

PHOTO AND VIDEO CONTENT IN PROMOTING  
DESTINATION ONLINE

Case: Ranua

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The aim of the thesis was to suggest potentially effective strategies for promoting Ranua as a tourism destination in content marketing, within the context of photo and video content. As Ranua is a small and local-favoured tourism destination while the tourism demand is growing, an increasing in the visibility for Ranua in the international market is much needed.

To achieve the aim and to gain deeper perspectives on photo and video content in content marketing, a considerable amount of research was conducted in order to gain good insights and understanding on the referred topic. The thesis project introduces several concepts with regard to content marketing, and then specifies the theories that could help comprehend the use of photos and videos in content marketing. A qualitative research was informed, including theme interviews and an analysis based on the findings. The interviews were conducted in conversation-like format, which allowed the interviewees to express more openly their opinions.

The theme interviews helped to identify what the needs and orientations were for visual content on different perspectives from the chosen participants who had been working in the commissioning project and had a strong background on marketing. The analysis was carried out in order to find suitable content marketing strategies for the future of Ranua tourism based on the aforementioned researches. In the end, the results gave a set of potential strategies on developing the visual content in Ranua.

The thesis project focused to achieving the goal in order to increase the attractive of Ranua as a destination. However, the project had to be limited within the scale of opinions, therefore, non-tourism stakeholders were not considered. It depends on either the destination or the project itself to take the results to another level.

**Key words** content marketing strategies, Ranua, photo, video, destination promotion, marketing

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## SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

DMC	Destination Management Company
DMO	Destination Management Organization
SEO	Search Engine Optimization
SWOT	Strength, Weakness, Opportunities & Threats
ROI	Return on Investment
UGC	User-generated Content
UGV	User-generated Video

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Promoting a destination requires many different processes, and marketing is one of those that should be paid attention to. Over the course of time, there have been many changes in the marketing process. However, nowadays with the development of the internet, marketing has shifted from offline to online environment. In travel industry, tourism organizations and companies, hotels or destination marketing organizations, they seem to have the need of embracing the changes according to the quick rise of the Internet. The internet nowadays has opened up many new ways of distributing information and improving communications. Travelers can rely on the internet as their main resource of finding a possible destination, accommodation and leisure activities. (Akehurst 2008.) Information is always available on the internet, but the raised question is how to present it to the audience in a way that could attract most of viewers in order to inspire and motivate them.

Humans have been using in communication through visuals for tens of thousands of years (Waggener 2019). Researches have also pointed out, that visuals have the power to remain longer in the human brain than anything else. The colors together with the way how the components are placed are vital in the process of affecting the desire of consumers to engage and retain the information. (Phillips 2018.) By leveraging these resources as materials for marketing, the destination can stand itself out from others in the tough competition, raise the brand awareness while driving revenue. It is also worth noticing that the thesis emphasizes on the content available on the internet. Among more than 7 billion people, there are 4.3 billion people use are online nowadays, which forms 55.6% of the whole world population (Internet World Stats 2019). Certainly, travel brands or destinations should not ignore this potential environment.

This thesis concentrates on content marketing, specializing in content resources, such as photos and videos. Its final aim is to create potentially effective strategies on how these two methods can help to promote a destination online. The chosen destination for research is Ranua, a small municipality in Finland, which has many potentials to become one of the notable destinations in the upcoming years. A

small tourist destination such as Ranua can experience an increase in popularity due to a considerable number of travelers wanting to gain authentic tourism experiences. Every year, Finland welcomes more and more tourists. Therefore, it is essential to promote Ranua outside of the Finnish borders and help the international guests to know this destination better.

## 2 COMMISSIONING PROJECT

The name of the project is Destination Experience Development Model (Matkailualueen kohdekokemuksen kehittämismalli in Finnish), which was registered by Lapland University of Applied Sciences. The project starts on 1.11.2017 and it lasts until 31.3.2020. The use of networks between tourism actors in this project is very wide. Also, the implementation of this project requires the participation of tourism experts, business, tourism and technology students. Tourism and tourism-related businesses are also playing their parts in this project. (Linna 2017.) Mirva Tapaninen acts as the manager of this project for Ranua destination, and Eila Linna acts as the contact person of the project.

There are two main aims of this project. One aim is to increase the opportunity to develop the business of a tourism destination, to improve the profitability and to meet the year-around tourism demand. Another aim is to “develop a network-based approach for tourism actors, which covers the whole area in a sustainable, business-centred and profitable way”. This network-based approach would require careful planning and testing of a model acting as a guide. The model will be established by the network of tourism firms and different stakeholders in the region. It would in the end include the special characteristics, the operational environment as well as the opportunities for digital development of the region. Additionally, it would show the natural resources and cultural heritage. As a result, these factors would support the tourism services of the destination sustainably. (Linna 2017.)

The outcomes of the project are quite varied. The project is expected to analyse the current situation in each destination on its operating environment, networks, identity and the supporting industries and employments. Next, it can produce a model including the designing for destination experiences, definition of customer profiles and consumer journey in a sustainable way. Lastly, the developed model is assumed to be implemented and used sustainably in the pilot areas, networks and businesses. All of these three results could help to meet the aim of the project, while assisting in the development of tourism in Lapland altogether. (Linna 2017.)



### 3 INTRODUCTION TO CONTENT MARKETING

#### 3.1 Defining Content Marketing

Content marketing has been defined by a lot of bloggers, organizations and media companies. According to Kinsta Ltd (2018):

Content marketing is the creation of content that is relevant, entertaining, compelling, and valuable. Content marketing requires consistent publishing and can change the behaviors of customers.

The role of content marketing does not involve selling directly but it assists in retaining and attracting the customers, which ultimately drives the sales. Therefore, the content created needs to be engaging; otherwise, no marketing values can be offered. Despite being defined clearly, the definition of Kinsta Ltd is still missing some details to make it more complete. Farnworth (2015) has stated that content marketing needs to be closely relevant to what the brand is trying to sell in order for the audience to gain their trust on the business. Linn (2017) shared the same thought, defining that content marketing is mainly for providing useful information to the customers, more than for promotional purposes like other types of marketing. Moreover, it perhaps answers the questions that people might have about your product in a unique way. One additional good point to mention is that content marketing is not only about creating excellent and appealing content to the customers, but also, it is “a strategic marketing approach” and its main target is a “clearly defined audience” (Content Marketing Institute 2018).

Following the development of technology and social media nowadays, a new perspective should be added to the definition of content marketing, which is user-generated content (UGC). UGC is defined as ‘any type of content that has been created and put out there by unpaid contributors’ (Gallegos 2016). UGC is not a new concept, but it has turned into one of the most powerful tools that marketers can have over the course of time. It can be considered as a modern way of gossips which marketers can take advantage of for sure. UGC is powerful

because it is made by the people themselves. Every day, millions of photos are taken and uploaded across different social media channels such as Facebook or Instagram. These photos are more credible and trust-worthy when people look for recommendations or advice online. It lies in the hand of the marketers to not only create content, but also create opportunities for content creation to their audience. (Turton 2015.)

In overall, content marketing is meant to be attractive in order to appeal the potential customers. The content can be educational, entertaining and valuable. It is important for the content to stay consistently relevant to the business. Content marketing needs to have a specific target audience so that there can be suitable approaches tailor-made. With the increasing use of social media, content marketers can take advantage of the UGC from the audience, with the purpose of creating more diverse yet genuine content.

### 3.2 How Content Marketing Affects Decision-Making Process

A destination contains most of the tourism activities, which can help distinguish itself from other. According to Wang and Pizam (2011, 3), a destination which is different from their usual resident place is a place that a person travels to and spends at least one night. There are physical and administrative boundaries to define the management of the destination, while its images and perceptions help defining the market competitiveness (UNWTO 2016). Travelers are always on demand for discovering new destinations, and they have many choices of where to go. However, from the perspectives of the suppliers, the destination management organization (DMO) at different levels are competing with each other for attention from those travelers in such a highly competitive marketplace. In order to achieve such attractiveness and competitiveness, competent and unifying marketing and management strategies are required based on the understanding of the marketing condition. (Wang & Pizam 2011, 1.) With the characteristics of content marketing, it is undoubtedly one of the crucial factors to help a destination grow more popular amongst all the other destinations strategically. Without content, a destination would have nothing to show to the audience, which can result in the failure to attract visitors.

The journey of making the decision from the travelers to visit a destination is rather complex and contains different stages. Moreover, the internet is nowadays frequently used during the planning phases when searching for information (Prideaux, Moscardo & Laws, 2006), which encourages marketers to focus more on online content. There are five stages of travel according to Google (Snapshot Team 2018). Each stage contains different moments and touchpoints, where travelers can be inspired and motivated in order to move on to the next step. All stages are meant to get the customer towards making his/her trip a reality.

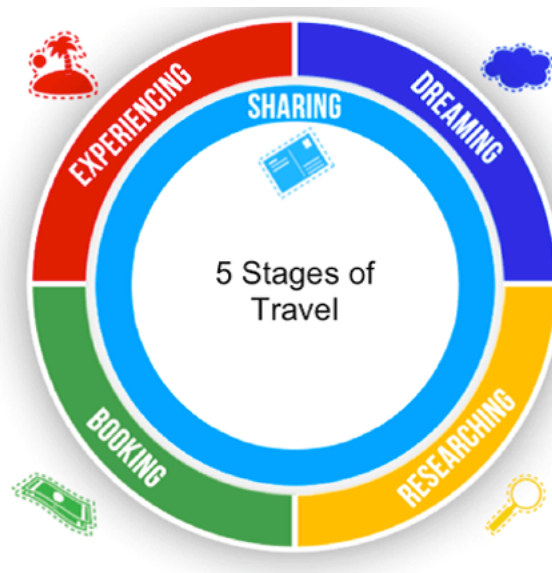


Figure 1. Google's 5 Stages of Travel (Snapshot Team 2018)

In each stage, there are many touchpoints that marketers need to pay attention to, in order to promote the destination to which they desire their customers to come. However, these touchpoints can be disturbed by unexpected factors such as: travel trends, natural disasters or changes in fuel prices. These factors can complicate the content marketing strategies, which demand marketers to take notice of what happens in the operating destination. (Harris 2018.)

Through the “dreaming” and “researching” stages, many people would want to find travel content that is informative, inspiring and also entertaining. They can find their content via different channels, mainly on the Internet as it is quick and easy to access. Impressive and informative content meeting these needs makes

the planning process go much smoother and assist the travelers in navigating with better ease. In addition, users get to imagine how the destination looks like. For example, videos are created to help travelers perceive a virtual insight, or a travel blog shows a friendly and conversational way of sharing experiences to the users. Another reason why online-focused content should be paid more attention is the UGC. Travelers are now relying on content from other users (friends, family, colleague or even, a stranger) to find an inspiration and consider a destination to go to. The UGC is usually shared to the Internet via different ways such as: social media (Facebook, Instagram, etc), or TripAdvisor. For example, according to a research conducted by Adweek, over 52% Facebook users dream about their holiday when being online, even though they do not have any intention to take one. Nowadays, people also tend to share more of their own content to their social media during all three phases: pre-, during and post-experience. This leads to the fact that many Internet users have turned to social media when looking for travel ideas. One reason behind this is the characteristics of these contents: sincere, genuine and authentic. In addition, it could be that these contents motivate other users to attend activities that they have not experienced yet. (Brown 2018.) It should be noted that the utilization of UGC in the marketing strategies of a destination would be needed, in order to inspire travelers online. A DMO or local tourism companies can help promote a destination if they know how to encourage users to posts their content online.

