers, planners and event managers. Even when an event is simple, the number of

people attending can make it complex: though a birthday party is rated low in complexity and uncertainty in (figure 2), it makes a lot of difference between a party for six and a party for 60 persons. It is often the increasing number of persons attending, the effort needed and stakeholders involved in the event that make the difference to the need for trained staff and professional expertise. (Shone, A & Parry, B. 2001, 4-6, 13).

Several parties organize events: the public sector, like The European Union and Universities. The commercial sector like trade exhibitions, accommodation providers and event management companies, and the private sector like voluntary organizers that organize events for private persons, or perhaps a sporting event in a society. Voluntary bodies can organize a whole event with the support from local authorities or with a partial use of commercial organizations. For example, a wedding can be organized within the family, but food can be bought from a caterer and venue booked in a hotel. The demand of ancillary services like transport, costume hire services and photographers are commonly used in personal events even though the event itself is self-organized (Figure 1.). The larger and elaborate an event becomes the need for increased technical and logistical support from one kind or another grows, especially in large- scale events the need for specialists grows, like production parties seen in Figure 1. These organizations can be for example: event management companies, caterers, party planners and organizers, contractors and technical services. (Shone 2001, 36, 38-39).

Figure 1. Events organizations. (Shone 2001, 4.)

| Production | Distribution |
|---|---|
| Event management companies<br>Event catering companies<br>Party planners<br>Production companies<br>Exhibition and theatrical contractors & designers<br>Technical services<br>Professional events organizers<br>Multimedia support companies<br>Voluntary bodies, committees and individuals<br>Education and training | Individual events and venues<br>Event and conference agencies<br>Trade media<br>Hotel booking agencies<br>Incentive travel agencies<br>Visitor and convention bureau<br>Exhibition organizers<br>Ticketing agencies<br>Trade exhibitions<br>National and local tourist bodies |
| **Venues** | **Ancillary Services** |
| Event room / hall / grounds hire<br>Catering and kitchen facilities<br>Accommodation<br>Food and drink suppliers<br>Business support services<br>Medical and créche services<br>Information and customer services<br>Technical support<br>Waste disposal and grounds clearance<br>Toilets, washrooms and public facilities<br>Parking<br>Security<br>Set designers | Accommodation providers<br>Photographers and video makers<br>Transport and guiding services, ground handlers<br>Transition services<br>Music and entertainment providers<br>Travel companies<br>Costume hire services<br>Marquee hire services<br>Printers<br>Floral contractors<br>Database support services<br>Fireworks display operators<br>Professional and trade bodies<br>National and local government services |

Figure 2. The demands and need of event managers and planners. (Shone 2001,13)
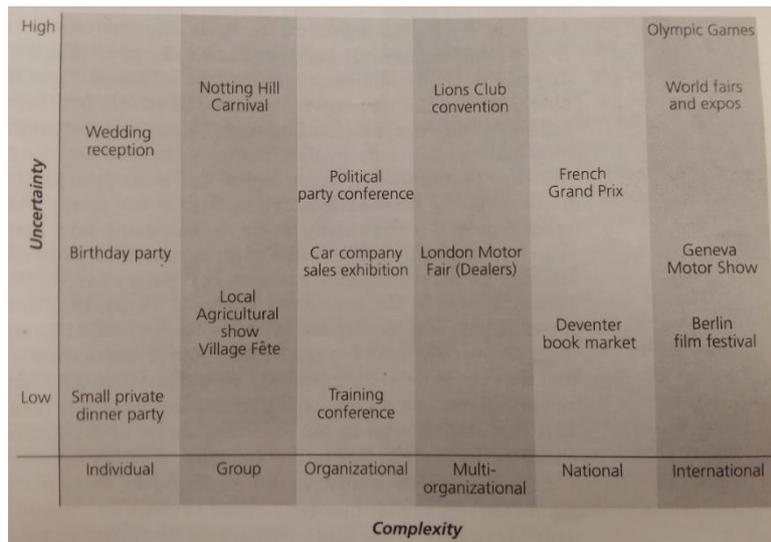


In order to be successful in the event industry one will need passion, organizational- and teamwork skills. (Capell 2013, 7.) The events industry is a global growing business. The role and impact of events in society are being more recognised as an academic subject area, a tool for promoting business, as a leisure time activity, an income generator, as a feature for tourist destinations and as a career path. The number of events have grown over the years and they have become more and more popular, today events are more central to our culture than ever before. (Berridge 2007, 43).

## 2.1 Objectives and aims of an event

Experiences are created for entertainment. What might be the purposes for taking part in events and what are the intentions of a person? Experiences are a way of escaping from the reality, interacting with others, create a feeling of belonging to a larger group. (Berridge 2007, 156). There are slogans from other business areas that can as likely to be used in the events business as well. One could quote the Zappos business- mission for employees in the firm is: "To live and to produce Wow- experiences" as the target aim of the events business. The Zappos' business ten commandments are: to produce experiences through service, to embrace and to thrive for change, to create fun and a bit of bizarreness, to be adventurous, creative and not to have prejudice, to thrive for growth and learning, to build positive team- spirit, do more with less, to be passionate, determined and to be modest. (Hsieh 2013, 170-171). Even though Zappos is a business selling clothing online, these milestones of the business serve excellently also in the event- business.

The aim to organize an event starts with the need of it. The acronym SMART is often used in the business world for people to write clear objectives and goals. SMART stands for Specific- be sure to find out accurately what the client wants, Measurable- what is it you are trying to achieve?, Attainable- is it possible considering the budget and timetable?, Relevant- is it relevant and appealing for the target audience? Timely- is it physically possible in the given time. (Capell 2013, 14).

There are primary and secondary motives for people to attend in an event and to organize an event. The main motive for having a dinner party may be to entertain friends, but there might be hidden motives such to boost one's status by showing off a new house for example. Participation in an event may be a result of many motives; therefore, a marketing approach that seeks to satisfy only one need to attend the event might not be enough, there should usually be some additional benefits. Personal expectations or the propensity to attend events as a form of relaxation or entertainment may be such reasons. Of those events, which of an admission charge is taken, the ability and willingness to pay the price could be an issue, and secondary cost implications, like travel fees may affect on personal levels. (Shone 2001, 24). The possible motives in attending the Mamma Mia! -event of this thesis could be social and psychological mainly. Referring to figure 3: the guests are the birthday heroes' closest friend, who seek to interact with her, and want to be entertained and relaxed. Attending the event is conditioned by paying a fee of a maximum of 50 euros and participating the volunteer work with implementing the potluck- style menu. Both the fee and the potluck- style menu bring risks in order to commit the guests into attending the event. It also puts pressure and more work to the author in order to create a worth the price event and experience. About the value of an event is to be continued later.

Figure 3. Motives into attending events. (Shone 2001, 27.)



**Examples of Social Motives**

Social Interaction with others
Creation of community spirit
Status or recognition of achievement
Philanthropy or charitable contributions

**Examples of Organizational Motives**

The need to make sales
The need to have an organizational presence
Status or recognition
Sponsorship or community support

**Examples of Physiological Motives**

Relaxation or recognition with others
Sexual enjoyment with others
Exercise or physical challenge
To eat, drink or be entertained

**Examples of Personal Motives**

Seeking new experiences
Learning and education
Creativity and exploration
Fulfilment of ambitions

## 2.2 Experience creation tools

The tendency is to see experience as a feature or a component in an event that can be inserted via staging and theming rather than as the underpinning platform on which the event is delivered. When studying events it is recognized, that experience is a central element also in the purchase and exchange of goods and services. An experience consists of several elements: developing a cohesive theme, creativity and collaboration, visual imagery, authenticity and inclement of emotions. Having an experience is also much up to the person him or herself. The creator of the event should strive to engagement of all senses. Immersion, absorption and interaction are important characteristics in experience economy. The key in immersing an experience would to participate in the event and to be in the right mental and emotional state through such participation. A factor in having memorable experiences would be also the chance to new knowledge, skills or the event would be addressing memories, strong emotions or the person would have lived through an experience. (Berridge 2007, 119-120). Ambience is the most important characteristic to the outcome of an event. It can lead to huge success or on the contrary, even though an event is perfectly planned, without the right kind of atmosphere it could still flop. At a personal event, it might be enough to have the right people as guests to get the right kind of mood. Some events need a little help to go well. A birthday party might need food, drinks, decorations and games but the presence of these elements does not guarantee success. There can be wonderful decorations, awesome food and the event might still go bad. (Shone 2001, 16). Important elements of special events are their uniqueness even though an annual event can be repeated many times; it is not the same. There are still going to be several variables, which make each event unique like the participants and different surroundings. Events are perishable because though some standardisation they cannot be repeated in exactly the same way. (Shone 2001, 14).

### 2.2.1 The event canvas

The event canvas (figure 4) is simply put a tool to support building Event Design (Frissen 2016, 35). The event canvas is a visual tool, which helps you to create an overview of the event. Thinking visually helps people to gather around a problem and constructively build a shared model for a complex idea. The event canvas helps to cut the process into different modules, helps you to ask the right questions, and exposes the insights in order to make conscious decisions. Frissen & Janssen and Smiths views concerning customer experience and customer journey go hand in hand: both conclude that in order to be successful in managing customer experience and improve experience design, one must have empathy towards the customer and be user- centric. Design is to be dissected in different

experiences and outlooks of different customers in order to anticipate and influence how a person is affected by an event. (Frissen 2016, 24-25).

The layout of the canvas block is dissected in three parts in general: the first parts to the left and right side of the blocks represent the way stakeholders enter and leave the event; it is called "change". In this part stakeholders are analysed as individuals as accurately as possible: who they are according to behaviour, knowledge level and attitude towards the event and therefore how could they be pleased. (Frissen 2016, 42). The worried figure on the event canvas refers to pain. This means simply that when analysing the stakeholders' personalities, the organizer should prevent causing any pain. A helping harsh example in order to understand would be: if you were throwing a party for severely religious Laestedi-ans, the venue should not be propped with television – screens (since their religion does not allow them to watch television). In direct response to pain is gain: what did the stake-holder gain from the experience, did the event meet his or hers dreams, want, needs and what benefits were the stakeholders seeking? Benefits can be social, cost savings, posi-tive emotions or new skills. (Frissen 2016, 50). The cloud on the left at the bottom "expec-tations" is self- explanatory, it refers to the stakeholders expectations of the event. Expec-tations can be based on prior experiences on similar events, what they have heard from others, social media or marketing messages. These are a crucial part of the mind- set in what the stakeholders walk into the event. (Frissen 2016, 46). The way a stakeholder leaves the event is crucial for the future: the organizer should ask him or herself what the stakeholders gained from the event and are they satisfied. What attitude does he or she have in public of the event? (Frissen 2016, 49.) The way a stakeholder feels about the event is relevant to events that will be rerun, because when being pleased with the event a stakeholder may commit to the event and return. The return figure is the bent arrow on the top of the canvas. (Frissen 2016, 59.)

The frame: upper and lower parts define a boundary area that focus on the exact thing one is designing. An hourglass figure on the centre of the block represents the actual de-sign of the event, how it will feel and look like. Design is a process that is based on goal, strategy and boundaries in the event. It describes the reality and limitations of the event in order to bring focus to the design. The flower picture in the canvas represents the stake-holders' commitment to the event. What personal investments were needed in order to at-tend the event: money, energy, lost free- time or other resources. Understanding the trade- off the organizers should create a positive experience to exceed expectations. (Frissen 2016, 57.) A price tag represents costs of an event: the costs of the stakeholders to attend the event and the costs of organizing the event. Costs go hand in hand with the

budget of the event, but there is always expenditure in order to get revenue, which is described with a picture of coins. (Frissen 2016, 61). The last two pictures in the centre is the man digging ground representing all the jobs in organizing the event and the present next to it represents the promise made to the stakeholders. A promise is quite the same to an event as the tagline is for a movie. (Frissen 2016, 67).

The experience and instruction parts in the core of the canvas represent the experience journey of the stakeholders in the event. The experience journey is modified by several parts and starts from the very beginning of the first touch of the awareness of the event. (Frissen 2016, 70.) A successful experience consists of both an emotional and logical instruction. The experience journey is about all emotions, senses and experiences in the event process. (Frissen 2016, 69.) The instructional part is combined with the experience journey because it covers the physical environment and happenings in the event. If the objective is that the stakeholders learn something, the questions to ask in the instructional part are: what needs to be learned- and how and is it reflected in the schedule and programme? (Frissen 2016, 73).

Figure 4. The event canvas. (Frissen 2016, 35.)
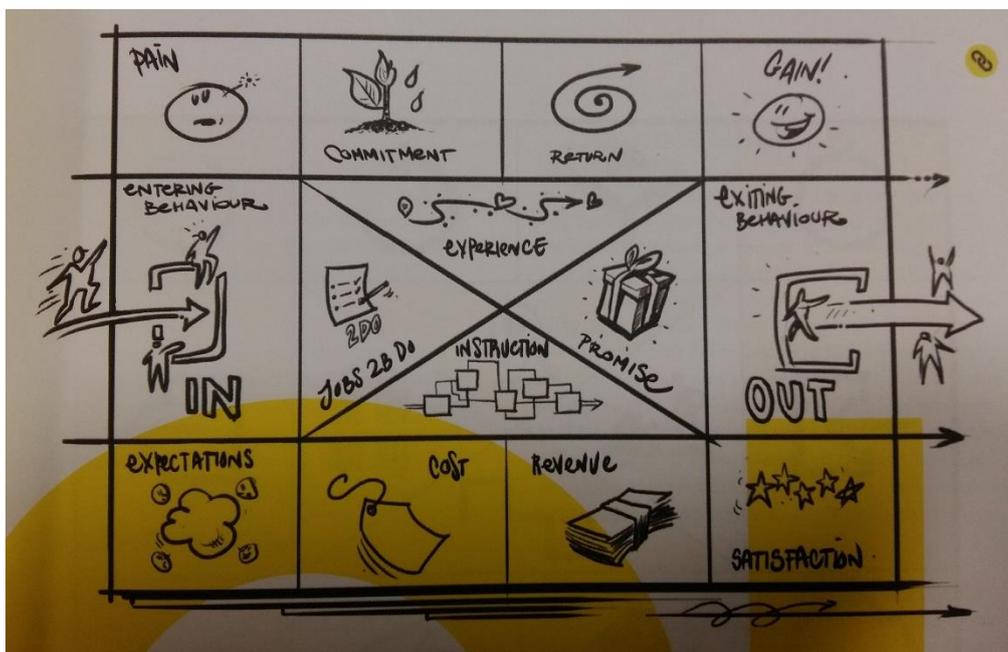


### 2.2.2 Event design

The target market of the event steers all the procedures in one direction. The first step in event design is to first choose which stakeholders the design is meant to please in the first place. Not everyone can be pleased, therefore it is important to choose the line and style

of the design and then stick to it. (Frissen 2016, 176; Capell 2013, 17.) When planning the design of an event one can start by imagining the space as four bare walls or an empty space outdoors. The space will then to be filled with décor according to the event theme and style. The importance of design and creativity may be more essential to some events and the efforts made to create thematic elements can be a considerable part of the management and planning process. The decisions made about how space will be used manifests directly into the kind of experience anyone attending the event will get. There are different reactions to the same piece of design like, "yes- it is ok", "no- hideous" and "wow- how great". The wow- effect is the one aimed for. (Berridge 2007, 92-93; Frissen 2016, 175).

Basic event design involves knowledge on how to use and apply focus, space and flow. The event design is connected with the overall experience, immersion and satisfaction of the event. In order to begin creating an event environment one useful tool to use could be a design blueprint. A blueprint concurs that a design must have focus, consider the use of space, and reflect the flow of movement and technical awareness of the line of composition, form, colour, texture, pattern, dominance, scale, rhythm and harmony. From these principles, the aesthetics of design can then be developed and these should be taken into consideration (Berridge 2007, 96-97).

From a practical perspective there are several components that affect the implementation process of design, like the budget, the size and style of the venue, aesthetic requirements, organizational skills level and creativity of the implementer. There can also be events, where design is irrelevant or unrecognized. (Berridge 2007, 102) but in events like parties, festivals, weddings, milestone celebrations, balls and galas creativity is most likely to be considered as a major feature of the event. When considering catering objects like food and drinks, they can be used as a big part of décor and design or as centrepieces. Catering additions that could be added to get an even more show- effect are cocktail bars, champagne- or chocolate fountains like in (picture 2) and special effects, like dry ice to name a few. (Berridge 2007, 107; Capell 2013, 133-134).

Picture 2. Champagne fountain. Rosie the wedding planner.



There are basic elements in designing a room like: light, textures, colours and furniture. Every event design should take into consideration the lighting of the room, soundscapes, the entrance, props, food and décor. Lighting makes a big difference to the atmosphere: black lights, beacons, rope lights, lanterns, candles and lasers all deliver a different mood, To give an example: with a gobo- light (picture 3) one is able to focus colour or a pattern in the ceiling or on the floor. (Shock 2011, 114-115).  Lighting can also be used as a safety measure in hallways and staircases and outdoor events in the evenings. (Shock 2011, 140, 320.)  With soundscapes, it is possible to decorate with sound in order to create mood. It can be ocean waves, animal sounds or a variety of background elements.

Picture 3. Gobo Light. Event décor direct.



