

# Storytelling and its effects on tourist experience

Nhi Cao

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<b>Author</b> Nhi Cao	
<b>Degree programme</b> Hospitality, Tourism and Experience Management	
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<p>This research explores the effects storytelling has on tourists experience and ways it can be utilized to enrich and enhance such experience. Existing literature about storytelling, tourist experience, place identity and attachment were aggregated and synthesized, with a conceptualization framework independently contrived. Literary definitions of narrative structure and general creative writing guidelines were also introduced.</p> <p>To arrive at the research aim, the author wrote a fictional story depicting a given place, embedded the story in an experiential walk at the same place and conducted focus group interview with a group of participants to collect empirical data. The author adopted thematic analysis as data analysis method, grouping data with similar codes or key words and conceptualize them under headings that are relevant to existing literature. Findings were further selected based on significance to research questions and data richness.</p> <p>The results revealed that storytelling was conceived as plots which follow a conventional dramatic frame, that it created immersion and emotional arousal and that it self-implies the presence of a narrating voice. Another group of findings concerned with the effects storytelling has on experience of place, namely, enhanced memorability, perceived singularity which induces meaning and purpose for visit and deepened experience of place. The last group of findings presented important factors for a continuous storytelling, which were the importance of readability in language and structure of narrative, a narrating voice as a transposing medium and restrain from use of technology.</p> <p>These findings confirm and support existing literature on positive effects of storytelling and suggest that storytelling can enrich and enhance tourist experience by create a unique place identity and strengthen place attachment. The study also proposes ways to utilize storytelling to create desired effects. Aspects of constructing a fictional narrative such as structure, content, language and medium were consolidated into practical recommendations for future experience designers.</p> <p>The study gives foundation and inspiration for multi-disciplinary collaboration between practitioners from tourism and creative writing to adopt storytelling for a rich and immersive tourist experience. It also shows application in how to utilize storytelling to bring about the desired effects, while arguing for the value of originality over commercial, over-simplified story-writing guidelines.</p> <p>Directions for future research might include exploring different effects evoked by storytelling when the form and content of the narrative changes. It was also stressed that future studies about storytelling should clarify how the narrative in question is constructed, what form it takes and through what medium it is conveyed, in order to better explain the resulting effects.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b> Storytelling, tourist experience, place attachment, place identity, narrative, destination.	

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# 1 Introduction

Storytelling has long possessed and ever since retained a unique role in the history of human development. As recognized from an extensive literature on narrative, we tell stories “not only for entertainment, but also for sharing information and influencing others” (Si 2016, 224.); we use narrative to organize our experience and knowledge (Neumann and Nunning 2008) and ultimately as human species rely on it to understand time (Abbott 2008).

With its inherent features such as emotional engagement and imaginative stimulation, storytelling has been applied in a wide array of disciplines, from education, adult learning, to brand marketing, organizational communications and leadership. In travel and tourism industry, wherein a traveller’s experience may include receiving a large amount of information about the destination, storytelling can hence be utilized to facilitate and enliven the process of conveying knowledge, which would lead to a richer and more memorable tourist experience.

## 1.1 Rationale

The researcher has always had a special fascination for storytelling and its benefits, which may originate from personal love in reading and literature. This motivation is also deepened after two notable recent experiences in studying experience product design. The first one is a student-organized project called Viaporin Kekri. It is a thematic and theatrical multi-venue event set on Suomenlinna island, based on the storyline of forgotten rituals, the returning of enraged spirits and indulgence. The second experience took place during a study trip to Lapland, where participating students learn to design an experiential product around music, well-being and Finnish nature. From the knowledge and practice gained out of these two involvements, the researcher is convinced that story is not only one of the key pillars when creating a transcending experience but also the most significant factor.

Another driving source to explore the impacts of storytelling on the journey of exploring a destination stems from the researcher’s revelation in the imaginative mind and the literary world. The researcher believes that fictional stories can be a stimulant that enlivens the tourist experience – tourists get to see the destination being depicted under a whole new magical lens.

## 1.2 Research design

The researcher is mainly concerned about and fascinated to find out how storytelling can be utilized to enhance and enrich tourist experience. This research problem will arguably be explored by answering such research sub-questions as 'What are perceptions and views tourists have upon story-telling?', 'What are the links between storytelling and tourist experience?' and 'How do tourists see the need for fictional storytelling application in tourist destinations?'.

The research paper aims to introduce and synthesize a number of theories about the impact of storytelling on the tourist experience, particularly when the traveller is exploring the destination. There are two objectives that entail. First, the author plans to write a fictional story which will embed the settings of a given place of attraction in a destination. Second, this story would then be presented to the focus group participants in a specific time and place as close to that of the fictional story itself so as to best mimic the imaginary setting and stage the realist experience. Finally, the participants will be interviewed in focus group sessions, with the discussions centred on the experiment experience, their perceptions and personal opinions as to whether storytelling affects their tourist experience, and if so, in what perspectives. Qualitative empirical data will be analysed to confirm if there are any impacts acknowledged from the respondents. The researcher seeks to gain insights into the relationship between the transmission of fictional stories and tourist experience, exploring the influence of storytelling upon the traveller's perception and its ultimate impact on the tourist experience.

It is important to acknowledge a number of limitations to this research paper. The first short-coming would be an unconventional research design. The researcher is ambitious at the attempt to create a literary work, and a qualitative research to explore its effects on the traveller's perceptions. As the researcher is not a professional in creative writing nor literary criticism, it is both a novel and exciting experience but at the same time a challenge to perfect both duties – one as an academic researcher and another as a writer. Another setback while conducting this research is a lack of maturity in the idea generation process. The researcher found herself grapple with doubt if the whole research idea and implementation would be realistic and viable.

## 2 Storytelling

It might be a difficult attempt to coin a precise definition as to what qualifies as a 'story', there are several universal characteristics which Sax (2006, 165.) summarised to be "a series of connected events in chronological order, centred on a single character. A story has a clear dramatic structure, in which tension builds to a climax and is released". Storytelling dates back as long as the invention of writing and since then has been inhabiting our present days as "a means of connecting events and deciding what is important" (Sax 2006, 166.).

Around Aristotle, Socrates and Plato's time, storytelling is dissected by two aspects: mimesis – "artistic imitation of reality" and diegesis – "the engaging way the story is told or shown to the audience". In an elaborate work of serious storytelling, Lugmayr A. et al. (2017, 708.) described the process of storytelling as an act of representing reality, or imitation of real-world people or happenings (mimesis), while emphasizing the engaging effect the story teller or narrator cast upon the audience (diegesis). Indeed, Bernard (2011) consolidated this two-aspect approach to defining a story as "a narrative of an event or series of events, crafted in a way to interest the audience".

One defining characteristic of storytelling is its ability to arouse emotions and stimulate human cognitive activities (Lugmayr et al. 2017). Concluding from the diegesis definition of storytelling, it is clear that engagement, emotional immersion and imagination are fundamental and integral whenever one is involved in the act of telling or being invited to the imaginary world of stories. Consequently, this explains storytelling recent applications in service and experience design, where stories are believed to speak to human needs (Mossberg 2008, 196.) and thus are essential materials for developing the so-called 'servicescape' – a physical hedonic environment promising fantasies, feelings and fun, and ultimately facilitating consumer immersion. Moreover, the sequence of events and progression in a story is essential for us to make sense of our life, shape our identities as well as the actions of others (Benhabib 1999; Bird 2007). We may intentionally or unknowingly utilize storytelling to understand and organize our experience and knowledge. Neumann and Nunning agreed on this viewpoint, claiming that "Narratives are not only a literary art form but a fundamental way of organizing human experience and knowledge." (2008). This feature has thus been successfully adopted in adult learning, organizational communication and leadership, where storytelling proves to improve understanding and participation, cohesiveness and higher quality relationships.

Storytelling has long been used to communicate and present information, arguably due to the characteristics of narratives. Indeed, empirical studies have concluded that under a narrative form where events and objects are told in relationships, information emerges clearer and thus more understandable and memorable to audience (Dusold 2008; Thorndyke 1977; Wilkens et al. 2003). A recent modern technological initiative deriving from this feature is Si's (2016, 224) narrative-based tool which helps users explore, digest and remember the content. The automated narrator agent to guide users through the exponentially growing thousands of information entries on the Internet, thus facilitating information search queries.

Another discipline where storytelling has proved substantial effectiveness is language learning. As suggested by Lucarevschi (2016), storytelling is an effective pedagogical instrument which enhances the process of learning a foreign language. It promotes participation and boost social interactions between teachers and learners; facilitate comprehension through contexts, illustrations, verbal repetition and body language – all of which are fun and engaging. A traveller's experience can be configured quite similarly as that of a learner, as he or she is placed in completely new environment and is urged to learn and adapt. If a language learner learns better with context, illustrations through stories, tourists would benefit from the same characteristics distinctive of stories, thus experience the novel settings and have a more fascinating knowledge journey about the place or destination.

'Interpretation' is another term assembling storytelling used in application to destination and tourism development. Coined by Jamieson (2006, 85.) similar to language translation, to interpret a destination means to present it in a way that is understandable and relatable to people from other cultures or parts of the world. Jamieson praised using stories as interpretation practice to be a powerful tool for tourism destination management and conservation. He claims interpretation as "explaining a community's story in an engaging, vibrant way" and that "in the same way translators interpret across languages, communities can interpret their heritage so that it is meaningful across different cultures." We can deduce that interpretation in this sense is essentially storytelling, which bring places to life and engage visitors in the community's cultures, enticing them to gain knowledge about the attractions and destination. Indeed, a number of studies confirmed the positive influence of storytelling on the tourist experience and how destination should adopt it during their destination image development process. One research carried out by Woodside et al. (2008) reveals that the embedded presence of a story in presenting places as a destination development strategy is likely to win tourist attention and positively influence their decision in choosing the desti-

nation. Moscardo (2017), in an attempt to combine storytelling with mindfulness theory suggested that stories encourage the mindfulness element in a tourist experience, resulting in tourists' more long-lasting memory for the destination, positive attitudes toward it and more responsiveness and adaptability to the destination management messages. The implications followed are that DMOs (Destination Management Organization) might benefit from the early use of stories in destination promotion and more importantly, from the continued practice of offering stories at the destination as an effective tool to shape the perspectives and manage tourist behaviour regarding environmental and cultural concerns.

It is necessary to make an emphasis on the proliferation of storytelling practice in today's commercial and marketing use. Digital marketing gurus are the first one to introduce instructions or 'rules' for companies to tell their brand stories and utilize websites as well as social media to build a strong brand through storytelling. Following their counterparts, marketing professionals in tourism and destination development have in turn devised similar storytelling models. A simple search on Google brings countless results upon how to adopt storytelling to brand a destination, tour and activities; third party companies which provide storytelling marketing services and story branding competitions. For the purpose of benchmarking, the researcher introduces a few commercial models and cases in the current marketing and tourism industry.

The first model worth mentioning is the Minto Pyramid Principle: S-C-Q-A (Minto 2002). The letters respectively stands for *Situation*, *Complication*, *Question* and *Answer*. By starting with *Situation*, the storyteller establishes relevance and interest in the target audience. *Complication* is meant to create tension in the progressing of the story and build up a need for solution. Out of *Complication*, *Question* arises naturally and in a poignant way to the audience. Examples of how the speaker would pose *Question* are "So what should we do?", "How do we resolve the situation?" or "Why this has been a problem?". The logic of thinking would then conclude with *Answer*, as the presenter anchor the key point of his/her story and win the audience with a satisfying resolution. (Minto 2002). This is a common approach much endorsed by consulting companies or by potential speakers looking to deliver an effective pitch.

In fact, Minto's model is actually a modern variation resembling aspects of age-old Freytag's pyramid in dramatic structure (See Figure 1). According to Freytag, the dramatic arc comprises of five phases, namely *Exposition*, *Rising Action*, *Climax*, *Falling Action* and *Denouement* (Freytag, 1900). This five-act model is originally based on plays, yet similar adoptions to short stories and novels. It helps authors and writers to organize thoughts while building the structure of a drama.

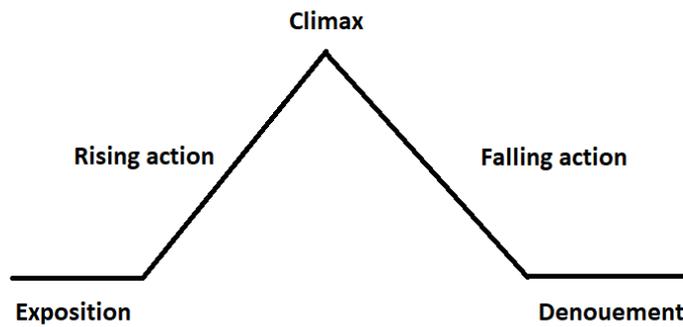


Figure 1. Freytag's pyramid. (Wikipedia 2006).

Indeed, Freytag's pyramid has been adapted in digital strategy quite recently. Caddell's (9 July 2013) (Figure 2) and Kayser's (8 August 2015) (Figure 3) adaptations are recent attempts from the immanent digital marketing industry to popularize the classic storytelling structure.

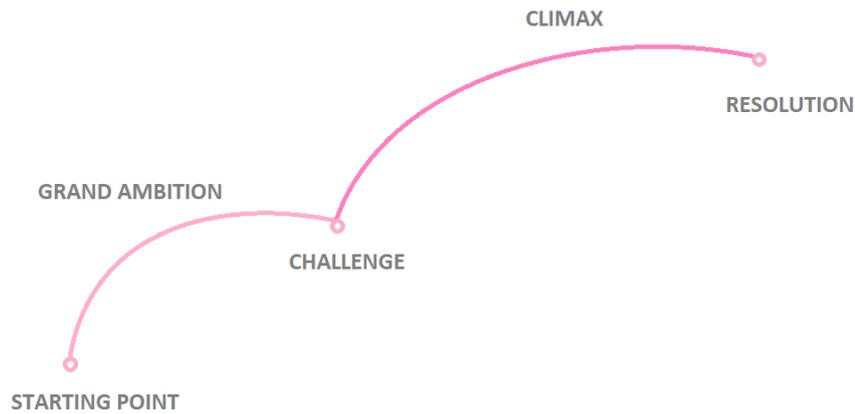


Figure 2. Caddell's simplified version of Freytag's pyramid (Caddell, 9 July 2013.)

## The Storytelling Canvas

<p><b>Situation &amp; Ambition</b>  <i>What is the current situation we are in?          What is its bigger context?          Who is involved?          What is our grand ambition?          What are our business objectives?</i></p>	<p><b>Resolution</b>  <i>How are we going to solve the challenge?          Why do we think this is the right solution?</i></p>
<p><b>Challenge</b>  <i>What is the biggest challenge we're facing?</i></p>	
<p><b>Insights &amp; Opportunities</b>  <i>What is the one thing that helps us overcome our challenge?</i></p>	<p><b>Epilogue &amp; Appendix</b>  <i>What is the expected outcome?          What do we need to turn our strategy into action?</i></p>

Figure 3. Kayser's Storytelling Canvas. (Kayser, 8 August 2015.)