The content displayed in the next stages is as important as in the planning phase. Once the travelers have locked their decision and decided to visit a destination, it is time to make a booking or arrangement for their trip. The websites of the local companies, or the DMO need to be neat and customer-centric. Prices of the cost should be well-displayed, while different seasonal events should be featured. One important factor to take notice at this point, is that whatever the people can do from the laptop, the mobile should do the same. It has been pointed out that about 60% of all travel-related searches come from mobile (Maytom 2018). During the experience stage, the customers will make judgements on the destination. This stage allows the destination to deliver what the travelers had expected from their online searches and consultancy. The better the destination can meet the expectation the more trust can be built. When everything has been

experienced, it is time to share to the world, usually with photos, videos or travel blogs. What the destination can do at this stage is stay observant. The reviews (positive or negative) are good for marketers to develop more, and therefore, it is advised to stay alert with these feedbacks and show a sincere attitude towards those. Sharing the content from the travelers is also a favorable way to let them know that the destination does care about how they see it and think about it. By treating the customers right, they can become the ambassador of the destination. (Advance 2018.)

### 3.3 Why Travel Destination Use Content Marketing

Content marketing is a great tool for travel destination to grow and evolve, in order to be more out-standing and engaging amongst their audiences (Dyakovskaya 2018). The power of travel content is that it is meant to be informative, inspiring, and able to provide people the motivation to book the trip they've always wanted to take. According to Demand Metric (2013), content marketing can help to keep the reader attention, improve the loyalty, generate leads and help increase direct sales. Figure 2 (Demand Metric, 2013) demonstrates the four main reasons that explains why a brand should adopt content marketing in their strategies.



Figure 2. Why Brands Use Content Marketing (Demand Metric 2013)

In another discussion, there are also other reasons for tourism brand to start using content marketing. Haines (2019) has stated a few more reasons that should be looked into at when considering content marketing in the strategies. The table below specify more clearly those reasons and their benefits, which affect the travel destination surely.

Table 1. Extra Reasons for Using Content Marketing and Their Benefits

<b>Reasons</b>	<b>Its benefits</b>
<i>Become an expert</i>	Through providing content such as travel information, the travel brand automatically become the expert of the destination. This leads to increase in reasonability and credibility.
<i>Search engine advantage</i>	By constantly posting text, photo or video content, this would have an

	effect on search engines as they will rank the site for the covered topic.
<i>Be realistic</i>	Content marketing can help to downplay expectation. A high expectation from customers can cause unhappy guests or even, bad reviews. It is the job of the marketers to reflect the truth, be honest and avoid misleading content.
<i>Building community</i>	The content posted on social media or websites can help the brand to gather a number of people who are willing to interact and share. The more the content get engaged, the bigger the community will become.

## 4 UNDERSTANDING PHOTO AND VIDEO STRATEGIES

### 4.1 Roles of Photo Content in Marketing Strategies

In marketing, photo content creates significant roles in attracting customers, thus assisting in promoting a destination. According to Mawhinney (2019), when people search for information online, not many of them would want to read a huge pile of text. It is rather dull and unpleasant to the eyes to look at a long text without images. In fact, articles with relevant images receive about 94% more views than those without. Marketing is about communicating the values to clients without the need of using many words, and marketing photos is capable of doing that. Furthermore, a suitable style with consistent imagery can not only bring quality, but also be able to convey the story or the messages from the brand to the audience. In the age of active mobile-device engagement, having good marketing photos can gain more engagement and noticing from mobile-phone users. The consistency in imagery is also necessary for the brand. Consistency in visual communication creates a common style, which can be memorable to the viewers while creating the right mood for the customers. This style needs to be in line with the vision of the brand and match with the viewpoints of the business. (Higdon 2016.)

Photos and tourism are connected with each other strongly due to its nature. Travelling is about happy moments that many people enjoy, and tourists take photo during their travel as a part of their activities and then share their experiences with others (Cederholm 2014). Photos also have the ability to recall the personal memories and experiences of the places where they visited (Berger et al., 2007). Along the same line, many tourist destinations display their destination images to their target audience through photos on brochures, postcards or on their websites (Jenkins 2003). Visual information allows tourists to explore and see the images better of where they would want to go to (Cao et al., 2010). The images and colors in photographs can affect the advertising recognition and able to recall that advertisement to those who see it (Percy & Rossiter 1983). In addition, the photos bring to the mind the impression of what the place looks like, whilst the colors have influence on the human feelings and



attitudes. For example, Yang & Peng (2008) indicated that warm color tones, such as orange or yellow, can generate the feeling of energy, while cool colors have the ability to make the viewer feel calm and peaceful (Kaewnopparat 2017, 95). Object(s) or person(s) in the photos also considers to be the factors that makes the photos more interesting. It can be identified as a scene composition feature (Luo et al., 2011). Having an object or a person can increase the authenticity and activate the cognitive process in different ways (Miller & Stoica 2004). In addition, photos are used as one of the crucial materials to affect the decision-making process of tourists upon travel destinations, influence their behaviors and reflect their satisfaction of such places (Garrod 2008). This is why different perspectives of a tourist destination, which can be beautiful landscape, architecture, natural scenery, people, even colors, compositions of photos and so on are presented.

Having photos in the content marketing strategies also helps to promote the brand online. Content with images is easier to share across different channels, thus enhancing the engagement rate between a brand and its audience. It has been researched that on Twitter, tweets with images get 150% more chances to be retweeted than those without any visualization. Same thing applies to Facebook when posts with images get 2.3 times more engaging rate. (Mawhinney 2019.) A brand with consistently aesthetic content in social media channels and other online activities can gain trust from the audience. The more consistent the photos are, the more interested the people become, and eventually they would be willing to engage with the content. Moreover, images can benefit the brand in the sense of Search Engine Optimization (SEO). Search Engine Optimization can be defined as “the process of getting traffic from the free, organic, editorial or natural search results on search engines” (Search Engine Land 2018). MDG Advertising has indicated that 60% of consumers would consider or contact a business which has an image shown in the search results (Bullas 2018).

One excellent example of content consistency can be seen from the official Instagram page of Salla in Lapland in figure 4 below (@sallainthefmiddleofnowhere). Throughout the page, it is clear for viewers that the main theme is exploring the nature, with the use of photos focusing on the

natural elements such as northern lights, snow or reindeer and huskies. The Instagram page also provides to the viewers the impression of an all-year-round destination by featuring photos from both winter and summer. The style remains the same in different pictures, which not only brings out the best nature colors in soft retouch, but also in each picture, there is a warm tone, even for winter photos. The most special part is the tagline: “In the middle of nowhere” has been used in a persistent way, as this tagline fits perfectly well with the content on Instagram. The Instagram page has attracted about 5700 followers, with each photo reaches approximately about 500 – 3000 likes.

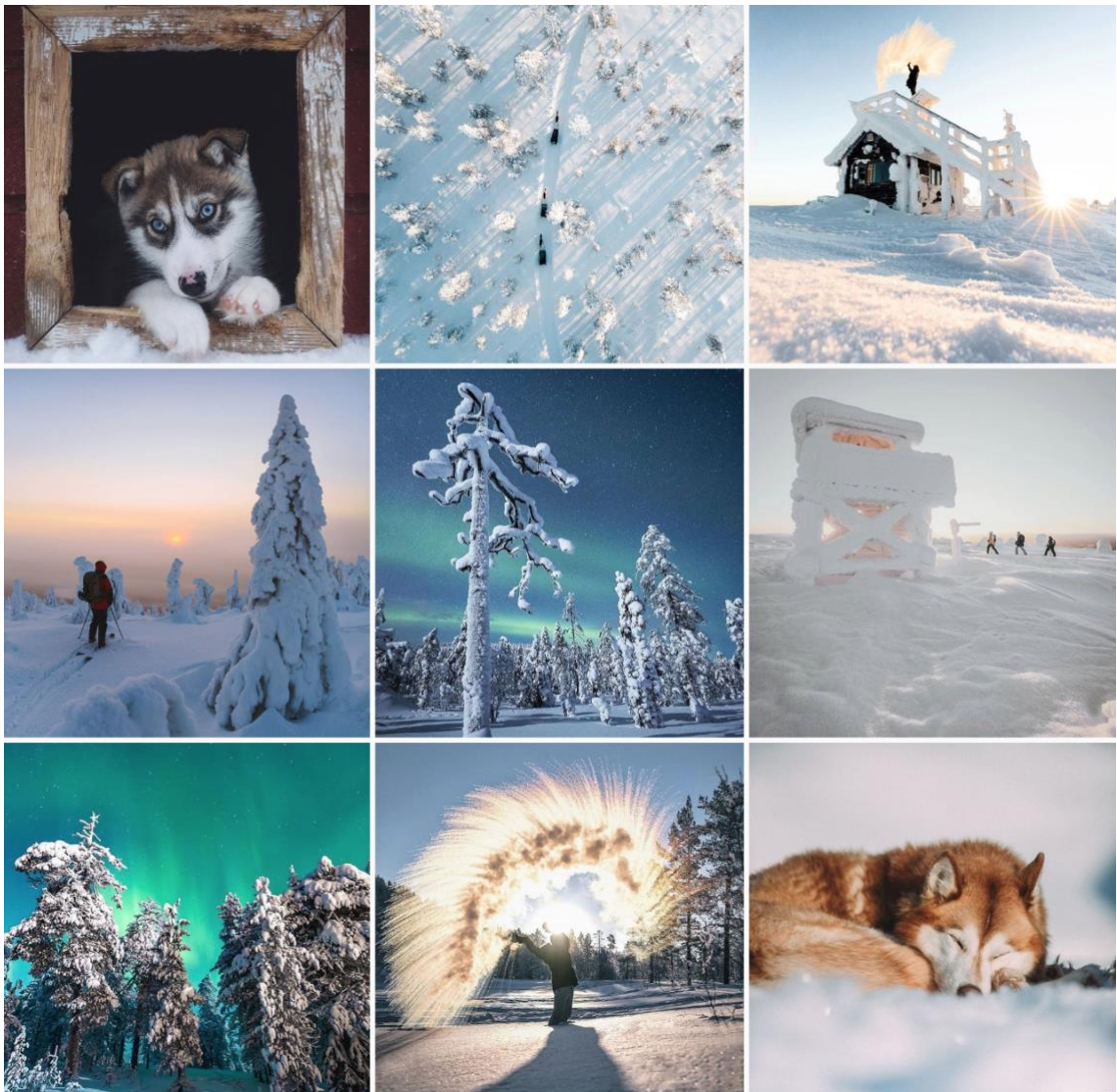


Figure 3. Instagram Feed of Visit Salla's Official Instagram Page (copyright: @sallainthemiddleofnowhere)

To sum up, photo content contributes many aspects to the success of content marketing strategies regarding to destination promotion. The use of photos enhances the interest of the audience, while it is certainly able to bring the messages that the destination wants to tell. Within the photos themselves, different elements have the ability to affect how the human feels towards the pictures, which improves significantly the interest and affects greatly the decision-making process. Moreover, the images help the destination perform well online, as they increase the engagement and advance the SEO performance. It is necessary that the marketers need to recognize the importance of photo content so that the marketing strategies can be well planned to be more visually attractive.

#### 4.2 Framework on Using Photo Content

In content strategies, how to utilize different elements in photos is necessary for a destination to acknowledge, in order to create the right atmosphere and impression. Putting emotions into photos is one good way to do that. By creating photos that can spread out the feelings to the viewers, mainly positive one, the images become more enticing. They can be romantic, happy or enjoyable moment. These emotions should be authentic and real. Human element is also another choice of contributing to a great photo. Many travel bloggers on Internet feature themselves or their travel partners in their photos, which noticeably are the most liked or shared via social media. Having human element in the picture inspires people to be in the same place and motivates them in making their final choice for a destination.