A different way of decorating the venue is by moving décor, which goes perfectly with themed events. Moving décor means placing people in costumes, they can be service personnel or guests of the party. (Shock 2011, 114-115). The entrance sets the mood for

the event. If it is within the budget, a few theme- related props should be placed in the entrance. The client usually pays separately for the props or it can be included in the price. Props can be rented but with décor, it is important to stay within the budget although it is easy to just add one thing and go over. When placing props it is important to mind the safety with enabling the ease of moving around in the space and not to deter the flow in the room. (Shock 2011, 116).

### 2.2.3 Customer journey map

A customer's journey is the experience and the different touchpoints to a service he or she has during the entire service chain. The touchpoints can be everything from visiting the website to their in- product experience. Designing a customers' journey map of experience like the example in (figure 5) requires analysis of gain data about customers feedback, inspired creativity in order to improve, attention to detail because small thing matter and cross- functional perspectives to things. In order to truly understand how the customers experience the service and surroundings the service provider needs to have empathy- see what the customer sees, hear and feel with the customers' senses in order to make it better. The mapping starts with the generalization of one's ideal customer group in order to understand who they are, and what preferences they tend to have and it is to be continued with mapping all the elements of service. Usually the journey map is in a timeline structure of events that can be linear or cyclical. Event management is about making sure the customer have a memorable and inspiring experience. One should therefore consider the details and execute them as well as possible. In order to get the needed data for a customer journey map, research must be conducted by surveys or other methods. The first mapping can be a hypothesis which can help one to maintain focus and identify gaps in current understanding in order to find the right questions to ask. The final map should have a timeline with touchpoints of events, actions taken by the customer, touchpoint channels, possible opportunities to improve after identifying gaps and also include assigned ownership of a touchpoint. Understanding a customer's journey across your service chain may increase your revenue and enables to discover how to be consistent when providing a positive customer experience and retaining customer loyalty. (Smith 2002, 51; Capell 2013, 115; Christensen 2017).

According to Smith, there are five straightforward steps to remember in order to achieve better customer satisfaction: to focus especially on the end of the experience, because the end is far more important than the beginning, because it will remain in the customer's memory. Get bad experiences out of the way as early as possible, like cuing, segment the pleasure and combine the pain- meaning that the experience should be cut into parts to

seem longer and it is best to combine the boring parts in one step this could refer for example to corporate speeches or waiting for food.

Building commitment through choice is believed to make people happier. When customers have control over a process, for example the meal service in the sky: British Airways have made it possible for passengers to get food whenever they want instead of waiting for meal service. This arrangement has implemented happy and satisfied customers. (Smith 2002, 52-53).

It is also important to let people have their rituals and stick to them: this could refer to the fact that people tend to enjoy habits and rituals. This is controversy with the tendency of people wanting at the same time exploring new things, being suckers for new arrivals and continuing with the urge to develop themselves and their surroundings. However, service and experiences need to renew and there must be new and unique experiences available all the time. This must mean that there are some points in service and encounters that need not change and should not. Customer loyalty is key in many brands and businesses successfulness over the years. Even though new things come and revivals give discounts, strong brands can still stay on the surface and keep their price levels. Consumers were asked to rate what attributes create a customer experience, that drive loyalty to a brand. The results were in order from the most important to the least important: people (because people make the experience), product and service delivery, place, product features, price, policies and procedures and last came advertising. (Smith 2002, 52-53, 101).

Figure 5. Customer experience map. Christensen 2017.
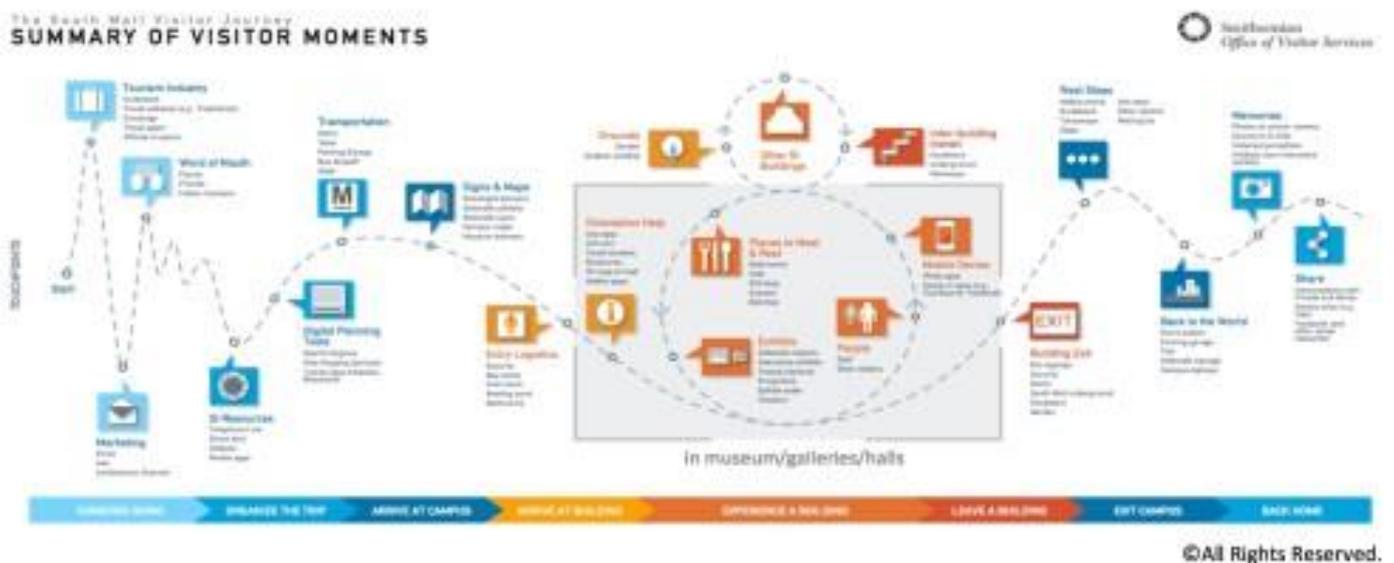
### 2.2.4    4 E's of experience

The four Es of experience refer to Pine & Gilmore's approach, that experiences engage in a number of different ways, which they refer as the Experience Realm. In (figure 6) is the set out of the different components. Participation is viewed on the horizontal axis, whilst the active participation is where guests actively affect the event, like in a work-meeting. The other end of the axis presents the passive participation for example an art exhibition. The vertical axis describes environmental relationship that connects customers together with the event. Absorption means a mindful experience, like a concert, while immersion is an active, physical experience, like a sports event.

The four E's of experience mean: entertainment, educational, esthetical and escapist. In some cases, experience is seen as a passive consumption, but in the future the requirements and diversity for entertainment grow and people are not happy anymore with just sitting and viewing passively. Education is also to be seen in a different way in the future: organizing events is going to be more engaging of the mind and body of participants and education is going to be provided in a more entertaining way. (Barridge 2007, 137.) An escapist experience relays on the guest totally immersing the event meaning and that the guest participates actively (Berridge 2007,140.). The esthetical realm points to that people are actively immersing themselves in the event, but they have no effect on it, like when they are viewing the Grand Canyon. (Berridge 2007, 142.) Addressing peoples' needs is a key factor in understanding what we should create. Experience design in the modern idiom should be about the type of event clients want for their own guests. Creating a thematic and perfect image that looks visually impressive but fails to deliver the required experiential environment is to no use. (Berridge 2007, 123, 126).

Figure 6. The experience realm. (Berridge 2007, 124.)
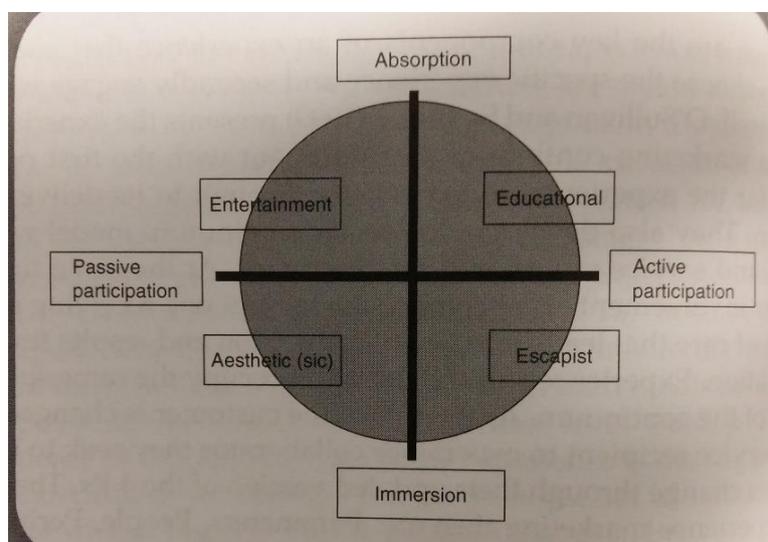
The next chapter is focusing on the events business in Finland and some comparing between countries operating in the market is made. The questions to why and how an event could be created, and what basic things should be taken into consideration will be sought answers to.

## 2.3 The event industry in Finland

The event market is so diverse and fragmented that it is difficult to determine the business as a whole. There are financial assessments of only a few parts of the total market: for example, the amount of money spent on private parties, like birthday parties and other gatherings can only be reasonably estimated. However, there is a feeling that an expansion of events activity is taking place. This is causing a rapid development of specialised event management companies and related service providers. The increased wealth in Europe and many years of peace have strengthened the inclinations of travel and the want for experiencing new ideas and enjoying recreational activities. This together with the awareness of traditions has set an increase in many kinds of events in culture, commercial, sporting and personal fields. While the demand for events grow the mechanisms to supply services and to satisfy clients, grow too. Nevertheless, the demand for events is hard to predict compared to routinely manufactured known products. The event business is also easily undermined by the economic situation of personal incomes. (Shone 2001, 19-20, 24.) The personal field of events is the main part viewed in this thesis.

Big companies, like events catering companies are common in the events business. There are also a wide range of smaller organizers and individuals that provide events- related services. The most common of these are most likely party planners and professional events organizers. Party planners tend to provide service for the personal events market and event's organizers for the corporate market. The personal events market include parties, weddings, anniversaries and similar events. People still tend to organize their own events on the small and intimate scale, but some are willing to pay a professional to come along and deal with the details of planning, organizing, operating and managing the event so that everything goes smoothly. Otherwise, one might have to rely on family and friends. (Shone 2001, 44-45). The benefits in hiring a party- or wedding planner is to get expertise in the project. Professionals have experience in organizing and planning events and therefore are able to take into consideration things the customer might not. The planner also knows what to invest on and has the budget under control. It seems like because of the business is small in Finland planners tend to know each other and know each other's expertise and can co- operate in order to provide the best to clients and recommend services according to planners' special skills and personality. (Häät ja juhlat).

When searching into the market of event planning in Finland, there seems to be just a handful of entrepreneurs providing party and wedding planning services. The business is yet underrated in Finland even though it would be significally beneficial for the economy market and society to recognize the market niche. The market of event business is estimated as worth a 280 million dollar market in the United States and 58, 5 million pound market in the United Kingdom. (Visit Finland 2017). It has been debated around the world how the evets business will affect the global economy and social values. In some key economic countries it is considered as the top businesses and central actor. In Finland there has yet not been noticed how big niche market the conference- and corporate events could have, even though Finland is in the top 20 congress organizing countries. (Visit Finland 2017).

Different kinds of wedding planning programs have reached Finland from Europe and USA along with it came yearly changing wedding fashions. When working with weddings in the summer of 2016 the current wedding fashion of the year "Barn and rustic weddings" showed in every wedding the style being viewed in (picture 4). The wedding that summer were almost replicas of one another. The culture in Finland has been family oriented in what comes to weddings and parties: the implementation and planning of events have been made with the help of family and friends. The culture is changing slowly according to a wedding planner interweaved by YLE in 2016. People are becoming more positive towards service. In the future, in all service, businesses will communicating skills and interpersonal skills be a key factor. The pay per hour is approximately 40-50 euros per hour and there are some 20 entrepreneurs in Finland focusing in the personal events business. Incomes are irregular and seasonal; therefore, it is hard to make a full- time living. (Yleisradio 2016). The average budget in wedding in Finland is according to YLE approximately 9000e when 20 years ago it was 2000e. The tradition of Middle Summer weddings (picture 5) are a dying tradition and the atmosphere and demands of weddings as an event have grown. Although when comparing the wedding trend rustic to old- time Midsummer weddings, weddings there are similarities in the décor style and atmosphere.

The average cost per guest is 30-45 euros by catering and in restaurants. (Yleisradio 2015). When comparing to the cost of weddings in the United Kingdom, the breath-taking 10 000 euros is a small amount, since the average cost of weddings in the UK is 2017 a whopping 30 000 (Independent 2017.) The estimated market size in the UK wedding market was in year 2000 a 2, 6 billion market. (Shone 2001, 24.) The UK event industry is now worth more than 36,1 billion, according to the 2010 Britain For Events report. The main event industry sectors are: conferences and meetings 18,8 billion, exhibitions and

trade shows 9,3 billion, sporting events 2,3 billion, music events 1,4 billion, incentive travel 1,2 billion, festival and cultural events 1,1 billion, outdoor events 1 billion and corporate hospitality 1 billion. (Capell 2013, 8).

Picture 4. Barn & Rustic Weddings. Latvasto- Hyvärinen 2016.



Picture 5. Midsummer Wedding in Finland. Yleisradio.



## 2.4  Event planning

Even though events are non- routine, the planning process is quite the opposite. Planning process is vital to the outcome of the event and a plan is a tool to measure progress. Lack of time and poor planning of events in the early stages create problems that will surface

later. A brainstorming phase before starting to plan the actual event is beneficial: for example implementing a screening process as shown in (figure 7). The process is to first come up with a range of different ideas and then deal with the list of possible events, and go through a series of criteria to evaluate what is feasible. Three basic questions to ask are: is there enough time to organize and book the event properly?  What type of events have been successful in the past? What can be organized with the given resources? When a number of ideas for the event has been sorted out, the process where the organizers or clients sort out the concepts, that would be most suited for the target market, which are set by the type of people, age group, income level, familiar activities, past experience of the former events and so on. Audience demographics can also be separated to "baby boomers" referred to them who were born in 1945- 1965, "Generation X " born 1965- 1980 or of whom it is proven to have a specific upbringing. (Shone 2001, 68-70, 81; Capell 2013, 18).  Who is wanted in the event? and are they the people most likely to come? What are the target market's needs? Why would they not come? and are there any competing events at the same time? The answers to these questions will guide the organizer towards the aims, objectives and theme of the event. (Capell 2013, 143-144).

After the idea and concept of the event are set out, the next step would be to set the date after first checking that there would not be any similar event running at the same time. The awareness of the other kinds of activities running at the same time is also useful in order to look into the market and see what competitors are doing to generate ideas and to look up the current trends. (Capell 2013, 23.) While searching for current events one might get additional ideas or identify gaps in the event market that could be filled. After the possible events have been chosen, the last pic would be done with the help of the event manager, whose task is to figure out what events, suppliers and entertainment options are possible to book on the due date, what are the resources that are usable, and therefore what can be implemented with it. (Shone 2001, 72; Capell 2013, 57).

Figure 7. Screening an idea. (Shone 2001, 70.)
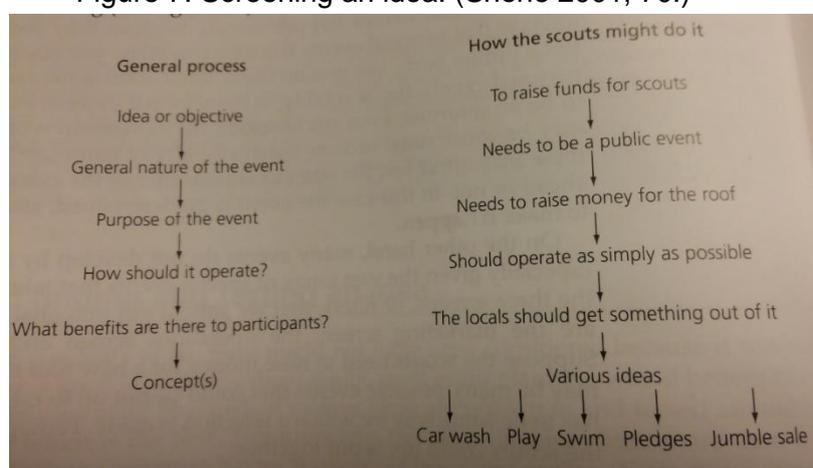
Then in order to take the idea forward the plan must be taken into parts and determine responsibilities of staff and implement which parts will be done by who and who will be managing the big picture? In bigger events, a project manager can be vital in order for the event to be successful. There are several methods and platforms to use as a manager in order to keep everything organized. A pre- event planner like in (figure 8) can be useful in order to take control of the beginning of the event planning. It includes for example what supplies and equipment are needed and how do they fit into the budget? Is there need to consider parking, transport or access? Why is the schedule made important and what are the deadlines? There are several points according to basic things considering budget, parking and layout in the pre- planner in (figure 8) and the layout can be used as a checklist for various issues. (Shone 2001, 77-79).

Figure 8. Pre- event planner. (Shone 2001, 79.)

