

**THESIS**

**Ester Calderón Martínez 2013**

**SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION CASE  
ST.LAPLAND  
Creating a Plan to Increase the Traffic Volume on the Website**



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Thesis

**SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION CASE ST.LAPLAND**  
**Creating a Plan to Increase the Traffic Volume on the**  
**Website**

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Commissioned by St.Lapland

Supervisor Outi Kähkönen

The thesis cannot be borrowed.

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The aim of this thesis was the creation of a Search Engine Optimization Plan (SEO Plan) for the commissioner, St.Lapland, a tourist services provider located in Kuusamo Finland.

The plan was hoping to improve the visibility of the website in search engines, focusing especially in Google.com as it is the major search engine in the Web and the preferred tool of the users for information gathering. By improving the visibility of the website it was expected an increase on traffic and therefore an increase in sales and revenue. The plan was meant as a basic tool for the online marketing of the company.

The theoretical background used for this project has two different sources: theories and practises of SEO experts and ideas and creativity of the author, as well as her own knowledge about the company. The data needed to analyse the current state of the company website and start the plan was gathered through Google Analytics, Google.com and Google Adwords Keyword Tool.

The thesis projects presents therefore a theoretical background to allow the reader to understand the topic even when not familiar with SEO, as well as an analysis of the past state of the website and the plan to improve the performance. Most of the practises have were implemented already in the website during the report of the project and it was expected to include a post-analysis of the current state of the company. However, the post-analysis requires a time the author does not count with, since SEO is an ongoing process which requires constant analysis and changes to be fully effective. Nevertheless, the author has included recommendations for the company to permit future changes and constant renovation.

This project has a functional approach as it is not a general research. Nonetheless, all the theoretical background and ideas of the plan can serve to any company or individual interested in improving the visibility of any website to base their own plans. Consequently it can became a basic guide to support the e-commerce strategies of different companies.

Key words: SEO, Internet, websites, links, social media, keywords, traffic

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

St. Lapland is the result of the networking of eight tourism companies that operate in Kuusamo Lapland. I completed my advance training in St.Lapland during the period November 2011–March 2012 and thus I am familiar not only with St.Lapland and its business, but also with the different companies. During November – December 2012 I completed an extra training for ViaNorth Consulting where I met Julián Amorrích, the owner of the company and SEO expert. During this second training I was helping with a new tourism application Mr Amorrích was launching as a new sales point, and I got familiar with SEO strategies as well. I am a regular user of the Internet and different technologies and I had basic knowledge about SEO, however, Mr Amorrích introduced me a completely new level which raised my interest on the practices. For that reason, the creation of a SEO plan became my thesis idea.

The author was still in contact with St.Lapland when the idea of investigating more about SEO started to develop. After a simple analysis of the website it was discovered that St.Lapland was not optimized for search engines even if their basic market is directed through the Internet. I presented the idea of creating a SEO plan to the company to improve the visibility of their website and therefore the traffic, resulting eventually in an increase of sales and customers without a large monetary investment. The idea was accepted by the company and they became my commissioner, with Harri Heiskanen as the representative.

The thesis aim is to create and implement an effective SEO plan for St.Lapland, including an extra social media strategy, to improve the search ranking of the website in Google. The baseline for the theory is knowledge gathered through different literature from SEO experts, but also the knowledge acquired in my training in ViaNorth.

The preliminary plan included an analysis after the plan was implemented, to permit possible changes for a more accurate plan. However, due to communication and logistics problems between the author and the commissioner, the post analysis has been postponed. The reason is that the changes for SEO do not have immediate results. It needs time for the

changes to be appreciated by the search engines. Moreover, the time that search engines need to index a page is imprecise, and therefore impossible to schedule with exactitude.

The final outcome is the result of the combination of theory and practice. SEO is not a static science but a changing field where constancy and creativity are rewarded. The result of the project is a SEO plan specially designed for St.Lapland, the implementation of the plan and recommendations for the on-going process.

## **2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Internet and Search Engines**

The Internet is a worldwide system of interconnection of information between computers (Restrepo 2001, 2) or other devices capable of running the software. It is the world's largest computer communication system, with an estimated 700 million users worldwide by the Global Internet Statistics by Global Reach in 2006. (European Commission, Enterprise & Industry Directorate General 2006, 192.) Nearly 60% of the European population accessed the web regularly in 2006 and 76% was the estimation for 2009 (European Commission, Enterprise & Industry Directorate General 2006, 24). By 2010 more than 50% of the European population accessed the internet daily. (Eurostat 2010, 2.)