Next is the use of UGC, which is currently one of the motivations for tourists to decide where to go based on looking at pictures from other people. Many travelers are willing to share photos of their holiday to the Internet, not only as a way of keeping memories, but also as a showing of their happy moments they got to enjoy. Travel destination should design a system that can be used to promote the photos from their travelers, such as an Instagram competition or a repost. Marketers, however, need to pay attention the legal issues when dealing with UGC, especially if the picture features a clear face of a child. According to Finnish law of data protection, a photograph belongs to a personal information of

a person. However, a child who is under 18 years old cannot make any legally binding decisions. According to Law of Child Custody and Right of Access Decree, it depends on the permission to use and distribute the photos from the parents or those who act as the guardian of the child. Also, in Chapter 1, Section 4, it states that when making the decision, it is mandatory to consult the opinions of the child about it. (Finlex 2018.) The GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) of EU has stated the same issue in Art. 8 concerning the personal data of a child (Intersoft Consulting 2019). If a travel destination wants to repost a picture that has a child on it, it is mandatory that they need to get the permission for the parents or the guardian. A photo release form is authorized between the parents or the guardian and the travel destination so that the photo can be used for commercial purpose. On the other hand, the use of UGC does not deem the importance of aesthetic photos, and therefore, marketers should also consider hiring a professional photographer. A series of images produced especially for the travel destination in order to meet the audience expectation is recommended. It evidently costs money to hire, but this comes much handier and more useful than the general photos that can be found from the free photo stocks online. When using both UGC and professional photos, it is essential that travel destination should remain selective. The photos have to be coherence and deliver the consistency to the audience. Being consistent gives the impression to the audience that the travel destination is truly paying attention to its content and also, the audience get a positive feeling when looking at a news feed full of pictures that match well with each other. (Mandryk 2019.)

Advertising the photo content on social media is also as important as making, because its performance on the social media channels can help the destination boost the visibility. Different channels have different approaches to the photo quality. For example, on Facebook or Instagram, photos tend to lose their quality after being uploaded. The reason behind it is that the two channels compress all uploaded images in order for fast webpage loading times. Therefore, the photos should be exported accordingly to the requirements from the social media channels. On Facebook, it is best to have the photos at 720px (pixels), 960px or 2048px on longest edge (Nicholls 2014). On Instagram, it should be with a width of at least 1080 pixels and its aspect ratio is between 1.91:1 and 4:5 (Weithers

2018). Different programs specializing in photography should be used in order to export photos accordingly to these restrictions such as Lightroom or Photoshop. In addition, scheduling the post is also another point to notice. Marketers should not post two or three photos per day, as this would be annoying to the viewers. It is advised that marketers should notice the best time when most people are online. Some channels require the use of hashtags, such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. A post with at least one hashtag can average 12.6% engagement more than one without any (Chacon 2019). The marketers need to track how successful a hashtag is with the post insight, and choose which one can drive most likes, comments and reach from the audience. The travel destination should also choose their own hashtag, in order to find posts from the travelers easier to make a repost. (Chacon 2019.) The use of Story is now becoming more popular, as Snapchat, Facebook and Instagram are including this feature. The story lasts for 24 hours, which is beneficial for multiple-posting during a day or updating the viewers what is happening. Also, this feature would stay on top of the feed, so viewers can see the story whenever they can. On Instagram, the story can be saved as "Highlight" in order for viewers to re-watch it and see it again in case they have missed it the first time. However, from personal point of view, the story feature is not a good idea for call-to-action activities, as it lasts only 24 hours.

Optimizing SEO for the photos is essential in the marketing process in order to improve the performance on search engine such as Google or Bing. Search engines cannot see images, but the alt texts given to the pictures can make the photos be more SEO- friendly. A picture with appropriate alt text can help boost the ranking of the website, or at least avoid the website to be mistakenly considered to be a spam site. There are different ways to optimize a photo, such as to condense the images (decrease the file size but retain the details), to precisely describe the picture or to choose the right tags. (DeMers 2017). One feature that marketers should take notice on Google is to submit sitemaps for the pictures in order to increase the chance to be found on Image Search results. The sitemaps should allow Google more information about the images available on the webpage, thus assisting Google in finding the photos much faster and more effectively. (Search Console 2019.)

Using the photo content properly in order to maximize its effectiveness demands many details to be considered. The travel destination needs to make a lot of efforts to create photo content attractively and emotionally attached, either by professionals or by the travelers themselves. Moreover, the photo content should be optimized so that not only its quality is remained, but also it can be detected by the SEO. This is important especially for small travel destination which needs attention from more viewers. The more careful the photos are prepared, the more enthusiastic the audience get.

#### 4.3 How Video Content Assists Marketing Process

Video has proven to be a big driver regarding to marketing perspective in travel industry. It was expected in 2017 that video content would consume about 74% of online traffic (KPBC 2018). Buffer (2014) has pointed out that it is 40 times more likely for visual content to be shared via social networks (Buffer 2014). According to Forbes (2017), YouTube, which is a video sharing service, is the second largest search engine in the world. Each month, YouTube has 3 billion searches, whose volume is significantly bigger than other search. On YouTube, travel vlogs are ranked as the most popular type of travel videos, with 100 million unique visits monthly from travelers. Travel-related videos also motivate people to take a trip, with approximately 60% of people agree they would consider traveling somewhere, while 45% of travelers would book immediately after watching a travel video. On intermediary websites such as Expedia or Skyscanner, the increase rates regarding to referral traffic from YouTube are 27% and 59% respectively. (Henderson 2018). These few statistics have indicated that video is popular amongst internet users as much as photo.

There are different reasons why video content is needed in the marketing process. First, the SEO would be improved. According to Comscore, the addition of a video can increase the chance of making to the front page on Google results by 53 times. Second, it helps to attract more attention from the consumers, thus increasing the engagement by having more people to share and comment. Third, it provides greater optimization opportunities. With a video, a brand can track measure click-through rate, numbers of times watched or the amount of drop-off

views, all of which helps the brand know what works the best and what do not. Fourth, though it might take time and resources to make a great video, nowadays travel destination has many options to make videos, either by themselves, hiring professionals or collaborating with travel bloggers. Fifth, video is a decent way to evoke emotions from the audience. By connecting emotions, it can positively impact the decision-making process but also stay remarkable. Finally, about 71% of marketers has stated that video conversion rates perform better than other types of content. (MacMaster 2019.)

Videos in travel industry take an important role to affect the decision-making process of the viewers. Travelers tend to watch related content from their mobile, as two-third of travel videos are viewed via mobile on YouTube. Because of this, travel destination can make an impression on the viewers since the beginning. By being present, especially on mobile, during the dreaming stage, the audience would get inspired and interested more. The viewers have already had the intend to travel. It has also been pointed out that about 83% of leisure travelers have not considered any destination in their mind at this early stage (Google 2016). Therefore, it is critical for the travel destination to raise their awareness about the place at this point. This moment is also a good opportunity for travel destination to engage with their potential clients.

Travel destinations can reach out to their audience via video content in various ways in order to increase their visibility. As mentioned earlier, there are 5 different stages of travel. During the first stage, which is dreaming, videos are essential in affecting the travelers by helping them narrowing down the destinations. In addition, a large number of travelers watches their videos on mobile devices, as the watch time on mobile has increased by over 65% yearly (Google 2016). This means that the travel destination should utilize video content more and it should be compatible with mobile devices. Despite the fact that travel vlogs are among the most-viewed travel-related videos, only 14% of vlogs on YouTube are from the brands themselves, while the rest is from YouTube creators (Google 2016). This speaks the facts that travel brands should create content that reflects the needs of the audience based on the engaging format.

Videos are in general needed for a successful content marketing campaign. The number of viewers watching travel-related videos is increasing daily, which means that video content is more and more favored by the audience. Besides, videos are also beneficial for the destination to perform better in the online environment. On top of that, it is vital for marketers to approach the audience effectively by having video content present in decisive stages during the decision-making process.

#### 4.4 Creating Video Content for Marketing Strategies

Creating marketing videos is not just about showing great techniques and cuts, but it is also about making a compelling story. Stories in destination marketing videos do not need to be complicated. However, they need to amplify the emotions and awake the desire in order to attract people to the specific destination and make an impression into the consciousness of the viewers. Travel is an emotional journey; therefore, the need of storytelling is essential to build up the excitement (Mowat 2017).

There are some headlines for marketers to notice when making marketing video content. First, keep the videos simple. It is better for the viewers to get the message at the first sight, rather than confusing them, thus diluting the videos. Second, the videos need to have a structure, which shows a clear format that has the beginning, middle and end. This would turn the videos more complete and easier to follow. Third, the videos should awake the emotions from the audience. It can be happy, ecstatic, positive or reminiscing feeling. The feelings significantly make the audience more committed and more connected. (Whitaker 2017.) Humorous factor can also be included in order to create a moment where viewers can laugh and enjoy (O'Brien 2019). Forth, do not turn any character into stereotype. The characters in the videos should be authentic and original, so viewers can remember them more. (Whitaker 2017.) Fifth, timing is important. The first 10 seconds should grab the attention of the viewer immediately so they would stay to watch. It has been researched that there is a drop-off in attention between two and three minutes of viewing time, so the idea time for a video is about 2 minutes. If the video is longer than 2 minutes, then the next choice is



from 6-12 minutes. Finally, make sure that the videos is mobile friendly. Many people use mobile devices to watch videos, so marketers need to check the orientation, aspect ratio and captioning so that the videos can be mobile optimized. (Social Toaster 2018.)

Apart from the storyline, travel videos can influence viewers by the sound and the tone. A good sound is as much important as beautiful shots when recording videos. By choosing a precise sound, the hearing sense of the viewers is much improved. The sound can be considered as the flavor and texture to the main course, which is the video itself. (Burgess 2016.) It adds more depth to the scenes, which creates a general feeling and keeps viewers engaged throughout. Furthermore, its benefits are to enhance the motion graphics, while adding to the videos a more real-life touch so that viewers can connect with the video easily. (Vossen2019.) The video sound somehow also sets the tone for the video. It could be mysterious, adventurous, relaxing, or inspirational; depending on how the creator wants to communicate with the viewers. The chosen tone for a video reflects what the target audience wants to see; therefore, it is very important to decide what specific tone should be set. Marketers need to think the tone which the audience would respond mostly to and the vision of the destination can be presented. A video tone can create the mood that people would feel, thus makes a great impact on their decision-making process. (Ydraw 2019.)

The travel destination can either hire a professional company or collaborate with travelers in order to create video content. The video production companies provide excellent quality of the visual and content, as long as they can reflect the message that the destination want to deliver to the audience. When choosing a video company, marketers need to consider its portfolio, quality and cost (Weiss 2019). Nowadays, as the result of the rise of social media, UGC is more and more useful in the marketing process, and user-generated video (UGV) is the new trend. UGVs are the videos that are made by the travelers themselves and shared via social network channels such as Facebook or YouTube. The most popular form of UGV is Vlog, which is a video form of blogging. These UGVs have specific narratives or stories that viewers can easily relate to, thus making it more personalized. The benefits of UGV are that it provides the travel destination a

cost-effective, spontaneous yet authentic feedback from the travelers. Moreover, it reflects the experiences based from the view of the traveler, which is more subjective to other viewers. Marketers can select the most compelling UGV in order to integrate it into the campaign. In a holistic perspective, the narrative of the UGV can be depicted as representation of the destination experience. (Elliot 2009.)

Marketing videos on internet requires a lot of works from the marketers in order to gain the visibility for the video. The most common channels where marketers can share the videos is YouTube, as this is the biggest video-sharing platform. Optimizing the videos for YouTube SEO needs detail planning. Keywords are essential for SEO because it helps people to find the video easier; therefore, marketers need to conduct a keyword research. The keywords need to have high search rate and short enough. The name of the video files and the titles should match with the main keywords for better search. The titles also should be inviting and in coherent with the content of the video. In the keyword tags, the main keyword should be listed as first tag, and all other related keywords or its synonym can also be put as secondary tags. If the account allows to add custom video thumbnails, marketers should consider do it properly. Alluring thumbnails can result in higher rate of the videos getting clicked. When marketers need to post videos in other social media networks, it is best to embed or link them to YouTube, so that it would help increase the search rate. (Wiens 2019.)