Event organizers can also make use of a Gantt- chart (figure 9) as a tool in a project in order to put all the various tasks into time- sequence order. The chart can be used to put all the tasks onto one plate and importantly to see how much time each task requires time. White boxes show the tasks that still needs to be done or if a task is delayed. In this Gantt – chart example the resources are not included, this is a simpler chart for smaller projects. (Shone 2001, 167-168).

Figure 9. Gantt- chart. (Shone 2001, 168.)
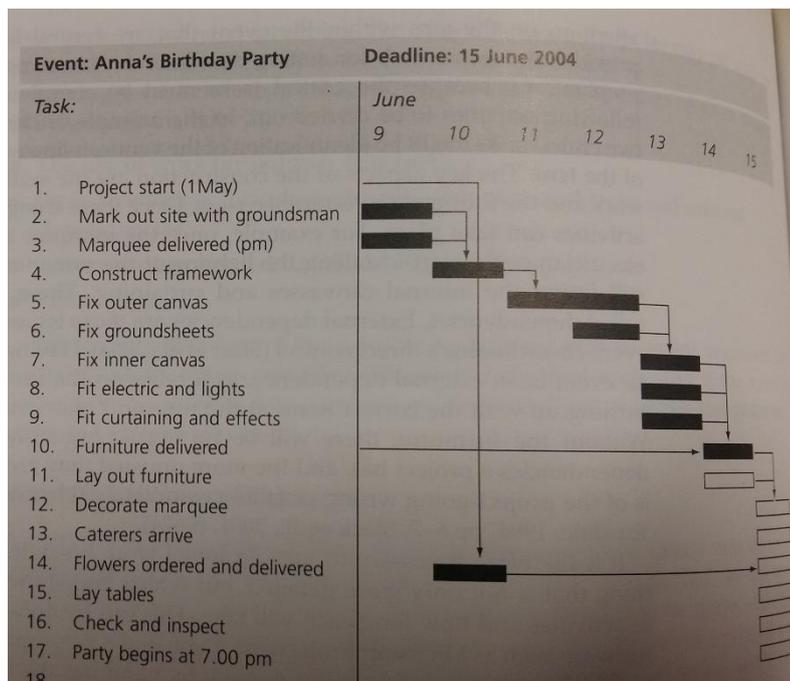


### 2.4.1 Menu planning

Catering is usually a big part of an event. The food and menu can also be themed in different ways to accommodate the event in different styles like the 50s, global food, Dracula-themed like in (picture 6), Las Vegas or kids' party for adults. (Capell 2013, 129). A menu planner should consider the demographics of the guests: age, gender, diet restrictions and ethnic background determine the chosen menu to name a few. There are several styles of meal service based on the style and requirements of the event: the service can be canapes' which mean small portions of food served on plates, bowl food, buffet, street food- which is eaten while standing up (like bowl food) or a plated service or sit-down meal.

Special diets are in the rising amongst different kinds of allergies. The issues can be religious- related, life- style (like vegan) or life- threatening in the worst case, and therefore

must be taken into consideration. The most common food allergenic are: dairy, eggs, peanuts, soy, wheat and carmine. There are also common types of foods that are badly tolerated like salt (due to high blood pressure) sugar (diabetes) fat (increase weight issues) onions and garlic that cause digestive problems (Shock 2011, 147; Capell 2013, 130-131). Even though eating healthy is a current trend (Shock 2011, 158.) A Dessert is important and guests are reluctant to give up the dessert course, since it is seen as a reward. A dessert forms the last impression of a meal and should therefore strive to be spectacular. (Shock 2011, 149).

Picture 6. Dracula- themed food. Latvasto-Hyvärinen 2017.



When planning a menu, one should consider the variety of different meals and should not use the same ingredients in more than one course unless the menu is specifically signed for it (Shock 2011, 152.). Easily produced proteins are chicken and beef, which of chicken is commonly used because of its variety of use in different dishes. (Shock 2011, 153.) A menu planner should also balance colours, flavours, shapes, textures and temperatures in foods. All of the senses stimulate appetite; therefore, the look of food is equally important. One should strive for mixing flavours and having something mild, sweet, salty, bitter and sour in the menu. (Shock 2011, 155). Serving two or more starches such as potatoes and rice on the same time should be avoided. (Shock 2011, 165.)

When matching food and wine there are some basic things to remember: white wine goes well with less flavourful foods like fish, and red wine is usually served with red meats, pastas and other strong flavoured foods. (Shock 2011, 157.)

If the guests have a stay over, breakfast is an important part of the service, and it is also a functional meal, but still many guests skip it. Therefore, the chances are that guests become irritable during the morning when brain- cells are un- nourished if they are for example in a conference. It is also important for the metabolism to be activated and this is an important thing in weight problems. The breakfast menu should contain energizing foods like fresh fruits, whole- grain breads and cereals and yogurt. (Shock 2011, 171).

### 2.4.2  Budgeting

In recent decades, the budgets have become tighter in the catering business. The average budget per person has dropped by approximately 25 percent while costs per person have increased by 25 percent. This has not lowered the expectations though; clients want fresh food, quality, creativity and service. (Shock, Sgovio & Stefanelli 2011, 114). According to the Marketing, Technology and Creativity union MTL it is a weekly note, that clients have unrealistic expectations and wants in what comes to cost. For example, one client gave a budget of 2500 euros for a 100-pax event meaning 25 euros per person. It is impossible to organize a high- quality event with such a low budget. Ekholm- Talas agrees with Shock in her text that the economy situation and regression is influencing the event industry. Expenses are rising whilst budgets get smaller. Money and value go often hand in hand, and with a smaller budget, it is not reasonable to expect wonders. (Ekholm- Talas 2015).

A budget should be made with the target in mind: is there a target of getting profit or not. What is the financial objective, to make profit, or simply to cover costs? Several events are cost- oriented, and the budget might be determined by what the organizers or clients can afford if there is no other resources, like sponsors or revenue from sellable items. There might be different basis on budget: meaning to raise money, to get even or getting enough surplus to start next year's venue or at least cover the costs. The organizers will have to have some basic information about the costs (venue, materials, staff, consumables, power, food and drink) and to assess whether a profit or surplus would be made from this. In addition, an estimate on how many people might attend and how much they can be charged. All these can be estimated with the help of comparing to former similar events. (Shone 2001, 76). Identifying similar events and how much people were willing to pay for it may give hints to pricing. It is hard to estimate the costs as an unexperienced organizer. It is essential to list all the needed items and the cost them properly. Therefore, find financial help in order to estimate and calculate ticket prices. Selling tickets is also a way of committing people to the event psychologically event though it does not provide much revenue. (Shone 2001, 91-92; Capell 2013, 95).

It is easy to spend over the budget but expenditure is not what makes the event. The first step of making a budget is to find out how much money there is all in all like in the first box of the sample budget in (figure 10). People want the best but often can not afford it. A budget helps to prioritize what is the most important to spend on. If there is a will there is a way, one must try to be creative. The same sit down meal for 100 pax can vary from 20 000 to 150 000 pounds depending on the season. (Capell 2013, 76). The costs included in the budget are at least: the venue, content, entertainment, lighting, sound, power and catering. Additional costs may be: furniture, security, branding, marketing, administration costs and staff and not to forget your planning time. (Capell 2013, 77-80). If the venue is pay and tickets are sold designing and printing tickets, updating websites and commissioning pays must be included to the budget and ticket prices. (Capell 2013, 96.) Even when you are putting effort into the budget, things outside your control may incur additional costs that you had not budgeted for. If it is a client that asks for additional things, the commitment to stretch the budget should be confirmed in written. If there is no money source, you can try to search for additional sponsors. (Capell 2013, 91).

Figure 10. Budget template example. Pinterest.

| Creating a Wedding Budget | Plan | Final |
|---|---|---|
| **Income** | | |
| Parents' Contributions | $ | $ |
| Savings | $ | $ |
| Loan | $ | $ |
| Other | $ | $ |
| TOTAL INCOME | $ 0 | $ 0 |
| **Expenses** | | |
| Wedding & Accessories (bride & groom) –10% | $ | $ |
| Ceremony (location, officiant, marriage license) – 2% | $ | $ |
| Reception (venue, rentals, food, beverages, cake) – 45-55% | $ | $ |
| Flowers & Decorations – 5-10% | $ | $ |
| Photos & Video – 8-12% | $ | $ |
| Music (ceremony, cocktail hour, reception) – 4-6% | $ | $ |
| Transportation (bride & groom, Guests) – 2% | $ | $ |
| Gifts (Attendants & Favors) – 2-4% | $ | $ |
| Wedding Bands – 2-5% | $ | $ |
| Printables (Invitations, programs, thank you cards) – 2-4% | $ | $ |
| Flowers & Decorations – 5-10% | $ | $ |
| Taxes & Tips – 5-8% | $ | $ |
| Misc & Unexpected (wedding insurance, overages, unpreventable crisis) – 10% | $ | $ |
| TOTAL EXPENSES | $ 0 | $ 0 |
| INCOME – EXPENSES = | $ 0 | $ 0 |

## 2.5 **Themed events**

All events can be themed and some of them are evidently themed, like Christmas parties, Easter- and Halloween parties. Themes are limited only by imagination and budget. Here are some theme party ideas in general: TV Classics, Movies, Music Themes- like Rocka-billy (picture 7), or musicals, like Mamma Mia in this project, Science Fiction, and Famous Highways like route 66, and Beach- style, Location Themes like Paris, Time Themes, Historical Themes, Cultural Themes and Sports Themes. (Shock 2011, 111-114). A themed event transports the stakeholder to another dimension, another place and time, away from the ordinary world. Themed events create memories of unique and creative presentations and outstanding entertainment. These events tie in creativity, food, beverage, entertain-ment, décor and activities. Event elements include fun, excitement, action, colour, sound, surprise and entertainment. All five senses should be included by sight, sound, smell, taste and touch. Guests like interactive events therefore entertainment is key. (Shock 2011,110; Capell 2013, 111). All events can use themes, consider the objectives and messages that you are trying to communicate and bring them to life before, during and af-ter the event. Be realistic though, do not present a theme you cannot activate. (Capell 2013, 107).

Picture 7. Rockabilly- themed wedding. Latvasto-Hyvärinen 2014.
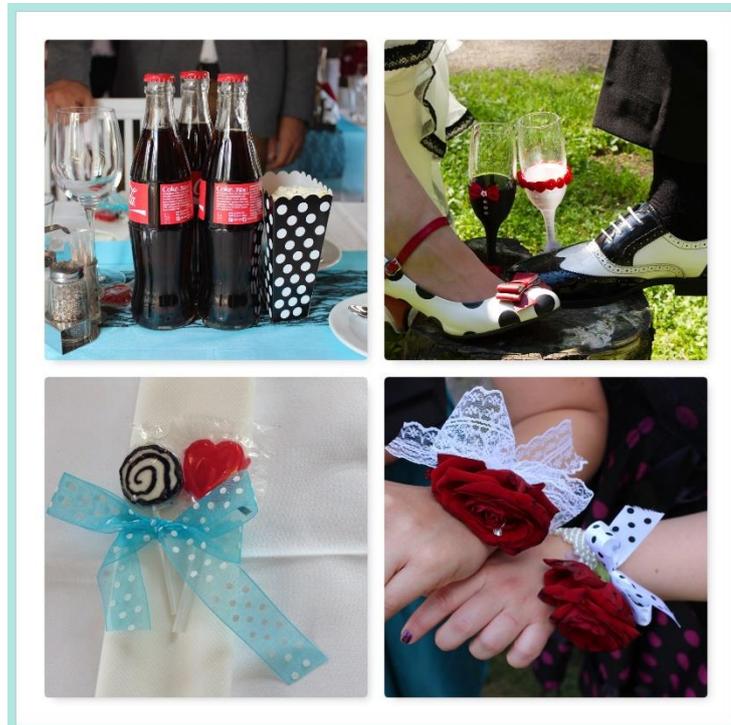


Themes can be carried out in several ways. Using colour as a theme is one of the illumi-nating ways of designing an event experience. Colour itself is complex, it can be used in

various ways, with different shades like the shades of blue and purple in (picture 8), and textures of just one colour, and the space can be brightened up. Colour is not just cosmetic; it affects our mood in several ways and can therefore also to be seen from a psychological perspective. Colour can be used in a key role of communicating messages or in symbolizing things. There are seven different contrast effects in the world of colour that can be used to create moods, like neutrality, warmth, cold or subdued. Colour is used in different cultures and countries in different ways. (Berridge 2007, 108). Vibrant colours also stimulate appetite like the colours red, pink and bright yellows. (Shock 2011, 116.) The next chapter will lead to project- and event management. It will give a glimpse at the differences in planning an event and managing an event or a project.

Picture 8. Theming with colour. OMG Top Tens.



## 2.6 **Event management**

On a professional level, there is a need to use techniques in event management that are effective, enjoyable and have a safe outcome. This requires a more organized and structured approach than a cheerful family party. The event manager can be something of the following or all: the co- coordinator of the event who accepts and interrogates the brief from the client, who manage suppliers, manages the staff and venue, manages the facilities, car parking and traffic and is in charge of first aid and makes a safety plan. Here can be included: the designer and production management, creator of a marketing plan for the event, planning room layouts, programme, scheduling, selling sponsorships, preparing papers, overseeing the dismantling and removal of equipment after the event, carrying out post- event evaluation including data entry, analysis and producing reports for stakeholders. Take the breath away does it not. (Shone 2001, 64; Capell 2013, 57-58). The benefits

of having an event manager come with the range of expertise, experience and innovative ideas, for example a gala evening or a themed dinner. The expertise may include the planning, menu, theme design as well as providing full catering support in food production and all the range of supportive services at the event. The creation of special complex events like these require careful planning and costing. A great deal depends of the objectives, the venue, facilities, design features and elements like licensing, parking, power and access. (Shone 2001, 41-42).

For management positions, the candidate must have technical work experience along with the requisite human skills. The event industry is hard work and intense. One with a desire to be a manager needs passion in order to enjoy the ride. People skills, communication skills and negotiation skills are important when leading people as a supervisor and when constantly dealing with customers. Creativity, flexibility, efficiency, problem solving skills, time management control, delegation skills, endurance and resourcefulness are equally important to keep the strings in hand. (Shock 2011, 335; Capell 2013, 10-13.)  Event managers tend to be involved where the organizers have a requirement for major VIP events, corporate hospitality or where the event demands special design and innovation. A production company will usually be able to undertake most of these activities: project management, design, venue management, participant handling, technical support, training, and presenting speakers.

When starting as a manager, dinners could be an easy start. A manager must know the basics of staff employment. For example in parties and different anniversaries and dinners, one must be able to anticipate the number of staff needed. Experience shows that staff members needed can vary from one server per eight guests to one server per 75 guests totally depending on the style of service. (Shock 2011, 287.) Industry experts suggests for a conventional sit- down meal with plated American style service with some of the foods pre- set one server for every 20 guests. Two servers should be able to handle five dining tables. In the case of poured- wine service there should be one server per 16 guests. In a buffet- style serving one staff member can handle up to 40 guests. (Shock 2011, 288). Service personnel should be flexible, and all of them must handle these tasks: napkin folds, table settings, placing table pads and cloths, pre- setting foods on dining tables, greeting and seating guests, takin food and beverage orders from guests, serving food and drinks, opening wine bottles, pouring wine, hot and cold beverage service, crumbling and busing tables, stacking and emptying trays, tableside preparation, using different service styles, handling complaints, dealing with intoxicated guests and refusing liquor service to minors. (Shock 2011, 284-285).

An event manager will also forecast the need for staff directly from the requirements of running the event. The needs will be based on what the organizer specifies as the event's objectives and needs and on the experience and forecasts of departmental leaders. The complexity and the uniqueness of the event determines the labour- intensiveness of the event. Meaning simply how much work and therefore staff the event requires to be organized well. Different events require different numbers of staff: managers can forecast the need of staff from experience, the number of guests, types of service, the experience and quality of staff and the time required to complete the service and outcome of the event. (Shone 2001, 17.) One of the event managers' roles is to try ensuring the event succeeds by attention to detail and by encourage the desired outcome. In service situations, the customers are frequently in touch with the staff and the experience is an outcome of the interaction. Even though they say that there is no "I" in a team, the manager is sometimes a one- man- team and the job can be very intense unless you do not have the right team around you. (Shone 2001, 16; Capell 2013, 53).

The client is the key character in the event, a good manager guides the client throughout the event process and managing the client is as important as managing the event. This means in practise to listen to the client and finding out the likes and dislikes of his or hers and identifying any internal politics that may affect. It is also important to empathise with your client, the customer is always right. Be adaptable to the preferred work- method of the client and be proactive and flexible. (Capell 2013, 54-55.) The organizational issue relates to the need of relatively complex planning to able the event to be successful. The main phases are relatively well put out in (figure 11) from where one is able to see the event managements main activities from the beginning to an end. The objectives are the main thing in the events process, the planning phase is followed by the implementation phases and every event should also end to an evaluation in order to learn from it. (Shone 2001, 82).