TrekSoft, an e-solutions provider for tour and activity companies also advocates for the use of storytelling. Its blogging site posts a detailed guide for travel companies, taken the view from a popular figure in entertainment industry Peter Guber about elements of the best stories. In order, they are *The Challenge*, *The Struggle* and *The Resolution* (Guber, 2011). *The Challenge* is where the story grabs the audience' attention and it is essential to know your audience and the different ways you can approach them. *The Struggle* would display the emotional experience where the protagonist is faced with hardships yet finally able to overcome them. *The Resolution* is recommended to have twists and turns in order to retain the audience's attention (Fuggle 21 September 2016). The blogging site wittily suggests tour and activity companies to weave into *the Resolution* their call-to-actions such as "Book your tour with us!" or "Visit our amazing destination website!".

The number of different variations is vast, yet they all have a common structure which is to present a problem, its mounting tension and finally a poignant call for action. A concrete case study of this would be the work of a storytelling, destination marketing and PR agency called BrandStory. It saw the potential and made widespread the story of a family of eight and their audacious travel across 43 states in the US. Dan, her husband and their six children – inspired by the television series Sesame Street, embarked on the journey to America. Their journey tells the story of audacity, challenge and rewarding experience. BrandStory immediately captures this story structure and amplify it to the target audience of millennial SouthEast Asian families. The story – named as '6 Kids and a Pop-Up Camper' was presented at ITB Asia 2016's Travel Trade Exchange. The family's color 300-page travel book, thanks to BrandStory, was launched at Book Ahoy!, a famed Singapore-based bookshop

and picture book reseller which has influence to the SouthEast Asian leading media. The destination marketing agency also had the story featured on Channel News Asia and The Straits Times, gaining “a viewership of 2.3 million and a readership of 1.4 million, respectively” (BrandStory 2016). All these marketing work based on storytelling by BrandStory are effective means to the ultimate end of putting forward a ‘call-to-action’, promoting Chinese millennial families travel to the United States, boosting the already enormous potential of China as world major outbound source market and in return, attract business from American DMOs and DMCs.

### 3 Tourist experience

Tourist experience, according to Noy (2007) is the experience of place or self in place when the individual engaged in tourism activities which offers complex experiences, memories and emotions related to places. Selstad (2007) defines the tourist experience as a novelty or familiarity combination involving the individual pursuit of identity and self-realization. The tourist experience is very much subjective and personal to the individual (Jennings 2006); influenced by factors (O'Dell 2007); can be the on-site experience (Stamboulis and Skayanis 2003) and also past memorable travel-related event (Larsen 2007).

These are, to a degree, exacting definitions, yet they are not comprehensive on their own accounts. As an effort to summarize current approaches to defining tourist experience and synthesize them into an all-encompassing framework, Cutler and Carmichael (2010) composed the following framework (Figure 3).

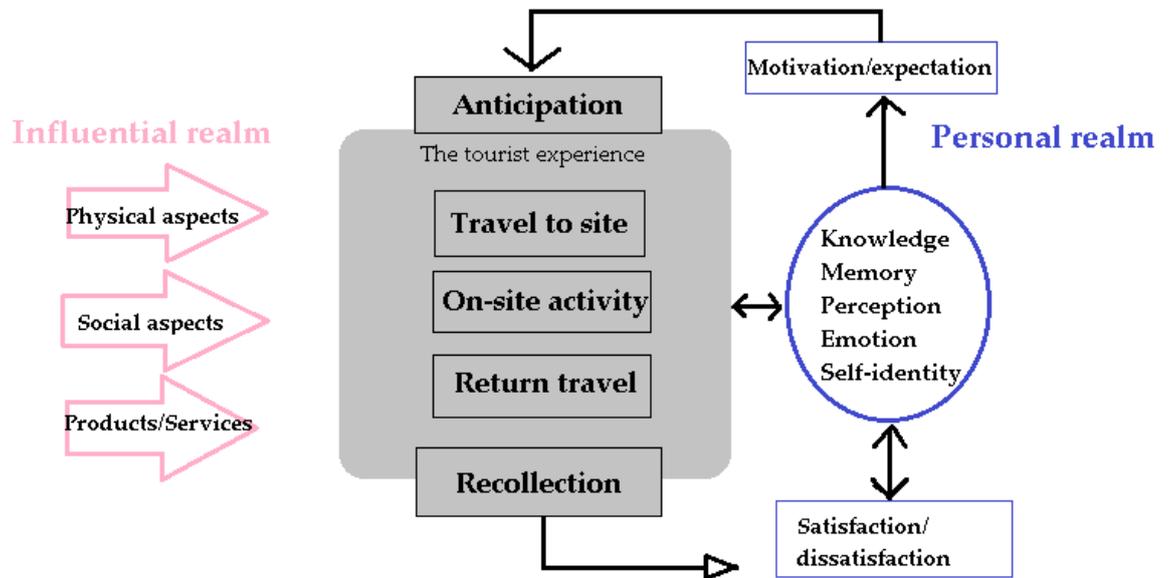


Figure 3. The tourist experience conceptual model of influences and outcomes. (Cutler & Carmichael, 2010)

From the model, it can be interpreted that the tourist experience is sequential, comprising of five phases and is affected both by outer Influential realm and evaluated internally in Personal realm. A tourist develops (1) Anticipation for the destination before making the trip, continue on to experience it during (2) Travel to site and especially through (3) On-site activity, enjoy the ending (4) Return travel and finally reflect upon the journey in (5) Recollection. These five phases are subject to Influential realm of Physical aspects (landscape, scenery, different cultural settings), Social aspects (interactions with locals, other tourists,

tour guides) and Products/Services (tourism-related products such as hotel stay experience, safari tour quality, airport transfer customer service). These external factors are present in country of origin, transit or destination.

The tourist experience is not only determined by outer Influential realm but also constantly evaluated in the tourist's own Personal realm, which includes elements such as Memory, Knowledge, Perception, Emotion and Self-identity. They can be pre-defined depending upon personal experience, cultural background and level of self-cognition but they can also be influenced by outer factors from Influential realm, and ultimately will play a decisive role in (1) determine if, and to what degree, the tourist experience is met with Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction; and in (2) shaping Motivations/Expectations for future trips.

Studies have shown a strong connection between stories and the enhancement of the tourist experience. Moscardo (2008) suggests that stories are vital for bringing about positive outcomes from the tourist experiences. She argues that the adoption of stories in presenting a destination's heritage forges learning and changes in attitudes. Another research in brand development proposes consumer is drawn to and actively in search for stories to act out during participation in consumption experiences (Bodkin et al., 2009). According to Tarsanen & Kylänen (2005) the story "gives an explanation and meaning for the participation and strengthens the memorability". The exact interrelations between storytelling and other elements of the tourist experience – or, in other words, its position within the paradigm above, will be elaborated in the next chapter.

## 4 Place identity and place attachment

The production of place identity has stayed at the centre of destination development, due to the fact that tourism is essentially a place-based phenomenon (Urry 1990, 1995; Hall, 1998). The more distinctive and competitive identity a place has, the more likely it attracts tourists and gains market share. By presenting a given place under a form of a fictive story, or, in other words, applying storytelling to a place's presentation, we can imbue places with originality and authenticity, from which we can expect the positive outcomes of an increased long-lasting place attachment. By Giuliani's definition (2003), place attachment is the bond we develop toward a place that embodies an emotional content. And as we already discuss how effective storytelling shows in triggering emotional cognitive activities, it is safe to anticipate storytelling a place will bring out affection, thus creating a stronger and richer bond between tourists and places. Also, in the same manner, place identity will be remembered and reinforced.

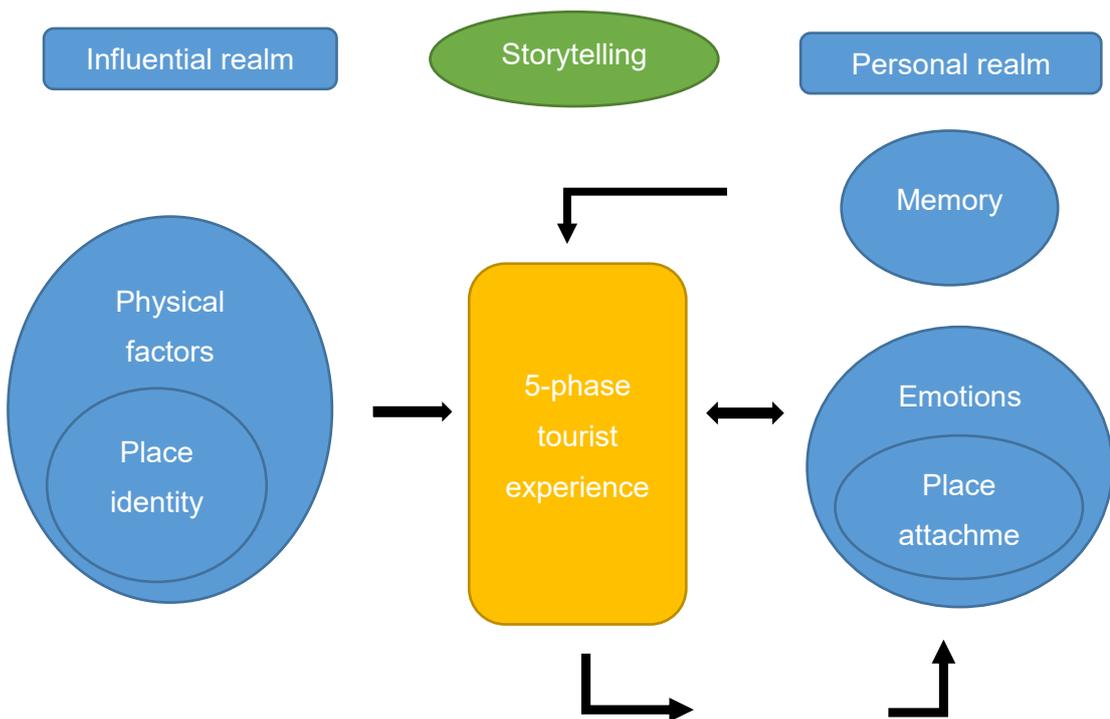


Figure 4. Author's own conceptualization of storytelling and its effects on tourist experience

The model above is the author's personal attempt to build upon Cutler and Carmichael's (2010) conceptual framework. By adding Storytelling as a facilitating agent into the model, the author endeavours to speculate and induce the interplay of storytelling in the tourist experience paradigm. It is acknowledged from above-mentioned studies that stories and

storytelling enhance tourists' Memory of a place, making the tourist experience vivid, long-lasting and memorable; while exercising its inherent unique characteristic of arousing Emotions, which essentially form the affective bond between tourist and the place (Place attachment). This gives a considerably viable assumption that usage of Storytelling (presenting a place under a form of narrative) will enrich the tourist experience as it contribute to the Personal realm (Memory and Emotions), while at the same time gives originality to the places, enlivening Place identity which in turn conjures fascinating influence on the tourist experience. In short, storytelling enrich the tourist experience by strengthening Place attachment (Emotions aroused on-site) and present the Place identity (Physical factors) under a striking and memorable lens. (Cutler and Carmichael 2010).

Much of the existing research and literature upon storytelling does not signify the difference between stories of personal experience/factual events and fictional stories. In addition, how the stories are constructed or written, was not mentioned. Moreover, there have been no clear attempt to clarify what kind of stories (regarding its structure and forms of expression) were used in those studies where storytelling/story marketing is claimed to have positive impacts on travel intention and involvement. This research paper recognizes this gap in tourism research and thus will endeavour to bring forth the principle structure of a story from its original cradle in literature. An in-depth understanding of the structure and features of a story will reveal that there is an excitingly wide variety of ways by which the author might choose to construct and transmit the story, consequently casting different kinds of influence upon the reader/audience for each variation. It is also crucial for the researcher to diverge into literary criticism in view of the following writing process (creating a fictional story as a testing product on the focus group) requires fundamental literary background and the ability to justify for the final story construct and transmission. By taking more reference from the literature arena, the researcher hopes to synthesize and support the current acclaimed impacts of story-telling on the tourist experience. The next chapter will attempt to present the structural dissection of stories, beginning by changing its long-rooted misconception in conventional discussion as well as academic research, reversing the misused 'stories' to its rightful original entity – 'narrative'.

## 5 Narrative development process

This session provides readers with a literature definition of a story which introduces two distinctive components of content and form, some general guidelines of how to write a good story and the author's reflections of her own creative writing process in relation to these guidelines.

### 5.1 Narrative structure

It is crucial to distinguish between storytelling which is the practice of presenting a story and the story, being the content itself. A comprehensive and exhaustive definition cultivated by Chatman (1980) suggests that story is only a content of what is more precisely called 'narrative' – a semiotic structure comprised of content and expression. Conventional structuralist theories claim narratives of two properties: *a story* – the content or chains of events (actions, happenings), in addition to what may be called the existents (characters, settings); and *a discourse* – the means of expression by which the story is conveyed to the audience (Chatman, 1980). In other words, *story* is 'what' is portrayed in a narrative, while *discourse* is 'how' the story is revealed and through which medium.

With regard to narrative story – the '*content*' aspect of a narrative, it is safe to assert that a narrative is a structure independent of the medium via which it is conveyed. Bremond (1964) points to the transposability as the ability for a narrative message to manifest the same level in the same way, regardless of the expression techniques that bear it along. That "the subject of a story may serve as an argument for a ballet, that of a novel can be transposed to stage or screen, or one can recount a film in words to someone who has not seen it" strongly suggests that narratives are consistent structures transposable via yet independent of any medium, and that they retain their essential properties through every transposition. On the other hand, narratives are also semiotic structures, which means they are independently meaningful, conveying meaning of and in themselves, separately from the story they tell. A narrative expressed in either verbal, cinematic, balletic or pantomimic medium would bear distinct unique aesthetic value.

### 5.2 General guidelines

In the author's point of view, there can be no pre-defined guidelines as to how to arrive at a creative work of literature which brings pleasure to the imaginative mind and evoke empathy and appreciation in beauty. Nevertheless, one can find multiple online sources that guide

potential writers to learn the elements of a good story. The word 'story' from now on might be referred again as the *content* aspect of the narrative. The author will present a brief collection of these elements. It is also worth-noticing that the guidelines are given by professionals from various disciplines, from publishing house community, acclaimed children book author, young writer and novelist community to the blog of a multi-media marketplace.

The Archway Publishing company generated a message to young writers that a good story must contain the Protagonist, the Antagonist, an Inciting Action, Conflict and Resolution (Archway Publishing 2018). From Pond5 Blog – a multi-media marketplace, to complete any narrative, the writer must include Setting, Characters, Plot, Conflict, Theme and Narrative Arc (Roe 3 June 2016).

The guidelines from these two sources have so far only concerned the narrative structure and forgotten the literary beauty of the narrative, in other words, the linguistic ability of the writer. Aaron Shepard, an award-winning children author, gave a more comprehensive advice. The rules, according to him, are: Theme, Plot, Story Structure, Characters, Setting and last but not least Style and Tone (AaronShep 1998).