Its creation started through a project run by the United States' Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) focusing on new technologies. As a method to communicate in between the different departments there was a need to create a network to send data between computers. In 1969 ARPANet was established and sent the first communication: word "lo" instead of "login", as the system crashed. Nevertheless, the research continued and there was soon a network which the government and researchers in the United States could use to communicate. (Soskin 2010, 3–4.)

In 1981 the National Science Foundation linked the ARPANet with its own creation, a network called "Computer Science Network" (CSNET). Together they provided internet services including email, linking the United States with Europe and Asia.(Soskin 2010, 4.)

In 1983 Paul Mockapetris invented the domain name System, which translates human hostnames to Internet Protocol (IP) addresses, easy to read to computers. (Soskin 2010, 4.)

In 1987 the United States opened their network to many universities and companies, (Restrepo 2001, 3) but it was the European Tim Bernes-Lee who created the World Wide Web (www). It was a system of interlinked documents immediately accessible via the Internet displayed on the computers by references, or hyperlinks. In 1991 the first website was



launched, and since then, the Internet has grown fast and unstoppably until its current state, been allowed to be used for business in 1993. (Soskin 2010, 5-8.)

The Internet is not owned by anyone, not government nor private business, but is regulated by an association which, among other things, assigns the Domain names. (Restrepo 2001, 2.) It is not physical but virtual, which means there are no physical territories. Nevertheless, to organize the resources and allow users to communicate on the internet, a virtual territory is assigned to every website. Those are the domain names. (Restrepo 2001, 6.) To be able to access a territory a user can type the domain name on a browser or use a search engine.

A search engine is a piece of software that collects information about websites with a user interface that permits the users to enter search terms. (Ledford 2008, 5). By entering a search term, the search engine returns a list of results that may suit the request of the user. To be able to do that, the search engine indexes and stores the information retrieved in the collection and using an algorithm can match the search of the user with the proper answers. Every search engine uses a different algorithm on their indexing and return of results. (Ledford 2008, 8.)

The process of collecting information about web pages is performed by an agent called a crawler, spider, or robot. They look at every URL on the Web, collect key words and phrases on each page and include them in the database that powers a search engine. (Ledford 2008, 5.)

Some of the criteria used by the engine crawlers to determinate the rank of a website on the results include: anchor text, site popularity, link context, topical links, title tags, keywords, site language, content and site maturity. Nevertheless, there are estimated to be at least several hundred other criteria that could also be examined before a site is ranked by a search engine. Some of the criteria have different factors to take on account. Link context is one of the cases, where the crawler can analyze or might take into consideration where the link is located on the page or what text surrounds it, not only the link itself. (Ledford 2008, 18-19.)

Even if every search engine uses a different algorithm and hundreds of factors to return the desired results to the user, the ranking can be disclosed into two categories: relevance and popularity (or “authority”). Furthermore, within the category of popularity, there are two primary types: domain popularity and page popularity. Modern search engines rank pages by a combination of these two kinds of popularity metrics. (Dover 2011, XXII.)

There are different types of search engines. Some generate a lot of traffic; others are narrowly focused on a specific topic. However, even in the same category, each search engine has a different method of indexing and returning results.

Primary search engines, also called major search engines, generate the majority of the traffic to a website. Nevertheless, each primary search engine differs from every other on the used software and strategies. Examples of primary search engines are Google, Yahoo! and MSN. (Ledford 2008, 11.)

Secondary search engines do not generate as much traffic as the primary search engines. Smaller, more specific audiences are targeted by secondary search engines, although the search engine’s content is still general. They are used by many users because these have some loyalty to that specific search engine. They are useful for regional and more narrowly focused searches. Examples of secondary search engines include Lycos, LookSmart, Miva, Ask.com, and Espotting. (Ledford 2008, 13.)

Targeted search engines or topical search engines narrow the search into a specific topic, being the most specific of the search engine types. (Ledford, 2008, 13) The examples include CitySearch, Yahoo! Travel, and MusicSearch, specialized in Cities, Travel and Music respectively.

## **2.2 E-commerce**

*“ICT and e-business do matter in the global economy”* – (European Commission, Enterprise & Industry Directorate General 2006, 13.)

“Internet” and “business” are majorly linked by the concept of “E-commerce”. E-commerce or E-business extents for all the business done online.

There were two clear approaches in the beginning of e-commerce: the Informational, focused on building brand presence and informing the consumer's buying decision; and the transactional approach, focused on facilitating the exchange of product or service for financial value. Currently, the approaches merge. (Bradford, 2005, 3.)