Figure 11. Event management activities. (Shone 2001, 82.)
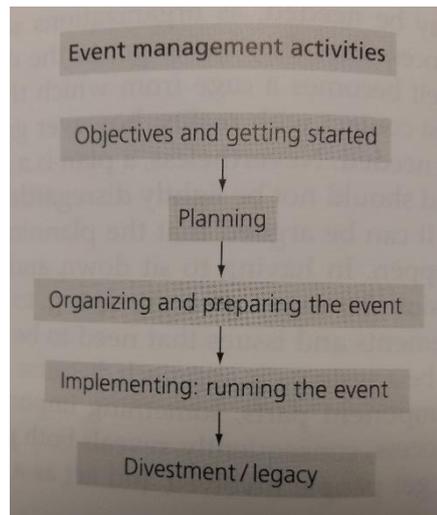


### 2.6.1 The natures of leadership

People often say they are interested in managing events because of their organizing skills. Management is much about human contact as well- the manager needs to have excellent communication skills and must know how to communicate in which situation. Nowadays it is possible to organize an entire event without human contact with the help of technology. Using conference calls reduce time and costs of travel and encourage efficiency; they also allow more people to participate without being bound by location. (Capell 2013, 67).

Volunteer resources run many events, ranging from charity functions to village sports events and birthday parties to local events. They might be family, friends or another group of volunteers related to the event. This type of organization is commonly significantly overlooked in studies of events activity, because there is a tendency to look at larger- scale professional events. A typical volunteer committee is often committed, effective, and willing to put in work and effort to the event. They might also go into lengths to obtain resources, help, facilities and services for the event. It is also the case, that for larger and more important events there might be co-operation between volunteers and professionals. An event might also be run by volunteers but managed and run by a professional. (Shone 2001, 47.) The event manager should look for expertise amongst the staff in order to get to the best outcome: there might be people with jobs or hobbies that are relevant in order to handle important parts of the venue implementation. There are also risks in volunteer-based work forces: volunteering can be hard work and not everyone is up for it, or have the time for it. Achievability is important, in the end people might not have time to participate in the event or might be forced to call it off. (Shone 2001, 74).

There can be complex and difficult stakeholder environments that puts a strain on the organizer. Every stake has a different view, preference, interest and unequal power over the decisions made. In some cases, a chosen stakeholder should have not been there at all. The key is to align the stakes of each stakeholder and to be clear of which one of the stakeholders you are designing for. In this thesis, the stakeholder to take into consideration is the birthday heroin. However, the other stakeholders as guests are needed to get the event organized, therefore all of the stakeholders in this thesis project are almost equally important financially at least. There is also the question of who of the stakeholders to be just informed and who to get involved more?

The lead method can be used to solve this. (Frissen 2016, 152). Getting stakeholders aligned in what you are doing can be a difficult task, some stakeholders can appear from nowhere and some can stop you or make your life really difficult if they feel you have not been informing them properly. In order to avoid problems one can get closer to the stakeholders, find out their agendas, ensure what they want and need and to find out what their critical measures are. (Frissen 2016, 154). The tool to be used is the stakeholder alignment tool (figure 12) and it needs to be used systematically. Firstly, decide on your aim and list your stakeholders. The next step would be to prioritise the stakeholders and then put them into boxes: who to satisfy, whom to inform, whom to delight, and whom to involve. The stakeholders falling into the category "those to delight" have a high level of interest and can stop you immediately. In the group, "the ones to satisfy" are the stakes who have power but does not have that much interest in you. Those in the "to involve" group need to be included because of their special interests in the event, and the last group of the "informative" are those who only need to keep up to date. (Frissen 2016, 158).

Stage four is to list the to "delight" stakeholders needs and measures, in stage five you need to deliver the list in person to the stakeholder and check for accuracy and feedback. In the last stage, you will have the chance to show the stakeholder your own needs and wants, it might be your last chance. (Frissen 2016, 160-161).

In order to influence different people, there are some boundaries on what to do and the do nots. The "lead" tool might improve your ability to influence almost anybody. People can be divided into four groups according to their communication style and personality like in (figure 13). The "thoughtful" personalities tend to think for a long period before discussing things with others, while the "talk- full" persons are louder and out- going. (Frissen 2016, 165). The "logical" preference needs information, logic and accuracy, whilst the "empathy" prefers to be inclusive, uses relationships and consideration. The "action- person" needs

summary and information, uses speed, activity and clarity, and lastly the "difference" preference needs options, creativity and demands excitement. (Frissen 2016, 167).

There can be difficult meetings between two persons of the opposite ways of communicating. All have difficulties when trying to influence people, whilst other find it easier. One might find themselves from one of the graph parts in (figure 13) and sometimes when these behaviours are overly presented in the wrong situation, they may become weaknesses. In order to make use of the lead tool one needs to be able to categorize each stakeholder in order to influence them differently and to be flexible in your behaviour as a leader. (Frissen 2016, 170.)

Figure 12. The stakeholder alignment tool. (Frissen 2016, 159.)
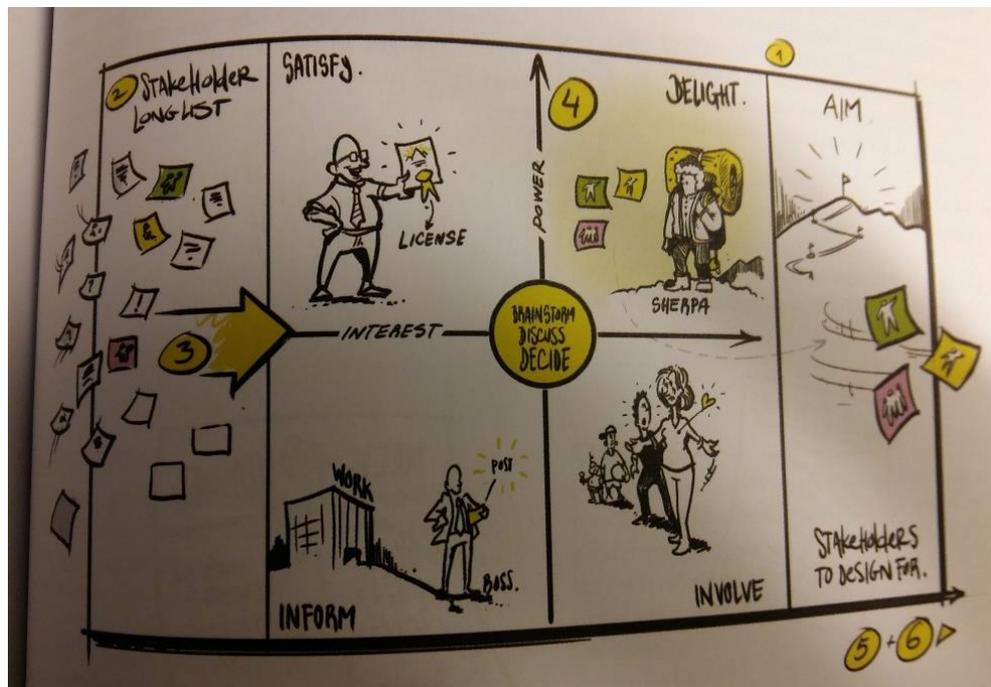
Figure 13. The four major categories of persons. (Frissen 2016, 165)
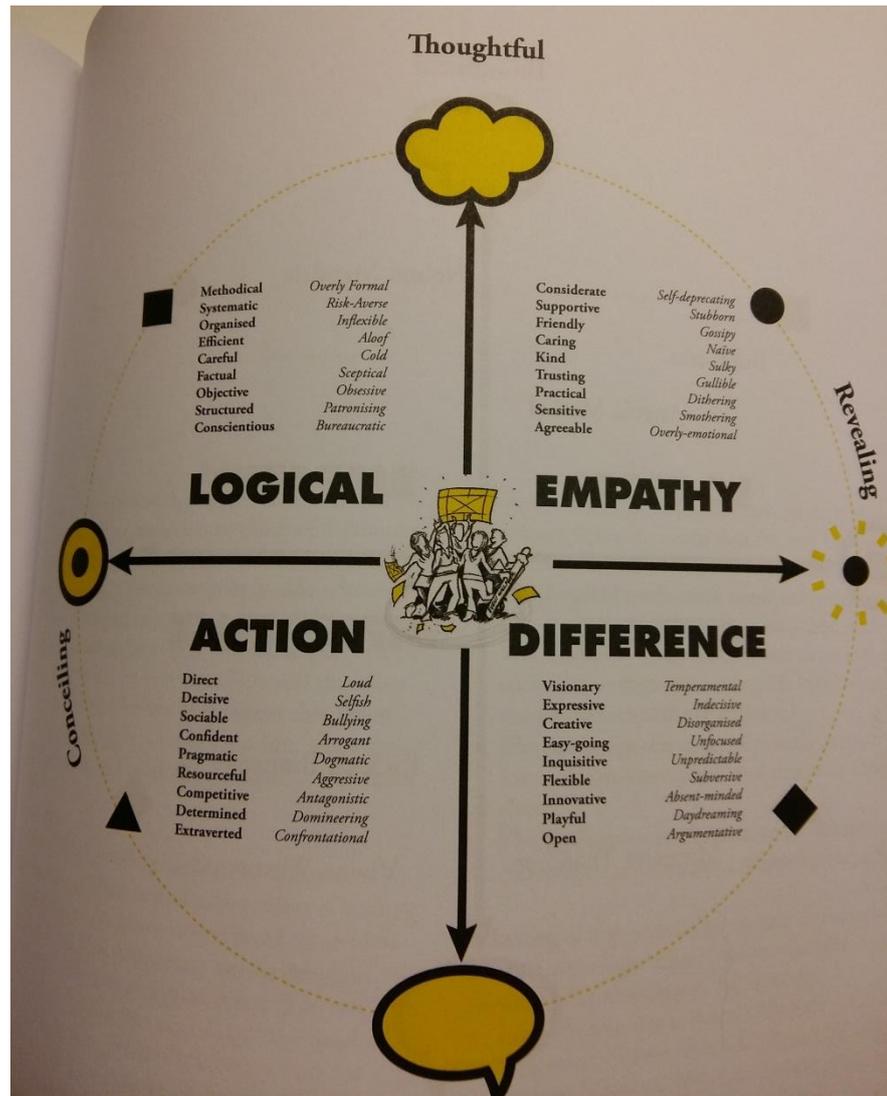


## 2.6.2 Running the event day

Even though planning an event takes considerable effort, running it on the event day can also be a challenge. Coordinating a wide range of separate and unusual activities can be overwhelming. Event managers must be good coordinators, delegators and communicators. According to Shone 2001, the most used technique in supervision is 'wandering around', which means that the managers have several main checkpoints that they wonder around checking occasionally. Every manager should have a checklist of the things to keep in control, like shown in (figure 15). Before the event it would be good to walk through the same route the guest does, like a customer journey, and check that every aspect is in order (figure 15), including the toilets.

When talking about delegating tasks it means for example, that small tasks should be ran by the staff when the managers' duty is to control the bigger component. If the manger see him/herself sorting out minor tasks, it can reveal that he/she has failed in choosing staff, training and briefing. Briefing the staff would need to include information like responsibilities for health and safety, a reporting mechanism according to problems and a tour of the site including toilets and emergency exits plus other relevant locations.

When solving problems it is essential to take notes and ask questions to sort out what caused the problem in order to avoid the same mistake again. (Shone 2001, 208-212). On the ground, communicating ways are important. Push- to talk devices can be given to key employees so that they can have a constant communication line with the supervisor. Facilities with several function rooms require coordination and control. It is difficult to monitor employees who are on the move constantly; therefore, managers must select an appropriate methods in which the staff contacts the supervisor. A low- cost method is the call- back method, in which the staff member contacts the supervisor when his or her task is completed. The supervisor will know from experience how much time on one task requires time and can therefore anticipate a pattern of calls from the staff. (Shock 2011, 260).

Closing up an event have several elements from clearing the venue to completion of the accounts and payment of final bills. The managers' task includes also to make an evaluation of the event and bringing up to date staff records. The obvious physical tasks in closing an event is the big clear- up. It should be approached the same way as the activities leading to the opening. A clear- up plan can be helpful in order to be efficient. It is also important to step out of the shadows as a manager and be visible in the event opening and at the close down. After a period there should also be a meeting of various parties to evaluate the event. Care in evaluation is an aid to future planning and should not be overlooked. (Shone 2001, 215, 220). As evaluation is important as service business is all about customer satisfaction, the last paragraph this chapter will be about evaluating success of an event.

Figure 15. Running the event day. (Shone 2001, 215.)



Walk through the event site as a visitor would

↓

Manage by walking about

↓

Communicate with departmental leaders, visitors and staff

↓

Check key locations at key times

↓

Delegate authority and action, ensure departments are self-controlling
(be tactful: help is appreciated when it is needed, interference is not)

↓

Deal with problems, but seek adequate information about them

↓

Identify reasons for problems, for future analysis and action

↓

Work steadily and take breaks

↓

Ensure you are visible at the beginning and at the end

### 2.6.3   How to measure the value and success of an event

One crucial factor to be aware of, is that any kind of experience is not just a simple occasion, or activity but a complex series of relational components. No experience is the same for those involved due to the circumstances under which people have chosen to attend. The people creating experiences should have understanding to how people engage in and experience the encounter or engagement. Developing the idea needs anticipation of peoples' reactions. (Berridge 2007, 182). In order to succeed in the experience economy business, one has to build and sustain an exquisite branded experience, measure and monitor what matters to customers. (Schmitt 2002, 1.)

It is suggested, that a successful event is one that effects the guest somehow (hopefully for the better). The affect an event had on people would be the first aspect to analyse in designing a quality event. The event canvas introduced in the former chapters is the embodiment of a stakeholder's perspective. The event canvas can be used in a way that an own canvas is created for each stakeholder; it makes sense since there usually are different stakeholders attending an event. Successful events are designed to change behaviour: how stakes are affected and influenced. (Frissen 2016, 19, 37; Shone 2001, 15).

It is important to document the event. Even though you had planned the perfect event but is not able to prove it to customers, stakeholders and future sponsors what is the use of it? There are different ways of documenting an event, for example the traditional photographing, video recording, live streaming, social networking, guest video and photo content. (Capell 2013, 134-135, 138-139). A measurement plan can also be made to identify the areas that need improvement, justifying the budget and providing your client with insight about the events brand if there is one. A review of the events is important for stakeholders and possible sponsors to be assured, that the event was effective and money well used. (Shone 2001, 220-221; Capell 2013, 267-270).

When you purchase an item from the store, you know its value. With events, the value is more in the persons mind; it is intangible, different from a pair of socks for example. One might get a few tangible things, like a piece of wedding cake and photographs. People tend to take from a hotel the complimentary soaps and shampoos or matchbooks in order to make the experience more tangible. It is also in the nature of people to take it, if it is free. (Shone 2001, 15).

According to Shone 2001 and Capell 2013, there are two key evaluation questions: did the event meet its objectives and what can be improved for the next edition if there is one? Did you stay within the budget? There are several resources of evaluation for events like shown in (figure 16), that does not rely on one person's opinion. Formal and structured information can be gathered by observation, questionnaires, quantitative methods that focuses on numbers or quantities, or qualitative research, which is a word based information straight from the respondents. Face- to- face research is an immediate feedback on sight that is also used in this thesis project, since it is credible and straightforward. One can also use online research, surveys or telephone research. In the evaluation of the project behind this thesis qualitative and face- to- face research is being conducted because of the nature of the event. A questionnaire will be handed over in order to gather the information guests are not willing to give straight forward.

Figure 16. Event evaluation. (Shone 2001, 221.)



## 2.7 Theoretical framework

The product of this thesis is the Mamma Mia! Themed party. The main pre- event tool used for the planning process is a Gantt- chart by (Shone 2001) in (figure 9) and (figure 17). Another Gantt- chart was to be conducted of the event day itself in order to get things done efficiently and to report the event day implementation in a demonstrative way.

The main tool in order to measure the success of the event is using qualitative research methods. Leaning to (Shones 2001) theory about qualitative research, the tools to use in practise in order to clarify if the event met its objectives are questionnaires and face- to- face immediate feedback during the event. Questionnaires and immediate feedback will help to understand which ones of the Experience Realms (Berridge 2007) presented in (figure 6) were met. It was conducted in this thesis as a post- event evaluation tool. The goal was to provide immersion during the event via active participation. It was to be con- ducted via games, entertainment and the guests are going to be participating in making the food potluck- style. The décor play a big part in theme- parties, therefore an aesthetic experience that wow the guests was the reaction the author was aiming for. The reaction itself gave spontaneous immediate and real feedback.

The four major categories of personalities that are presented in (figure 13) are going to be used as a tool of self- evaluation for the author as an event planner in the future, meaning that the author should become more aware of the different characteristics of her own and

the personalities of others. That way it could be easier to understand own behaviour, improve own leadership skills and to better understand various personalities that are different in what comes to communication and dealing with tasks for example.

What things should be taken into consideration in order to give accurate and good expectations and a promise of the event and what should the guests expect? What are the personal strengths and weaknesses, that need to be better taken into consideration in different occasions in the future in a planning and implementation processes? There are tools presented in this thesis that are usable in the future. For example definitely budgeting tools and the theories on how to take into consideration different aspects of décor. The budget and the objectives of the event pretty much limits the décor too and therefore gives direction to the planning process in order of what kind of theme is possible to implement with the funds and workforce. Shones table in (figure 15) can also be useful if managing bigger events, but all the tools mentioned above will be enough considering the size and nature of this thesis.