The mentioned resources have only suggested comparatively similar sets of elements but have not clarified how to craft those in a unique and impressive way. The guidelines from NowNovel blog (2016), on the other hand, gave a more insightful and instructive as to how to make these elements effective and alluring in a work of novel, listed in ten as below:

1. Make the dramatic content of your story strong
2. Vary your prose's rhythm and structure
3. Create believable, memorable characters
4. Make the important parts of your story effective
5. Deepen your plot with subplots
6. Make every line of a dialogue count
7. Add immersive settings
8. Create conflict and tension
9. Craft beguiling beginnings
10. Deliver knockout endings

(NowNovel 2016)

The general guidelines reviewed so far have focused on the structure of the narrative. However, one can also approach the elements of a good story by evaluating the message it might convey. A guest contributor's post on Michael Hyatt's blog (CEO of Thomas Nelson Publishers) regards the virtue of powerful stories in how they

1. Resonate within us
  2. Show the light and the dark
  3. Point to a greater cause
  4. Teach – but in a different way
  5. Leave room for interpretation
- (Ragland 17 November 2012)

### **5.3 Creative writing process**

The author set out writing the story – the narrative *content* as a reflection on general observations and appreciation of beauty at her natural surroundings. As Autumn arrives in Helsinki with its charming auburn color, overcoating the city's landscape, the author was allured to incidental but charming leaf showers, which then triggers an inspiration to create a story enclosed in its appearance.

The author particularly frequented parks and other often-overlooked natural hideaways in Helsinki. After a delightful visit to Vanhapuisto where she was left in awe in front of a haven of yellow and auburn maple leaves, the sublime memory sank in and became the story started to become ingrained with maple leaves and Vanhapuisto as setting. Another natural force of the story setting is the full-moon incident. The author again encountered the mesmerizing charm of the moon one night walking home, which leads to its representation in the story.

It can be seen from the author's own creative writing process that inspirations and ideas for narrative contents are not governed and dictated by the general guidelines found online. Although it is crucial to understand these essential elements of a good story, it is very much dependent upon the author's writing instinct. If the author's aware of these rules and elements, it must have been from subconsciousness and the work of fiction in the end is not contingent upon the fact that the author has applied these rules. The end literary work is often not the result of prudent application and compliance to rules of elements and sequences. Most author would have admitted that they often have no control over the story development, that the narrative often unfolds itself. All in all, general guidelines are more suited for assessing or critiquing works of literature than dictating creative writing process.

## **6 Methodology**

This section hosts the description, explanation and justification of chosen research paradigm, sampling techniques, participant recruiting process and the planning of data collection and analysis.

### **6.1 Qualitative research**

The thesis adopts a qualitative approach to doing research. The researcher attempts to induce some theories (if the conclusion leads to any) about storytelling and its impacts on the tourist experience. To achieve this, an experiential walk with storytelling will be presented to one or several focus group, who would then participate in a focus group interview(s).

By Veal's definition (2018, 278), qualitative research methods include "the collection and analysis of qualitative information using the media of words, images or sounds, as distinct from numbers as used in quantitative methods". Indeed, qualitative research can be perceived as a research strategy that put an emphasis on words rather than data quantification. The most predominant emphasis of qualitative research is to inductively form a relationship between theory and research and the generation of theory (Bryman & Bell 2011, 26). It is in contrast to the deductive approach widely used in quantitative research, where researchers use research to test theories and hypotheses.

The focus upon words and other non-verbal information give qualitative research methods distinct merits. First, it allows the researcher to explore the nature of the problem, seeking to understanding the reasons behind, investigating people's emotions, perceptions, values, motivations, attitudes and experiences. In this sense, qualitative research collects a massive amount of data rich and in-depth, rather than in quantifiable numbers. Second, research subjects are put at the centre and given autonomy to describe and explain their views in their own words; rather than in a predesigned questionnaire or framework imposed by the researcher. Third, the informal relationship that accidentally forges between the research subjects and the moderator or researcher oftentimes culminates in the genuine quality of the data collected.

As much insightful data as method qualitative method aspires to provide, the method is not without its drawbacks. Critics might first question the significance of qualitative research, mainly because it is impossible to generalize the findings to larger population. Yet people or accounts participated in qualitative research are not supposed to be representative of a

population. Instead, as quoted from Bryman & Bell (2011, 408), “the findings of qualitative research are to generalize to theory than to populations”. Another criticism towards qualitative research is its subjectivity. The findings rely too much on the researcher’s view, which might often be biased, unsystematic or influenced by the personal relationships with the studied subjects during the data collection process (Bryman & Emma, 2011, 408). Finally, sceptics of qualitative research may point to its reliability loop hole, as it is almost impossible to carry out a true replication, since there are hardly any standard procedures to be followed and the response given by participants would surely vary.

The argument over the validity of qualitative research compared to its quantitative counterpart has continued forever, yet some have switched to the take on a pragmatic view while trying to justify their research methods. In leisure and tourism studies, in recent decades, qualitative research has no longer been seen as exceptional and in need of special justifications, but even regarded as dominant (Veal 2018, 282). As the topic of this research paper remains in the leisure and tourism domain, it is important for readers to understand the justifications for the researcher’s decision of choosing qualitative research method.

In a convincing attempt to encourage more qualitative leisure research, Kelly (1980) accounted for the following advantages that qualitative research possesses over their quantitative counterpart, in leisure and tourism context. Firstly, the method corresponds with the nature of the phenomenon being studied – that is, leisure is a qualitative experience for the individual. Following this point, Kelly (1980) argued that human face-to-face interaction is an integral part of leisure, including tourism – and qualitative research is well suited to explore this. As the nature of the research aim is to explore people’s perceptions of storytelling and their personal tourist experience, qualitative research is deemed the most reasonable approach to get desired results, to the researcher’s viewpoint. It can also be attributed to the benefits mentioned above regarding testing and developing a product.

## **6.2 Focus group**

Qualitative research adopts various data collection methods, one commonly known among which is focus groups. By definition, it is “an interview with several people on a specific topic or issue” (Bryman & Bell 2011, 502). There is a distinction between focus groups and other interview techniques, which hints beyond the number of participants. Unlike group interview, where the aim is to carry out interviews with many individuals simultaneously to save time and money, focus groups is not devised for this purpose. Focus groups emphasize a spe-

cific theme or topic and seek to explore it in-depth. In this sense it assembles in-depth interviewing in the aim to understand “why people feel the way they do” (Bryman & Bell 2011, 503). However, the ability to conduct an open and exploratory conversation with a group of people bring out unique uses which traditional one-to-one interviewing sees limits to. First, focus groups allows people to probe each other’s reasons for holding a certain view, without following a somewhat predictable question-followed-by-answer sequence of normal interviews. Hence, the researcher is able to see a much wider variety of views, modifications, questionings.

Second, focus groups facilitates a much laxed and open environment for participants to be bold and bring to the fore the issues they deem important and significant. Individual interviews also enable this, yet the power of the interviewer/researcher in a one-to-one encounter would be more dominant, participant may unknowingly suppress or reserve some issues concern them. However, in focus groups, because the moderator has to “relinquish a certain amount of control to the participants” (Bryman & Bell 2011, 504), it is easier for the troubling issues to surface, in less degree of control and in the presence of other participants.

Third, viewpoints and perceptions extracted from focus groups are likely to be more realistic, thanks to the process of collective discussion. Focus group participants are involved in the process of arguing, challenging each other’s view and are constantly forced to think about and revise their own views; whereas in conventional one-to-one interviewing, participants are rarely challenged, often give inconsistent replies which the researcher is reluctant to point out.

The last and most distinguishable feature of focus groups interview, and also its most powerful merit, is the ability to read the discussion under the lens of group dynamics and to observe the process of forming meaning and perception in a collective group of different individuals. As coiled by Bryman and Bell (2011, 504), making sense of the world and constructing meaning in everyday life is a process not undertaken by individuals in isolation from each other, but rather occurs in interaction and discussion with others.

This research study adopts focus groups technique in consideration of all the above-mentioned merits, as well as the researcher’s preference and preoccupation. From previous experience in qualitative research (semi-structured interviewing), it is in the researcher’s best interest to carry out a new technique, both challenging and promising. Moreover, from a recommendation, it seems that conventional interviewing has been the most common method adopted by student researchers, which has not ended with meaningful and signifi-

cant findings. Therefore, the researcher is more preoccupied on implementing a not so conventional yet more viable method. The awareness of leadership and social competency required in conducting such a complicated conversational process also increases the researcher's thrill to take on the challenge.

### **6.3 Sampling**

By convention, it is mandatory to conduct at least three sets of focus group interviews in order to ensure some common themes with emerge, yet it should not be the goal to carry out focus groups in the first place, to seek consensus (Myers, 2013). Regarding sampling method, as the purpose of focus group interviews is to obtain an in-depth understanding of a specific population (O'Gorman & MacIntosh, 2015), it is only wise to consider non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling methods select participants in a purposeful way where the researcher recruits desired sample with a set of defined selection criteria, unlike the counterpart probability sampling which assigns a known chance of being randomly selected to every individual in the population. Non-probability samples are therefore limited to generalization and incompatible with analytical statistical tests, yet considering the difficulty and costs involved in their probability sample counterpart, non-probability sampling satisfactorily serves the objectives of many qualitative researches and this study in particular. Among the few kinds of non-probability sampling methods, the researcher decided to adopt snowball sampling – researcher selecting one respondent met with predefined criteria and asking that person to recommend others that he/she thinks would be suitable (Trochim, 2006). Bryman (2008) describes snowball sampling as when the researcher makes initial contact with a small group of people who are relevant to the research topic and then uses these to reach other potential participants. This results in the difficult question of which selection criteria to use to filter desired respondents. It is crucial to be reminded of the objectives of the research – examining the potential influence of a fictional narrative upon tourists' experience. Thus, it is the author's rationale and wish that the respondents should have an inclination for literature, specifically English literature; and possess the ability and capacity to appreciate its literary beauty. This 2-element set of criteria is undoubtedly very specific and thus decidedly infers a particular location where it is possible to access potential sampling population.

From the researcher's experience, there is known to be one book club and literature community in Helsinki whose history and activity has become eminent – Arkadia bookshop family. They are a group of like-minded people who shares a common interest in books and

literature, while the bookshop itself is also utilized for musical, theatrical and cultural performances, events and talk shows. The researcher would establish contact with the bookshop owner and the frequented members, some of whom are among the researcher's acquaintances, familiarizing them with the research and asking for their support in form of personal referral. In addition, the researcher will utilize her like-minded friends' connections to expand the reach of the recruitment, with a presupposition that they as much as the researcher herself are fluent in English and have an appreciation for literature.

However, regarding the conventionally low turnout of research participants in general and especially in qualitative research, the author was also prepared to take on other sampling methods and look for other possible sources of research participants. Convenience sampling is such a sampling method which will help tackling the scarcity and inaccessibility of recruiting research participant. It is defined as a sample that is "simply available to the researcher by virtue of its accessibility" (Bryman 2018, p.183). The following recruitment process with convenience sampling mainly concerned doing marketing targeted at selected sources of participants. Other than the ideal Arkadia bookstore, several sources of recruitment at convenient access to the researchers are the university campuses and online platforms. Direct marketing, email marketing and social media marketing were the types of marketing adopted in view of feasibility.

In the unfortunate case of insufficient number of participants due to the nature of research recruitment turnout, it was discussed between the author and her supervisor that the study could be carried out on a group of students from Hotem18 (Hospitality, Tourism and Experience Management Degree Program 2018).

#### **6.4 Recruitment process**

Firstly, starting with direct marketing, recruitment ad posters were placed on windows, doors, notice boards, tables and other conspicuous display points at the university campuses and the bookshop (the researcher requested and was given consent from Arkadia to put on posters).

Secondly, with email marketing, the researcher was faced with challenge of acquiring a student mailing and register info list, according to which she could filter out the relevant target group for emailing the recruitment ad. It is later learnt that no such info is ever given out to any external party, the recruitment ad will be sent by the university on behalf of the researcher and that in order to receive this service, the researcher needs to apply for a

research permission approval which was granted smoothly. One matter arising from this knowledge is that the researcher will not be able to have total autonomy and control over the recruitment progress. With the university being the intermediary and its limitation in facilitating the researcher any further than being the email sender, it is difficult to keep track of open rates, response rates and lead follow-up. As it is crucial that the researcher be able to follow a structured follow-up procedure to establish trust and retain participants (Ripple Science 2018.), the limited coordination from the university during recruitment through email marketing was potentially jeopardizing to the conversion of research participants.

The last and most unexpected recruiting method is social media content marketing. The researcher at first overlooked this most convenient yet powerful tool to reach out to general audience but was later advised by the university R&D staff. Owing to time and resource scarcity, rather than investing in the more proper way of doing content marketing and social media campaign, the skills and know-how of which she is equipped with, the researcher had to rely only on participant recruitment ad (Appendix 1) and content post (Appendix 2). Some Facebook pages and groups with most likely respondents are 'HAAGA-HELIA Pasila Campus (unofficial)', 'Haaga-Helia ammattikorkeakoulu', 'Haaga-Helia StartUp School', 'HAAGA Campus of Haaga-Helia, University of Applied Sciences' and 'Haaga-Helia Alumni'.

Having thoroughly examined the options of sampling methods and the corresponding sources of recruitment, the author's attention turned to creating the contents and design of the recruitment ad. The contents of the recruitment ad was crafted with consideration. The language design was done following the IRB (Institutional Review Board, an American research ethics committee) requirements for approval of research recruitment advertisements. These requirements advise that the language used in a research recruitment ad should not be coercive, enticing or misleading. Nor should researchers emphasize monetary rewards. The basic guidelines also suggest that purpose of research must be clarified while the approach should be straightforward and honest. (University of Michigan-Flint 2018). However, as the recruitment ad also need to appeal to the targeted audience, be relevant and somehow internally motivates them, more personality in the wording of the recruitment ad is preferred over neutrality.

The visual design of a research recruitment ad is uncommonly one of the underrated steps in conducting a recruitment campaign. For reference of best practices, the researcher looked for and found insightful advice from Ripple Science (2018). One suggestion was to do A/B testing with the poster designs, as a variety of visual templates can be adopted and while some might work best upon a target group or at a particular location, others may not.

The researcher produced six styles of recruitment ad posters using Canva (a graphic-design tool website) and test it on friends to select the most desirable ones. The posters are attached as Appendix 1, while qualitative data from friends' comments are collected and aggregated into an evaluation table (see Appendix 3). Based on this rich input of opinions from friends and families, the researcher is able to identify the effective features, narrow selection down to two non-picture templates and improve upon them. The story manuscript was also put into design template, as the author believes harmonious colours and patterns will help to give the reading experience a subtle and mood-fitting feeling. The sample of the story booklet prints can be found in Appendix 4.