In overall, with the purpose of creating compelling travel video content for marketing, it is required that the marketers should take a thorough planning into account. The videos should include storytelling factor so that the audience can connect easier, and different aspects of storytelling need to be planned ahead. Collaborating with different partners, for example, professionals or travel bloggers can help the destination get more diverse materials. In addition, as YouTube is the main channel which travelers search travel videos from, an attentive preparation to optimize the videos is much recommended in order to gain the visibility of the destination in the online environment.

#### 4.5 Values of Photos and Videos to Marketing

Photo content creates many worthwhile values to the marketing process when referring to the destination promotion. First, they increase retention. When the destination promotes itself, it needs to make an impact to the travelers. The longer and stronger the impression stays in their head, the better chance the destination is to be picked. Pictures are actually easier to recall than words in both short and long terms, as the human mind can store and retrieve images much more accurately. Second, images can awake the emotions. Great promotional photos from a destination can make travelers astonished by the refinement, thus activating their desire to visit the place. As these types of photos are more frequently used, the desire of the travelers grows bigger. Third, photos can captivate the attention. Images are considered to be unique and show more visual variety, which draw unconsciously the attention from the audience. Well-taken photos can much keep the attention continuously. Forth, images can demonstrate what words cannot. The visuals unquestionably tell the audience what they imply without the need of putting too much text under it to explain. No matter even how clearly a text is written, the stunning colors and the realness stand out much more to the eye of the viewers. (LeRoux & Corwin 2007, 86-96.) Finally, photos, especially taken by the users, can indirectly help drive the sales or bookings. The use of UGC not only increases loyalty with the existing customers, but it also adds reliability to the destination itself. This certainly encourages the travelers more to make bookings that relate to that specific UGC. (Barker 2018.)

Videos simultaneously bring the comparable values to the destinations and the audience as photos. Video content can increase the brand remembrance, as it is very lively and visually-active, even than images. By producing great marketing videos, it can represent the destination aesthetically. This results in attracting the viewers to linger to a greater extent. Next, in the age of mobile device currently, videos can be watched easily on every device. The development of responsive web design has allowed webpages to be viewed according to the size of the screen, or the browser that users are viewing with. This has led to the fact that video content can fit well with different screen size, which makes it more user-

friendly. It is also worth noticing that videos can be shared across everywhere in internet. When videos are visually-attractive and are made with great sound, animation, and editing, the chance they are shared by internet users is much easier. Furthermore, videos are now coming in every shape, from 3-minute video, to just 10-second video on social media, and to live video nowadays. Promotion videos can be made in a creative way that assuredly would allow the creation of the video-markers to be more unique. In addition, video content helps the destination to be promoted regarding to the SEO. Videos can not only drive people to the website, they also can make the bounce rate much lower. Also, by placing the video as the first thing to see on the landing page, the time on page metric is increased when the user stays just to watch the video (Lage 2016.)

Generally speaking, both photo and video content hold great values which are beneficial for both the destination and the travelers. These values are fundamental for the marketers to notice in order to plan the marketing strategies for the destination promotion. Moreover, the planned strategies should correspond to the values in order to create a comprehensible and complete marketing campaign.

## 5 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

### 5.1 Qualitative Methodology

A qualitative methodology is carried out in order to support this thesis project. The qualitative research enables in-depth insights on the basis of small number of respondents. The chosen respondents have relevant experiences with the research topic. The aim is to “describe and understand the phenomenon studied by capturing and communicating participants’ experiences in their own words via observation and interview” (Yilmaz 2013, 313). Therefore, the method itself is flexible as it allows freedom in the responses. (Melkert & Vos 2010, 34–35.) This type of methodology helps increase the general understanding of the research topic, in the perspectives of quality, characteristics and meaning. Noticeably, the method can also assist in recognizing the research topic from the perspectives of the “local population it involves” (Northeastern University 2019). In other way of expression, qualitative research put more focus on the study of the topic from the perspectives of the insiders, rather than outsiders (Lapan & Quartaroli 2012). A qualitative study is best to apply for cases where the subject matter is still much unknown to be analyzed (Melkert & Vos 2010, 34).

It is worth pointing out that qualitative research emphasizes on “process, context, interpretation, meaning or understanding through inductive reasoning”. The responses would allow the researcher to understand and present the discussed issue the way it is, without predetermining any standard points. The active participation of the researchers plays an important role in the process. Their involvement does not only assist in examining and interpreting the data, but also feel, experience, listen, and record what is happening throughout the data acquiring process. (Yilmaz 2013, 313.)

In conclusion, for the purpose of building content marketing strategies, in the perspectives of photos and videos, the mentioned methodology proves to be the most suitable. There has been little researched on the current situation of Ranua regarding to its marketing strategies, let alone researches on developing its content. As the research subject is still under developing, it is advisable to acquire

opinions and thoughts from those who not only involve to the project, but also have experience in the relevant field. Moreover, a qualitative methodology could generate new ideas or topics emerged from the data acquisition process. (Decrop 2004, 157; Hogan et al. 2011, 7; Melkert & Vos 2010, 34–35.)

## 5.2 Theme Interview

The chosen tool to conduct qualitative research for the thesis project is theme interview, in order to identify the respondents' opinions and views on content marketing in the perspectives of photos and videos for Ranua. The interview is carried out face-to-face and Skype meeting in Rovaniemi and Ranua.

Each interview lasted about 30 to 40 minutes, as participants were very active in answering and able to provide insight depth. There was no time conflict, but only the difficult of interviewing the participant living in Ranua, as the interviewer had to conduct the interview via Skype and technical problem arose. In the beginning of each interview, the participants were asked to give permission to have the interview recorded and used for the thesis. Besides, as there are not many actors involving with the content marketing development for Ranua in this project, the number of participants was relatively small. There were only 3 who were willing to partake in the interview. Nonetheless, they all chosen based on their level of contribution in the Destination Development Project for Ranua content marketing -wise, and on their relevant background.

Interviews were conducted following the style of semi-structured. Semi-structured interviews have more flexibility, and the order of discussion questions varies between different participants. (Ritchie, Burns & Palmer 2005, 103.) In addition, this type of interview allows conversation-like interaction to take place (Jennings 2005, 134–135). The participants would have freedom to express their opinions. However, this style has a drawback, which is the interviewees may have too little or too much to say, which can become irrelevant to the research (Myers 2009, 124). In all three interviews, the conversation went as more of a discussion, so that both interviewer and the interviewees can express their own opinions, and also awake new topics if possible. The interview questions are made based on

the researches on content marketing. The questions were divided into three sections, and each of them served contributed to different purposes. The first section helped to gain the overall picture of content marketing strategies in Ranua. The second and third ones were to understand how different aspects relating to the photo and video content are used and would be utilized to maximize the online visibility of Ranua tourism respectively.

### 5.3 Data Collection

The data acquired for the qualitative research in the thesis topic are mostly from recordings of the participants. Below can be found the general information of the three interviewees:

Table 2. General Information of Interview Participants.

	<b>Participant 1</b>	<b>Participant 2</b>	<b>Participant 3</b>
<b>Level of Expertise</b>	Project Manager	Communication Manager for Visit Ranua	Contact Person the project / Lecturer at Lapland UAS
<b>Business Industry</b>	Tourism & Education	Tourism	Tourism & Education
<b>Location</b>	Rovaniemi, Finland	Rovaniemi (via Skype to Ranua)	Rovaniemi, Finland
<b>Length of Interview</b>	32:20	32:32	27:34 (1st part) 25:25 (2nd part)
<b>Environment</b>	Face-to-face	Skype	Fae-to-face
<b>Audio recording</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Disturbance</b>	No	No	No
<b>Language used</b>	English	English	English

Three separate interviews were conducted between the time period of December 2018 to March 2019. The same style was used for these three interviews, which

was semi-structured. One interview was carried out via Skype due to the difficulty of distance between Ranua and Rovaniemi. The time of conducting the interviews was decided by both the participants and the interviewers, as all actors had work and could not have scheduled for better timing. The main language was English, as it was easier for interviewer to communicate and for later analysis. However, one interview was a mix between Finnish and English. Nonetheless, this did not create any difficulty. All interviews' audio was recorded so as to assist the interviewer in transcribing the data and make analysis based on that.

The interviewees were chosen based on their background and their relevant related to both the Ranua destination development project and marketing experiences. The first participant is the project manager of the project, who has the overview and opinions from the perspective of a manager and hence, able to provide the thesis research with an in-depth thinking and ideas for what would be the best to develop the destination. The second interviewee is the Communication Manager of Visit Ranua, whose expertise focuses on creating and managing content for the social media accounts and online profile of Visit Ranua. The third interviewee is the contact person of the project, who is a senior teacher at Lapland University of Applied Sciences, with various experiences on marketing, sales and customer-related matters.

#### 5.4 Data Analysis

The three interviews were transcribed from audio into word documents in English. The first interview was transcribed into 1785 words, while the other two were put into 3543 words and 5190nwords respectively. This procedure took 24 hours, which can be considered to be long. The transcripts help the researcher to not only choose the data that is useful for the research, but also eliminate any irrelevant data, as mentioned above. These transcripts were used to align with the researched theory in order to contribute to the aim of the research.



## 5.5 Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are the two criteria which researchers should pay attention to in regard to designing a study, while carrying out the qualitative research. However, these two terms are preferably described as essential criterion for quality in quantitative paradigms. (Golafshani 2003, 601.) In qualitative research, trustworthiness is important as it assists in making qualitative studies to be more accurate and acceptable (Decrop 2004, 157). To pursuit a trustworthy study, different terms should be used and discussed in order to reflect and ensure the accuracy of the research, which are: credibility, transferability, dependability, dependability and confirmability (Shenton 2004, 63).

Drawing on establishing trustworthiness for a research, assuring the credibility or internal validity is among one of the most important factors. This means that the researchers should seek for what the research is intended. The transferability indicates the external validity, which concerns with the extend that the findings from the study can be utilized for other situations. Dependability is based on the hypothesis that if the same techniques or methods were used for the work in different times, same results could be clustered. Confirmability refers to the ability of the researcher to be objective. The key criterion is that the qualitative investigator admits his/her "own predisposition". (Shenton 2004, 64–72.)

Theme interviews were done in order to obtain the primary data that could provide in-depth insights to the topic, and analysis are made based on the data. Moreover, the interviewees were given the opportunities to refuse to participate, which is to make sure that the thesis project involve those who are willing to be part of it and offer the data on their free will. The research is made for marketing development of Ranua with the involvement of small number of interview participants; thus, some strategies might not be fitting or show limits. On the other hand, most of the findings from the theme interviews can be applicable to marketing strategies to other small regions as the strategies are based on general knowledge and up-to-date resources. Through the process, the research was remained to be biased. A plentiful of sources were utilized and combined with the

findings from the theme interviews, with a purpose of making the study more objective.

Certain limitations arose during the thesis project. First, the main language done in the interviews were in English, hence, there might be prevention from a more in-depth communication with the interviewees. All three of the interviewees are Finnish and in one interview, it was a mix between Finnish and English. Second, the theoretical materials on the topic were mainly either out-of-date or not available. This has led to the fact that many of the sources were taken from websites, which does not guarantee the academic factor for the paper. Finally, the time was the problem for the researcher, as there were many other matters to be taken care of other than this project, which in the end, has extended the time of the project to be longer than expected.