# 3   Mamma Mia! What a party

This chapter was written from the managerial point of view and it introduces the reader to the project as a whole. The author planned, implemented, and managed a Mamma Mia!-movie themed surprise party. The party was a themed 50th surprise birthday party for the authors' sister. The event took place at a farmhouse in Pornainen. The venue was decorated with two themes: a colour theme and the Mamma Mia! - Movie themes combined and the programme also being partly themed.  The managerial part in this thesis consists of managing stakeholders, planning and implementing the event itself and a bit of the writing process. The 10 week thesis process was highlighted to the event due 23.3.2018.

## 3.1   Background of the project

The objectives of this thesis was to learn about the event industry and to find tools to work with in the future as an entrepreneur or an employee in the business. The aim was also to learn about event planning in practise and to learn about own managerial skills.  It was clear from the beginning that the thesis would be a project-based thesis, since it is the best way of learning planning and managerial skills in action and the interests of the author has always been to create things. The idea of the authors' sisters' 50th birthday party as a thesis project came into mind for the first time in spring of 2017. The time slot did not seem right at first and it became clear that the authors' sister would not want to celebrate

her birthday, but later when there were no project worth or interesting enough to imple-
ment as a thesis the idea came to mind again. This project was chosen because the date
was convenient according to the thesis process and the event was versatile enough to
serve as a background project. The author wanted also to do something special for her
sister to cheer her up, since she had been feeling down for quite a while. Since the party
was going to be the project behind the thesis, it had to include some details to be credible
from the managerial point of view as well.

The idea of a surprise birthday party came first to mind when the author was searching for
venues to an upcoming party and accidently found a gorgeous venue on line. The basic
idea of the event was that it would be a surprise party including only the closest friends
and the programme being something relaxing, laid back and fun. The idea of a small sur-
prise birthday party came first to mind and then in a few days it grew into the idea of serv-
ing as a thesis project and to a proper themed event. The Mamma Mia! - Movie theme
came naturally, since it is the all-time favourite movie of the authors' sister to whom the
event was planned for. A colour theme is also used partly and it was chosen according to
the birthday heroes' love for the colours pink and gold and the love for bling. Theming is a
way of easing the planning process, because it gives certain lines to the style, structure
and consistency to go with. Colour theming implemented added difficulty to the event and
stretched the budget but also diversified the usage of the theme from 70s' disco to the
sets of the Mamma Mia! Movie.

### 3.2   Process management

The process began with the idea being born on the last week of January 2018. The thesis
process consists of an event project with the written part supporting it. The timeframe of
the whole process was set at 10 weeks overall. The first step was to find out who was go-
ing to be invited and what would the frames of the event be. The planning process began
with the help of one of the authors' sisters friends. She was contacted on Facebook and
together they sorted out the basis of the event: there was to be a sauna and possibly a
bathing barrel in order to have a relaxed evening together with the birthday heroin's clos-
est friends. The original idea was to rent a cottage, to bring some food potluck- style, and
to have only some lent décor proper to the venue.

The process began with the search of a suitable and affordable event and with inviting
guests via an event page on Facebook. Information about the event was given mainly via
the event page. After finding the venue it was visited and with the gain information of the
sets a décor plan was made and needed props ordered. A menu plan was also made with

the consideration of likings, healthiness and special diets. After the frames of the event were sorted out and current tasks were done, the writing process began and continued up until a week due to the event when the final preparations for the party had to begin. After the event, there was only the final evaluation to be done based on questionnaires and face- to- face feedback.

### 3.2.1    Time management

The planning of the project and the supporting written part of the thesis started on the last week of January. The event itself was going to be due on the 23 of March and therefore the author set a deadline to 28 February for the theoretical part of the thesis to be completed. The original deadline for the thesis to be completely ready in order to graduate was on April 5 but since it was not probable because of the strict schedule, it was set at 15 April together with the supervisor. The empirical part was planned to be done by 20 March since the party was going to be on the 23 March and the last week was going to require time preparing for the event itself. The final report was set on the 15 April in order to graduate before June 2018.  The timeframe set for planning and implementing the event and written parts are shown in (figure 17). The time schedule shows also the due dates of written parts of the thesis and the main things to be done before the event. This includes aspects, like reminding and ensuring the guests of the foods, they promised to provide, buying the last things, filling the balloon, crafting the décor and props as much as possible, making the party favours and making the cake. There was too much to do in the timeframe, therefore the author asked help from her sister daughter to do the party favours and come and help with the decorations on the event day. Fortunately, the author had help with the party favours and the glitter jars to the table setting, which was a small relief. The authors husband was about to take charge of parking, moving furniture around and preparing the bathing barrel. A week before the event the author figured that there would be more important things to help with and therefore bought the barrel service from the provider freeing her husband to run smaller errands, like filling up the balloon, loading the car, bringing Singstar records and making the chicken salad. The help was vital and there should have been even more hands to help implement the event itself. It was a good lesson to learn that even though the number of guests are not so many and the space is not big and whether all the props have been prepared and made before there still is never usually too many pairs of hands to help. Nevertheless of the event, there should not be anything else in the schedule for the manager and planner of an event within a few days before and after the event if there is a wish of staying mentally and physically functional.

The timeframe was tight to implement the décor at the event site. Therefore, some of the props, as the photo booth was removed from the plan in order to save time. The author had to get the previous workday off on one day notice when it begin to look like there would not be enough time to implement the décor even though the authors sisters daughter was going to come to help. The preparing of all the props were made well before the event in order to only place them. The two days before the event went as planned collecting props and packing up everything in the car and preparing the cake. There was also the map and instructions to be handed over to the authors sister to gain just before one hour of departure when her son was about to take her to the venue.

The schedule went as planned but it would have failed if it would have not been possible to begin decorating the day before because all in all it took up to six hours all in all and the original timeframe was three to four hours. The author had to work the previous day before the event and fuelled with a few hours of sleep implemented the second floors' décor Santorini style. Most of the time of the three hours went to placing the furniture, because nothing seemed to work because of the small space and bad functionality. Late in the evening, there was still the cake to be decorated. All of it was done in time but it took a lot longer and took a toll on the author.

The schedule on the event day went as planned: the tables were set, props put up and lanterns put in the entrance. The staircase needed also to be made safer because it was dark, narrow and steep. This was improvised and implemented by putting white rough sports tape on the steps, in order to make them more visible. There were many small details to do and to take into consideration, which took surprisingly much time. The birthday heroine's bedroom was decorated with a golden string of flags and a red heart pillow, which was not planned in the first place but it payed off because it was one of the details the authors sister loved. There were also two marks to be put in place, the first one being the pink sequined fedora hat in a plastic bag and the last one on the yard being the first glass from a "Diva" glass. A pink sheet was also placed in the crossroad in order to ease finding the venue. All was done just in time before the guests started to arrive.

Figure 17. Timetable. Latvasto-Hyvärinen 2018.
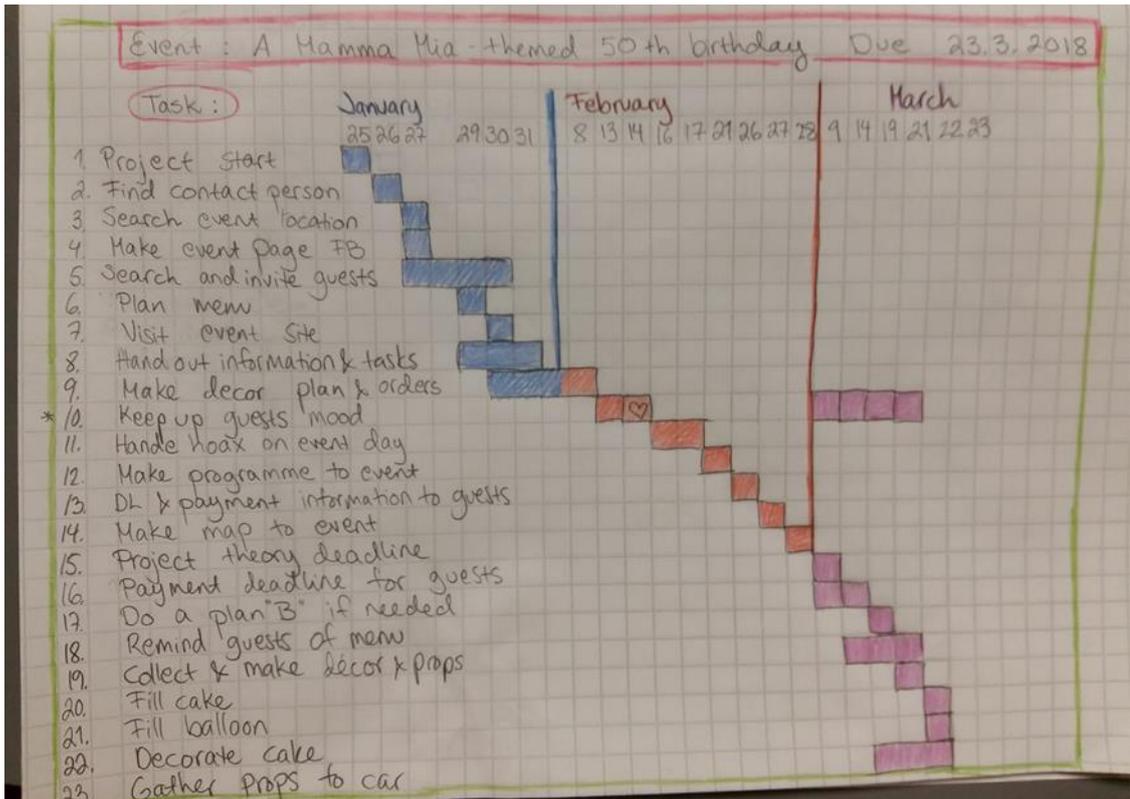


### 3.2.2 Managing the stakeholders

The guests to be invited were figured out with the help of family and friends with some re-search made on the authors' sisters Facebook page. A Facebook page was created as an information channel between the author and the guests. All but one guest was invited via the event page. The guest- book proved hard to implement there had to be done some detective- work on Facebook. Eventually 11 persons were invited via the event page, which was made in order for the guests to get information and for the author to keep up a good mood before the event and in order to create an enthusiastic atmosphere.

A good hoax was needed for the event day, because the authors' sister suspected that something was going on. Implementing a good hoax became quite tricky since the author found out, that her sister had scheduled work for the evening of the party. It took some time and sneakiness to find the contact information of the employer and to get the job gig out of the way and of course in a way that the authors' sister still would think that she was going for work. It was planned that the author's sister's son was going to be the driver who would take his mother to the event. Later on, you will learn how the hoax turned out.

Since the event was planned as a surprise for the stakeholders, the author did not want to give up many details about the décor and the event itself. The mood and expectations of the guests was being modified via the design of the planned menu and programme. They were carefully made in the theme colours and planned to tell the story of the event to come. The author thought that if there was going to be a fee as much as up to 50 euros there had to be a wow- effect implemented and value for money, therefore she decided to try to implement as much as she could by herself as a proper event planner and manager.

It became clear that the author was going to need extra help on the event day. Luckily, the authors' niece was willing to help and the décor plan together with the party plan was delivered to her a few weeks before the event lifting a big stone of worry from the authors' chest. The help was welcoming since the author had already stressed about possible striking sickness and not be able to implement the event herself and all the work going to waste. There should always be a plan B and this was a good one. The bathing barrel was to be warmed up by the authors' husband but then in order to save time and minimise risks and complications the author decided to buy the wood and the setting of the barrel from Airbnb. The authors' parents were to provide the wood for the barrel but later wanted to pay for it and then it became possible to buy the service as a whole. There was still work to be done for the husband as setting the karaoke equipment, moving furniture around at the event set, bringing one of the guests to the set and to be in charge of parking cars in a hiding place.

Managing the guests was supposed to be easy, since most of the guests replied within a few days, that they would be attending. Meanwhile the author tried to search for help in implementing the décor, making food and lending out props it proved to be much harder. The only one of the guests who was active in the beginning had a very different idea of what the main thing and style of the event was going to be, it being to drink and food being un- necessary. Therefore, the author made the decision to only put out posts of ready-made plans to the event page in the weeks to come. The author tried to post mind- boggling texts and videos on the event page in order to keep the mood up until the event but it seemed like no one followed it. Even though the food was planned to be implemented pot-luck –style from the very beginning there was trouble and difficulties to get the guests to take on their part of making food. The author had to bombard the guests via messenger and on the event page to reach the guests. This flattened the motivation of the author, but she did not give up and surprisingly all but one had paid the fee by the set deadline and the conclusion made from this could be that the plan had worked and the guests were committed to the event after all. Whether this was according to the authors acts or simply

because of friendship to the birthday heroine will be revealed in the final report after the feedback gathered from guests.

On the last week due to the event, the guests started finally to respond to messages on the event page, but there were still difficulties with implementing the menu. Nobody was keen to take on the chicken salad event though there were instructions to all of the dishes. The tortillas planned to be eaten on the night time were promised to be brought by one guest but since she had no fridge available it became unclear what she would bring and she did not respond to messages either. On the event day, she did bring food but did not tell anyone about it and the author did hesitated to ask. Therefore, the food sat on the floor in a bag all evening. The other guests who had not yet taken responsibility of the menu was asked to bring flowers but again no response, later she answered to pleas about bringing sparkling wine. The authors husband who was about to do the chicken salad did not have the current information of the amount needed or simply forgot. Therefore there were not enough protein in the salad. There were additional problems with the menu: also, the bread bought with the soup was not as asked and all of the mentioned together made the menu lack of a main course and stood as a first course only. The dessert, the cake was made in a mood of tiredness and with a lack of time, therefore it was modified once and it did not please the author. The guests were delighted about it and most importantly the authors sister loved it. The author heard later also that the breakfast was not either as asked for, there were no yoghurts, it is believed that some of the guests ate them during the night; therefore, the breakfast was missing one part.

Even though the menu was implemented potluck style and therefore the guests could not actually complain about it. It was still a big disappointment to the author since it had been so carefully planned but flopped partly. The operatives were the only course that was to the point. The lesson to learn from this is that on the other hand not to trust people such a big part of an event, not to listen to one person even if she is a chef that the menu planned is too much just be confident. Also not to be afraid to take the charge of people and actually taking personal contact in order to confirm it. The problem was in the original idea of handing out recipes and trusting it to be done, what should have done would have been to delegate the management of the food to someone else after planning the menu and having somebody else kick the guests to implement what was asked. The management of the menu implementation was poor partly because of the author was afraid to push being afraid of the guests cancelling.

### 3.2.3 Venue and theme

The venue was chosen according to its site, price and accommodation possibilities. It was an old farmhouse located in Pornainen, which was approximately a half an hour drive away from the city of Vantaa. The premises had two floors, sauna and could accommodate eight persons in twin or quartet bedrooms. The possibility to rent a bathing barrel to be set up on the yard finalized the deal. The location being out of reach of public transportation there had to be the possibility for accommodation for everyone since the price included it nevertheless. On the other hand, some of the guests were not going to stay over, but they still had to pay the full price. It was expected and they made their choice.

The theme was chosen according to the birthday hero's' favourite colours. However, after visiting the venue on site, the colours of the walls upstairs triggered the Mamma Mia movie– theme slash Santorini Greece and together they became the final plan to go forward with. Some research was also made in order to get a picture of the sets in the theme movie. Luckily the bedroom of one the main character Donnas' has the same wall colours as the bedroom upstairs on the premises. She had also lace in her bedroom and it was therefore connected with the lace curtains at the venue.  After the theme was chosen, the party grew gradually into an actual event plan while the ideas started to pop up and the mind-set of the party being created as an actual experience, which goal was to wow. There was also the goal to implement a unique experience for the guests and to give value for their money.

The colour theme was planned with the help of several images from Pinterest and online search with words and then imagining which ones would fit the theme, settings and budget. The upstairs room was the tricky one, since the premises did not have an actual sitting area, and therefore it had to be created in the upstairs bedroom out of single beds. The bedroom was to be done in the bedroom and some props brought in order to create a colour scheme of Greece Santorini. The colours being used was different shades of blue, white, red, pink and a touch of yellow. The décor plan was implemented via watching the actual movie and finding hints of décor and aimed atmosphere.

### 3.2.4 Budget

According to Shone 2001, the price should not be based on ones' private opinion instead of a carefully budgeted assessment of the costs. There should be an evaluation made of how much the target market would pay for such an event. The hesitation of putting the price too high should not have been made according to gut feel according to Shone 2001.

The cost people pay should always at least cover the fixed costs, therefore a need for knowing how many people would attend would be vital (Shone 2001, 101- 103). The theory mentioned in the previous sentence was not one the author was aware of when she planned the costs set per person based on gut feeling, therefore the price range of the venue was set at 250- 450 euros in order for the costs to be divided between 8-12 guests at a maximum of 50 euros per person. The estimate of the price was simply made by figuring out by comparing different events the average cost of an overnight stay at a Bed & Breakfast including a bathing barrel.

The event was to be a united gift to the authors' sister from her family and friends. If the cost would have been too high the author would have not been comfortable into charging too much of her sisters friends. There is also the question of value, how could the author convince the guests of the value of their money put into the venue? The estimate of the price was simply made by estimating the average cost of an overnight stay at a Bed & Breakfast including a bathing barrel. There was no knowledge in how many friends would attend, therefore the venue was chosen from the cheapest side to be sure. There were always the dark shadow of the fact that the event would not be able to be implemented if more than one of the guests would cancel when the final guest number was seven persons, because the fixed costs per person were 45 euros per person so there were not much stretch. There was not going to be a possibility of returning cash if someone would not be able to make it to the venue. In the future, there must be a budget made which is not as vulnerable and has a backup plan.