One issue arising with using Haaga-Helia mass email service to recruit student participants is concerned with the format of the cover letter (same term referred by the university for recruitment ad). The cover letter can only be sent in plain text included a hyperlink to supplementary media but cannot be an image itself. Therefore, the researcher cannot use the recruitment ad poster designed for this particular way of recruiting. Moreover, the university requires more info to be included in the cover letter such as how the data will be analysed, when the results will be published, how can participants learn about the results, anonymity and data confidentiality, how data is handled confidentially, and so on. This information guaranteed complete transparency, yet if included in the recruitment ad will jeopardise the readability and attractiveness of the poster, which will be counter-productive to its original purpose. Meanwhile, it can be included in a separate consent form or in the beginning of the research register form. Due to the collision of objectives of these two recruiting materials, the researcher decided to retain the brief, appealing and straightforward language in the recruitment ad poster; while preparing another more detailed version of it called cover letter (keeping to the term set by the university) (See Appendix 5).

## **6.5 Session plan**

According to Kleiber (2004), a typical focus group session would see the convention of between seven and twelve people to discuss a specific topic for about an hour. O'Gorman and MacIntosh (2015) also suggest similar size of between six and ten people, with an emphasis in possible difficulties in controlling the conversation if the group size exceeds ten. Regarding the number of interview sessions, it is usually considered mandatory to conduct at least three sets of interviews to enable the emergence of some common themes among the groups (Myers, 2013). In brief, the researcher would ideally aim for 18 interviewees divided into three groups. However, as the current recruitment process is unlikely to return high number of participants and the researcher is at time and resource constraints to

carry out commercial-quality advertising campaigns, the goal is reduced to 12 participants maximum who would make up three interview sets with group size of four. At the event of insufficient number of participants, the researcher will resort to doing only two or even one focus group session.

Each session will last about an hour, with the researcher being the moderator, asking questions pre-defined in an interview guide (See Appendix 6). It is important to understand the role of the interview guide as the tool helping the researcher to maintain the relevance of the discussion. Although occasional divergence from the topic may usually bring about valuable perspectives, moderating with an interview guide will help ensure relevance is not compromised at the expense of degree of freedom. On the other hand, when designing the interview guide, it is also desirable to aim for minimal structure, as relatively open questions allow for participants to “refer to virtually any aspect of the general stimulus identified in the question” (Stewart et al. 2007, 63). The number of questions are ideally fewer than a dozen, yet as focus group interview is a dynamic and idiosyncratic exercise, flexibility to probe and pursue new questions is the critical factor to successful focus group session. The researcher will aim to showcase a welcoming attitude and utilize ice-breakers, which would ease the participants’ mentality and help creating a friendly and relaxed sentiment. This is crucial as good rapport between the moderator and participants and among the participants themselves will forge an open and trusted environment for conversations, which is most likely to result in smooth flow of dialogues, rich exchange of opinions and unveiled perspectives.

Focus group sessions will be held at Aalto University, in Computer Science Department building, in a cosy room with window view to a bay. Refreshments will be provided during the interview. Direction to the facility is provided and the researcher will pick up the group at Aalto metro station to lead them to the building. At the beginning of the session, the researcher will shortly introduce herself and the purpose of the research. Issues such as confidentiality, anonymity, data handling, data analysis and release of findings will be presented. Ground rules such as everyone should have the opportunity to speak and all remarks should be directed to the collective (O’Gorman and MacIntosh 2015, 127) will also be mentioned. Participants will have their name badge for ease of internal referral. The researcher will start by initial questions about their past experience or beliefs. The discussion will then move to important themes, where the moderator will use probes to develop interaction and discussion aids to instigate debate. Various types of questions such as probing, follow-up, direct and in-direct, specifying, interpreting questions and so on will be used. However, as heavy as the emphasis on asking good questions is the ability to listen. Listening attentively means the researcher is being active without being intrusive, a difficult

balance to achieve (Bryman 2008, 447). Physical behaviour, gestures, postures, voice tones and other non-verbal signs will be noted as group dynamics is an essential factor in interpreting results from focus group interview.

The researcher pays great emphasis upon group dynamics, and thus plans to create the best atmosphere to facilitate conversational exchange. At the start of the interview, participants will be encouraged to introduce themselves and tell about their original interest in the research. The purpose of this is to break the ice and create initial trust among the group. During the interview, the researcher will pay attention to subdue a dominant member, make sure everyone's voice is raised and take note of the gesture, posture cues, opinion change inside the group.

## 6.6 Data analysis

The study adopts thematic analysis as an approach to analysing qualitative data. Simply coined, it can be understood as a "method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun and Clarke 2006, 79). Thematic analysis is often confused with other approaches such as grounded theory and template analysis due to its use of identifying themes and codes. However, its distinction can be demarcated when compared to those alternative methods. Thematic analysis does not require the development of theories out of data as in grounded theory; and does not predefine a set of a priori codes relevant to research questions prior to data collection and analysis as in template analysis (O'Gorman and MacIntosh 2015, 144). The researcher follows the proposed steps of carrying out thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Table 1. Phases in thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarisation with data	Data description (if necessary). 'Active' reading and writing down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes	Coding data (posteriori) in a systematic fashion across the entire data set.
3. Searching for themes	Re-focusing the analysis at the broader level. Forming codes into potential themes.
4. Reviewing themes	Checking themes against the coded extracts and in relation with each other. Forming a thematic 'map' of the analysis.

5. Defining and naming themes	Further refinement of identified themes. Locating the overall story of the analysis.
6. Producing the report	Writing up the analysis results with vivid extract examples and comprehensive commentary.

The first and primary rationale for choosing thematic analysis for this research is its simplicity and feasibility. Unlike the more popular method grounded theory which is an iterative process, thematic analysis does not require for repeated alternation between data collection and data analysis. This helps the independent research worker to aim for manageable goals when analysing data. Secondly, thematic analysis is applied in view of the researcher's naturalist standing point. The researcher considers organizing data using a priori codes predefined based on core concepts in existing literature before actually reading the data transcription, as in template analysis, presumptuous and restrictive. While it is virtually inevitable to possess relevant knowledge and assumptions prior to data analysis, this awareness should not impose on the interpretation of data. As the work of a qualitative researcher is judged upon the freshness and richness of themes and explanations, the research worker is inclined to explore the textual data collected with an unprejudiced eye, trying to derive categories and themes from data while suppressing as much as possible any personal preconception. The last justification for the employment of thematic analysis rests upon the freedom it allows the researcher to explore and interpret meanings and relations relevant to research questions without the obligation to build theory from data.

One important process in thematic analysis or mostly any qualitative data analysis method concerns coding. After data under the form of voice recordings has been transcribed in to text, the process of coding begins. According to Bryman and Bell (2007, 586), coding entails reviewing transcripts and fieldnotes and giving labels (names) to component parts that seem potentially theoretically significant or salient within the social world of those being studies. These labels are potential indicators of concepts and will be constantly compared to see which concepts they best fit with. The outcome of this constant comparison process is the grouping of concepts into categories, which are then saturated and further cross-related, validated and refined. As categories are linked and their relationships and patterns emerged, illuminated interpretations can be attempted.

The stage of interpreting and handling data transcription is embedded with two encompassing approaches, hermeneutics and semiotics. The former, hermeneutics, is the practice of understanding the meaning of textual communication, through the researcher inferences (O'Gorman and MacIntosh 2015, 150). The researcher's interest in hermeneutic analysis resides in its concept of historicity which recognizes that human understanding are nested

within a historical, linguistic and cultural horizons, and that ideas can only be genuinely understood when considering its historical context (International Institute for Hermeneutics). Using hermeneutics in this study will actively drive the researcher to look for grounds and context so as to better understand individual perceptions and beliefs.

The second approach, semiotics, is concerned with the analysis of signs, symbols and their meanings (Myers 2013, 197). Semiotics extends to rituals, culture, images and art, as signs and symbols are not confined only to language. In the scope of this study, the researcher focuses on only two aspects of semiotic analysis, making sense of what Hackly (2003) classifies as bodily semiosis – body language, posture, gesture, facial expressions and verbal semiosis – tone, volume and pace of speech, emphasis on particular words, use of metaphor and so on. Since non-verbal communication is an inherent feature of focus group and hence an important data source in interpreting individual thoughts as well as the construction of meaning in a collective group, the application of semiotics in the data analysis is necessary and might promise insightful results.

## 7 Findings

As the recruitment process failed to obtain sufficient number of participants (even those who signed up later withdrew their participation at last minute), the researcher had to resort to the ultimate plan agreed with the thesis supervisor which is to conduct the experiential walk and focus group interview with a group of 18 students from Degree program in Hospitality, Tourism and Experience Management 2018. Since the experiment and interview need to be restricted on or nearby university campus and moulded suitably in the student's study schedule, the original location of the experiential walk as well as the length of each focus group session were modified accordingly. Consequently, the experiential walk was implemented in the forest nearby Haaga campus, followed by a 30-minute focus group interview for three groups of five, six and seven students respectively.

On the implementation day, the researcher, who was also acting as guide and moderator, gave a brief overview of the experiential walk agenda and focus group interview to the student group, then took them to the forest nearby where they were handed the story booklet to read as they wandered on into the forest (See *Implementation script* in Appendix 7). The temperature was particularly low and the forest was dimly lit by some street lamps. The walk to the forest crossed a bridge and one could hear different sounds of people walking and traffic on the background. The students ventured in to the forest and scattered individually in different directions and areas in the forest as advised for a personal and private experience. It took the students about 15 to 20 minutes to complete and get back from the experience. They were also advised beforehand by the researcher to keep their thoughts and the urge to comment after the experience to themselves and postpone discussing with their peers until the focus group interviews.

After the experiential walk, the participating students were divided randomly by the means of assigning numbers, into three groups and in turn taken to a modern-designed classroom with comfortable and relaxed seating configuration for focus group interviewing. The duration of the session varies among three groups (shortest period being 20 minutes and longest being 45 minutes), despite the researcher-moderator's effort to regulate and monitor the discussion. The researcher-moderator started off the session with general salutations and information about the recording equipment, ground rules and factors for successful focus group; then moved on to ask questions on the interview guide, listened attentively and probed for further self-elaboration.

Regarding the group dynamics, it was interesting to observe different types of respondent based on their discourse patterns. Some were more dominant and bold in expressing their

views, while others were either shy or had the tendency to confirm to previously-made opinions. There was, however, a commonality in participants' difficulty in articulating their verbal response or finding suitable words. Yet all in all, the focus group sessions were very fruitful thanks to an active participation, willingness to disagree and constructive opinions. The implementation of the data collection comprising of the experiential walk and the focus group interview could, therefore, be considered satisfying and successful.

The interview data, after being transcribed, was sorted based on the repetition or familiarity of key words (or codes) into categories whose names were coined by the researcher. This is the primary sorting of data into generic transcription-derived categories. These primary categories were then synthesized and coined into headings and sub-headings with which the results are organized and presented (See Table 2). When conceptualizing these headings and sub-headings, the author reflected back upon existing literature and the study's research questions in order to derive meaning and form relevant wordings. This second stage of making sense of data requires more inferring activity and critical thinking compared to devising primary categories from raw data, as the author also had to look at research questions and literature review to select only those findings that might serve to illuminate the research questions or that might confirm existing theories or contribute new knowledge.

Table 2. Categories and derived headings

<p><b>Primary categories</b></p>	<p>Immersion, Plot, Meanings and Lessons, Children and Childhood, Awake Emotions, Powerful tool to convey message, Presence of a Teller</p> <p>Strong memory, Meaning and purpose, Unique and Different, Complete senses, Imagination, Concentration</p> <p>Language and structure, Weather and external factors, Technological involvement</p>
<p><b>Main headings and sub-headings</b></p>	<p>Conceptions of storytelling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Plot</li> <li>- Immersions and emotional arousal</li> <li>- Presence of a narrator</li> </ul> <p>Effects of storytelling on tourist experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enhance memorability</li> <li>- Create meaning and purpose for visit</li> <li>- Deepen experience of place</li> </ul> <p>Important factors for a continuous storytelling experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Language and structure of narrative</li> </ul>

- |  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Medium for transposing narrative</li><li>- Controversial issues of technology involvement</li></ul> |
|--|---|

Throughout the process of data analysis and interpreting, i.e. making sense of data, the author exercised a great amount of objectivity and resistance from arbitrary judgement, in order to present raw data at a meaningful level without costing its factuality. The following exhibition of findings is presented with subdued subjectivity, organised with consideration to research problem and literature, and supported with verbatim quotations in a way that pertains to objective interpretation. Note that the verbatim quotation for each finding was not intentionally extracted from one participant whose opinions aligned with author's bias, but was exemplary of a set of similar quotes from different respondents expressing the same opinion or thought, and was selected based on degree of articulate language or content richness.

## **7.1 Conceptions of storytelling**

One of the research questions sets out to explore what ideas or perceptions tourists might have about storytelling. This section summarizes the common conceptualizations about storytelling, which namely concern narrative structure, impressions of storytelling (immersion and emotional awakening) and the presence of a narrator or narrating voice.

### **7.1.1 Plot**

Respondents thought of stories as plots, following a frame of introduction, high points and solution. They claimed their conceptions come from the ubiquitous existence in many manifestations of today's literature (adult novels, children stories...) and from the teaching in early education. A story that differs from this conventional structure is believed to be of the modern genre which is usually abstract and does not have a clear beginning or end.

"I learned it from school. But basically you can see it in every story. Like in children's stories and in adult stories. In normal novels. And everywhere. If you tell a story then there's always a beginning, high point and solution. And if,..., the concept is more modern if it doesn't follow that frame."

Some of the participants expressed their dislike towards the modern structure of stories. The reasons for this preference are (1) the excitement as a reader to be on the search, with the expectation to see the revelation of the plot and the satisfaction once that expectation is met,

"For me personally I prefer the traditional frame because it makes it more exciting. You know you're expecting to search a model when you're reading something. You're

expecting it to do something, have a high point and then a solution. It gives a satisfaction when you go to the solution.”

(2) the need to receive something out of the story at the end (e.g. morals, lessons, solutions...),

“I’ve got the same lessons. So it would start with the setup, and then problem, and then adventure bit and the solution. And I also prefer the traditional way, cos we knew the end is like a moral or a conclusion. And the modern way sometimes is like, you just stay on, nothing. Like from your hanger. And then... I don’t feel like this way.”

(3) the ease and effortlessnes of reading, aversion to cogitation, avoidance of perplexity in the event of inconclusive ending,

Participant: “If you follow the traditional way like, she’s playing, and the traditional flow that you can see in many stories, children stories, you are more likely to hit a wider public, a wider range of customers.”

Moderator: “Why is it so?”

Participant: “Because if you change the flow then you need to make the brain work. And we are lazy people. I mean, that’s the truth.”

(4) discontinuation in writing/reading or the lack it, which results in intolerance to a story frame that is more challenging than the traditional structure.

“if you’re not like someone who writes, maybe you know like, the traditional way for you is a child’s play, and you really need the challenge of, you know going away, finding another way. But, let’s face it. We don’t write. As much as when we are kids or when we are teenagers. And sometimes when we’re teenagers we read a lot because the teachers encourage us or forces us to.”