The Internet offers to the businesses instant interaction with the clients globally, speeds up any transaction, helps for a fast adaptation in almost any situation, permits mass customization, gives equality to all the actors, simplifies the business processes and is highly affordable. (Zilliox, 2001, 8-13.) It is a low cost, immediate marketing channel with high selectivity power and possibility of interaction. (Alatalo 2012.)

E-commerce is one of the most secure and productive investments a business can have, since it does not necessarily need large funds. In fact, it is possible to start operating on-line using free and successful tools such as Wordpress. (David 2011.)

On a business-to-consumer level, it is widely believed that involvement in e-business can create a new sales channel, improve product promotion, reduce costs, help develop a brand and present the opportunity to develop closer relationships with customers. On a business-to-business (b2b) level, it can help to lower the procurement costs, create an efficient purchasing process and improve cycle times and productivity. (Bradford, 2005, 1.)

During the 2007–2009 credit crunch, where credits were easily accessible but many economic activities collapsed, the e-business continued to grow. Using Internet technology in business allows consumers to compare prices and, consequently, save money. (Soskin 2010, XXII.) Therefore, e-commerce demonstrated its value on the new era of technology.

Tourism is not an exception. In fact, it is becoming more and more important to have presence online for all the business in the sector. There is a trend in society towards individualization regarding leisure time. They demand more personalization on how they spend it. Consequently, consumers demand quick information, pricing and travel options prior to the travel, during and after it. Moreover, traditional rigid packages are in decline and the demand of

dynamic packaging increases. (European Commission, Enterprise & Industry Directorate General 2006, 23.) Through the technologic solutions that e-commerce offers, the flexibility that consumers require is possible and easy and with a low budget.

Internet will maintain its growing influence on the purchase of tourism products and services because of the easily accessible information and instant possibility to purchase online. The European Information and Technology Observatory and the European Travel Commission noted that *“this possibility leads to an ongoing increase of transactions in online booking and has a strong influence on the competition in the tourism market”* (European Commission, Enterprise & Industry Directorate General 2006, 24.)

## **2.3 Visibility of Websites in search engines**

### **2.3.1 Search Engine Optimization**

Search Engine Optimization or SEO is about the strategies on-page and off-page to improve the ranking of a website in the search engines. (Ledford 2008, XV.) On-page refers to all the content visible online by visitors, while off-page refers to all the back content and strategies which are not directly seen by the visitors. It is the process and discipline of improving the quality and visibility of a website in order to increase its ranking in search engines, thereby increasing the visitor traffic (David 2011, 7.) SEO is setting up a website to make it rank high for particular keywords within the organic search results, which results free of marketing costs. (Jones 2008, XIV.)

Attract more traffic to a website is the main objective of ranking high on the search engines. More traffic is potentially more clients. Therefore, more traffic becomes more revenue, which is the ultimate goal of SEO. (Ledford 2008, 18.) Thus, in e-business having a great amount of traffic to a website is fundamental. When the SEO strategies have been conceived with the right target audience for the company, the impact will be greater, and consequently, the business will have better chances to grow. (Amorrinch 2012.)

It is a fact that more people search the Internet rather than other information services, such as the yellow pages, when looking for phone numbers or the

locations of local businesses. (Ledford 2008, 11.) Consequently, ranking well in the search engines is an important factor companies shall take into account.

Ideally a site must be displayed on the first three pages of results to be noticed by the users, and therefore increase their traffic and possible customers. It has been studied users don't usually navigate farther than the third page. (Ledford 2008, 18.) Because of it, a company ranking lower than the third page rarely receives any search traffic.

In fact the maximum traffic is received by the websites ranked on the first page of results (Ledford 2008, 18.), which makes the first page the most desirable position. Statistics generally show that the number of search users that ever look beyond the first page of search results is minimal; most studies reveal that only between 6% and 3% of all the search engine queries result in a visit to the second page of search results. (David 2011, 8.)

There are three categories on the SEO strategies divided by the professionals: on-page optimization, off-page optimization, and conversion. On-page optimization is concerned with all of the text, images, code, words, navigation, structure, within a website. In other words, all the factors appearing on the page for visitors. Off-page optimization refers to all of the material on the Internet concerning or pointing to the website that does not appear "on-page". Thus it refers, for example, to inbound links on the third-party websites. Conversion refers to how effective a website is at making users take actions once they are on the site, how good and fluent the navigation is or how long a user stays on the website. A high-performing website needs all three elements working together. (David 2011, 12.)