It was planned in the beginning that most of the décor would have been gathered from guests and only some would be bought, therefore only 50e in décor and 30 euros for the cake and rose wine was included in the authors' budget. The cost per guest would have been less if they would have participated to the décor by lending some, not being so the author excluded herself from the costs of the venue rent and divided her part to the guests to be paid since she had to buy a lot of props. Fortunately, there were some surprise sponsoring from the behalf of parents, they wanted to pay for the barrel and gave an extra 50 euros to cover some of the décor. In the end, the cake and rose wine costed 18 euros being under the budget. The authors' sisters' daughter also bought flowers to her mother as a present that saved 30 euros and she made the party favours. Situations change, like also during this project nevertheless and that is why there should always be a proper budget made when planning an event, in the project of this thesis the budget was almost overlooked excluding the fixed costs. Fortunately, the bought props are mostly reusable; the value of it was planned beforehand. Some of the props is being used to designing the interior of the family summer cottage in the spring and the props used to the table setting

are reusable as well. Some props, like the fedora hat, sunglasses and the Diva- glass were given as memorabilia to the author's sister.

### 3.2.5  Guest satisfaction

A programme, guest list or small give- a ways, such as chocolates help the event be more tangible and memorable for the guests. (Shone 2001, 15.) Therefore, small cans of home-made jam were made for all the guests, since without the presence of all friends the event would have not been possible. It also contributes to better guest satisfaction. The author wants to give the guests something tangible to remember about the event. The might keep in mind, that when they need a cake or have a bigger party someday they could ask help of the author. Arranging all events and happenings are a way of promoting and bring-ing one's own style and abilities available to the market. Guest satisfaction is important when working in a rather new business in Finland, since many know each other and word-to- mouth marketing is most efficient one. Good feedback is also going to influence the work of an event planner or manager in the future via self- esteem and efficiency. Nega-tive feedback if it is not constructive might influence ones' self -esteem negatively and drag down the efficiency and value of work. Happy customers might return and do free marketing in an efficient way.

As mentioned before, guest satisfaction is going to be measured by immediate feedback on the event day and with the help of questionnaires. The gathered feedback must be an-alysed keeping in mind that the guests are probably going to be influenced by the fact that the author is the sister of the birthday hero; therefore, the gathered feedback may not be valid or might be sugar coated. There is also the personal matter in this, since the guests are the author's sister's closest friends and therefore she wants her sister to be happy with everything and not to hear later negativities. The guest number being so low, the feedback is also going to be opinions of a few private persons. The event plan is going to be compared with the implementation in the upcoming sections and parts in the text. All gathered data and self-assessment is important knowledge of what can be improved in the future and learnt from. The most important thing is to understand what went wrong and what went well, and why in order to lead action in the wanted direction in the future.

### 3.3  Limitations and risks

For any event involving a significant budget or complicated organizational issues, a judge-ment of risks might have to be made. Questions asked could be, how vulnerable is the

project operationally and financially. What are the risks and what can be done to prevent them and what are the necessary precautions to be made? Are there hazardous materials or activities that needs to be considered like: fire, safety, crowd control or dangerous materials? (Shone 2001, 77). When having an event outdoors, one must take into consideration things like noise and a backup plan for weather. In this project, one risk is the heat of the sauna and the bathing barrel connected with some amount of alcohol. No glasses should be taken into the water, because it can break by mistake if dropped into the barrel. Even though there is bathing, the possibility of drowning is minor. To prevent drowning or collapsing in the sauna one should not be left alone and the time of bathing should be supervised. (Shock 2011, 139). Bathing is also placed outside in the dark, so enough light to prevent slipping in the snow is essential. Other possible physical injuries may occur in the staircase, which is steep dark and narrow. This is going to be prevented with inserting a cable of led lights on the side. The events safety equipment includes a few fire blankets but no first aid equipment. Snow can be used to bruises and minor injuries like twisted ankles and so on. Some first aid equipment including medicine is going to be left at the house.

The biggest risks in what comes to the implementation of the event project itself was due to poor planning of the event like mentioned and declared earlier as if not getting the planned money for the fixed costs. There were also risks related to the surprise part, like the surprise being spoiled, some kinds of obstacles of the authors sister not able to attend or the author getting sick and nobody take the charge of the event.

Time was a question mark and the endurance of implementing the writing process. Most of the material to be found of the business were written in English, which is not the mother tongue of the author and the books were also to be found at Haaga-Helia library and needed time to be collected. The event business being quite small yet as mentioned before in the event industry part before, it was therefore hard to find current and enough information about the events business especially according to private parties in Finland. These factors did influence the versatility of sources and making versatile debate and comparison amongst things.

The author worked full time in two shifts during the whole process and most of the writing was done during worktime, which was hard because the work was supervising and therefore highly stressful in order to be sharp and focused on several things at the same time. The tight schedule and many interesting books related to the event business were tough to read through, since there were so many of them. The author had also a high maintenance way of going through material: all books and search words were gone through not

to miss any valuable information and sections and parts were filled out little by little one book at a time. The process was very stressful, there were many subjects and text to be written in the theoretical part, therefore, there were some meltdowns during the process, but the schedule was implemented before due dates.

### 3.4 Evaluation

The previous parts consist already some parts about how the event went. In this part, the assessment of each part is presented separately in order to give a bigger picture of the outcomes of the project as a whole. The Mamma Mia! - Themed surprise party's main goal was to create a surprise theme party for the authors' sister for her 50th birthday. There were other goals as well, like to bring together her friends in order to have fun and to entertain. According to immediate face- to- face feedback, observation and documentation via pictures and video recording, the guests seemed to have fun and to be enjoying themselves. The author had given her sister a letter the previous day, which she was allowed to open up only with permission. In the letter were only instructions about what to pack along, what to wear and when she was going to return back home. The goal was to implement a total surprise with all of the birthday heroes' closest friends. The surprise aspect and hoax behind the project succeeded perfectly, the birthday hero had no idea about anything until she stepped inside the house. This goal was hit perfectly, the immediate honest feedback was seen on the face of the authors' sister when she walked in with the tune "Dancing Queen" by ABBA playing on the background. She had tears in her eyes, surprised and happy giggling, laughter and she said later that all of the women in her life were present.

### 3.4.1 Did the event meet its objectives in theory?

An experience is created when an event succeeds at addressing memories and rises strong emotions (Berridge 2007). The goal was to give the wow- factor to the birthday heroin and on the base of her reaction all boxes were ticked. According to Berridge (2007) one aim of an event is interacting with others, this objective was especially met in the beginning of the event and until the late evening. As mentioned before, only one guest wanted to use the bathing barrel and sauna whilst all the other guests were left doing something else. During this time, the party of guests were divided into two or three groups. The author asked a few times the party if they wanted to get some activation or play a game, but they replied that they were good having a private conversation of their own. It was clear, that not all of the guests were that keen on the theme: after the bathing

session, it was meant to sing some karaoke but it became more of a duet between the author and her sister to whom the ABBA set was brought for of course.

The overall flow of the Mamma Mia! -event went backwards according to Smiths five steps. According to Smith one should focus on the end of an experience, because it is one of the most memorable. As mentioned before, towards the end of the event the atmosphere changed when guests carried on doing things that interested them. The author sang karaoke with her sister, supervised her out of the bathing barrel during the night, and then left the premises to be returning on the morning to clean up. According to the video clips that were filmed during the night, the mood was good after the guests had found some rock- music to dance to. On the next morning, the guests were hangover and tired. The breakfast lacked some of the food meant to have: the yoghurts, fresh fruits, eggs and the Detox- drink planned and therefore it was not as filling and versatile.  The author learned from her sister that she and her friend went for supper because they were left hungry. This adding to the night before not having enough food and people with a hangover left with an unsatisfying breakfast adds the misery about the food. The mood would certainly have been better with some food, therefore one could conclude that the mood sank during the event. A proper breakfast could have changed this totally. When drinking alcohol people tend to be hungry and stay up late, there could have been some hamburgers for example for the night. It was planned that there would have been tortillas for the late night but they never made it to the table. The menu should be planned rather too rich and overflowing rather than guests left hungry. The whole menu fussing is one of the most important lessons to learn.

Supported by the theoretical part of this thesis one can conclude that props and décor is one of the most important aspects of a themed event, but when trying to create an experience and not just an event, there must be different aspects in it. Using Pine & Gilmores approach of the four E's of an experience, it can be stated that the Mamma Mia! – Events focus of the experience was the décor and table setting, and stood for the aesthetic aspect. Participation in the event and interaction with each other happened via games. The entertainment part of the event happened via games, different props and the guests entertaining each other. Of course, the guests participated in the event by bringing and preparing food. Overall, there were immersion in several ways and the guests participated well.

According to Berridge the elements of an experience are created by a cohesive theme, visual imagery, interaction, creativity and collaboration. The entrance to the event is the most important space of the whole, because it gives a glimpse of the event and also wel-

comes the guests according to (Shock 2011). The entrance was to be decorated with lanterns, the golden "Dancing Queen" flag and with the "Happy Birthday" balloon. In the end the balloon was given away the day before and the flag was too long for the space, therefore the only props left to decorate with was few lanterns. The entrance being quite small and for the surprise lasting as long as possible maybe this was a good thing in this case and no more decorations were needed, perhaps a gold glitter fringe curtain should have been nice at the door but on the other hand it would have been annoying and in the way all evening. Overall, the event design was the most successful part of the event according to guest feedback. The usage of colour, different textures and space, the focus on props and the overall harmony was as good as possible all taken into consideration. If it would be possible to be done over again with more money, effort and workforce the author would have put more lights outside to make the yard and terrace more welcoming, and also the kitchen ceiling lights that created an ugly yellow light would be changed. Everything can be improved in some way, but the only thing that was near to perfection in the authors opinion was the table- setting.

There were some safety measures made during the event, firefighting and first aid equipment were pointed out, no glasses were taken into the bathing barrel and no one was left alone in the sauna or bathing. The bathing barrel was unfortunately too warm and therefore snow was shovelled into it, but it obviously did not help much. Bathing outside in winter time can be dangerous when the temperature differences are high, therefore everyone bathing had a stocking cap on and safety was considered wearing sandals. The porch light was turned on and it gave a good light to the front of the house. The hazardous indoor staircase was lit up and the steep dark steps marked out. The author also asked the owner where the nearest doctor was located; she also gave instructions for her sister to bring possible needed medicines with her since she was unaware of where she was going. Fortunately everything went well from the safety point of view.

### 3.4.2  Guest feedback

Feedback was gathered by observation face- to- face, immediate reactions and qualitative research was used in the form of a questionnaire. The authors sister and an additional five guests filled in the questionnaire out of seven guests. The average rating for overall experience was 4,8 on a scale from 1-5, five being the excellent and 1 poor. The venue and menu got both 4,5 from which the menu got three fours, the venue one three and one four, otherwise they were rated excellent. The programme got two fours and four fives with an average of 4,6. Overall value for money was rated 4,6 with one number three and the rest fives. The given information and the organizers communication were rated 4,8

with only one four the rest being excellent. The theme, décor and Facebook event page were all rated excellent. All of the participants, who answered the questionnaire would recommend the organizer as a party planner or organizer, at least to a themed event in the future. Therefore, the aim to do some promotion via the event was a success.

The things that guests did not particularly like were sauna and bathing, the Singstar karaoke playlist, overlooking a guest's special diets and the staircase. The menu was the only part of the event that was outsourced and failed. The guests can complain about the planned menu but not about the implementation, because they were responsible of it themselves.  The author failed in managing the stakeholders because she should have delegated the responsibility of the menu to another guest, or taken responsibility about it in the first place with including food and drinks to the budget and fee. Sauna being on the not liked list was surprising, since it was one of the most relevant aspects of the party. It was a shame, that even though the bathing barrel took the biggest part of the budget only one guest joined the authors' sister to bathe. The barrel took a whopping 220 euros, which is 31 euros per person leaving only 15 euros for the venue rent. In the end, it might have been better to exclude the bathing barrel from the fee and include venue rent and put food and drinks to the price instead. The bathing barrel could then have been an extra present to the birthday heroin and the sum could have been collected from family and friends. One guest did not like the Sing star games song collection. The Sing star song collection was chosen according to the theme and the songs were therefore mostly ABBA. The author tried to get 90's songs as well, but unfortunately they were not compatible with the newer version of PlayStation. Overall, the theme and programme were chosen according to the theme and liking of the birthday heroin, she was after all the main stakeholder to please. The only written negative feedback from the author's sister was related to the staircase, it was still quite hazardous even though rough white tape was put on the stairs in order to make them more visible and also led lights were put in the staircase.

The birthday heroin liked especially the bathing barrel, the fact that the author had managed to get everyone together, getting her own bedroom with decorations especially for her overall and with special thanks about the red heart pillow, golden flags and she liked the photographs of her from past years. The décor got the highest ratings overall but the authors sister told that there were so many details, that she did not notice all of them at once and they had to be pointed out. It is of course understandable because of the surprise affect and the positive shock that came out of it. Overall the guests and the birthday heroin liked that the theme and décor was perfectly planned according to the personality and likings of the birthday heroin and all that so many details were taken into consideration, like curtains in the kitchen so that they matched the décor. The author was especially

keen to hear the feedback of one guest, who is an event planner herself. The feedback from her was only positive and she complemented that the whole was very well organized. One guest gave special thanks about the food and liked the fact that everyone were involved.

# 4 Discussion

One of the goals of the thesis process was to gain experience about organizing events. At first, there was the question whether the planned theme party would not be enough challenging but this proved to be false. The process was made challenging amongst other things because of the stakeholders of whom a lot depended on and the special features, like two themes, the venue not being kindred to the theme and the surprise aspect, which all made the process more challenging. Nevertheless, the author was still responsible of the whole and during the process, it came clear, that there were still aspects in the planning and management processes that needed to be taken into consideration. The author learned thons and gained experience, for example the importance of proper planning of the beginning and the value of a budget planned even for smaller events. She also came to knowledge her strengths and special assets, like a unique style and an eye for colour. The following parts sum up the thesis process and its outcomes.

## 4.1 The thesis process

At first, it was hard to come up with an interesting topic, that could be narrowed down enough. The project behind this thesis was risky in several ways, for example having several stakeholders of whom the budget relied on and the tight schedule together with a full time job made the process hard. It was informative to look into the event business in Finland to see the competition, and also read about the theory in order for the information to become active thoughts. Otherwise, there were not as much new information or knowledge to gain, but during the process the importance of all aspects became clear in every kind of event no step in the planning nor the budget should be overlooked. It was also difficult for the author to cope with the tight schedule of the thesis, party the strain was unnecessary because there were no actual rush but the urge to finish. Overall, the theory was written of several books but there were topics that were harder to find. If there would have been more time to find sources, then the parts about decoration, theming, event-planning tools and management together with the budgeting would have been broader. In general, the author is rather happy with the whole, especially when she was

working from home with the thesis and did not have time to search for books in the school library, where would have been more material.

As mentioned before the project event behind the thesis did go well as a whole and the author was very happy with the implementation of event and cake minus the menu otherwise. There must always be things to improve, and overall the implementation of the event was is a good lesson to learn from. The main goal, which was to create something memorable and special, was reached.

4.2  **Learning outcomes**

The author had only planned and implemented family events before, but it is always a different thing to plan an event to total strangers even though one of the stakeholders happened to be her sister. The author learned amongst other things to never underestimate the workload of an event according to the number of guests or even if the space was rather small. In addition, one lesson learned was to always include everything in the budget (and to make one!).  In this case, the budget limited the options of venues, but in the future if possible, the venue should be chosen suitable for the theme. The importance of the style of the venue is key because it will save a lot of money from the props and décor. Afterwards some of the props could have been better used all together but it would have distracted the natural flow of the party.

In the future when taking responsibility of a project, the author must remember to focus on the planning process instead of adding things on the way. The planning of a budget should neither be overlooked again, even though the event might be small. When thinking as the event as a whole, all but the menu management were good or excellent. The menu was well planned, and looked good on paper but the supervision and management of the stakeholders who were to implement it failed. A party can never run out of food, there should always be some leftovers. When planning the menu the author also wanted to make it healthy, it was a well-meant idea but when alcohol being involved it would not have been healthy anyway. The original thought of not having to overlook the implementation of the menu being potluck- style was a mistake. In addition, the food preparation failing it took some glam of the well-set table and one cannot forget to prepare dessert for special diets. Next time all of the costs is going to be included in the budget and rather to estimate the budget on the higher side than underestimating it.

After the event an aftermath was made with the author's sister and the conversation revealed the problems regarding implementing the menu. Even though the author had decided that her sister would not hear anything about the hustle about the menu and the problems getting any candles the information leaked out because of exhaustion and frustration. The author's sister told that, she had been a little hungry during the evening and waited for the main course after the soup and salad but it never came. After eating snacks, she told the hunger went away but in the morning, the feeling returned because the breakfast included only bread, eggs and some cold cut on it. Later the author heard that probably some of the guests had eaten the yoghurts during the night. The author should have not explained that one of the guests who was a cook, made the author second guess herself when the guest pointed out that there were too much food planned to be prepared and also the food being side issue. The author should have just said something mediocre like, well there were some trouble with the menu and that is it, no specific explanations to drag down the mood. The conversation took place at the wrong time, there should have been a pause in order to gather up the emotions and rest a bit first. Along with the terrible thing, that there were not enough food was the feedback of the one guest, whose special diet had not been taken into consideration. The author was responsible of the dessert and she completely forgot to take a gluten free option for one guest. Forgetting something like this is unacceptable. There were just too many things, stress and overwhelming. It is highly unusual for the author to forget details.