On the basis of these beliefs, the respondents went on to assert that a modern, perplexing or unconventionally-structured story would fail to reach a wide public. The audience in this case would be much more selected, ‘more intellectual people’, those who study, work or have a special interest in drama and literature. On the other hand, one respondent admitted that to follow a more modern structure would bring about more surprise due to mental activity.

“But then again, if following a modern frame, it is like, it attracts more intellectual people. Like those who actually read those. Like my drama teacher. She always said that she finds the traditional model very boring, nowadays. You know it’s more surprising to follow the modern road, because it makes your brain work. And you get more experience out of it. If you really think about it. If you really weave yourself into it. But, it depends on the target group. I think.”

### **7.1.2 Immersion and emotional arousal**

One association participants made with storytelling is immersion. A story is commonly thought to be immersive or, in other words, the perception of “being immersed” is contingent upon the thought of storytelling.

“It should be something sort of immersive? I think a good storytelling takes you, sort of, to the story?”

Another recorded conception of storytelling is its ability to arouse emotions. Stories were in this study, believed to be “something that moves a person so that it can be memorable”.

“I think there’s a connection with emotions and always remember more than emotions that they told us. It’s kinda wakes up emotions on you usually.”

Emotions are thought in this study to be triggered by the fact that the reader or audience are linked to the story or the characters in the story. The readers are bound to identify themselves with the emotions in the story, the character’s feelings. Indeed, the readers start to empathize with and respond to different emotions in the story.

“It kinda, you are linked with the story or with the person. In this case it wasn’t a person but you feel that so you can start feeling what the story tells. For example in this case it was a bit sad so you feel a bit sad, melancholic, so it kind of triggers that emotions in you.”

### **7.1.3 Presence of a narrator**

The majority of participants concurred in the opinion that the presence of a narrator or storyteller is the natural assumption of a storytelling experience.

“I thought in this case someone would be telling the story, not reading. So I thought we would be listening someone talking. So for me when I think of storytelling, I think of someone talking to me, telling the story, not reading it.”

Some pointed to the self-explanatory definition of the word ‘storytelling’ when probed to give explanation while others attributed it to their induction to storytelling from childhood, being told a story by someone: “Maybe from childhood, that’s what we are grown into. People read us the story .”

The participants also thought about the tone of the narrating voice and its role in storytelling experience. For instance, a warm voice was said to transmit feelings better, getting audience closer to the story than reading.

“And that a warm voice when someone talks to you I think it kind of links better to the story. Like emphasize a bit better than reading. With the voice, with the tone of the voice. So it kind of really gets you in that feeling. Or whatever you want to transmit.”

Another insight brought up about presence of a narrator considers its relaxing benefits. When compared with reading by oneself, the passive act of listening to a story teller was perceived to be a modern-day luxury because one can escape from the need or obligatory amount of reading at school or work.

“I think, nowadays it can be not like luxury but like something different that somebody’s telling you the story because you can read all the time, anything, what you want. And also in school you’re reading so much stuff so it would be nice to just relax and actually not doing anything just listening.”

## **7.2 Effects of storytelling on experience of place**

The next group of findings can be prominently construed as effects or differences created by implementing storytelling at a given place or destination. In this research, respondents related to their experience at the experiential walk to form their views.

### **7.2.1 Enhance memorability**

The story in the experiment was said to strengthen the memorability of the forest. In other words, through the storytelling experience, the memory of the forest becomes more vivid and easier to retrieve or brought back to mind. As the audience get to live the place through the story, they form a stronger attachment with the memory of that place afterwards.

“I think because you’re more linked to the place, so I think it stays better in your mind with the story with the place.”

“And also if the story gets some emotions in you, so you remember the emotions.”

“Yeah I think that it’s about you experience something in the forest, so you remember the experience.”

“you give a story to a place. It, it gives you experience. It creates a memory. To a certain place. I think a positive memory.”

Moderator: “Why would it creates a memory?”

“Because..., yeah, you interact in a way. In a certain place. Then if you just visit it you’ll see a place but you don’t have an experience regarding to it. But if you hear a story about the place or, a story regarding to that certain place, no matter if it’s fictional or not, it creates a memory. And, it makes the place more memorable then.”

“Now every time I walk through that place, I would probably remember this experience. Even if it wasn’t for the story, I wouldn’t remember this place, after this day.”

### 7.2.2 Create meaning and purpose for visit

The story was said to make the experience unusual, different. Many participants regarded the story as a driving force for them to embark on the experience – something which would help them immerse in the forest. They saw no point in going to the forest as it is, since they perceive a walk in the forest as a mundane activity.

Moderator: What do you think the experience would be without the story?

“It wouldn’t be as meaningful as it was now.”

“It’d be boring.”, “It’d be normal.”

“yeah it was a purpose. Like why you want to go to the forest, because you want to immerse with something in the story and it should like, help. But like, that’s of course possibly to immerse to the forest as well, without the story, but ... yeah, it was a purpose. Or like a task. Why we need to go there.”

“Yeah, I think we will remember this. Because it’s unusual. It’s like it’s not something we do everyday.”

### 7.2.3 Deepen experience of place

The story in this case was conceived as an analogue to the exterior environment. The resemblance of the physical place found in the fictional narrative was alleged to elevate perception of place, while external factors from scenery and atmosphere at the place work to complement the experience of living in the story world. Respondents revealed they recognized details of nature reflected in the story, and vice versa, elements of the story world existing in the forest. They asserted that this mirroring has a two-way complementary effect on the experience at the place and in the story world.

“Basically I was trying to imagine that story, ah... by looking around as well because like I said it was a good mix of nature so it’s like, it, it helps you more to immerse to the story in my opinion. Cos the colors, the sounds, the you know, you can, you can ... of course we don’t see, we don’t hear the metro in the forest but like, we’re able to hear the buses and stuffs like that. So it’s still like ...(raise voice) It was like a story with sound effects that are absorbed by your ears or I don’t know it was something like that it was, it was nice. It was nice.”

In particular, the audience were more able to appreciate the beauty in the forest as well as elevate their imagination in the fictional narrative. By encouraging reader or listener’s imagination, the story employed more active use of multi-sensory perception, thus managing to “complete the senses”.

“It brings a bit of mystery in the moment when you were hearing it. Depends on the storytelling. I think like, it makes, complete the senses. So, if you’re just sitting and hearing and seeing, and then there’s someone who’s storytelling you something, you imagine that story so you somehow add more things to the present. Complete something.”

The presence of the story was also claimed to provide a tenet for concentration which allows for immersive place perception. A number of respondents claimed that the presence of the story helps them to concentrate on perceiving and experiencing the forest to the fullest (sounds, surroundings, scenery...), to be mindful and to live in the moment. Without the story, it would have been likely that their experience in the forest would be disrupted by everyday worries. In other words, the story serves as an intermediary, a tranquil escape from everyday nuisance into an immersive experience. The story filters out common thoughts which would otherwise easily find their ways into disturbing solitary experiences, a good example of which is a forest walk.

“I feel like you concentrate on different things when you have the story and when you’re just there by yourself.”

“If the story wasn’t there I would think about like, “Oh I have a long school day today”, well, like it wouldn’t be as nice. I would worry about everyday stuff probably.”

“I would think about something else then. Being in the forest but not looking at the forest or thinking about being there but just think about normal things. What I need from the store or uh, long days at school or something.”

### **7.3 Important factors for a continuous storytelling experience**

This section provides rich opinions in improving the experiential walk, particularly how to create a smooth-flowing and uninterrupted experience. Adjustments can be made in the future accordingly, in regard of level of language difficulty and story structure, the medium through which the story is conveyed and the consideration of using technology for this kind of storytelling experience.

#### **7.3.1 Language and structure of narrative**

The difficult level of English language at play in the narrative was one of the most recurring discussion points. Participants regretted that they could have had a smoother experience had the language not been so unfamiliar.

“people who are not like, familiar with the English, uh, like, will have a difficulty reading it. Because like, I have to read the version the sentences again”

“yeah like you understand the whole story but then you miss some points when you don’t understand every word so, you can easily, like, not be so in the story.”

However, this mismatch between the story’s language and reader’s vocabulary range did not seem to them a point of complaint, only of regret. Not only did they refuse to phrase the difficult vocabularies as explicit complaints but also elicited that the words, despite their obscurity and uncommonness, were very comprehensible from context and described the story world beautifully.

“So the language was...very storytelling like, as such but, obviously for an adult, uh, public adult customer, the thing is that uh, if you, if I may say, the language was amazing. But the thing is like, you really need to be good in English to find a way to understand the narrative.”

“Seems our English levels are not for this story. But the story when you understand it, it was nice.”

“Well in the text the adjectives and the words are really like, I’d say...technical. Fancy”, “Sophisticated”

“If you know them, it describes very nicely.”

### **7.3.2 Medium for transposing narrative**

A prominent wish recorded from participants is the change from reading to listening, with a proposal of a narrating voice in replacement of printed paper story booklet. It was unanimously agreed that reading and walking at the same time is far from ideal. The explanation provided was that one activity extracts concentration from the other, which results in compensation for the more important activity.

“if it was like, also turned into a pod cast or if you hear it in your ear phones instead then you would be able to concentrate on the nature more.”

“if there was a na...(narrator?) somebody else telling the story then you would concentrate more on the nature and get more immersed into the story because now you have to divide your concentration between reading and being in the forest.”

“I think when you were walking and reading, you didn’t pay that much attention to the nature as well.”

However, what remains debatable is the divided preferences over a voice recording or a live person narrator. Some favored the former because they appreciate the convenience of being able to stop and rewind as wished. One respondent verbalized his dislike for a live person narrator in view of being out of control of the story flow and unable to pause when encountered unregular vocabularies. The ability to pause when needed is, therefore, deemed important.

"For me, this particular one if someone narrates it to me I will have difficulty to understand it. for me it's the vocabulary. It really needs a lot of effort. So...you know like, I either needed to read, if I read, I'd be able to understand it completely. Or at least listen to it. So you know, somehow I can go back if I need to or something like that."

"I would have earphones as well. Cos if you tell the story then I wouldn't have even hear it sometimes. Or somewhere I wouldn't get it. So if I can have earphones I can just go back on it. So I would, I would have that instead."

Others, on the other hand, voted for a real person narrator as they perceive that only such human character will be able to bring about values such as subtleness, warmth, closeness, passion... or storytelling traits that would bring the story alive.

"I think I prefer always someone telling, cos it's kinda more, close."

"More personal, yeah."

"I think it's more about how they tell it. That they need to be kind of engaged to the story in themselves and being like, excited about it, not just reading something out loud."

"I feel like the body language of the like, speaker could also be a part of the story."

However, the preference of a live person narrator was also questioned and debated. Respondents revealed that the introduction of a personal narrator should only be encouraged on the condition that he or she lives up to those commendable traits of a storyteller.

"Sometimes it depends on the speaker. Like, if the speaker is not as experienced or doesn't have a good voice for that or articulation so then it's not, not good." (*note that what the participant meant by **speaker** here is the **narrator***)

"If it's not engaged to the story it would just ruin the atmosphere completely if the person just reads it. I can read it too."

Some participants expressed concern over a live person narrator in fear of dissipated concentration. They believed that the presence of such a person would feel disconcerting and intruding, and that it would disrupt their personal experience, interfere with their private individual sphere and dilute their concentration and immersion when living the story.

"No, but not real narrator, but somewhere you know, like behind. (raising volume) Hidden somewhere. So that you can hear different nuances of the voices and stuff. But not that you have to concentrate on the person."

"I think, because to me, the point of this experience is also to be in the forest and like, look around. Where if there was a speaker, then you would focus on the speaker no matter what. And that would kinda ruin the calm experience in the forest, or the individual experience." (*speaker here means **narrator***)

“Like the speaker would disrupt because you’re gonna concentrate on speakers sometimes.” (*speaker here means narrator*)

### 7.3.3 Controversial issues of technology involvement

The question of whether to involve technology in such storytelling experience at a given place sparked contentious opinions among participants. Some preferred to have light and sound installations as these effects were said to help with imagination and enliven the story.

“I’m thinking in some places like museums or indoor places it can be a good tool to make it more alive, the story.”

“You can put something special like projections, like as long as you hide the materials, that you can just see the projections. I think, yeah. I’m a visual so I like having visual. So it helps with my imagination.”

“It can be a good tool. Sometimes when you watch a video and you hear the story, maybe you’ll get more into it than just hearing it or just seeing it”

Others, however, shunned the idea of involving technology, pointing to the fact that it has become too pervasive in modern life. The world today was said to be loaded with constant engagement with screens and social network, which led to a need to break away from digital world.

“I’m connected to technology nearly 22/7 so I think if I want to have a storytelling experience, if I want to have another experience, I would it to be non-technological. To get a bit of space, apart from thing.”

“Twenty years ago, you would go into the Internet to disconnect from the real life and now, you would be the other way around. You would go to the real life to disconnect from the Internet.”

“At some point, technology becomes a working tool and if you work very hard, you get stressed very easily and just the presence of technology gives you stress.

According to the response, any experience that is pure and non-technological was deemed as original and human luxury. Therefore, the value of the storytelling experience in place would be reduced with the implementation of technology.

“Cos I feel like nowadays everything is so (technolida?) like everything is involved in technology , like technology is involved in everything so, if there’s too much technology, it would be to everyday, I think. Maybe. SO it’s not as remem...memorable as it is just like pretty much without anything.”

“I think if...your target group is like the kind of people who just need a break, then just don’t put any technology in it and just put a person, just reading and people will be like, “wow”.”

Opponents to the involvement of technology also posited that light and audio installations would distract their attention, preventing them from absorbing into the story.

“I don’t really even think there’s lighting and the voices. I think, like, I would say that I would get disturbed if there would be more. Cos I would not be able to concentrate on the story. I would concentrate on everything else around me. So too many things would make me be... It depends on the person but, for me I would say that’s too much.”

“And we have so much technology around us so it would make, ..., the experience would be so much calmer when we don’t have that much. Maybe the lights and sound but nothing more.”

Another controversy resides in the use of headphones to record the narrator voice or play nature sounds. While some suggested the use of technology in this way (observed in the above extracts), others thought sounds played from headphones are artificial and using headphones would block the sounds and noises naturally occurring in the forest.

“Yeah probably the best one is uh, to, ..., ask somebody to read it. Or to have just, ..., uh, sound? But not in the headphones, because it, uh, you’re not able to hear the surrounding sub noises then. Because you wanna hear the bus traffic, you wanna hear the people walking around just to get the feeling that you’re actually in a forest.”

“Yeah because that’s the natural and real ones probably.”, “It might be too artificially if it’s electronic.”

#### **7.4 Summary of findings**

In summary, the experiential walk and focus group interview have yielded data pertinent to the primary research questions. The data results can be summed up as presuppositions of tourists about storytelling, its actual effects recorded after the experience implementation and considerations for an uninterrupted and harmonious storytelling experience.