To achieve a high position in search results, a website must be recognizable by a search engine crawler and it must satisfy a set of criteria to be cataloged above most, or all, of the other sites that fall into the category or topic it is competing in. (Ledford 2008, 18.)

Been SEO essentially the science of designing a website to maximize its search engine rankings, all the elements in the website become a factor to the Optimization. These elements include: entry and exit pages, page titles,

site content, graphics, web site structure, keywords, links, HTML or site map, and meta-tagging. Factors such as advertising campaigns and update frequencies also affect the search engine Ranking. (Ledford 2008, 14.)

**Entry and exit pages** are the first and last pages that a user sees on a website. It is not necessarily the home page but it can be any other page where a user lands in the first place. This happens either by clicking through search engine results, by clicking a link from another website or a piece of marketing material, or by bookmarking or typing directly into the address bar of a browser, (Ledford 2008, 44.) and therefore is not strictly necessary that the entry page will be the home page. The exit page is the page where the users leave the page. It is important to analyze which pages are the exit pages. It can occur an exit page is a page with an error where the users decide to leave the website or it can happen that the users leave after completing a purchase. The first situation shows bad performance of the page and dissatisfaction of the users. The second situation is a result of a successful flow through the website concluding in a satisfied client and revenue for the company. (Amorrrich 2012.)

**Page titles** are highly important. Besides the domain name, the first things crawlers discover through the pages of a website are the site names. It is crucial to have the correct tags and names for a crawler to consider a website relevant. By titling the pages with search-engine optimization in mind, there is a powerful opportunity to establish relevance to a certain topic or keyword. (Jones 2008, XVI.) Page titles should be as descriptive as possible with the content and include the business' keywords always when possible (Holtz 2006, 209-210.)

**Content** is another relevant factor, since the search engine is working to offer the users the most relevant content to their search terms. The tags on the content, or description tags, become very relevant for a crawler or spider to determine how relevant is the page for a certain topic. Nevertheless, is not only the tagging that makes the content relevant, but the "freshness", measured by the crawlers using the number of updates as a reference, or the amount of content play important roles too. Search engines could eventually begin to ignore a website in favor of other with more updated content. There

are exceptions to this generalization, however, such as a very rich content by nature but not dynamic. (Ledford 2008, 21.) Because of the usefulness of the content the site can count with popularity rank (Dover 2011, XXII.) and could probably continue to rank well, but it is a case difficult to determine. (Ledford 2008, 21.)

**Graphics**, such as images, are ignored by the crawlers but are highly effective to attract the users to navigate into a website because of the visual effect. Visitors do not like to stay long in pages visually poor. Nevertheless, there is the possibility of taking advantage of those graphics in a SEO strategy by using the “img tags” and the “alt tags”. “Img tags”, or image tags, are the tags used to code the images that will appear on the website. “Alt tags”, or alternative tags, are the HTML tags used to display alternative text when there is some graphic present. (Ledford 2008, 49.)

**Website Structure** regards to the hierarchy of the pages in the website. When the site structure has a natural navigation, it becomes easy for the users to find what they are looking for and even easier for the crawlers to index the pages properly. The navigation is natural when the hierarchy is logical. For example, on the home page of a website there should be links to all the main important sections, and on those sections links to their specific subsections. A logical path would be “Home -> About us -> Contact us”. But the hierarchy should be also natural on the page titles. If the home page of a website is “*www.website.com*”, the page “about us” may be “*www.website.com/about-us*”, and consequently the contact page may be “*www.website.com/about-us/contact-us*”. (Amorrich 2012.)

**Keywords** are the most important words to represent what the website offers. It is not necessarily a single word as it can be a short phrase as well. It is important to choose the right words to describe the content of the website as well as the more effective words for the search engine. In other words, the need –what the user is looking for- and the offer –what the website provides- should converge, so it is important to try to think as the user when choosing the keywords. (Holtz 2006, 208-209.) The list of keywords should include broad terms as well as specific to have more chances of improving the ranking (Jones 2008, XVI.)