Out of the managerial point of view, it must be remembered to always manage all parts of the event or see that someone else does. There should always be more than less people to help with the décor and no preparation time is too long. The workload of the organizer should be put onto paper and be divided into hours per day, otherwise one might be carried away and exhaust oneself too much. If one wants to glaze to Shock's (2011) and Capell's (2013) theories about management skills on a personal level, there is room for improvement in delegation skills, stress control and endurance skills. A pre- event planner together with another more particular Gantt- chart could have been helpful in order to release stress about remembering everything. The author made several notes of what to do but they were quite messy and were not that organized. On the other hand, the base and important personal skills of an event planner, creativity and problem solving skills are on a high level. There are still signs of underestimating oneself by the author and also being not as self- confident as the author maybe should be. This can be related partly to the Finnish tendency of being too modest. Anyway, there are improvements to make on communication skills, more contact that is personal would have made the whole process much easier and stress- free, just phoning people instead of waiting and trying to reach the stakeholders on Facebook was plain stupid and self- harming. It is also important to try to

recognize and make difference in the jobs as a manager and a planner even though the tasks often can become a bit mixed up in practise. This can be a challenge for the author since she is too much of an "action" personality according to Frissen's (2016) categorization of personalities. The "action" concentrated person goes straight to action, uses speed, activity and lacks patience. This becomes obvious when looking at the poor planning process and the beginning of the process thinking back at the paste of making things happen.

To conclude this part and the whole thesis, the process was vital as a whole. The author only wishes there would have been more time and patience in the beginning. Overall, there is still many basic things to learn before being able to implement, plan or manage bigger projects. The author came to learn her strengths, weaknesses and her limits, that all together make a good knowledge base for her to start in the business little by little.

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**Appendic: The Mamma Mia! –party**

A warm Welcome to have a look behind the scenes of the making of The Mamma Mia! What a party - event!

## The venue

The search for venues started within the 50 km area of Vantaa. The venue had to accommodate 10-15 persons, have a sauna and possibility for bathing, dining and space for activities. At first, there were mainly two options: a beautiful cottage with two bathing barrels included in the price together with a modern light grey wooden interior. Unfortunately, it was much more expensive than promised on the site, and therefore it was declined. The other option was a sauna-less venue in the centre of Helsinki with beautiful pink interior and awesome audio- equipment plus props but no possibility of bathing. The idea of relaxation and keeping it easy- going together with friends would have had to be changed all together if this venue would have been chosen. The budget per person was limited to 50e per person as a comfortable price to pay, and the estimated guest number was 8-12 persons, therefore the maximum price was approximately

450e for the venue. The pink venue did not offer enough value for money and therefore the search continued on cheaper options.

✦ _Lähdeahon Omenatila_

A cottage house was found via Airbnb: it is an apple farm in the countryside in Pornainen. It is a two- story old rustic farmhouse presented in the picture next to right. It has a sauna and there was the possibility to rent a bathing barrel to the premises.

Downstairs are two bedrooms that are seen in the picture below in the two pictures on the top, the kitchen, an entrance hall and bathroom with sauna.

From the entrance hall is the gateway to the staircase and up-stairs. The second floor has a small vestibule, toilet and one big bed-room for four persons that are all seen in the picture above and on the right.

The venue rent was cheap, only 140e per night. However, the rent of the bathing barrel was not as cheap, it costed 220e including wood and water. In order to save 50e, the wood was planned to be brought in from the author's parents, which later turned out to be a bad idea causing extra work and the barrel service as a whole was bought.

The premises could book up to eight people to stay over which was considered enough, since not all of the guests were about to stay over because of the location being quite close. The rustic style of the venue was good and the size was convenient, also the location was suitable. Google maps did not guide all the way to the premises; therefore, a hand- drawn map had to be drawn for the guests.

The major downside of the venue was that there was no sitting area, no public transport to the venue and the rent for the barrel was too high. Otherwise, it was great in size, equipment and value for money.

The party was themed by two separate themes: a colour theme and another by the Mamma Mia! - Musical movie, which is based on the Swedish 70's disco band ABBA's songs. The authors' sisters' favourite colours are golden, pink and different shades of burgundy red. The colours to the table setting were easy to pic according to her favourites. All of the colours are earthy and therefore easily blended. The bottom floor of the house is themed with these colours in the décor, props, table settings and cake.  Ideas were gathered on Pinterest, online and by searching possible props from the houses at the authors' and her mothers.

The second floor is themed by the Mamma Mia! - Movie and was to be decorated Greek - style because the Mamma Mia! - Movie takes place in Santorini Greece.

The blue walls of the premises on the second floor like shown previously were first a challenge in order to create a cohesive theme, but later gave the idea of implementing the décor according to the similar wall colours of the Mamma Mia! -Movies main character Donna's bedroom in the movie,

which is presented on the right side. The Mamma Mia! Movie is taking place in Greece Cortina and the colours and style are very beachy with different shades of blue, bright pink, yellow and different textures and shapes. There were also some décor examples of Mamma Mia! Themed parties found on Pinterest, like in the picture below. The theme décor was being familiarized by online search, Pinterest pictures and by watching the Mamma Mia! Musical. The Mamma Mia! -Theme was going to be implemented also in the pro-gramme, in the form of ABBA -kara-oke.

The table setting, cake and props played a big role in implementing the wanted style and in order to create beautiful surroundings that would implement a wow -factor.

The décor plan was divided in the colour- and Santorini- style themes: the first floor sketched out on the right was going to be themed 70's disco with the colours pink and gold. On the first floor lays the kitchen, a bedroom for two and a master bedroom reserved for the birthday heroin.
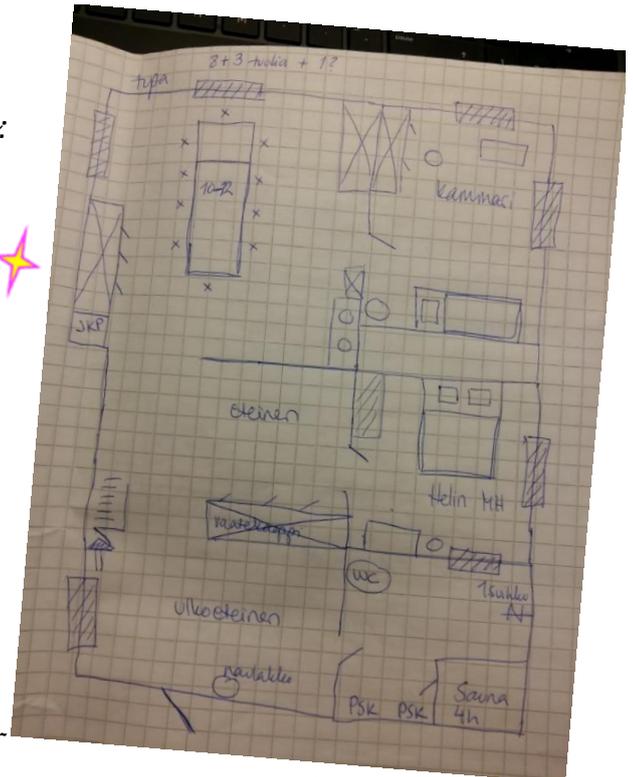


The plan was to have the kitchen tables covered with pure white shim- mering tablecloths plus light pink organza with an addition of a blush pink glitter table runner on top. The napkins were white linen and they were going to be folded on white plates with golden edges. The plates, cutlery and white coffee cups with painted roses were going to be set on the tables.

There was going to be a flower bouquet centre-piece like on the middle of the table in order to give different shapes to the table setting. Candle-holders like demonstrated were going to be self-made with blush gold glitter on the tables. White and different shades of pink pom poms were going to be hung from the ceiling in the dining room.

The entrance décor is also important, since it pro-vides the first glimpse of the venue; therefore it was also going to be decorated with big lanterns, a big balloon and a "Dancing Queen" -flag Mamma Mia! -style.

Here is a glimpse of how the kitchen turned out to look like....

The big bedroom on the second floor was going to be decorated Santorini -style with different shades of blue, white, pink and different textures with the aim of implementing a Middle Mediterranean vibe. There was no sitting room on the premises; therefore, it had to be made using creativity. A sitting area was set upstairs from the single beds: they were made as cosy as possible with many mushy pillows and beautiful Greek- styled covers.

The second floor space was going to be used in the evening for games and karaoke, therefore much light was not needed but the staircase was dark and steep; therefore, it was to be lightened up with a led string borrowed from the authors' mother.
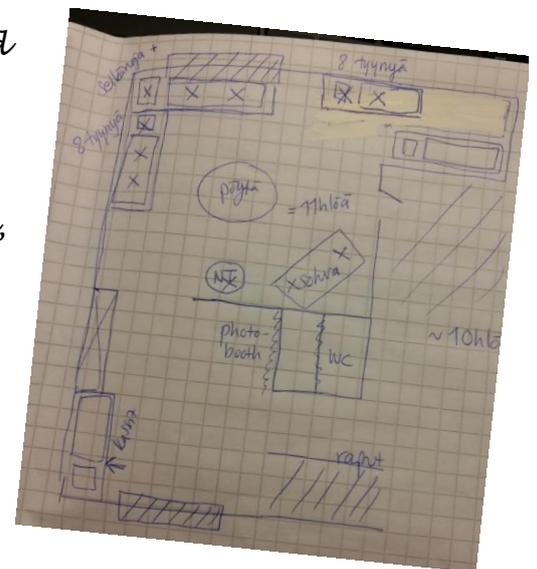
A string of lights holding pictures from the years was going to be hung up on the wall. The aim was to find funny and amusing pictures with great stories behind them. Blue and white lanterns were bought and they were going to be hung up in the ceiling from a string to give light to the space. The room was going to be lightened up with additional lanterns with crystal-crossed glass in them and as many blue, pink, and white candles needed.

The implementation process was tough, the furniture was moved around in the space for one hour before it  finally looked good. The curtains had been changed so therefore lace bedcovers had to be brought up from the downstairs bedrooms and some pillows were

borrowed from the author's mother to get a coherent look. In addition, many pillows, candleholders, led- lights, a rug and candles were borrowed and brought from home.  There were some last minute findings from the authors' sister's house: a few seashells and a pink tablecloth. The entrance hall upstairs was decorated with photographs hanging from a string of light and on a table lay questionnaires and some props to take pictures with. The authors' sister's bedroom was decorated with a heart pillow and with a golden flag "Congratulations". All in all the decoration of upstairs took up to three hours. Below you can see how it turned out to be.

The hazardous staircase was decorated with light grey and pink led candles and the author came up with the idea of putting white rough sports tape on the front edges of the steps in order to increase visibility and safety. It was planned for a long 20-metre led cable to be put in the staircase but after setting it on place, the author came to realise that it was meant to be used outdoors and therefore it did not work.

It was planned that there would have been a photo booth for the guests to be memorized at the event portrayed with different props. The photo booth might have also served as a backdrop for the karaoke and it was going to be implemented on the author's dress hanger that was going to be covered with a white sheet and a line of golden strings hanging in front of it like in the picture to the right. A few weeks before the event the reality of the workload came clear and the author began to hesitate if the age group of the stakeholders would use a photo booth at all and because of that, it was skipped in the end to ease some of the tasks.

It was planned to have small bonfires outside by the bathing barrel to give light and in order to set a beautiful atmosphere outdoors as well. In practise, a big lantern with a big led cable was proven good, because there were some outdoor lights on the terrace as well.

Menu

The planned menu shown below was made taking into consideration possible allergies, diets and implementing a decent healthy meal. Some adjustments were needed to do to some courses due to nut, dairy and ginger allergies.

The event was planned to begin at 6pm with serving appetizers: a 12 cl glass of sparkling wine and some rye bread covered with salmon. Later on a vegetable -soup and chickpea bread was going to be served together with an additional option of a Cajun- chicken salad.

A themed birthday cake was going to be served as dessert with one gluten- free option.  The author originally planned to serve some tortillas for the evening and some additional snacks for the late night.

Since the menu was going to be implemented potluck- style, the alcohol serving was limited. Guests could bring their own drinks if they liked to. One 16cl glass of red- or white wine was going to be served with food "on the house" with an addition of the first cup and rose.  A few cups of coffee or tea with a glass of rose wine was to be served with the cake. The recommendation for wine amounts with food is according to (Myllyrinne, Siistonen, Pakkanen & Puustinen 2013, 14) two glasses per person, but because one of the guests would be providing wine for all it could not be expected to buy loads of wine. Alcohol was going to be served only with food for the guests but additionally some cider was going to be brought for the birthday heroin for sauna and bathing. There were also alcohol- free options. On the next page is the menu draft shown.
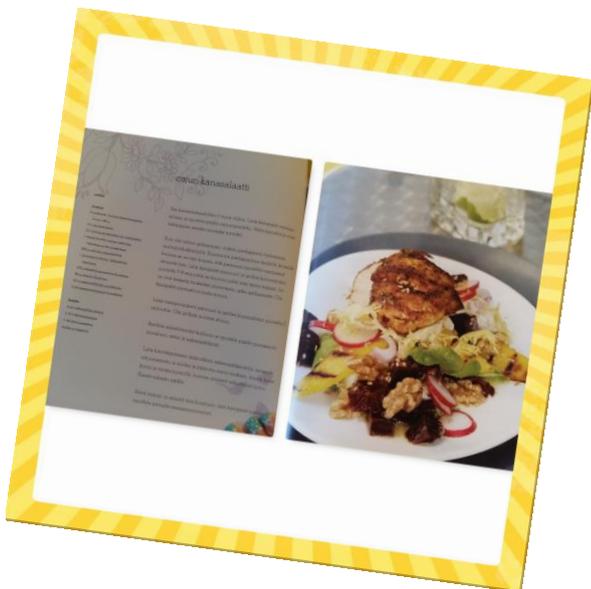
# Helin 50 v juhlat

## 23. MAALISKUUTA 2018

### APERITIIVIT

alkumalja: kuohuviini & alkoholiton
vaihtoehto

Palttoon-napit

### PÄIVÄLLINEN

Cajun- kanasalaatti

Kasvissosekeitto & kikherneleipä

Puna/ valkoviini

Kivennäisvesi

### JÄLKIRUOKA

Täytekakku

Rose' viini

Kahvi/ tee

### ILTAPALA

Pientä purtavaa & dipattavaa

### AAMUPALA

Detox- drinkki/ kahvi + leipää lisukkeilla

*Since some of the guests were going to stay over, there was also planned to have breakfast. It would consist for example of wholegrain bread, eggs, yogurt and berries with coffee and a detox- drink in designed for the hangovers. The detox- drink consists of metabolism boosters and liver cleansing grapefruit and ginger.*

As mentioned before the menu failed partly. It was harder than expected to manage the potluck- style menu. The aperitifs were exactly as planned: rye- bread with salmon and avocado paste. The vegetable soup was also delicious but instead of a protein consistent chickpea bread a white French loaf was brought in. The Cajun- chicken salad was a problem from the beginning, since no- one wanted to take on it. It was meant to be the main course together with the soup. The author's husband tried to find time to make it on the morning of the event but unfortunately, there was not enough ingredients bought for it. The consistency was of red beat, salad, and chicken with a Cajun- seasoning, leak, nuts and improvised tomatoes, which were what was found from home. There were not enough chicken for 12 persons, therefore it was more of a firsts course making the whole menu lacking a main course. There were much effort put into the planning of the menu, recipes and printed out instructions. The thought of a potluck- dinner was not thought through well enough and it was one of the known risks from the beginning. Still, no- one needed to order pizza.

The drink amount was measured correctly and there were enough wine and other refreshments. Coffee, rose' and tea was served with the cake. The cake was not quite as planned because there was so much to do in the last few days that there was not enough time or energy to complete it as perfectly as the author would have wanted. However, it turned out to be beautiful anyway and her sister liked it, which was the most important thing. The cake even matched her bracelet!

As mentioned, one of the guests was a cook and she pointed out, that there would be too much food on the planned menu and therefore the author started second-guessing herself. On the last few days before the event some of the guests started asking what to bring and therefore the author asked to bring tortillas with insides just in case, like the original idea was. Later on the author heard that the guest had brought tortillas, but never told anyone about it. Guests had ate a part of the breakfast during the night and evening, out of hungriness. The breakfast lacked the planned detox- drink and yoghurts (that were eaten during the night) there were bread, boiled eggs, apples and some cold cut.

The budget was planned in the first place in a way that everyone involved in the event would contribute to the costs. The rent for the event and the bathing barrel were to be divided amongst the guests. When planning the event together with a friend of the authors' sister a per person budget of a maximum of 50 euros felt comfortable. After searching for proper venues, it became clear, that the venue itself would be costing between 35 - 50 euros per person. Therefore, in order to reduce costs, the menu was to be done potluck- style. The author had planned from the first beginning to take on the costs of the dessert including drinks. The authors planned personal budget of 100 euros consisted of 20 euros for the cake, 10 euros for the rose wine and the rest was reserved for some décor, and the authors' part of the rent 50 euros, therefore overall it was planned to use a maximum of 100 euros all together like shown in the budget plan.