## 6 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### 6.1 Ranua in Tourism Perspectives

Ranua is an area that locates in the Southern side of Lapland, and it is about one-hour drive from its closest tourist-attractive city, Rovaniemi. Ranua is a small municipality, and therefore, the closest airport and railway station are all located in Rovaniemi. However, there are bus connections between Rovaniemi and Ranua daily, which makes it easier for tourists to access to the area. From Ranua, there are at least 3 buses that run consistently every day, all year around. There are other time schedules that allow visitors to get to Ranua conveniently, depending on the season. (Ranuan Seudun Matkailu 2018a.) Tourists can choose to use their own way of transportation to get to Ranua, as it is easy to find (Ranua Seudun Matkailu Oy 2018a). Figure 4 shows where Ranua is on the map of Finland in specific and European area in general:

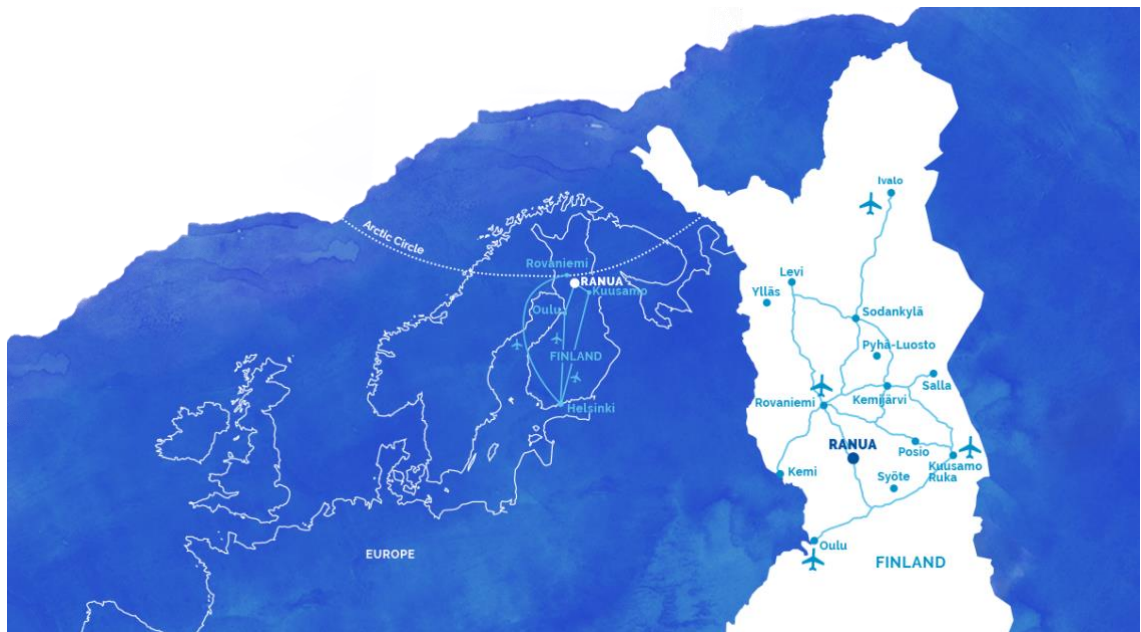


Figure 4. Ranua on the Map (Ranua Seudun Matkailu Oy 2018d)

In Ranua, there are quite a number of activities, or attractions that are being used for the tourism purposes, during both summer and winter times. First, the Ranua Wildlife Park has been widely popular. It is open around the year, which is quite beneficial for all the tourists who wish to visit the park during the summer. The park is also the only place in Finland that the polar bears can be found, which

made it even more special in compared to the other regions in Finland. Besides the polar bears, there are other 50 different species of arctic animals that are quite exotic for both foreigners and Finnish people (Ranuan Seudun Matkailu Oy 2018b). As animals are used as a part of the park, different animal protection programs have been launched. Their purposes are to not only conserve the wellness and the population of the endangered species, but also to ensure the visitors that the animals are being treated with care. (Ranuan Seudun Matkailu 2018c.) Second, there is a local Destination Management Company (DMC) in Ranua, Wildlife Safaris, which offers different programs such as: snowmobiles, reindeer or husky rides. The company is working closely with Holiday Village Gulo Gulo, an accommodation place in Ranua that fits well for customers who wish to stay longer in Ranua than just one day to explore the area. (Wildlife Safaris 2018.) Figure 5 below shows how the Holiday Village Gulo Gulo looks like during the summer time.



Figure 5. Lomakylä Gulo Gulo (Ranuan Seudun Matkailu 2018e)

Third, according to both Ranuan Seudun Matkailu (2018b) and Rohkea Ranua (2018), Ranua is famous for not only the Wildlife Park, but also its authentic nature experiences, the true Lappish village, the clean environment and especially the golden cloudberry (Kulta Hilla). In Ranua, there are a variety of berries, but the golden cloudberry is one of the prides of the people. There has been a long tradition of picking and using the golden cloud berries. A berry village

(Hillakylä) has been established about a century ago, and in 2017, the village just turned 100 years old. In the same year, it has been branded as Ranua the Arctic Berry Village (Arktinen Hillakylä Ranua). (Rokea Ranua 2018.) During the summer, guests can visit the village and enjoy picking berries, fresh from the trees. Picking berries belongs to everyman's right, which mean anyone can do it without asking for permission, as long as it is not wild berries (Ympäristöministeriö 2017). In Ranua, the cloudberries take an important role in the food chain. There are berry wines or pizzas that are made from only reindeer and cloud berries, which are somewhat similar to Pizza Hawaii. Bakers in town make the cakes with different layers of berries, or cloudberries are frozen for hours at home, only to serve as a compote with leipäjuusto (squeaky cheese). (Kerry 2016.) A Berry Festival is organized every year during the first week of August. In the festival, people can sell berries, while participants can follow daily program, suitable for kids and adults. This event has attracted thousands of people to visit annually (Holiday-in-Lapland 2018.) Fourth, there are quite many outdoor tracks for people who love hiking to go to, which would give the hikers amazing nature views and freshly clean air (Rohkea Ranua 2018). In addition, fishing is also one of the favorite activities to do. Having the same rights as berry-picking, everyone can go fishing freely (Ympäristöministeriö 2017). Fishers can go fishing in Simojärvi or Simojoki.

Ranua is one of the pilot destinations for the "Destination Experience Development Model"- project, and therefore, its tourism aspects are analyzed strongly. Ranua has many potentials to develop to meet the demands from tourists and travelers. In addition, as the high number of tourists are coming to Lapland, it is time for Ranua to develop itself to be a touristic city. Rovaniemi has witnessed an increase of overnight stays, as the number was 53,800 in November 2017, and throughout last year, the total overnight registered was 517,000 (Daily Finland 2018). The number has reached its peak and is expected to be stable. As the number is rising, the demands are also higher. Ranua Wildlife Zoo is expected to be even more well-known. Therefore, it is a priority for the municipality of Ranua to shift the focus out of Wildlife Zoo, that they could offer something else which is still unique but interesting enough.

## 6.2 Visual Content Situation in Ranua

### 6.2.1 Analysis on Visual Appearance of Ranua Online

An analysis on the current situation of visual appearance in Ranua is much needed, as this helps to overlook how Ranua has been performing with its content marketing strategies, which in the end would assist in developing future planning. A current situation analysis is defined as a transparent and succinct review at the present state of a brand or a business. The analysis examines on different factors in order to formulate marketing strategies. There are several ways of analysis, but the most popular one is the method of analyzing the Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT). (WiseGeek 2018.) A SWOT analysis is carried out in order to evaluate not only the potentials but also the risks when considering the applicability of the subject into a destination. SWOT analysis has been evaluated as a successful method of analyzing current situation due to its function and nature. The model allows organizations to identify promptly both internal factors linked to internal operations and external factors connected to its evolving environment. SWOT analysis is also very simple to understand and to use, which the public can easily communicate to it. (Seth 2015, 5.)

Table 3 below focuses on identifying factors that affects the content marketing situation of Ranua. The analysis concerns to the content related to photos and videos.

Table 3. SWOT Analysis on Current Content Marketing of Ranua

<b>Strength</b>	<b>Weakness</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Good use of content from professional photographers or UGC.</li> <li>- Content from website (visitranua.fi) is easily-orientated and informative.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some of the photo captions are too simple and not informative (using emoticons only).</li> <li>- The use of language is confusing. Some posts were written only in Finnish.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Good focus on the nature theme, which has been mainly used for visual content.</li> <li>- Effective utilization of high-quality content on social media channels and the websites.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is no official video channel, only vlogs or videos from travelers or travel agents.</li> <li>- Budget to develop content seems to be limited</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Receive marketing supports from the DMO in Rovaniemi.</li> <li>- Earn supports from the Destination Experience Development Model project which is in cooperation between universities and the government of Ranua.</li> <li>- Then network in Ranua is rather small, thus allowing the destination to be easier to manage the content.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Competitors from rising destinations, which are also relatively small in Finland and international market.</li> <li>- Concerns involving the real living conditions of the animals at the Ranua Zoo.</li> <li>- New trends are rising at a quick pace, which demands Ranua to instantly catch up with them.</li> </ul>

### 6.2.2 Target Audience

Having a target audience is important to the development of Ranua marketing strategies, because it assists in creating consistency in order to be more appealing to the specific groups of audience. According to Visit Finland, there are 6 main target groups, which are: City Breakers, Comfort Seekers, Nature Wonder Hunters, Nature Explorers, Activity Enthusiast and Authentic Lifestyle Seeker. As observed from the current content posted on social media channels, the target audience can be recognized from the last three groups. The table 4 below will explain in detail the traits of these three target groups, in order to establish the common characteristics of travelers whom Ranua should put more of its focus on.

Table 4. Typical Traits of Target Groups

	<b>Nature Explorers</b>	<b>Activity Enthusiast</b>	<b>Authentic Lifestyle Seeker</b>
<b>Way of searching information &amp; inspired</b>	Use online travel sites and blogs	YouTube	Online magazine
<b>Who to travel with</b>	Partner	Friends or family	Partner
<b>Travel time</b>	Travel more during winter than summer	Summer or spring time	Summer
<b>Interests</b>	Experience nature parks, forests, lakes, northern lights, and midnight sun.	Hiking, wild animals, swimming, husky or winter activities	Local lifestyle, events or culinary experiences
<b>Drivers</b>	Peaceful, quiet and safe	Safe, secure, idyllic	Safe, secure, being educated and interacting with local life and history

From the table 4 above, it can be seen that these groups share a lot of traits in common, which can be combined to create the main customer type for Ranua. Table 5 highlights the common characteristics that builds up an ideal traveler that Ranua is looking for.

Table 5. Traits of Ideal Traveler to Ranua.



<b>Traits</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b><i>Way of searching information and inspired</i></b>	Use of Internet, with access to social medias, blog, online magazine or newspapers
<b><i>Who to travel with</i></b>	Partner(s)
<b><i>Travel time</i></b>	Winter (sometimes summer)
<b><i>Interests</i></b>	Activities related to nature and local life
<b><i>Drives</i></b>	Safe, peaceful, entertainment/education

It is quite impressive that different tourism-related companies in Ranua has concentrated on highlighting the strength of Ranua, which is nature, on their content. However, there should be more content to emphasize on being a destination which is friendly for visitors travelling in pair or group. The content should also promote the ability of Ranua on bringing different values to travelers, which visitors would get to fulfill during their visit.

### 6.2.3 Destination Competitiveness

Destination competitiveness is increasingly important, especially to regions relying heavily on tourism. To be competitive enough, a destination should be able to surpass at least other similar destinations (Tsai, Song & Wong 2009, 524). In addition, according to Enright & Newton (2005, 340), a destination is considered to be competitive if it has the ability to attract and satisfy its potential travelers. Destination competitiveness is important to a destination, because it shows how a destination performs against its other key competitors (Kozak & Rimmington 1999, 274). Furthermore, Hanafiah, Hemdi and Ahmad (2015) stated that competitiveness is one of the essential factors in tourism industry as it assists in tourism development, destination management and strategies planning (Perna, Custodio & Oliveira 2018, 21). In this thesis project, the focus is on the competitiveness based on content marketing, in the perspectives of photos and videos. Other destinations were benchmarked accordingly to the following determinants in order to compare between Ranua and the chosen destinations: coherence, creativeness, honest, quality and style.