Findings that are grouped as *Conceptions of storytelling* revolved around three main focal points concerning (1) plot or story structure, (2) immersive experience and emotional arousal and (3) presence of a narrator voice. Regarding (1) story structure, it is important that the narrative in experiment follow a conventional frame comprised of a beginning, high points and solution (or an end), rather than a modern structure with no obvious storyline. This preference was accounted for by early education about stories and the prominent existence of conventional story frames in everyday life examples. Respondents recorded to have expectations for a story to follow the conventional structure. They claimed to have needs to receive certain lessons, messages or solutions at the end and thus feel a sense of satisfaction when the story succeeded in doing so. Modern genre stories which do not

follow a predictable and familiar structure reportedly strain and exasperate the common reader with inconclusive endings and unclear structure. The unpleasant feeling of being unable to comprehend unorthodox stories are claimed to be the reasons they avert from modern genre. Respondents also admitted to a lack of time spent reading, little exposure to literature and writing genres, which made them less likely to tolerate any narratives that are unconventional. (2) Immersion and emotional arousal are the second most significant conceptions of storytelling, which were said to stem from the connections instantly formed between readers and the characters. The readers in this case took up the feelings and thoughts of the characters, thus started to have various empathetic and emotional responses. Participants lastly believed that the word 'storytelling' itself implies (3) a narrator voice and that the narrating voice plays an important role in transmitting emotions and creating a relaxing effortless effect.

The second group of findings are organized as *Effects of storytelling on experience of place*, revealing that presence of storytelling (1) enhanced memory of the place visited, (2) added singularity to the experience which created meaning and purpose for visit and finally (3) complemented and deepened experience of place. When the physical elements at the place resonate with the description in the story world, they created a mirroring effect that enlivens the participants' aesthetic appreciation of the place and at the same time elevates their imagination in the fictional world.

The last group of findings concern with *Important factors for a continuous storytelling experience*, where remarks about (1) Language and structure of the narrative, (2) Medium for transposing the narrative and (3) Controversial issues of technology involvement are recorded. When writing for non-native speakers, the vocabulary used, no matter how beautiful and descriptive, should be on par with the intended audience in order to create a smooth and fluent experience of reading and living the story. Similarly, a vague or complicated narrative structure might also discourage or interrupt the reader's experience and imagination process. Regarding the medium of transposing the narrative, there is reportedly a substantial consensus of a narrator, yet whether this can take form of a live person or a voice recording divided opinions based on preference for privacy, undivided concentration and freedom to pause and play at one's speed. A continuous storytelling experience was also regarded in relations to technology involvement, with some supporting the use of visual installations for purpose of assisting imagination while others disagreeing in view of distractions, tiredness of pervasive use of technology in modern life, need for a complete break and perceived value in any experience that is technology-free. The use of headphones to complement nature sounds was also discussed to make the experience fuller and multi-

sensory, yet it was faced with concerns over blocking the real sounds occurring from nature at the place and the perception of fakeness or unauthenticity in electronic simulated sounds.

## 8 Discussion

This section presents the implication, relevance of the above findings and their contribution to existing knowledge. Reflections upon literature review will be made, interpretations formed and the author personal conceptualization about place perception and attachment will be put to contestation.

The study set out to explore the problem of how storytelling can be utilized to enhance and enrich tourist experience. In order to arrive at this aim, it sought to collect data that answer three research questions: 'What are perceptions and views tourists have upon story-telling?', 'What are the links between storytelling and tourist experience?' and 'How do tourists see the need for fictional storytelling application in tourist destinations?'. The gathered findings addressed the first question by revealing that stories are conceived as structured narrative, that when living in a story one feels immersed and emotionally evoked, and finally that, the word 'storytelling' presupposes a narrator voice which helps bringing the audience closer to the story and lifts their reading effort. Descriptions of a conventional plot resembles Sax's (2006) definition of stories as dramatic structure which build into climax and is in the end released, and Freytag's (1900) five-stage dramatic arc. However, what intriguing and novel about the recorded notions of story structure which has not been mentioned in existing literature is how an unconventional structure can create negative reception. Notions of immersion and emotional arousal correspond with Lugmayr et al.'s (2017) claim that storytelling arouses emotions and stimulate cognitive activities, while the presupposition of a narrator supported their *diegesis* definition of storytelling – effect the narrator cast upon audience.

The second question about storytelling and its link to tourist experience was illuminated by responses that when they are let to experience a place through storytelling, (1) it is more likely and easy to remember the place with potent impression, that (2) storytelling brings about a sense of meaning and purpose to the decision whether or not to visit the place in question, and finally that (3) the story complement and deepen experience of place, the mirroring physical surroundings at the place complement their aesthetic appreciation and experience of living in the story world. Referring to the literature review, findings related to enhanced memory testified Moscardo (2017) results about long-lasting memory brought about by storytelling. Meanwhile, findings about meaning and purpose for visit which stem from perceived singularity in the presence of storytelling attested to Woodside et al.'s conclusion that the introduction of storytelling in destination wins tourist attention and positively influences their decision to visit. It is also backed by studies from Tarssanen &

Kylänen (2005) who claimed storytelling gives meaning for participation in tourist experience. The last finding under Effects of storytelling revealed that storytelling reportedly (3) complements and deepens experience of place. It is safe to infer that in this sense, storytelling enriches tourist experience, with reference to Noy's (2007) definition of tourist experience as an experience of place or of self in place.

As for the third question of how tourists see the need for storytelling applications in destination, not only did the author receive unanimous consensus of the wish to see future application of storytelling in tourist destinations, but also constructive remarks of how to design better storytelling experience which, if carried out at its best, would work to enrich and enhance tourist experience. These are readability of the story (language and structure), method of conveying the story (medium) and considerations of whether or not to involve technology in to the design setting.

At this stage, it is important to be reminded of the original research problem of how storytelling can be utilized to enhance and enrich tourist experience. After discussing the relationships between research empirical data and existing literature, it can be argued with good grounds that storytelling has positive effects upon tourist experience. As illustrated in author's own conceptualization framework (See Figure 4), storytelling acts to enrich and enhance tourist experience by effectively influenced upon both Influential realm and Personal realm. In Influential realm, the presence of storytelling hints singularity and sharpens place identity, which in turn induces meaning and purpose for visit. In Personal realm, storytelling strengthens memory of place and evokes emotional engagement which according to Giuliani (2003) is place attachment – the bond developed towards a place that embodies emotional content.

Most importantly, the research findings not only verified that storytelling enrich and enhance tourist experience but also suggested ways to design or craft a storytelling experience which will deliver those positive effects. Table 3 sums up conclusions to the research problem of how to utilize storytelling to enhance and enrich tourist experience.

Table 3. Conclusions to research problem

<b>Aspects of storytelling</b>	<b>How to utilize</b>	<b>Resulting effects</b>
Structure	Absorbing narrative plot. Follow conventional dramatic structure.	Ensure readability and satisfaction of reaching high points and receiving solution at the end.

Language	Beautiful, delicate and pertaining to describe the fictional world to the best of imagination yet readable and easy to understand.	Ensure readability and smooth experience, uninterrupted by encounters with difficult vocabulary.
Medium	Narrating voice with fitting warmth, depth and appeal.	Personal touch which helps bring audience closer to the story.
Content	Depiction of a fictional world that resonate with physical elements at the visited place.	Create a mirroring effect between fictional world and the visited place. Complement aesthetic appreciation of both worlds.

In creating fictional narratives with fictional landscape mirroring the physical place, beautiful yet readable language, absorbing yet not-to-unorthodox dramatic structure, and finally through an appealing narrating voice as transposing medium; future creative writers and experience engineers will be able to elevate the tourist experience, create a lasting memory, deepen experience of place and give the place in question a unique distinct identity.

## 8.1 Implications

It is worth reminding of what has been established from current studies about storytelling and its effects on experience. From literature theories we know that a story has a content and form, that it can trigger emotions and enhance memory. It is due to these effects that storytelling has been used in marketing and education to convey powerful messages effectively and there have been research claiming that the use of storytelling has created positive effects in consumer's experience. However, it is also worth noticing that these researches left out clarification of how they construct the story in experiment or what is the structure (form and content) of the story in place. This implies that we do not yet know what exactly about the storytelling experience are memorable and emotional to people, or in other words, what aspects of the story can be attributed to creating those positive experience.

Relating to the above account of storytelling and experience literature, the study first confirms existing theories about stories' structure and its effects on memory and emotional arousal. Second, it sheds insights on what exactly about the story or the storytelling experience that bring about those effects, how storytelling experience could be made more harmoniously. Third, findings from this research pose a question upon the necessity and viability of story writing guidelines as the author did not scrupulously follow them.

These implications bear a considerable significance to the tourism and experience field because they give experience engineers or practitioners from other disciplines a foundation and rationale to implement storytelling for a transcendental experience. Furthermore, they also give a detailed description of how to bring about the triggered effects, an insight into what aspects of the story enhance the experience. Last but not least, the study is relevant in an experience economy where the practice of storytelling is on the rise, in a sense that it recommends future story creators not to follow stringent rules or over-simplified and commercialized guidelines about story plots, frame and language; but to show originality, imagination and consideration upon the audience. The author's own writing process and its justification themselves are shared here with the hope to become a source of inspiration and materials for references.

As this study only revealed a small insight to knowledge, future research is much needed to explore different effects evoked by storytelling when the form and content of the narrative changes. It should also be stressed that clarification of how the narrative is constructed, what form it takes and through what medium it is conveyed be included in future research upon storytelling and tourist experience. The current understanding of narrative from literature viewpoint is very much downplayed and neglected in tourism and experience research, which is harmful to its research validity. If future researchers from the business field want to explore and utilize storytelling, it is crucial to understand its definition, structure and codification in literature theories and literary criticism.

## **8.1 Reflections on research process**

This section recalls and presents a truthful account of changes and obstacles faced by the author during the research process. There would also be critical admission of research limitations and a review of learning outcomes the author has gained through such research process.

### **8.1.1 Adjustment and challenges**

It is crucial to acknowledge that the original manuscript of the story was changed during the research process. Due to a delay in the implementation, autumn was long gone before the author realized she could get participants to experience the mirroring coordination between the scenery depicted in the story and the physical setting at the park. For this reason, the author adjusted the description in the story so as to leave out autumn elements. The author

visited Vanhapuisto for a site inspection to survey if she could find her inspiration and imagination resonated and magnified from its scenery. As winter revealed Vanhapuisto under a completely different impression of a grim, shady and uninspiring place which then contradicted the fictional world in the story, the author decided to look for another venue for the implementation.

Kaivopuisto, having been frequently patrolled by the author, naturally became an ideal option. After a site visit and imagining the story world on a rocky hill there at full moon, the author decided this to be the new venue whose elements were to be borne in the fictional narrative. The first rationale for this is the awe-inspiring scenery with marvellous view over the sea and mighty-looking trees, which could be a foundation for a captivating and elevated experience. The second reason why the author switched to Kaivopuisto is that it is considerably vaster than Vanhapuisto, which would be more ideal for participants to spread out in various directions to have a private and personal experience. Changes to the manuscript can be seen in italic in Appendix 8.

As much as the author wanted for experiential walk to happen at the venue where the story world is imagined in (Kaivopuisto), it was not possible due to the only participants (the student group) are bounded within university campus. The park nearby campus was a quick and only plausible alternative, considered and chosen at the time when feasibility of carrying out the research implementation was the only utility.

One of the rare complaints from participants concerns the extreme cold temperature of the day of the experiential walk. The cold was described as a deterrent to fully enjoying being in the nature and reading-living the story. Many expressed regrets over the disrupted immersion and concentration in the story, the unduly unwillingly break-off from the experience to go back inside and seek warmth.

Another undesirable factor from exterior environment is insufficiency of light for reading. Some respondents reported they were not able to read well as the time of the day did not see much sunlight and lights from street lamps were quite dim over a large area. Moreover, it was also suggested that the nature of the physical place could have matched better with the landscape or settings depicted in the story.

### 8.1.2 Reliability and validity

Reliability and validity have been the central of debate among quantitative and qualitative inquirers since their implications become incongruous when applied to these intrinsically dissimilar approaches.

Given an intrinsically different paradigm such as qualitative research, reliability and validity are disputed to the point that they are deemed irrelevant, as the context of data gathering in qualitative research is ever-changing and challenges exact replication, and the researcher's involvement is appreciated as creativity and considered a vital instrument in seeking understanding of social world. To use reliability and validity as 'goodness' criteria for evaluating the quality of a qualitative inquiry would it destined to be bad. Social scientists have thus shifted to introduce and endorse parallel terminology such as rigor and trustworthiness, yet Cypress (2017) argued that reliability and validity are "overarching constructs" that can be applied in both quantitative and qualitative methodologies and Morse (1999) criticized that introducing parallel terms will diminish qualitative research from mainstream science and reduce its scientific legitimacy.

Taking into consideration the nature of qualitative inquiry, reliability's adapted definition would essentially lie with consistency. A marginal degree of variability in results is bound to be tolerated in qualitative research provided that "methodology and epistemological logistics consistently yield data that are ontologically similar but may differ in richness and ambience within similar dimensions" (Leung 2015). Not only is reliability based on consistency and care in research practices, it is also concerned with transparency and thoroughness in the reporting and presenting results. Owing to the ever-changing research settings and changing contexts in social science inquiries, researchers should document changes or unexpected occurrences that may help further explain the findings and provide crucial details for other researchers who wish to replicate the study (Center for Innovation in Research and Teaching). Indicators of a reliable qualitative research are therefore evident in its visibility of research practices, analysis, and conclusions, reflected in an open account that remains mindful of the partiality and limits of the research findings (Davies and Dodd 2002).

Regarding validity and its common apprehension as the state of being well-grounded, justifiable, logical and well-founded, the interpretation one can make in quantitative methodology and its qualitative counterparts is hardly substantially divisive. If the quantitative bias of validity implies the accuracy of scientific findings reflected in valid measurements, a valid qualitative research would have to pass similar criteria regarding the

“appropriateness” of the tools, processes, and data (Leung 2015). An existing method of verification called triangulation has been utilized by social scientists which examines the research questions from multiple perspectives and through convergence of data from different sources. A thorough description of five triangulation methods adapted from the work of Guion and colleagues (2002) is provided in Appendix 9.

After achieving a certain understanding of the nuances in reliability and validity in qualitative research, this research work might be brought to evaluation accordingly to those criteria. Concerning reliability, the research was not able to provide proof of consistency as there was not sufficient time and effort to conduct the experiential walk and focus group sessions in other settings, in other occasions and with other participant groups. This failure in providing a comparison of data obtained from implementations at different research settings was not an indicator of inexperience but unfortunately arrived at after vigorous attempts. The author did strive to recruit demographically-different participant groups using varied methods at different locations, try to retain recruit contacts and arrange implementation dates, yet ultimately was met with last-minute withdrawals. It was the author’s intention to carry out the experiential walk with participants recruited by herself independently and interview them first, before implementing it with the student groups which would be granted her participants. The author saw a potential in data variability between participants from different degrees or even from wider public other than students. The setting would have been originally at Kaivopuisto in the evening, or ideally intended in autumn. These intentions in extending research setting context and participant demographics were not realized, hence the inability to demonstrate consistency and the implication of insignificance of the research’s findings. However, if we consider transparency as the other factor in attributing reliability to a qualitative inquiry, the study at hand could be credited a good level of clarity in documentation of environmental settings and practicalities, with description and justifications of unexpected changes during the research process. It is this detailed and careful account of research design, methodology and results; and an open and thoughtful reflection upon limitations that grant this research work its good quality as a reliable qualitative quest.