**Site Links** are an essential factor in SEO. They are one of the focuses of crawlers and spiders when indexing a website. They look for the links into and out of the website in order to traverse the site and collect data on each URL. However, it is important as well that the links are in context, meaning the link must come from or lead to a site that is relevant to the page that is being indexed. Broken links tend to be a large problem for indexing and become very negative factors. (Ledford 2008, 22) The fact that a relevant website on the search engine links to another website gives the second one “authority”. This means it will help the second website to rank better. It only occurs when the link is what is called “Quality link”. Quality links are considered such when they are on a popular website and with relevant or related information to the website they are linking. (Jones 2008, 118-119)

**HTML or Site Map** helps crawlers to index every page of a website. If a website has each page indexed by the crawlers the chances of appearing on the search engines are greater. The reason is that there will be a larger amount of content, keywords and other relevant factors for the search engine included on the algorithm that returns the results to the users. The Site Map is a CML-based document at the root of the HTML with all the website information. (Ledford 2008, 22.)

**Meta data** is the information and tags that are included in the coding of a website and therefore, they do not appear in the visible text of the website. They are essential to have the site listed properly in a search engine because they contain the description of the page, which the crawlers are interested in to index it properly. (Ledford 2008, 21:35-36.)

SEO is not a quick and easy solution to highlight a business in the search engines. It is an ongoing process that is necessary to maintain and maximize the position of the website in the organic search results in the long term. (Jones 2008, XV.)

### **2.3.2 Search Engine Marketing**

Search Engine Marketing (SEM) is slightly different than Search Engine Optimization (SEO), especially for the experts. Even though the final goal of both is to drive more traffic to a website, SEO is about the organic ranking



with free strategies while SEM includes payment campaigns such as pay-per-click campaigns. (Ledford 2009, XVI.)

SEM's aim is to help the potential clients to find a certain website when looking for related information or services by all possible activities. SEM is, subsequently, the strategies to attract new visitors to a website by boosting the ranking in the search engines through organic activities, including all SEO practises, as well as paid activities. (Roetzer 2011, 109.)

### **2.3.3 The Use of Social Media on SEO Strategies**

Social media is a still growing global phenomenon in the internet (Bannon 2013). 20% of the time users spend on the internet through personal computers is on Social Networks, says the social media Report 2012, and 30% percent of the internet time in mobile devices. It is important therefore to include social media strategies in any company. (Nielsen 2012)

Social media can effectively be used by companies to grow, to promote their products or services or with SEO purposes. With social media a company can build relationships with customers and competition, can learn and bring value to the agency. The main goal of social media is not selling but engaging, promoting and branding. (Roetzer 2011, 110.)

In addition, there is a new tendency in social media for companies: social care. Through social care customers can share experiences, ask questions or submit their complaint through social media. In other words, it is possible to run customer service through the social media.

An average of 47% of social media users get engaged in social care. In fact, 9% of them use social care daily. Moreover, one in three social media users prefer social care to direct telephone contact with the company. Almost 60% of the users access social care through different options in Facebook; 15% on the official blog from the company, 27% Twitter and 23% YouTube. (Nielsen 2012.). The percentage is above 100% because many users access social care through more than one platform.

Marketing through social media is important as well and can be cost free. The statistics from the social media Report 2012 published by Nielsen

recount that 15% of the people shared an ad seen in social media, 26% liked an ad and 14% actually purchased products. Moreover, more than a quarter of people pay attention to an advertisement posted by a friend. This is one of the reasons to build a network in social media for companies. (Nielsen 2012)

From a purely SEO point of view, social media is a support tool. Activity in social media creates content. Activity and fresh content creates traffic, which through well positioned links is redirected to the company website. Thanks to the combination of link activity and referral traffic the website can experience a boost on popularity for search engines, resulting in better ranking. (Deschamps 2013.) Also, in websites where the content is static (products and services) and therefore the content is static, the embedded social media is the solution. As discussed previously, crawlers prefer regular updates and fresh content. By using the social media embedded to the website, the activity occurred on the social media pages creates new content to help maintain the website fresh and updated.

### **3 SEO PLAN FOR ST.LAPLAND'S WEBSITE**

#### **3.1 Choosing a Search Engine: Google.com**

Choosing a search engine for the SEO plan is the first step to take. Since every search engine uses a slightly different algorithm to index and offer results, it is important to focus the efforts to fulfil the requirements of one of them. The best option, recommended by the majority of SEO experts, is to focus the optimization to Google.com.

There are many reasons why Google is chosen by the experts as the main focus. Google itself had a value of more than 100 billion dollars in 2011. At that time, 65 percent of the searches in U.S were submitted to Google (Roetzer 2011, 102) while the next search engines on the ranking, Yahoo! and Bing/Microsoft, only had a share of 17 percent and 12 percent respectively. (David 2011, 9.)