Even though Ranua is rather a small destination, in compared to other tourism regions in Finland, it still has tough competitions to compete with. One of the prominent examples is Salla, a municipality that is more up-north than Ranua. Visit Salla has used its geographical location to make it a special slogan, which is: In the Middle of Nowhere. The slogan awakes the curiosity and interest in travelers, which draw them to check the destination via internet. The content created by Visit Salla is also consistent enough, especially the visual content. Based from the website, it is likely to say that the web navigation is very simple while still able to maintain the pleasantness for the eye to see. Outside of Finland, some destinations can be named as competitions for Ranua are: Luleå in Swedish Lapland, or Tromsø in Northern Norway.

## 7 CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR RANUA

### 7.1 Importance of Content Marketing in Promoting Ranua

Content marketing has been stated to be important by the interviewees regarding to the promotion of Ranua online. Content is meant to be informative, to inspire and to be able to provide motivation for people to book their trips they always wanted, and that is what the interviews think of, when referring to content marketing. As Ranua is a small destination, it is essential to utilize content marketing effectively, in order to increase its visibility to the potential travelers. How the marketers can bring those factors into the materials so as the audience can relate to or can interact with would require careful planning. However, once it is done effectively, the results would be undeniably positive.

The recognition of the importance of content marketing plays an essential part in creating the marketing strategies for Ranua. This would help the marketers to carefully plan the content materials from the beginning of the five stages of travel. Captivating the audience since the first touchpoint during the first stage results in their lingering to complete all the five stages. Moreover, as Ranua offers safari companies and attractions to tourists, which some would require bookings or sales, the use of content marketing can help drive the sales indirectly. Creating consistent content across different channels can help visitors be more attentive and keener on these activities, which leads them to book or pay and raise the sales of local companies.

### 7.2 Finding Right Target Audience

Regarding to the target audience that Ranua needs to focus on, it has been acknowledged by the interviewees that most of the visitors are domestic travelers, as the destination is still unknown to the international market. This leads to the fact that the marketers of Ranua should work on attracting more people from other countries, which have the potential of visiting Ranua more than others. The content that Visit Ranua has produced is mainly written in both Finnish and English, which enables both domestic and international guests to understand

what the content is about. As the destination is more favored by the domestic travelers, Ranua should focus more on the international side. English language in social media or website needs to be used more frequently. A multilingual use could be proposed in order to attract more customers who do not understand English much. A great example is the use of Chinese in the website, as there are more and more Chinese coming to visit Lapland. This not only brings the personalization element to the tourists, but also makes the tourists feel more at ease and willing to look further into the website. As international guests are more unaware of Ranua, the destination can reach to the local companies, or even people from the villages to be involving in the tourism development. This would help travelers to feel more assured and more welcoming when traveling to Ranua. These can also be considered as target audience in an indirect approach.

[...] we are quite domestic destination. We have a lot of Finnish travelers, so we need to publish always in Finnish and English also. But we are trying to reach the European and British customers at the moment because, well, they are coming here. And also, the Asians like: Singaporean customers. [...]. (S2)

Our target can also be company, entrepreneurs, travel companies and maybe others, which are indirect target groups. Maybe some kind of bus, taxi companies or something like that. (S1)

The most mentioned factors when referring to content creation for Ranua is either nature experiences or the way of how Finnish people would live in Ranua. Foremost of all, it is important to demonstrate also the safeness of Ranua via the content. In short, it is advised to focus on what Ranua can offer to the travelers and deliver those in the content, in a way that it is attractive, yet connecting to the audience. This indicates that it is unanimously agreed that the content is aimed for audience with characteristics that fits with the findings previously from table 5. Following the traits in table 5, marketers would be now able to address what type of visual content they should focus on creating, what they should include and how to make the content more attracting to the travelers.

Generally, finding the right target audience is one of the most important tasks in order to create effective marketing strategies for Ranua. Attracting the right audience can give the destination the advantage of understanding what to create and how to create the content. Moreover, the international market can help Ranua expose its name more widely, rather than being known only among Finnish travelers. This could be a challenge as marketers need to spend time researching on what the travelers desire to do. Along the same line, the marketers in Ranua need to also consider what values the tourists would get, other than entertainment or education as this has not been well-noticed during the interviews.

### 7.3 Using Online Channels Effectively

There are various types of online channels nowadays that people use, but to find those that are most relevant for Ranua to focus and manage is not an easy task. When building marketing strategies, it is worth to notice that Ranua marketers need to find the signals indicating which channels would benefit them the most in promoting. This would take different resources to conduct, but by planning well-ahead, it would give the marketers the perspectives of how to do it effectively on the chosen channels. As Visit Ranua is the DMO of the region, its main task is to market the area to the potential visitors through different channels online. At the moment, Visit Ranua is focusing on social media (Facebook and Instagram) and its main website (<https://visitranua.fi/>). On its website, the information is more general but informative, and they are made in long text. However, it is planned that Visit Ranua will reduce the amount of information and focus more on the visuality on the website. The use of social media and websites indicates that the Ranua marketers are now focusing on more the online environment, which fits with the trait of the audience for Ranua. Furthermore, the use of different channels can help the marketers easier to share it easily in-between those channels. Their realization of rearranging their information on the website also shows the effort of approaching the audience in a simpler yet effective way. The information should be focused on bringing what truly is important to the visitors, along with the alluring visual content to maximize the chance of grapping the attention from the audience.

[...] you really need to build your marketing strategies in a way that you focus on the most relevant channels you are using, and you take care of them. And also, strategies that are easy for you to run, when you think of what it takes for you to learn in a destination. The resources are actually a wide concept which takes about the money, the know-how and the knowledge to use it, and the person. (S3)

[...] I think about the social media, [...], about the life and experiences made or told with photos and videos and text. But then, [...] like we have in Visit Ranua's webpage, we have the longer texts, which are quite informative, and they are quite general also. (S2)

In addition, Visit Ranua is planning to focus on bringing the online booking system to their marketing strategies, which would help drive the sales of local companies and bring higher return on investment (ROI). ROI is "a performance measure used to evaluate the efficiency of an investment or compare the efficiency of a number of different investments" (Chen 2019). By creating such enticing and attractive content, Visit Ranua is expecting to drive the sales up and assist the local companies in getting more buyers. One of the reasons why travel destination should use content marketing is to help the sales, and by optimizing the booking system into the website, it would genuinely generate great sales.

[...] we are going to focus on online booking system. [...] we can work with the content more towards the buying and booking directly. We will have the product cards, which customers can buy, and we will have accommodation booking in our webpage also so maybe in the future, there will be not many texts as what we have now. (S2)

Engaging with the audience is an important part in the age of digital nowadays, which would require a two-way interaction. By engaging actively online, not only marketers in Ranua would be able to understand their own potential customers, but also, they can assess what type of content would be interesting enough. It comes handy to know what the clients are looking for, because this helps the destination to be more proactive and to look like they are the best guide to trust.

Moreover, it brings a positive value to the customers that the destination is always aware of what they want and be ready to answer their questions. The marketers somehow need to be flexible and quickly adapt to different customer groups, and what channels they are using the most in order to focus on that and increase the engagement. In the online environment, the engagement usually takes place either on social media or on email. Marketers can interact with their audience by liking their posts on social media, comment and even, repost the content. When it comes to questions, the important thing is that the questions should not be left unanswered for a long time. An immediate answer would be beneficial, or on the same day. It is also recommended that if the questions come outside of working hours, the automatic answers stating to get back to the questions should be used.

When you get some messages: email or Facebook or Instagram, you should answer, at least same day when the message comes. Or when you send email, many organizations have this ready-message that they will get back to the sender in a few days. (S1)

On Instagram, I usually answer them during the day, so not immediately, but the same day that they sent me the message. Also, same on Facebook. Sometimes it happens that they send me the message so late, so I try to avoid being on phone after eight because I have all the accounts on my personal phone. [...] I will answer them the next day. (S2)

When it comes to digital age, we need to be more flexible to understand different customer groups and the channels they are using. (S3)

One interesting point to mention is to establish different customer profiles as pointed out by interviewee #3. The customer profiles can include: where they from, their background information, what kind of characteristics they show and what they actually need based from the questions they ask or from the activities they have done. This can be done by the destination marketers through networking with local travel companies or tourist info in Ranua Zoo. The reason behind this is due to the difference in technology use accordingly to ages and the countries they live. The data collected from different companies should share the

same purpose, which is to help the destination marketers to know which online channel they should focus on and how to approach them appropriately. In addition, from these customer profiles, the marketers can find the common components that can be used to assist in targeting the right audience.

On the whole, there are many online channels nowadays for Ranua, but the focus should remain on social media (Facebook and Instagram) and website. However, marketers need to start considering what channels the target audience could use or could become highly used in the future based on the weak signals they get. The amount of information on these channels should not be too much in order to avoid the overwhelmed feeling from the audience. Keeping it short and answering to what the audience needs are beneficial. These channels should also be able to integrate with the online booking system with the purpose of increasing the chance of raising the sales across different channels. Finally, attentive engagement needs to be done regularly to maintain the interest from the customers.

#### 7.4 How to Plan Content Materials for Marketing

Content materials requires a careful consideration and planning, as Ranua marketers need to know where to find the resources for the content and how to make it in a captivating approach to attract more visitors to Ranua. The conducted interview revealed the different manners for the marketers to search for what the audience would want to see on the marketing process. According to respondent #2 from Visit Ranua, search words are checked from the google ads to see what the travelers would usually look for when travelling to Ranua or Lapland. Another method is to seek assistance from the help of the cooperating university, Lapland University of Applied Sciences. The school conducts researches on what can draw tourists to Ranua based on what the destination can offer. On top of these, it is quite interesting to find out that Visit Ranua has been keeping records of the questions they receive from the incoming travelers. Visit Ranua can plan the content based on these questions, in order to get the interest from the travelers immediately without the need of asking again for the same thing. Experts from the field are interviewed in order for Visit Ranua to provide accurate information



and tips. The content is to be published for the time that would be the best for the specific activity. By showing to the travelers that their questions can be answered before getting asked, this would impress the travelers, help them imagine Ranua better. Besides, the marketers in Ranua would become truly the experts that the tourists can trust and rely on.

In spite of the mentioned methods, more could be done to look for the content resources. Ranua marketers can ask local companies to cooperate with them. When tourists ask questions or make requests to those companies, they can collect and forward the questions to Ranua marketers. By doing that, the marketers can get a more detailed and bigger range of content to analyze. The online feedback form is also one good way to collect ideas for content, as it allows travelers to answer truthfully and honestly without the fear of being known. The feedback form can assist in finding more about what should be developed more and what new ideas which Ranua can adopt to integrate to the development of its tourism.

The content needs to be planned according to attentive research on how audience would be appealed to content. For example, interviewee #3 has pointed out viewers are willing to look on websites for 3-6 seconds, which is a pretty short amount of time. The impression on these first few seconds are crucial to the possibility of the customers to linger in the website, thus creating more time for them to look deeper into what the destination can offer and raise interest. These short seconds are considered to be a touchpoint during either the dreaming or researching stages, and it could affect the journey of the travelers during the five stages. If a destination fails to impress, the audience would turn away and not continue to proceed to next stage, which results in the unsuccessful attempt of getting tourists to Ranua. Therefore, these first few seconds need to make an impression with inspiring yet entertaining visual content in order to stay in the mind of the audience longer and let them willingly look for more.