When put under the test of validity, it is in the author’s belief that the appropriateness of tools, process and data is relatively established. The study has a strong well-grounded research design with justified reasons provided for choice of methodology and data gathering techniques. However, it passed the author’s awareness that there exists triangulation methods to enhance research validity. In fact, this is one major oversight regarding author’s methodological preparation since it did not occur to the researcher to examine issues of validity and reliability before implementation and data collecting. As

Patton (2002) concluded, reliability and validity should be taken into consideration by qualitative inquirers while designing a study, analysing results, and judging the quality of the study, not after when the study is completed. In hindsight, the author should have actively attained validity during the research process through the above-mentioned methods of triangulation, as it is argued in Cypress (2017) by Morse and colleagues (2002) that strategies for ensuring rigor must be built into the qualitative research process per se and not to be proclaimed only at the end of the inquiry.

### **8.1.3 Learning outcome**

This thesis work has been no doubt a rich learning opportunity for the author as a future academic and researcher. Indeed, given the amount of labour and time invested, the research lends itself as a tremendous but rewarding tenure for the author to experiment, study and validate her passion and acumen in doing research. The author had the chance to further exercise her knowledge of research design and drive her attention to critical issues such as the importance of ontological and epistemological positions in research and verification strategies for reliability and validity.

Another benefit to the author's development as a researcher while conducting this study is the chance to sharpen her moderating skills. Conducting a focus group interview is a novice experience to the author as a qualitative researcher and has thus broadened her exposure and practise to a variety of qualitative data gathering techniques. The author ultimately succeeded in implementing three smooth and fruitful focus group sessions, during which she managed to increase her confidence in probing, employing cues and body gestures to regulate discussion, encourage participation and open up conversation.

The author's competences as a qualitative researcher are also strengthened by familiarization and shrewdness with handling big amount of data. When faced with four hours of conversational data that needs transcribing, the author did consider automated solutions for data transcribing yet later decided to manually do so with a self-devised systemic way of annotating verbal locutions, grouping categories and organizing themes and relationships. Given all the advantages of the chance to carry out this focus group interview, the author regretted not being able to take and make use of field notes (turn-taking, body language...), or verification methods for enhanced reliability and validity as mentioned above, yet these learning points will undoubtedly be borne in mind in the author's future research work.

Moreover, this study will always reside as a special memory to the author as it marks the first attempt of her fictional writing. The motivation it creates was substantial enough to make the author venture into literature theory and to take up a more serious and audacious attitude towards fictional writing. The author received many recognition and appreciation from research participants and other fortuitous audience. However, there were constructive remarks which the author deemed worth-considering for future writers. Regardless of the audience's embrace of the descriptive language, future writers should pay great consideration to the readers' word range (especially if the language of the narrative is not the mother tongue to audience) and to exercise moderation and selection in vocabulary range, in avoidance of unnecessary verbosity and flowery language. An equivalent level of difficulty should be maintained throughout the narrative, from sentence to sentence, in order to bring about a smooth comprehensive reading experience and a continuing flow of imagination.

Last but not least, the importance of this research to the author's personal development lies in a rigorous utilization of practical aptitude such as time management, academic writing and data literacy. The research design, thesis writing, and recruitment process required a high degree of self-discipline, the ability to assign priority, divide work load over time and self-commitment to deliver before deadlines. As for academic writing, the author takes revelation in writing up the thesis report as an opportunity to articulate arguments, deliver convincing justifications and attempt meaningful conclusions to universal knowledge. In particular, the author conscientiously, critically and scrupulously exercise and consider word choice so as to avoid ambiguity and confusion, besides rigorous proof-reading to simplify unnecessarily complicated sentence structure and to break lengthy passages into smaller paragraphs to improve transparency. Regarding data literacy, when looking up research papers, blogs, articles, the research worker learned to be more aware of the common mistake of wasting time on irrelevant contents and deviating from original research problem. As a result, the author started to adopt the strategy to carefully skim through the contents of any research paper (Abstract and Findings, not just Title) to look for relevance and commonalities to her own research problem, when faced with a surplus of search results.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1. Participant recruitment ad



Template 1



Template 2

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

## ARE YOU A TRAVELLER?

Would you like to experience places through a new medium?

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**EXPERIENTIAL WALK**

Vanha Kirkkopuisto  
Bulevardi, 00120  
Helsinki  
Duration: 1 hour



**WHEN THE MOON IS FULL**

The story will unfold...



Be part of this study and help the researcher understand what makes your experience special.

The experiment includes a narrative-reading experience at Vanha Kirkkopuisto (Old Church Park) on a full moon evening and a focus group interview at Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences on the following day.

Template 3

## STORYTELLING AND TRAVEL EXPERIENCE RESEARCH

Everyone interested and fluent in English is welcome to participate.

Are you curious? How would narratives evoke in you certain feelings about a place?

Help the researcher find out.

The purpose of this research is to explore possible effects of storytelling on traveller's experience and perception of places.

Route direction and refreshments will be provided both at the evening experience and the interview.



**Contact**  
Ms. Nhi Cao  
Email:  
nhi.cao@myy.haaga-helia.fi  
Phone: +358 (0)44 9355540  
to sign up or for further info

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT RECRUIT

## Storytelling & travel experience

Are you a traveller? Would you like to experience places through a new medium?

*Help the researcher find out what makes your experience special.*

Embark on a walk with a narrative-reading experience in Vanha Kirkkopuisto (Old church park) and share your experience in a focus group interview the next day.



Template 4



## When the moon is full

*The story will unfold*

The purpose of this research is to explore possible effects of storytelling on traveller's experience and perception of places. Everyone interested in the study and fluent in English is welcome to participate.

Are you curious? How would narratives evoke in you certain feelings about a place? Help the researcher find out.

Get in touch with the researcher Ms. Nhi Cao  
Email: nhi.cao@myy.haaga-helia.fi  
Phone: +358 (0)44 9355540  
to participate in the research or for further info



RESEARCH PARTICIPANT RECRUIT

# ARE YOU A TRAVELLER WHO LIKES NEW EXPERIENCES?

Embark on a narrative experiential walk and help the researcher find out what makes your experience special.

EXPERIENTIAL WALK I  
VANHA KIRKKOPUISTO  
BULEVARDI, 00120 HELSINKI  
DURATION: 1 HOUR

The experiment includes a narrative-reading experience at Vanha kirkkopuisto (Old Church Park) on a full moon evening and a focus group interview on the following day.

# WHEN THE MOON IS FULL

THE STORY WILL UNFOLD

The purpose of this research is to explore possible effects of storytelling on traveller's experience and perception of places. Everyone interested in the study and fluent in English is welcome to participate.

Are you curious? How would narratives evoke in you certain feelings about a place? Help the researcher find out.

Get in touch with the researcher Ms. Nhi Cao  
Email: [nhi.cao@myy.fi](mailto:nhi.cao@myy.fi) helsinki.fi  
Phone: +358 (0)44 8355540  
to sign up or for more info.

Template 5

## **Appendix 2. Facebook post**

Would you like to try an unconventional experience and let your perspective speak of meaningful findings? Your curiosity and audacity thus are valuable to my research about storytelling and tourist experience.

I'd love to share with you about the research (drop me a line at [nhi.cao@myy.haaga-helia.fi](mailto:nhi.cao@myy.haaga-helia.fi)) and hereby invite you to sign up via this link: <https://goo.gl/forms/pluBfJLI1tYjXdpr1>.

Thank you and sincerely,  
Nhi

### Appendix 3. A/B testing of poster – Peer evaluation

Poster	Vote count	Liked features	
		Design	Contents
Template 1	2	<p>Colourful and happy, warm feeling, get attention in the dark and grey weather</p> <p>Design shows effort</p> <p>Fun feeling of research, very playful</p>	<p>“How would narratives evoke in you certain feelings about a place?”</p>
Template 2	3	<p>artistic, mysterious and dark fitting the mood</p> <p>dark and eye-catching</p> <p>Fun feeling of research, very playful</p> <p>Eye-catching, vivid red leaves on dark background.</p>	<p>“when the moon is full, the story will unfold”</p> <p>“Embark on an experiential walk and share your experience in a focus group interview.”</p>
Template 3	1	<p>Calm, easy to approach</p> <p>Lighter colors might be more affected by printing quality</p>	<p>“Are you a traveler?”</p> <p>Message transfers clear</p>
Template 4	1	<p>Graveyard &amp; calm color</p>	<p>Contents are thorough</p>

		Lighter colors might be more affected by printing quality	
Template 5	0	Scary, eerie, Halloween, escape room advert	

**Respondents' verbatim comments:**

Maria: I checked the designs you created. The one that appeals to me most visually is 2 for it seems artistic, mysterious and dark fitting the mood - the others show daylight and sun - but not the scary type of dark as the last one which looks a bit like an escape room advert to me. The last one, though, I like best in terms of clarity of text and instructions right on the first page: for example, it tells that the event will happen on a full moon evening and that it is for 2 days which the 2nd doesn't.

Tuyen: [translated] Like these two templates the best [posting screenshots of template 1 and 2]. For template 1, page 2 would be better if there's one line in black as in page 1. As for the contents I like this line 'When the moon is full' the more. If you go for the dark background in the 2<sup>nd</sup> template, put 'when the moon is full' in yellow and 'the story will unfold' in red.

I also like the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> ones, their text seems to be more thorough.

If I have to go for only one, the dark background (template 2) is better, for it's moon watching. Dark yet captivating.

These are the best-fitting lines "How would narratives evoke in you certain feelings about a place?", "Embark on an experiential walk and share your experience in a focus group interview."

Valeria: They're all good in their own way. What I feel the most is that perhaps the two last ones would have been perfect if Halloween would come up because they have this eary and secret feel about them because they're darker. The one that I really liked was the first one. Especially now when its dark and grey, something colourful and happy gets my attention and gives me a warm feeling.

Sini: Personally I prefer the two lighter templates, especially the first one of the two. The title "are you a traveller?" stands out nicely and it quickly got my attention. I also like the calm easy to approach atmosphere and real photos you used. The message transfers clear in these two. Maybe it is because of the font you use, I'm not quite sure.

The first two templates on the other hand give a fun feeling of your research and are very playful. Depending on the theme of your storytelling, I would go with a template that suits the feeling you want to convey through the experience. The last template with dark background for example has mysterious feel to it and would suit if the experience was about scary stories.

Also, if these are going to be somekind of leaflets, I would somehow minimize text on the first page to draw informants' attention. 😊 But to sum it up, I really like the third pair as it is!

Henna: 4<sup>th</sup>. It's beautiful. Other's are also pretty but that one's the most aesthetic for me. Graveyard and calm colours are a good combo.

Mother: 2<sup>nd</sup> one. Dark with outstanding vivid touch of red leaves. The lighter fonts are not so striking. Also consider the printing quality, they might lose their delicate colors. 5<sup>th</sup> one gave an idea about scary Halloween, which might be misleading if this is not what your research is about.

Henrik: Cast my vote for the first one. The template is pleasant and color is beautiful, showing your effort. The second one with dark background reminds me of party invitations or advertisement, it looks too modern. The structure in the third one is too splitted. I wouldn't read anything like that except for a research paper and even so there has to be two equally-spaced columns. The pictures in the third and forth ones gave an impression of unprofessional design attempts. And in my opinion the use of pictures create expectations.

STORYTELLING AND TRAVEL EXPERIENCE RESEARCH

# *The crying maple leaf*

Author: Nhi Cao



Once there was a maple leaf village tucked at the edge of the world. By moonlight, the leaf villagers summoned themselves to shed tears over the most saddening things in the world. They begun tracing the chasm of sorrows, where they would dive in, grapple a soft nebulous mass of woe and mould it into tears.

The tear drops were no mere liquid of water. In form of pristine droplets, they flew upwards to the moon, with an elusive force of alleviation. A tranquil lake was rapidly formed, where the moon would perch on and rested unstirred.

“I’m done crying!”, exasperated the maple leaf. “My eyes are sore and swollen and I couldn’t admire the moonlight anymore with these heavy eye lids.”

“Think of the higher meaning, Cylisis. We do this to cleanse our souls. You’ll see better colours and more beauties with a purified spirit.” – said his friend, condescendingly.

“What empty words. I cannot force myself into a superficial re-enactment, and I won’t.” – Cylisis thought to himself.





Pumped with resolution, he set out to seek knowledge of sorrows and burdens – determined to experience darker feelings, although it means that he would have to spear his heart open to the apathetic world.

He took a ride on the Salient Courier – the most powerful wind force in the forest. They traversed the length and breadth of common land, into a city where they decided to stop by.

‘How vibrant? My inexperienced eyes can barely greet the blinding sunshine. Could we go somewhere a bit dark?’, Cylisis meekly asked. Salient Courier thought it was such a strange request. “Who wouldn’t want to stay in the warm? Little peculiar thing.”

With silenced reluctance, he took the maple leaf on a plummeting dip to the underground. A metro passed them by, so swiftly that Cylisis was whipped off Salient Courier, casted and landed upon the train floor.

“Damnation!” – uttered Salient with unexpected anxiety and worry. “I’ll catch you at the next station! Stay out of people’s footsteps!” – he cried out to the little maple leaf. But the shout was muffled by the siren of the closing door. The metro came swiftly to a halt. Door opened and in came strolling a woman with her baby pram. The last thing to enter was a breath of wind flinging a maple leaf. It landed softly on the train floor.



“A lone and lost maple leaf” – thought a female passenger who was standing among the empty benches in the train. “This cabin could not possibly have been his intended destination. Setting out on its dangling adventure, it must have only cared for the hills, the sea and the sky.” The maple leaf looked much intriguing to her. As she stood fixated upon the seemingly ordinary object, her senses were gradually blocked from the nuisance of the metro activities.

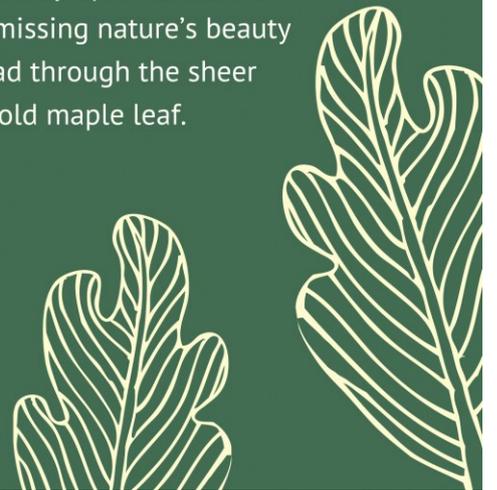
---

The next day witnessed the most ceaseless pour from the sky. Cylisis woke up to find his body wet and glued up upon a bus stop glass shelter. On the pavement right beneath was an old maple leaf, so pressed to the ground that the fragile threads of its skeleton could be felt.