The author was hoping to gather props and décor amongst the guests and family, so that there would not be any need for buying any. Unfortunately, it did not go as hoped. Therefore, in order to get the props and décor, it had to be ordered online for a bargain. A part of décor was found at the authors' home, but the budget went overboard anyway. In order to complement the costs the author decided not to contribute in the rent costs of the venue and bathing barrel. Fortunately most of the props are re-usable for future events.

The event itself was a bargain via Airbnb with a sum of 140 euros including a stay over for eight persons with linen and towels. The bathing barrel contributed an unexpected asking price of 220 euros including water, heating and wood. In order to save 50 euros it was planned that the authors' husband would heat up the barrel with wood gained from the authors' parents, since the cost of the barrel

itself-felt unreasonable. The final number of guests was figured out a few weeks before the event and the cost per guest was 45 euros per person to cover the rents with a total of 310 euros.

There were some problems with the menu, therefore it was still unclear during the planning process whether the author would have to stretch her budget and implement more of it. The budget was sensitive in a way, because if one of the guests were about to cancel or not pay, the question of who would implement the missing sum was unclear. One of the invited promised to give 30 euros to flowers as a gift but she then withdrew her promise. The flowers were eventually bought by the authors sisters daughter as a gift to her mother.

During the process, the sisters' parents wanted to contribute to the event and gave 50 euros to the author to cover some of the décor and later on, also a part of the bathing barrel. The cost per guest was going to be kept untouched and the extra money used for additional upcoming costs as a safety plan if the planned sum of money was not going to be gain from guests. The money given from parents came as a surprise and it was a relief. A better planning of the budget is one thing to learn from in the future in a way that all costs is going to be included in the pay for guests or clients, or at least figuring out a better plan B for extra money if then needed. The final outcome of the budget is reported in the final evaluation chapter four.

| Budget | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Income** | | |
| | **Plan** | **Final** |
| Own money | 100 | 200 |
| From guests | 310 | 310 |
| Gift | 30 | 30 |
| Parents contribution | 0 | 100 |
| **Total income** | 440 | 640 |
| | | |
| **Expenses** | | |
| | | |
| decor | 50 | 88,95 |
| cake | 20 | 25 |
| wine | 10 | 12 |
| flowers | 30 | 0 |
| Venue | 140 | 140 |
| bathing barrell | 170 | 220 |
| props | 0 | 36,55 |
| other | 0 | 0 |
| | | |
| **Total expenses** | | 485,95 |
| **Income- expences** | | 154,05 |

*Programme plan*

*The programme and schedule was planned to be implemented in a way that the guests were going to be arriving approximately a half hour before the guest of honour. The guest of honour was planned to be left a couple hundreds of meters away from the venue and would orienteer her way to the house. She used to orienteer younger and was one of the best in her age group. She would have to find a hidden key to the venue house with the help of a map. The guests were going to be waiting for her inside and when she would find her way in, everyone*

would be singing the song "Dancing Queen" in the entrance welcoming her. A welcoming toast with starters would then be served and later a sit- down 2 - course meal.

Depending on the atmosphere and the wishes of the guests there would be some games before sauna or at least a photographing session in the photo booth. A picture collage was planned to be implemented with the help of friends to collect pictures from the past years in order for the authors' sister and her friends then to tell the stories behind them. Unfortunately, it did not work out quite so, but there were pictures from old family albums and everyone loved it.

The Mamma Mia- theme was to be implemented in the programme in the form of ABBA karaoke. The equipment was loaned from the birthday heroin. The author planned also additional amusement. One possibility would be a game called "Speak Out" where the players put on a mouthpiece that makes is hard to speak and has to speak a line from a card and the others try to figure out what the player is saying in the given time. If these games were not going to be enough, the author has a game book, that consists of all kinds of funny games to choose from, like a get- together game called "I have never". The idea of the game is that all players take turns to tell a thing they have never done. If someone else has done it, he or she has to have a drink or gets a point depending of the type of approach that is taken, if no one else has done it either, the player herself has to have a drink (Syrjänen 2004, 83.). Below is the draft of the programme, which was also put on the event page on Facebook.

**Sydämellisesti Tervetuloa!**

Tervetuloa juhlistamaan 50 -v
syntymäpäiviäni

(joista minulla ei ole vielä aavistustakaan)

🧡 Heli

**Ohjelma 23.3**

17.30
Vieraat saapuvat

n. 18.00
Juhlakalu saapuu
Alkupalat & juoma

18.30
Päivällinen + kakkua
& jutustelua

n. 21.00
Saunomista & Kylpemistä

n. 22.30
Karaokea & Pelejä

**24.3**
10-12.00
Aamupala & Purku

## Preparations

The preparations of the event began already during the week when props were collected. The pom poms, menu, programme and other crafts were made beforehand in order to ease the stress near the event. Below are all the crafts presented: there is the programme, which was set on the dining table and also some games collected on paper in case there would be need for them. An instruction paper and map was made to be given for the birthday hero on the event day just before she was about to leave. The menu was also put out on the wall in the

kitchen and decorated due to the theme. The decorating of the venue and cake was done the night before.
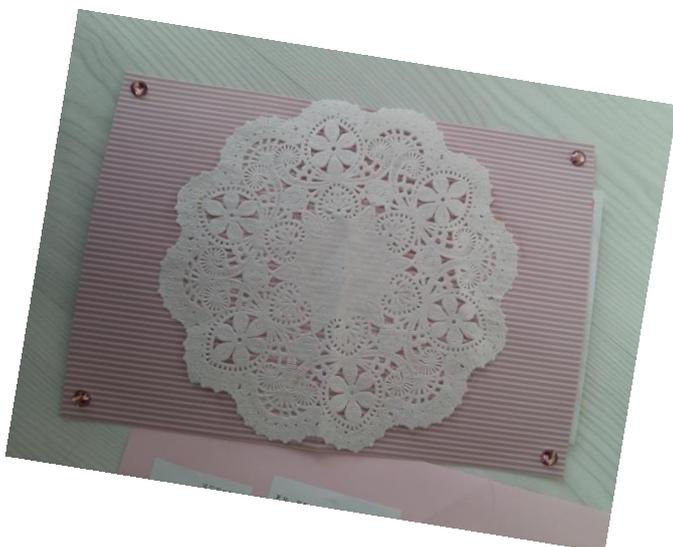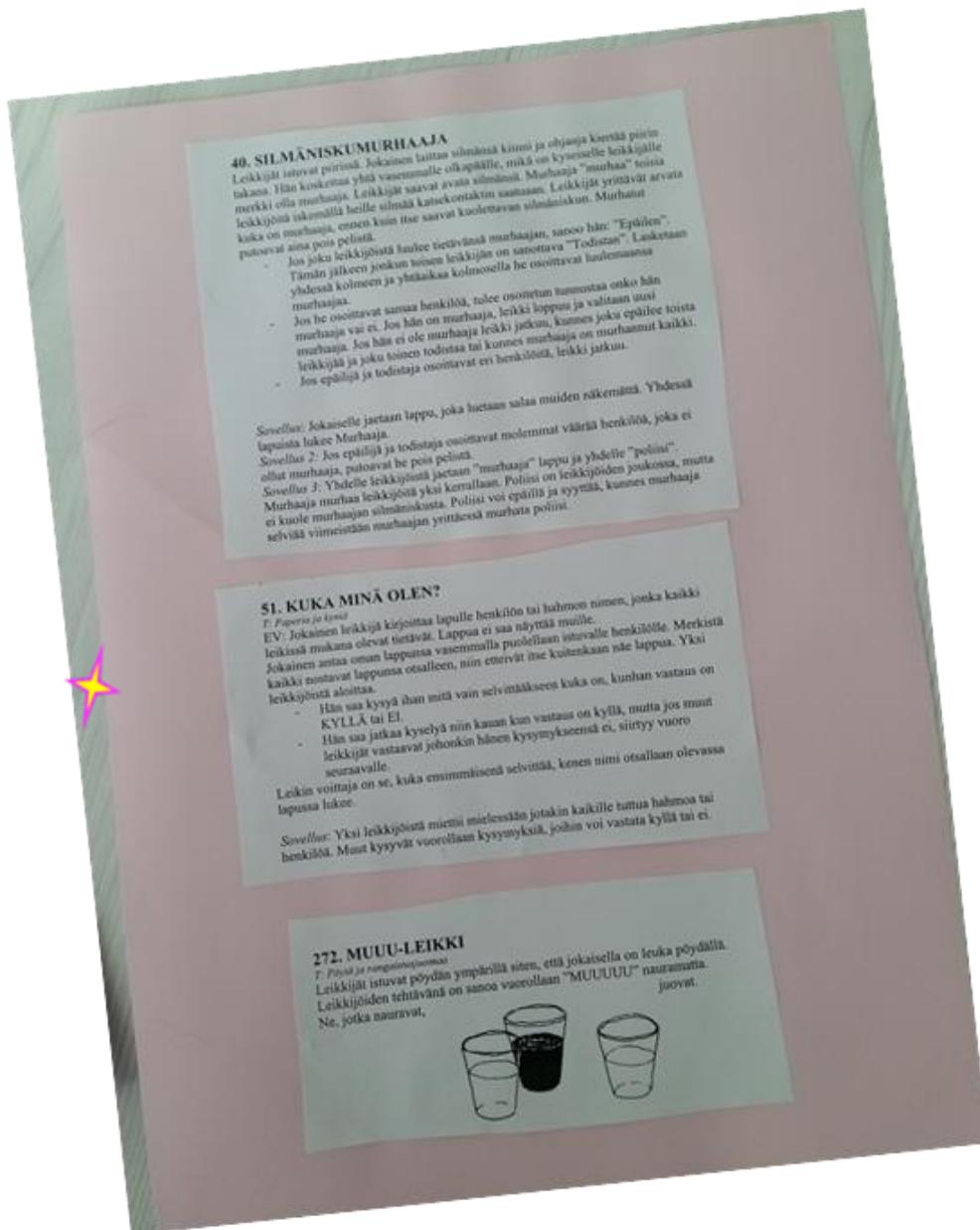
Rakas siskoni, 🤍 ♡

Matkasi kohti elämäsi yllätystä alkaa ennen kuin arvaatkaan :)

Ota rennosti, matkasi kestää n. 30-40min

Pukukoodi: Smart Casual + lämpimät päällysvaatteet päälle


Mukaasi tarvitset:

- uimapuvun/ bikinit + peseytymisvälineet

- pipon
- sandaalit/croksit
- aamu/kylpytakin
- villasukat & mukavat olovaatteet
- hammasharjan & tahnan
- iloista mieltä
- muuta? tulet vasta huomenna kotiin...

Odotan sinua, rakkaudella

Siskosi ♡

The decoration of the first floor started three hours before guests started to arrive. Luckily, the author had help from her sister's daughter to decorate and set the table. The time frame proved to be just enough in order to give a few final touches, like decorating the jam jar - party favours and decorating the birthday hero's bedroom. During the drive to the venue, the author's sister got the message, that her job gig was cancelled. Her son was in charge of bringing his mother to the party and giving her the instructions. She almost got away, and went to the gym when she thought she would have a free night. She got the envelope with packing instructions one hour before departure time. The hoax was so good, that she did not suspect anything. Not until she was told that, the hoax had been planned eight weeks ago when the author had contacted her employer.

Guests started to arrive at 17.15 and were welcomed, and attended. There was such a hustle when people started to arrive and a nervous enthusiastic waiting atmosphere in the room.

The birthday hero got a map, like the one on the right. It was given to her in the last crossroad 350 metres before the premises. The starting point was market outside with a pink hanging sheet; she had to orienteer her way through two control points until the finish, that was marked on the map. She did not first get that she had to go to the control points and her son had to remind her that one must always check the control points! On the first

one was a pink fedora in a plastic bag, which she then was wearing almost all evening! On the next control point stood one of her friends waiting for her with the "Diva" glass with sparkling wine. The author's sister had been previously mad to the same friend because of the author had not invited her as a good friend. In reality all of her best friends were invited but they all had own hoaxes and lies for the evening. All cars had also been hidden away in the forest and therefore the secret of who was at the party was kept until the end.

When the birthday hero's car finally rolled to the yard, it was like being in an ants nest in the house. The song "Dancing Queen" was on and everyone tried to find his or her place and prepare oneself. All of the stress and anticipation of the author's was released at the incoming of her sister and she was shaking with tears in her eyes. The incoming was incredible- camera lights were flashing, the Dancing Queen -tune playing on the background and the author's sister stepping in totally surprised and saluting the guests one by one tears

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in her eyes and being so happy of each one of them. The moment was so emotional for all, that it will surely be remembered as one extraordinary moment of all time. The video filmed of the incoming is incredible.



It took some time to wonder and take it all in before having dinner. There were photos taken, stories to share and some lame effort of the author to welcome the guests and have a speech. The stress- release mood was not the one to give any speeches and to be frank; the author does not remember any of it. First glasses were

drunk and operatives served before settling in to eat. A game from the game list shown above was played, called "Mooh". Every player puts his or hers chin on the edge of the table and all the players then call out a "mooh" and the ones who laugh, have to drink. The game was fun!



After dinner and having dessert, a few of the guests had a schedule, therefore everyone moved upstairs. The led string with the pictures got awes and the décor being very different from downstairs got an appreciative reception. At first the authors sister did not even realise, that there were pictures since she later told that there were so many details, that she did not even recognise them all but when pointed out. It seemed like, the resemblance between the décor of the second floor and Donna's room in Mamma Mia was not good enough, or at least the author's sister did not get it. Anyway, she liked it and told it was beautiful though. She was surprised to see her tablecloth, sing star game and shells on the table…

Upstairs the game called "Speak Out" was played and surprisingly all but one joined. It is a hilarious game, where every player take turns in trying to speak out a line written on a card when wearing a mouthpiece, which makes most of the letter un- pronounceable. Again, videos and pictures were taken and one did not even have to speak, only with the mouthpiece on it was amusing enough…
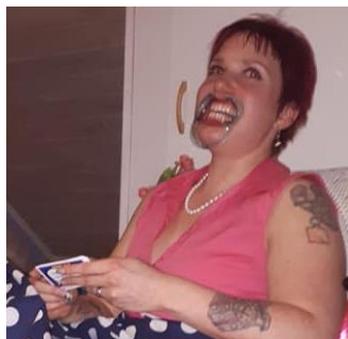


The night continued with singing sing star with the birthday heroin, bathing and enjoying the sauna. The author drained the barrel before leaving, which caused sorrow for her sister. It was funny, because her sister would have wanted to stay in all night and she was in as long as there were one drop of water…

After the author had left for the night, the party had been going on until the morning dancing and gossiping.
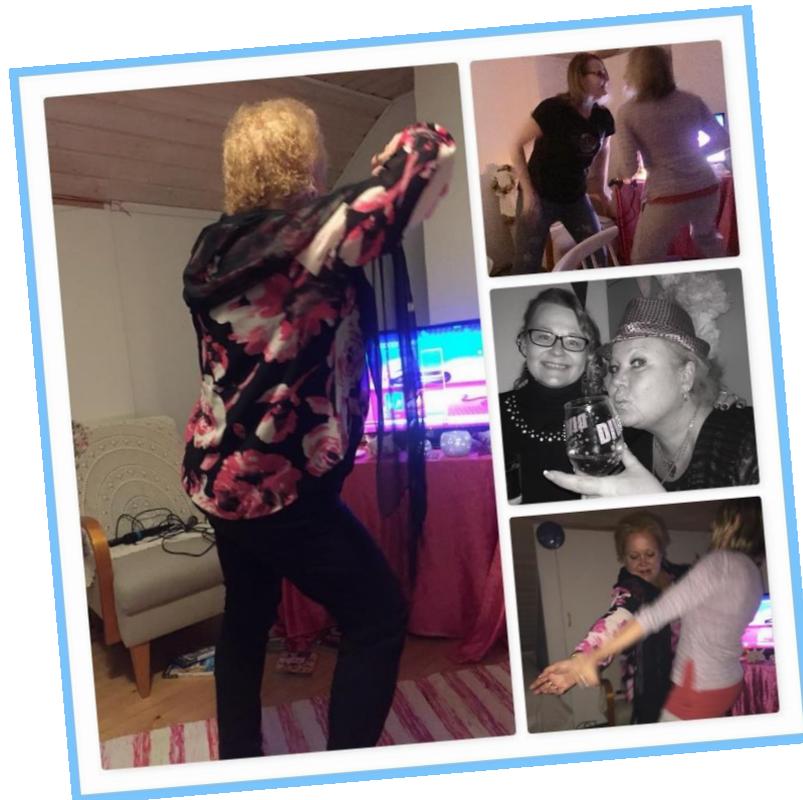
The morning after everyone was a bit hungover but the packing and demolition of the venue vent fast, since it had been partly done during the evening. The guest were kind enough and willing to help.

All in all the author was very tired and happy about the event all in all. It went very well because everyone was enjoying himself or herself. It was one of the toughest things the author had done so far, partly because of the surprise factor, but it was absolutely worth it all!

Only for my sister 💗