When you make some content, you need to captivate your audience with your pictures in short tiny few seconds of clip. [...] When you do the manuscript for your video and what you want to have there for a short

moment, you really need to know your customers and at those moments in your video clips. (S3)

When planning content for marketing, marketers in Ranua should consider how the content can get the people to relate. Creating the content in the sense of storytelling way is recommended, as it can get the attention and raise the emotion from the audience to build up the excitement. Visit Ranua has adapted a method that uses google calendar to see the events or holidays happening in Ranua and Finland. By collaborating with House of Lapland, they can get articles to use for their online channels while making content relating to the events or holidays. However, for long-term success, marketers can create content that tell the audience about Ranua in a format of a story that relates strongly to the five stages of travel. When audience see these visual storytelling content throughout the stages, they would be more fascinated and more willing to choose Ranua. One best way to create storytelling content is by using UGC. All of the interviewees have acknowledged that the use of UGC is needed for the marketing strategies. Not only the UGC can generate the enthusiasm of the customers, but it is also showing that Ranua appreciates the works of the travelers and reuse it in the marketing. This makes the travelers feel like they are a part of the story and become more engaged with the destination, thus increase their loyalty and motivate them to either revisit the place or recommend the destination to other people. However, not all of the UGC is well-polished or made in align with the style that Visit Ranua has established, thus extra works of correcting the colors or the quality are needed to make the content more consistent.

[...] I think it (UGC) gives a realistic and correct picture about the destination. (S1)

I really love it (UGC). Like every time, in Instagram [...] when people tag us, I always try to share it. I try to see if the photos are in good quality and I always like them and comment on the photos if they have tag of Visit Ranua there. [...] if you can see if it's phone photos, there might be a chance that I don't publish. Because we have really nice photos that we can buy from

locals, so we have quite a lot of photographers here who's tagged us every day, so we have photos to choose from. (S2)

It's about that how you can activate the customer to interact and be part of the designing process. The more you get the person to be involved, the more of the loyalty to you and feel that they are part of the destination brand, for example. So that's truly important. (S3)

The content can also be used to educate and raise awareness the incoming travelers, others than just entertaining them. Ranua Zoo is the leading brand in the region, and the marketers should somehow utilize the animals in the zoo into the general tourism development. There could be content on how to behave when visiting the zoo or the areas that need extra care. The culture background of the travelers varies a lot, and the way they behave to their visiting country depend on that. This not only prevents tourists from spoiling the experience of others by behaving badly, but also helps them not to embarrass themselves. Traveling is not just about relaxing and having good times, it is also about learning new things and respecting the country. This certainly adds to the values of choosing Ranua as a destination. Likewise, as Ranua is a natural and peaceful place, it should also be shown in the content about reserving the nature. Environmental issues have been raised during the past few years, and the Arctic life is getting weaker due to global warming. The issue needs to be addressed in the content of Ranua in order to show people what needed to preserve and to let them feel they can play an essential role in helping the area maintain its good quality.

One good point during the interview that was not brought into the theoretical research in detail was the reflection of the truth and authenticity when it comes to visual content. It is highlighted that visual content should tell the audience what is going on in Ranua, rather than beautifying it with outdated photos and hiding the truth away from the tourists. The weather, for example, is a natural phenomenon and it is hard to predict when the snow would fall. It is not advised to advertise Ranua with beautiful snow sceneries while in reality, everything is all still muddy or dry. In addition, the excessive use of editing or filtering could also ruin the experience of the travelers when they face the harsh truth. Even though

it brings to the content a more outstanding look, however, it will be unreal when people come and do not see what they have expected for. This is a task of Ranua with content marketing to downplay the high expectation that tourists may have from what they see on internet from bloggers or travel photographers. By doing this, such negative feedbacks can be avoided.

You have to remember that you can't photoshop the picture, you have to keep the realistic pictures to travelers. The photos should be up-to-date, reasonable and not well-photoshopped. (S1)

One thing I've been thinking about is filtering photos, what's real and not real. [...]. I think when I follow someone and see a nice picture, and now I see there are too much pinks or blues or lights, which are not naturally-based, I can't like it. [...]. So be honest, and don't use too much filtering.

Essentially, the content for marketing purposes needs doing carefully and thoroughly. The resources for content should be looked attentively from the audience because this would help to attract more and more people to take interest in Ranua visually. It is truly necessary for marketers to understand how the people would get motivated for a content so as they can find the best way to make the content reach to the audience in a tempting way. Once these have been figured out, Ranua marketers can start to make the content more responsive by using storytelling effect and creating different values that would make the travelers feel more connected to the destination.

## 7.5 Creating Visual Content for Ranua

### 7.5.1 Strategic Suggestions for Photo Content

Drawing on the importance of photo content in marketing, all of the interviewees stated that photos play an essential and relevant role in promoting a destination. The promoting photos are able to give out clear messages of what the marketers want to tell the audience, hence improving the communication between Ranua and the people. Most importantly, the audience should be able to feel and relate

to the pictures, as to make them more convincing and enticing. Moreover, the consistency is not limited within the style of the pictures. It continues also in other matters, for example, the hashtags, especially when Ranua has different companies taking on responsibility of promoting the area. This not only guarantees to be more memorable for the travelers, but also it helps them easier to find what they need via the common hashtags. Fortunately, this is what has been doing in Ranua so far, as this is a rather small destination with limited amount of local companies. Hence, the management of consistency between the companies is much less stressful and challenging than the big destination.

When creating photo content, choosing the right tones or moods should be taken into consideration. It is revealed from the interviews that the positive feeling should be given to the audience when they look at the photos in order to create such impressive looks because it can enhance the picture to be more alluring. Photos with scary feeling should be avoided. The common ground for the tone is set within the natural environment. This is due to the mixture of cool and warm colors in the nature-focused photos as it can help the viewer feel more energetic and more peaceful. The nature environment can take place in different activities: camp fire, a hike, or simply just a night out watching the Aurora, with the appearance of the human figure in the picture. The human factor could create the desiring feeling from the audience when looking at the photos. Notwithstanding, the legal issue relating to content with small children needs to be taken into consideration when uploading the content across the online channels, especially when the GDPR regulations are strict on the matter. The seasonality factor should also be considered, as each season in Lapland brings different feeling, mood and tone to the area, thus affecting the content. Marketers in Ranua should retain the consistency of the tone or mood throughout the different stages of travel. As there are many forms of pictures nowadays, it is suggested that marketers can create photo content that can activate different senses. Cinematography (motion-picture photography) or photos with sound can be applied to bring more of the experiences.

I like different kind of moods. Of course, always that kind of which can give a positive image. (S1)

We always try to use photos of nature and [...] we usually have them, the photos of activities that you can see it's done in the nature and there's like forest around so there's no hurry in the photo. [...] I love photos that locals have taken like they are alone by the camp fire because they are, like, you can how safe it is in the nature if people can go there alone. (S2)

You should consider the season and do a really good brief. [...] it'd be really effective to get some other senses to deliver with that picture. We cannot do it by smelling, but maybe with sounds or just some words to explain, how would you relate that picture to a person in their normal lives. (S3)

It should be noticed also that the caption of the photo is underestimated when creating content. Caption is to help the audience get more understanding on the visual material, while it helps to tell story to people. However, the caption should not be too long, unless if it is information that need careful explanation. The good amount of caption ranges between 2 to 4 sentences. This depends though on what type of the photos are. For example, if the photo is merely showing Auroras and admiring or showing its beauty, there is no need for 2-sentence caption, as it can be expressed in the length of 1 sentence. Foremost of all, the caption should be reflective to the truth. This is the job of Ranua to make sure the information is legitimate and reflecting what is going on. It would be more effective to give the "ugly" reality to the travelers by visual content with caption explaining. It is recommended that photos with detailed caption should be included in the researching, dreaming and booking stage. These are the three stages that the tourists seek for information about Ranua in a more specified way, other than just to get impressed. Moreover, the caption should be customer-centric and is able to tell people what Ranua can offer and what the destination can bring to the tourists.

The quality of the photo content is stated to be relevant when considering how to attract the tourists visually. The quality affects significantly the experiences. If the photo is in bad quality with blurriness or noises occurring, the feelings and messages cannot be shown clearly, which results in the lack of interest towards

the destination. This is truly important to the marketers in Ranua in developing the destination marketing-wise. The online environment reduces the photo quality a lot, therefore, careful attention should be paid so that the uploaded content could retain the sharpness, the colors and the clarity. When creating photo content, it is recommended to have the photo exported in the form that is able to fit its quality with the requirement from the online environment, for example, Facebook or Instagram. These two, which are the most used by Visit Ranua at the moment, tend to decrease the quality of the picture a lot if the exported content does not follow the guidelines. With the quick development of the story feature on both Facebook and Instagram, the quality should maintain also high when posting a story. Story feature is being favored by many persons and showing the content to the story can help the destination to be more visible and different from others. Ranua should utilize this function more often in order to make itself more active on online environment. Consequently, when considering the five travel stages, photo quality needs to be steady throughout the process, and Ranua marketers should make sure that the quality consistency goes through in all stages.

The cooperation work between Ranua with professional photographers and bloggers is well-noticed. According to the findings, the participants agreed that photographers are needed in order to create aesthetic photos, as they are specialized for it. They have the skills, techniques and the know-how that can help the photos of the destination stand out more in the eyes of the audience. The photographers help bring out the different perspectives to the destinations by giving their artistic touches through creative angles. Bloggers are also the important partners for the destination. They are usually influencers that have a lot of people following them, thus making them valuable to Ranua. They tell exactly what they have experienced during the trip and they can be considered as the promotion (PR) persons for the destination. Travelers tend to trust the bloggers more, as they reflect their feelings more genuinely. Moreover, both photographers and bloggers help the destination itself in discovering new places that have not been identified as an attraction to the travelers. What could be done is to reuse their content as part of the marketing. This allows both the photographers and the bloggers to contribute to Ranua and also, it encourages

others to do the same. Hence, these types of cooperation match perfectly with the sharing or dreaming stage. However, problems occur regarding to the cooperation. The lack of big bloggers interested in Ranua make it difficult for Ranua to promote themselves via bloggers. Additionally, the budget of Visit Ranua is not well-funded yet, which results in limitation when working with either professional photographers or bloggers.

I think it's important, because, for example, photographers are specialists for it. They can take real pictures, like good ones, from the destination. Also, these bloggers, they tell what they have experienced in the destination. I think it's good we have that kind of travelers and they are ready to come here. (S1).

We have that in our budget that we're going to work with some bloggers or influencers. [...] We invite everybody here but people like, not the big names, have not asked to come here. (S2)

They will be telling the actual feeling that they feel, and we are allowing that, so we are not trying to tell, for example, the bloggers something else what we are willing to tell. [...] There are certain attractions, we're supposed, are the attractions. How about these persons who enter there, and how do they get the information of other interests that might be there and we are not aware of. (S3)

It is important for marketers in Ranua to create effective strategies relating to photo content that can be used to assist the marketing process of promoting a destination. Photo content is one of the essential factors that intrigues the travelers to travel to Ranua. It is worth to point out that what has been analyzed above is applicable to make the content for the five stages of travel. By giving high-quality, positive and inspiring-toned photos, with short but memorable captions, they can hit the multiple and different touchpoints productively. The beauty and the realness affect the feeling of the audience, resulting in the emphasis on working with both photographers and travel bloggers. Marketers in Ranua also need to pay detail attention of how to advertise the content in a



proper way. Not only do the photos quality need to be fit with the requirements, but also, they should be optimized for the SEO, with details to be filled such as: alt tag, sitemaps, or the tags.

### 7.5.2 Proposing Strategies for Video Content

Regarding to what the role the video is in promoting a destination, the interviewees acknowledge its critical role. When promoting a destination such as Ranua, the use of video is undeniably needed. Videos can perform in a livelier way with movements while it can provide the audiences a more flexible view on different angles at same time. During the dreaming stage, the traveler does not only look at the photos, but also search for the video content. These videos can provide them a clearer picture to how Ranua would look like, thus, building up the expectation. It takes a lot of resources to create a video.