“How palpable you seem to breathe.” A man at the bus stop looked upon the wrecked poor thing. “Is it the frail wind from your wrecked lungs that I just heard now?”. His thought ushered out in puffs of cigarette. Cylisis wondered if the man was aware of an unlikely audience.

The only one left out of this sympathetic resonance was the decomposing leaf itself. The old grandpa unfortunately felt a bit further out from the tree and was swept away by the pouring rain. Its bony frame squashed as people tramped ruthlessly upon it, whose minds trapped in screens and whose eyes dismissing nature’s beauty and existence. One could see the concrete road through the sheer auburn film which was what remained of the old maple leaf. Footsteps kept stamping on.

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Salient Courier grabbed Cylisis from aback. The affinity and joy in his grip resembles the occasion when one stumbled upon a long-lost belonging from childhood memory and was thus short of breath from sheer joy and thrill. Indeed, Salient was gasping heavily – the little maple leaf was more precious to him than either of them could have acknowledged.

“Care for one last ride?” - asked Salient Courier gleefully.  
“Since this may be our last venture before homecoming, I happily grant you the privilege to point your edgy finger to any spot which allures your twisted mind.”  
“There!” – Cylisis cried out with his unretiring excitement.

They landed to a small humble park adorned with maple trees. Scattered on the grounds stand solemn gravestones. Their silhouettes stretched away on the concrete road now and then trodden by humans dressed in coats and perfume, hastily passing by.

Soon it was gathering dusk. Darkness with its crisp cold breath permeated the air. None of them realized it before the soothing moonlight landed and travelled caressingly upon their skin. Cylisis caught the cool touch and looked up to reunify with the moon. Its illuminating glow dazzled the small park, its perfect contour suspended, impeccably whole and still.

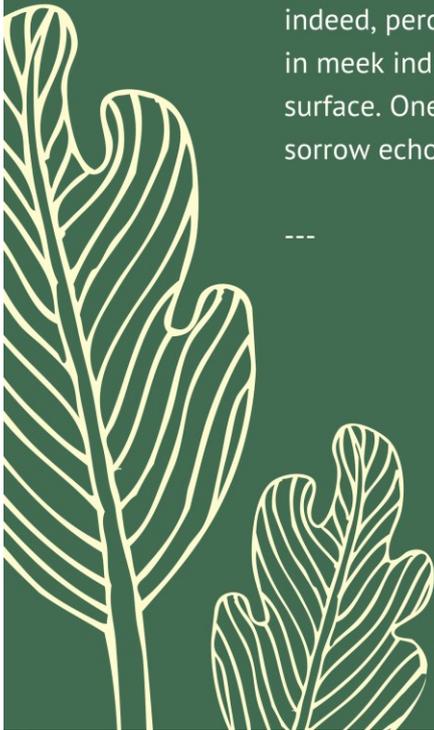




“Think of the sorrows in this world.” – the preaching which once had no impression upon Cylisis but emptiness and superfluity now almost seemed to seep through his soul. Salient Courier was confused. Half alarmed, half anxious. “Was it something I did wrong, bringing the boy to this park? What might have caused those tears?”.

The droplets tenderly parted from the maple leaf’s eyes, levitating effortlessly to the lustrous moon. Remembrance of the old scrawny leaf brought him to relive desolation, heartless tramping, indifference. The moon fell tonight indeed, perching on the same lake of tears. The lake rippled in meek indistinct waves as Cylisis’s tears flew to touch the surface. One could feel the poignant dip. The unfeigned sorrow echoed from afar.

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## **Appendix 5. Research cover letter**

Research cover letter

Storytelling and tourist experience study

Be part of an unconventional tourist experience study

- Are you a traveller?
- Do you want experience places through a new medium?

If your answers to these questions are YES, welcome to participate in a storytelling and tourist experience study.

The purpose of this research is to explore possible effects of storytelling on traveller's experience and perception of places. The experiment includes a walk to Kaivopuisto, 00140 Helsinki on a moonlit evening and a narrative-reading experience. Participants will be interviewed in groups the following day at Aalto University (Konemiehentie 2, 02150 Espoo) at a chosen time slot. The experiential walk will take about half an hour and the focus group interview will consume up to an hour. Route direction and refreshments will be provided both at the evening experience and the interview.

Everyone interested and fluent in English is welcome to participate. You are invited to sign up here: <https://goo.gl/forms/0MpaJ89KH3t072Lp1>

The recordings from the interview will be interpreted in thematic analysis to help answering whether storytelling has an influence upon the traveller's perception of place and how their tourist experience at the place was made different due to the narrative. Release of the findings can be expected by the end of February 2019, on Theseus repository ([www.theseus.fi](http://www.theseus.fi)).

All data collected will be handled confidentially and participants are granted anonymity. Personal contacts and interview recordings will be stored in password-protected files and computer and will be accessible only to the researcher. The data will not be shared with any other parties and will only be used for the purpose of this research. After the study has completed, all data will be erased.

Reach out to the researcher Nhi Cao via [nhi.cao@myy.haaga-helia.fi](mailto:nhi.cao@myy.haaga-helia.fi) anytime for more information and thank you for being a meaningful part of this research.

## **Appendix 6. Interview guide**

Research questions:

What are perceptions and views tourists have upon story-telling?',  
'What are the links between storytelling and tourist experience?' and  
'How do tourists see the need for fictional storytelling application in tourist destinations?'

Interview topics:

1. Story-telling & fictional narrative in general
2. Research experiment
3. Place perception, attachment
4. Storytelling at destination

Interview questions:

### **1. Story-telling & fictional narrative**

What idea do you have about storytelling? What are the first thing that come to your mind?  
Why do you think you have such presupposition/premise?  
What did you imagine the storytelling experience would be like?  
Have you ever had any experience involved in storytelling at a visited place?  
How did you feel about it?  
What differences did you think were brought about by storytelling?

### **2. Research experiment**

What do you think about the narrative-reading experience yesterday?  
What did you like/dislike about it?  
Did you have any expectations before coming to the walk? Can you tell more about them?  
Can you describe your experience yesterday? What was going through your mind?  
What aspects of the park did you perceive? How did you feel throughout the walk?  
What do you think about the fictional narrative?  
How different do you think the experiential walk would be without the story?

### **3. Place perception and attachment**

How would you reflect on the memory at the park? Would you describe the experience as memorable?  
Do you think it is easy to retrieve the memory of the park because of the storytelling experience?

After the experience, what is the likelihood of your recollection and differentiation of the park? (How likely are you to recollect the park as a visited place and differentiate it from other parks?)

#### **4. Storytelling at destinations. Forms & media.**

Would you like to see storytelling and its variations in destinations?

Would you like to experience places through fictional narratives, set in the scenery of the place?

What do you think if the story was presented to you in other ways, through different medium? For instance, if it was narrated with a voice, played to you; or if it is re-enacted in the form of a short animation movie shown to you.

What is your preferred time frame when you would like to receive the story? Before, at or after arrival at the place/destination, or repeatedly seamlessly throughout all your travel journey?

In what manners would you like to receive the story? Independent of a narrator?

What kinds of form or medium can you think of as means to convey the story? Printed, verbal, cinematic, ...

How would you think technology might be involved in storytelling?

How would you feel if the story is transposed to you via technology? For instance, a video projected on screen by a projector, narrating voices being played through speakers and music effects coming from amplifiers.

## **Appendix 7. Implementation script**

[At Room 3006 when participants are arriving. ]

Greetings & refreshment. “Good morning. Everyone else will be present in no time so please take a rest and help yourself to some chocolates.”

[When the group is present. ]

Introduction. “Good morning everyone. My name is Nhi and I’ll be guiding and facilitating you in today’s experiential walk and focus group interview. As Mia must have briefed you before, this experiment and the following interview is for me to collect data for my thesis research which aims to explore the effects storytelling might have on tourist experience.

Now let’s cut to the act. We’ll take the exit at Hotel Haaga, walk and cross the bridge into the nearby forest. At the bridge before you went into the forest, I’d like to hand you the story booklet so that you can read on your own as you wander on.

The experience is meant for an individual perception, so feel free to spread out in various directions as you like. We’ll go in with a few people at a time, and then followed by another group so that there’s a room for privacy.

When you think you are ready to come out of the experience, return the way you came from and meet me at the bridge.

One thing I’d love to note is that after the experiential walk, it is very likely that you would like to comment or talk to your peers about the experiment and what you think about it. That would be very interesting and exactly what I want to find out, but I hope you can hold your thoughts until when we begin the focus groups. Of course, we can’t help or avoid small comments but because your opinions or feelings might change others’ so if you think about it like that, you wouldn’t want to share your most private thought just yet since it’d be interesting for me and for you as well to hear all fresh and uninfluenced opinions.”

## Appendix 8. Manuscript

The crying maple leaf

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Once there was a maple leaf village tucked at the edge of the world. By moonlight, the leaf villagers summoned themselves to shed tears over the most saddening things in the world. They began tracing the chasm of sorrows, where they would dive in, grapple a soft nebulous mass of woe and mould it into tears.

The tear drops were no mere liquid of water. In form of pristine droplets, they flew upwards to the moon, with an elusive force of alleviation. A tranquil lake was rapidly formed, where the moon would perch on and rested unstirred.

“I’m done crying!”, exasperated the maple leaf. “My eyes are sore and swollen and I couldn’t admire the moonlight anymore with these heavy eye lids.”

“Think of the higher meaning, Cylisis. We do this to cleanse our souls. You’ll see better colours and more beauties with a purified spirit.” – said his friend, condescendingly.

“What empty words. I cannot force myself into a superficial re-enactment, and I won’t.” – Cylisis thought to himself.

Pumped with resolution, he set out to seek knowledge of sorrows and burdens – determined to experience darker feelings, although it means that he would have to spear his heart open to the apathetic world.

He took a ride on the Salient Courier – the most powerful wind force in the forest. They traversed the length and breadth of common land, into a city where they decided to stop by.

‘How vibrant! My inexperienced eyes can barely greet the blinding sunshine. Could we go somewhere a bit dark?’, Cylisis meekly asked. Salient Courier thought it was such a strange request. “Who wouldn’t want to stay in the warm? Little peculiar thing.”

With silenced reluctance, he took the maple leaf on a plummeting dip to the underground. A metro passed them by, so swiftly that Cylisis was whipped off Salient Courier, casted and landed upon the train floor.

“Damnation!” – uttered Salient with unexpected anxiety and worry. “I’ll catch you at the next station! Stay out of people’s footsteps!” – he cried out to the little maple leaf. But the shout was muffled by the siren of the closing door. The metro came swiftly to a halt. Door opened and in came strolling a woman with her baby pram. The last thing to enter was a breath of wind flinging a maple leaf. It landed softly on the train floor.

"A lone and lost maple leaf" – thought a female passenger who was standing among the empty benches in the train. "This cabin could not possibly have been his intended destination. Setting out on its dangling adventure, it must have only cared for the hills, the sea and the sky." The maple leaf looked much intriguing to her. As she stood fixated upon the seemingly ordinary object, her senses were gradually blocked from the nuisance of the metro activities.

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The next day witnessed the most ceaseless pour from the sky. Cylisis woke up to find his body wet and glued up upon a bus stop glass shelter. On the pavement right beneath was an old maple leaf, so pressed to the ground that the fragile threads of its skeleton could be felt.

"How palpable you seem to breathe." A man at the bus stop looked upon the wrecked poor thing. "Is it the frail wind from your wrecked lungs that I just heard now?". His thought ushered out in puffs of cigarette. Cylisis wondered if the man was aware of an unlikely audience.

The only one left out of this sympathetic resonance was the decomposing leaf itself. The old grandpa unfortunately felt a bit further out from the tree and was swept away by the pouring rain. Its bony frame squashed as people tramped ruthlessly upon it, whose minds trapped in screens and whose eyes dismissing nature's beauty and existence. One could see the concrete road through the sheer auburn film which was what remained of the old maple leaf. Footsteps kept stamping on.

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Salient Courier grabbed Cylisis from aback. The affinity and joy in his grip resembles the occasion when one stumbled upon a long-lost belonging from childhood memory and was thus short of breath from sheer joy and thrill. Indeed, Salient was gasping heavily – the little maple leaf was more precious to him than either of them could have acknowledged.

"Care for one last ride?" - asked Salient Courier gleefully. "Since this may be our last venture before homecoming, I happily grant you the privilege to point your edgy finger to any spot which allures your twisted mind."

"There!" – Cylisis cried out with his unretiring excitement.

*[They landed to a small humble park adorned with maple trees. Scattered on the grounds stand solemn gravestones. Their silhouettes stretched away on the concrete road now and then trodden by humans dressed in coats and perfume, hastily passing by.]*

Rewrite: They landed on a nobly wooded park bordering the seaside, with long-winding paths slithering between verdant patches of lawn and sturdy tree trunks. Upon the hill stood solemnly an observatory which they strolled nonchalantly towards. The last beams of sunset cast over scattering silhouettes of humans wrapped in coats and perfume, whose footsteps hastened against crunchy gravelled soil.

Soon it was gathering dusk. Darkness with its crisp cold breath permeated the air. None of them realized it before the soothing moonlight landed and travelled caressingly upon their skin. Cylisis caught the cool touch and looked up to reunify with the moon. Its illuminating glow dazzled the small park, its perfect contour suspended, impeccably whole and still.

“Think of the sorrows in this world.” – the preaching which once had no impression upon Cylisis but emptiness and superfluity now almost seemed to seep through his soul. Salient Courier was confused. Half alarmed, half anxious. "Was it something I did wrong, bringing the boy to this park? What might have caused those tears?".

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## Appendix 9. Types of triangulation

Adapted from Guion et al. (2002).

<b>Types of triangulation</b>	<b>Description</b>
Data triangulation	Data triangulation involves using different sources of information in order to increase the validity of a study. In Extension, these sources are likely to be stakeholders in a program—participants, other researchers, program staff, other community members, and so on.
Investigator triangulation	Investigator triangulation involves using several different investigators in the analysis process. Typically, this manifests as an evaluation team consisting of colleagues within a field of study wherein each investigator examines the program with the same qualitative method.
Theory triangulation	Theory triangulation involves the use of multiple perspectives to interpret a single set of data. Unlike investigator triangulation, this method typically entails using professionals outside of a particular field of study. One popular approach is to bring together people from different disciplines; however, individuals within disciplines may be used as long as they are in different status positions.
Methodological triangulation	Methodological triangulation involves the use of multiple qualitative and/or quantitative methods to study the program.
Environmental triangulation	This type of triangulation involves the use of different locations, settings, and other key factors related to the environment in which the study took place, such as the time, day, or season. The key is identifying which environmental factors, if any, might influence the information that is received during the study.