Even if those statistics refer to the market on the United States and the main market of St.Lapland is in Europe, it is indisputable that Google is the major search engine worldwide. (Davis 2011, XX - David 2011, 10 - Vise 2005, 2.) The study conducted by the Spanish Association for the investigation of the Media (AIMC) in March 2013 reflects that on the Spanish market Google is the preferred search engine for more than 90% of the Internet users. (AIMC 2013) In addition, a survey conducted by the author with 363 respondents from Spain, Latin America, Finland, Belgium, Poland, Russia, Germany, The Netherlands, France, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovenia, Slovakia, United Kingdom, Vietnam, Indonesia, China, Austria, Portugal, Italy and Greece, with 357 valid responses, had as result that 99,72% of the valid respondents uses Internet search engines to look for information and 98,32% do it through Google (See appendix 1). The survey was conducted through Facebook, e-mail in different platforms and forums. Both statistics support the idea of Google as the overwhelming favourite search engine.

Moreover, Statcounter situates currently Google with more than 90% of the total users of search engines worldwide. (Statcounter 2013)

Another reason for using Google as the preferable search engine is the advanced algorithm it uses to index and give results back. Google's algorithm

is the most advanced algorithm, constantly improving and it detects disfavoured optimization techniques such as keyword stuffing or “link farms”, having the most accurate indexing on the Web. (David 2011, 10.) Keyword stuffing is a strategy that consist in including dozens of popular keywords in a website, video or blog to try to get more traffic. These words are not related to the content of the web but are used large amounts of users. The most popular web and perfect for this example is “sex”. It is possible to use also names of famous people, as another example. “Link farms” are websites that do not include any content, just a list with thousands of link to sell. Link farms try to get profit by including a link of a website when the website pays a quota with the argument of the relevance of having many links for search engines. Both techniques are named “black SEO techniques” because they are not correct SEO techniques and search engines can detect them now and punish the website. Furthermore, Google's technology is imitated by other search engines because of its innovativeness, resulting in a good ranking in other search engines if a website succeeds on its SEO for Google. (David 2011, 10.) In addition, the fast indexing the crawlers from Google do gives a chance to have positive results faster than with other search engines, giving faster results to the investment. (David 2011, 10.)

Finally, through Google Analytics it has been possible to determinate that the majority of the organic traffic in St.Lapland’s website already is from Google. This means the target market of the company is Google user and therefore should put more effort in being visible in this mayor search engine.

### **3.2 Analysis of the Current Ranking of the Website in Google.com**

The analysis of the current state in the search engines for the main website of St.Lapland has been done manually focusing on the chosen major search engine for the SEO plan: Google.com.

To discover the current position in the search engine the author has created a list of the most common words or groups of them visitors or potential clients use to book holidays in Finnish Lapland. The reason is the targeted market for the company’s website is people using the resources of the Internet to plan holiday trips in the Finnish Lapland.

The list has been created based on the main features of the destination and the strengths and offer of the company (See Appendix 2), as well as the desires of the targeted visitors to the website. The target market for the website is the profile of a tourist looking for personalized trips to Lapland. Consequently, words such as trip, book, vacation or holiday have been used. Also, words regarding the position of the destination, such as Lapland, Finland form part of the keywords list. The combinations of words try to cover all the possibilities a potential client might be using to find services such as the ones St.Lapland is offering. The research has been always stopped after the tenth page because studies reveal the users rarely pass the fifth page, staying on the first three pages and deciding on one of those results. (Ledford 2008, 18.)

Keywords that returned St.Lapland's website on page 8	Keywords that returned St.Lapland's website over the page 10
Lapland	Lapland holidays Holidays in Lapland Lapland Vacations Vacations in Lapland Vacation in Finland Vacation in Lapland Finland Trips to Lapland Trips to Lapland Finland Lapland Holiday Packages Lapland vacation packages Lapland Tours Hotel in Lapland Safaris Lapland Book trip to Lapland Book holiday in Lapland Lapland Finland tours

	Tours in Lapland Tours in Finland Tours in Lapland Finland Trips to Finland Holidays in Finland Adventure Holiday in Lapland Adventure holidays in Finland Winter holidays in Lapland Winter holidays in Finland Summer Holidays in Lapland Go on unique holidays Unique holidays Unique holidays in Finland Unique holidays in Lapland Vacation to a unique destination Holiday to unique destinations Trips to unique destination
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Table 1. Results of the Search on Google.com

The current results are discouraging because only one result was found before the tenth page. The result is given when using a very wide keyword that is rarely used to specifically look for the services of the company. The fact that the only result above the tenth page was the word “Lapland” could have its explanation on the domain name of the page being “StLapland”. The first factor indexed by the crawlers is the domain name and the all the website URLs. Consequently, having the word “Lapland” included on the domain name and every page URL the crawlers rank it higher than other websites.