There was a small discussion on the resources for video content. While one interviewee mentioned that money is the big issue, the other stated that it was the knowhow, the knowledge and the hours one person had to spend is the bigger matter to worry about. Also, the limited amount of companies working for Ranua has been discussed about referring to the possibility of focusing on what type content, what message and what channel to be used for consistency. From the theoretical background researches, it can be implied that the resources lie in both of what has been mentioned above. Without one or the other, it would be very challenging for Ranua to create a video content that is interesting enough to be the visual magnet in the eye of the audience. Additionally, because Ranua is a small destination, the marketers with the local companies should agree together what they want to show to the tourists. The channels should not vary too much, otherwise it would be difficult to manage them. YouTube is the biggest video platform nowadays, and the use of YouTube regarding to promotion is highly-recommended. If the Ranua marketers manage to optimize their videos well on YouTube, their rankings would be better, thus maximizing the visibility to the viewers on YouTube.

Videos are the best tool to create storytelling content, as it allows the viewers to see the story in a motion way, which benefits them from easily understanding it. As one of the typical traits of an ideal travelers is to travel with partner(s) and focus on nature and local life activities, it is convenient that the videos are in a happy tone and able to express the feeling of a destination for a group traveler. The family-friendly feeling is mentioned to be what Visit Ranua would want to work on. However, a mysterious tone could also be applied into the promotional video, because it can be triggering. The mysterious theme does not give away everything to the travelers, thus leaving them space to imagine and the desire to visit Ranua to discover more. One different point of view when discussing about the nature and local life activities was indicated in the interview, which was the reindeer husbandry and the stories of people living in the Ranua village. Interview #3 acknowledged the interest of having the video in Ranua about the reindeer and their daily lives, which is not only entertaining but also educating. On top of that, the people in Ranua villages should be used also in the marketing content. They are those who live in the region for many years and they certainly have stories to tell. These stories are rather simple but very close to the normal life, which people can relate with. These are indeed good materials to make the video content of Ranua more outstanding. It is simple, very much storytelling, able to feature different feelings and each character can be different from others. The utilization of the people in Ranua villages would bring a much more effect to connect the audience with the destination, while showing the authenticity and originality of Ranua, other than the nature and the landscape. The use of storytelling effect requires to have during the all five stages of travel.

The length of the promotional videos is the topic that received three different answers. The first interviewee claimed that 1-3 minutes would be ideal, while the second and third interviewee stated that one minute and 30-40 seconds respectively. This is also in contrast with the finding from theoretical background, as it was researched that 2 minutes would be the best time duration. The video length is rather a difficult issue, as the ideal watch time always changes due to the nature of human. Making the videos shorter and shorter seem to be now a more effective way of promoting, as viewers tend to spend less time on a video if they do not get interested in the first few 6-10 seconds. The short videos are able

not to make people get tired or lose interest. The shorter but well-edited and well menu-scripted the videos are, the more chances people would be willing to stay and watch. Ranua has a lot to offer to its potential travelers, so how to have most of its best into short videos is truly a test to the marketers and the video-makers themselves. It is better to have the videos made by professional video-makers who have the ability of making shots, editing and exporting. The length of the video could range in between from 50 seconds – 1 minutes. However, if there is a need to show more than that, then it would be optimal to make many other small videos that do not exceed that amount of time. This way, viewers can see more, while not getting bored of them as the videos are rather short and descriptive. This is essential for promotion videos used during the dreaming or researching stage, as Ranua needs to make good first impressions. The viewers would be more willing to move to the next stages once their attention has been grabbed.

How the videos are made depends on how Ranua would want it to be, though it is more recommended that casually-made videos such as from YouTube creators themselves should be utilized more. The professional video-makers have the ability to create such amazing videos that can bring the best of Ranua natures into motion. The quality and the editing are also much more excellent. Moreover, they are capable of making consistent videos accordingly to the need of the destination, with high quality as they have the tools and devices for it. On the other hand, the problem is because they might miss out something which is quite small and unnoticed but have a great effect. This is where the casually-made video shines. For example, the sound is one of that. The sound of the nature when shooting landscape video mostly is ignored quite a lot, or is not used effectively, even in professionally-made videos. The sound adds more depth and a more authentic feeling. As Ranua wants to focus on the nature-based content a lot, the sound is the important ingredient that activates the hearing sense in a more buoyant way. However, the quality can be quite insufficient as most of the videos are made via the phone. The matter now lies in the marketers to have a sensor-oriented ability, in order to follow what sense should be the priority in promotion videos. At the moment, Ranua is now facing problem that their travelers do not record video as often as wished, which results in the lack of UGV to share. What the destination could do is to encourage people more to make

video by themselves. Holding a competition or sharing more UGV on the online channels are a few of the way to do such.

If the company is making it, I think it should be professional, but of course, travelers make their owns. [...] I think when tourists make videos or pictures, it's different than professionally-made. It's about the feeling (S1)

The nature here is so nice and unique, so I don't like videos that have people in it just saying and not seeing the nature. I really want to have it other way around, so people or anyone making those videos, they would not focus too much on themselves. (S2)

If a professional is really wise, he/she would take that (the sound) because it's a new kind of massive effect to get the feeling more. So, it's really difficult which is important, but the question is more sensor-oriented to follow what the senses are that we can use when giving that. (S3)

Between hiring a professional or a blogger to collaborate, it is most chosen that a professional is needed. With the help of a professional video-maker, the video content of Ranua is guaranteed to have on high quality with great cut. However, it is important for Ranua to have a voice of what should be in the video. They should be part of the script-writing in order to make sure the video could represent the best of Ranua as a tourism destination. In addition, there is a need of having strategies on how to keep the knowledge of the professional within Ranua, so it does not go away with them. In brief explanation, this means that Ranua marketers need to know how they can keep the know-how for the future need. These professionals bring their works to Ranua, but as the people who are a part of the region, the marketers need to obtain their skills in a way that the money does not go to vain.

To hire a professional. (S1)

Both. I want to have myself in the promotion video, in a way that Visit Ranua, the board, we are different companies in the board, and me, we can have a

say of what should be in the content video, or what should be in the video. [...] Also, the bloggers, they are like from their point of views, so I think it's also important to have that kind of video made and available. [...] I think it's that you can't catch the uniqueness of the place if you have the people who are like in the place, telling about what they want to tell and share.

The content of Ranua also for marketing purposes, so they need to have professional. But there needs to be a strategy, how to be in a way that the knowledge stays in the region and it's not going away with the professional. This is the problem when we use professional. They have the knowledge and skills, and we pay, and they go away. So how to brain export. Using professionals is important but you have to be tactical and get some information of the professionalism within the region. (S3)

As same as photos, marketers in Ranua need to make effective strategies for promoting the destination with video content. The video content can be quite challenging to make, but this does not mean Ranua cannot utilize this unique type of content in its marketing strategies. Promotion videos can be either made by a professional or just casually-made by travel vloggers, depending on what messages and values the marketers in Ranua would want to bring out. The videos can be either happy or mysterious, but they should bring the best of what Ranua can offer to show the audience. The little details need to be paid attention in order to activate the sense. Most of all, it should not be too long, as 50 second to 1 minute long would be the best for promotion videos to be.

## 8 CONCLUSION

From the theoretical framework and the conducted interviews, the thesis research managed to reach its goal, which was to introduce strategies for Ranua to promote itself based on photo and video content. These strategies are able to be used for the development of Ranua as a tourism destination, and they can somehow be applied also to other smaller regions whose resources are on the same level as Ranua's.

The use of photo and video content is important to the marketing process, especially considering the online environment as they are easy to share across multiple channels. Drawing on the practices of Ranua, Facebook and Instagram should continue to be the two dominant social media platforms to use, with the use of public websites also. Marketers in Ranua should consider how to affect the multiple touchpoints in these channels. These touchpoints can be audience engagement, the amount of information or the integration with a booking system in order to make the booking process easier.

The conducted interviews revealed that Ranua is indeed looking for more international guests, which is why the focus should be aimed on foreign travelers. The content is expressed to be understood universally, with the use of English language more often. In addition, the analyses from the interviews indicates what traits of a typical traveler in Ranua are. The identified characteristics assuredly help Ranua marketers to determine what types of group they should target on, while the customer profile should assist them in finding more specific aspects on their own audience.

Based on the researches and interview analysis, it can be noted indirectly that storytelling takes an important role in both the photo and video content. The storytelling factor needs to be considered when creating content for Ranua, which is beneficial for the destination to stay consistent and relevant to the audience. Stories can be anything, from nature of Ranua to the local lifestyle in the Ranua village, as long as they get the people connected and bring values to them. These stories were recommended to be expressed clearly in the content. They also are

able to offer something different or unique to the audience. The storytelling effect is advised to be present in all five stages of travel.

In general, different aspects of photo and video content were studied in this thesis research. In order to create useful strategies for Ranua, both need to have a consistent setting on their tones or mood, a steadily high quality and focus on various elements in nature or local life that could interest people. The information on these content, video length or photo caption, remains short but descriptive. Both contents can be made by the professionals or UGC/UGV, but marketers need to make the content align with each other. Moreover, these contents were researched to be present also during the five stages of travel, along with the storytelling effect. Their combination could enhance the visuals of Ranua while improving its visibility, especially to the international market.

Nevertheless, there are several challenges for Ranua in respect to conducting the strategies in Ranua. Due to the small scale of the destination, the budget is somehow in short, thus reducing the chances to make collaboration or assist the marketers in getting the know-how on creating photos or videos themselves. Moreover, as Ranua Zoo is the leading tourist attraction in Ranua, it might overshadow the attempts to bring other elements to travelers.

The inclusion of having non-tourism stakeholders in the research such as the local village people in Ranua, gas or bus company indeed needs to be taken account of. These stakeholders do not relate to tourism, however, their roles in helping the destination grow more international should also be studied in more detail. Conversely, the scope of the thesis project had to be limited within the Ranua's tourism players. Consequently, for future research on tourism development, even with content marketing, these stakeholders should be taken into account in order to bring a more holistic view on how to develop the area.

Likewise, the interview results could be more in-depth if the interviews had been conducted in Finnish, the native language of all the interviewees. The lack of up-to-date sources was also a challenge as it prevents the thesis research from being more academic. Moreover, the interview process could have also included

outsiders from the commissioning project in order to get more versatile views. However, this thesis project focuses only on suggesting the potential strategies to develop the marketing strategies in Ranua regard to photo and content based on literature review and interview results. Therefore, it depends on the destination if Ranua would want the results to another level. In the end, the author is satisfied with the findings and the proposed strategies, as the thesis was able to bring good results and the main goal was achieved.



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## APPENDIX

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

#### BACKGROUND

1. Can you introduce your company and your role in the Ranua destination development project?
2. What is your background relating to marketing?

#### GENERAL APPROACH

1. What do you think about content marketing in promoting a destination?
2. What methods of content marketing, in your opinion, should be focused on, in order to promote the destination?
3. How often should you engage with the audience online? (via social media, email, etc)
4. What can you do, in your opinion, to find out what content the audience is interested in?
5. What target audience do you think would you want to mainly focus on?
6. Do you have any specific plan when creating your content?
7. What's your opinion about user-generated content to your marketing strategy?

#### TOWARDS PHOTO CONTENT

1. How do you think about the importance of photo in promoting Ranua to potential visitors?
2. What will be the tone and the mood of the photos to keep it consistent with each other?
3. How informative do you think the photo caption should be?
4. What do you think about promoting via collaborating with photographers or photo travel bloggers?
5. What do you think about the effects of photo quality to the audience overall experience?

#### TOWARDS VIDEO CONTENT

1. What do you think about using video to promote Ranua?
2. How do you want the style of your video to be? (professional, casual-like no specific editing, just normal shooting from your phone or camera or blogging style).
3. How long do you want the video to be?
4. What theme do you want your video to have?
5. Would you prefer to hire professionals to make the video for you or collaborate with bloggers?

-Explain the purpose of the interview

-Address the confidentiality to the interviewees

-Address the format of the interview (conversation-like interaction)

-State the structure of the interview (general questions, specific questions about photos and videos)

-Provide contact information of the interviewer