### 3.3 Analysis of the Current Design of the Website for SEO Purposes

A SWOT analysis has been done regarding the website of the company from the point of view of optimization. The factors to take into account include

updates, meta-data, links and keywords on the website among other factors. The author has also investigated on the main touristic pages related with St.Lapland in order to find out how many had links to the company's website.

This thesis discusses the results from the SWOT analysis of the website for SEO purposes below.

- **Strengths:** Satisfying the customers, even if not pure SEO, is part of the strategies of making the visitors navigate longer on the website, helping to build popularity. In that aspect, the website is very competent. It is a very visual website, including graphics and pictures, which gives a big chance of having the visitors to stay longer. It has a large offer of services, which can attract the interest of the visitors to navigate more and find something that fits their expectations. The website counts, too, with filter options to adapt the offer of services to the visitors' need, which is always a positive tool to not overwhelm the customers. It has also the possibility to make a wish-list online to book directly through the site, which makes the transactions easier and induces the visitors to finish the whole sales process. In addition, it counts with direct contact information with the company in case of problems or inquiries.

From a more pure SEO point of view, the website structure through the menus is natural and easy to use and the domain name includes the word "Lapland", one of the most important keywords for this company. This means the entire website URLs will include "Lapland" in the beginning. The fact of having the keyword on the URL gives a push for the results with "Lapland" on the search engines because the first things the crawlers look into are the domain name and URLs. (Jones 2008, XVI.)

- **Weaknesses:** The website counts with a few weaknesses with the customers in mind instead of the crawlers. The product page counts with pop-ups for all the activities. Although it can be considered positive because it allows the user to stay on the same page and does not need to reload, it should be studied how fast those pop-ups load

on the users' computers. Slow loading pages can make the users leave the page. (Cutts 2010.)

Even if the website has a good website structure, making it easy to crawl, and very useful tools for the visitors the instructions of how to use them are confusing. There is a need of improving the search of the services with the customer in mind, a customer not used to tourism business terms but colloquial tourism terms, such as "leisure travel".

The domain of the website is ".fi" (Finnish domain), which could make the local search engines on some other countries ignore the website or rank it lower. Having a domain ".com" makes the website directly international for the search engines. (SEOMoz 2013.)

From the point of view of SEO, there are some important problems to focus on the website. St.Lapland.fi is not up to date at the time of this analysis. A page that is not updated is less attractive to the crawlers, which could consider the information very out of date and therefore not rank it well because it does not fulfil the user's expectations. Related with the frequency of updates the website has the problem of most of the business' websites: its content is static. Static content refers to content that does not change. It is common that websites that sell products have static content because their product description does not vary. Nevertheless, there are some strategies to help solving that problem.

The website also has a big gap on meta data use, because besides some use of keywords and tags on the home page, there is none. Meta data is highly important to rank well, because it is a big part of what crawlers use. Nowadays meta-tags in particular do not have a big impact on Google.com because they are trying to defeat the "keyword stuffing", but the rest of meta data is still highly important, starting with the description. The description, in fact, can appear as



the snippet<sup>1</sup> on Google.com, helping users to trust the page will offer exactly what they are looking for. (Cutts 2012.)

Another problem from the SEO perspective is the website texts. They are not optimized for SEO, in other words, they do not include keywords or informative words. They are just trying to sound beautiful to the visitors, but if the visitors cannot find the page, those texts become useless.

The last problem is the inbound and outbound links. The author has visited the most important tourist sites as well as St.Lapland's partners' websites and has not found links to St.Lapland's website. The only link found is through the description of one of St.Lapland's partners in Ruka.fi, but the chances of arriving to that link for users are small. In addition the website does not link to any other website, not even the partners. A lack of links can be a big problem to rank high on the search engines.

- **Opportunities:** The visual aspect of the website is one of its greatest opportunities, because it makes the visitors want to stay and gives a very positive image of the company, relating the visual aspect with the quality of their products and services.

From the SEO point of view, the lack of many important factors is an opportunity to grow, because it offers the website a big potential to improve. It is still very young on SEO, which gives a fresh start. The company counts with a Facebook page that could definitely be used in order to improve its visibility in one of the major Social Networks and subsequently on the rest of the Internet. It also counts with a blog with a module on the home page, which can be used to give freshness and constant updates to the website.

- **Threats:** The company has a lot of competitors in the same field, many of them with very well ranking websites. For example [lapland.nordicvisitor.com](http://lapland.nordicvisitor.com) or [www.thomascook.com](http://www.thomascook.com). The fact that the

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<sup>1</sup> Snippet: It is the name Google uses for the small description of the website appearing in the results under the link.

other websites are optimized can mean less visibility to St.Lapland's website even after the strategies are implemented if the optimization is not continued. The lack of links in the website is also a problem since some of their competitors count with links on the major tourist pages. Having links in popular and relevant websites is very well considered by the search engines algorithms.

Finally, the website needs constant updates to keep a good ranking and compete with the other business in the sector, but it is possible that the company does not have the resources to do it.

### **3.4 Analysis of the Current Performance of the Website Using Google Analytics**

Google Analytics is a free tool Google offers to any website owner to track and store the data of the performance of the website. It analyses the amount of visits, the traffic flow, the sources, the type of visitors and the nationality between many other factors. Therefore it is very useful to analyse the performance and popularity of a website.

To analyse the website using Google Analytics the author has chosen three different periods. All of them are part of previous and current year, to have the latest data over the website performance.

The first period is a long period covering the higher season in Lapland where the company has the highest flow of customers. The period is from 1 September 2012 until 31 March 2013. The reason of extending the period is to include the foresighted and the last minute visitors. Is in this first period when more visits are expected as it is the busiest period for the company.

The second period chosen covers the lowest season of the destination, therefore the rest of the months. It includes form 1 April 2012 until 31 August 2012. It is interesting to compare the flow of visitors through the website in different seasons because there are clear differences.

The last period comprises the months of February, March and half April. This period has been chosen to see the differences between a long period and a short period, as well as to compare last year's traffic and the current traffic.

The website has not been updated for this upcoming year, so this could affect the traffic. Also this is the most recent data and will be used as the starting point to compare the data before and after the application of the SEO plan.

During the first period the website had 790 visits. That is an average of 3,73 visits a day. From those visits, 82,9% were new visitors, people who had not visited the website before while 17,1% were returning visitors. Returning visitors are users that come back to the website more than once in different times. If a website has a high rate of returning visitors it counts with loyal users. That rate in a company website shows loyal customers, customers that come back because they are satisfied; and interested customers, who may not have completed a sale transaction but are considering it and thus visit the website repeatedly to gather more information to make a decision. The bounce rate, however, is 57,85%. The bounce rate shows the amount of visitors that left the website without interacting. That means they left on the same page as they enter the site, without navigating through it. This is very negative for the company because the lack of interaction interferes to achieve the final goal of the website: a sale transaction. There are many reasons why a visitor will leave the page: malfunction of the site, too slow loading time, not meeting the expectations or simply is not what the visitor was looking for. In that case the visitor will consider the information wrong and will quickly leave the page.

A very good practise to discover how the visitor of a website acts, which are the preferred pages, the direction the user follows, where the user is confused and needs instructions or where there is errors is conducting a User Experience Research. (Amorrich 2012.) The User Experience Research is a method where some volunteers or customers which have been offered some reward perform different roles in a website while the company records the movements on the screen of the computer. Afterwards, the videos are analysed and it is possible to make right conclusions. However, the budget of the company does not allow that process to be performed currently and thus the author needed other methods to analyse the results. The technical performance has been analyzed individually through different computers and internet browsers. The results show a correct performance and there have

not been found any malfunction or errors. Therefore, that bounce rate is not originated by technical problems. Also the loading time seems to be fast in different browsers with an average internet speed connection and consequently it is not counted as a reason for the high bouncing rate.

By analysing the flow of the visitors through Google Analytics it is possible to draw good conclusions on what may be the reason for the bounce rate.

The image shows the flow of the visitors using blocks for the pages and grey connections for the navigation of the user in the website. Most of the visits land in the website on the home page, a percentage of 61%, which is the most common behaviour since the home page usually includes a summary of all the information in the website and is normally the page which the crawlers use to start indexing. At first it is surprising the amount of visitors that land on the media secondary pages, a fact that will be explained further in this analysis. Nevertheless, the bounce rate for those secondary pages is almost 100%, which means the user does not find what is looking for and the page is not achieving its main goal: the conversion of a visitor into a customer. Subsequently the attraction those pages currently have over the visitor to inspire them to continue exploring the website is almost non-existent. Therefore we can assume the efforts of the company to deliver the message to the visitors are not productive and thus new strategies are needed.



Figure 1. Visitors Flow During the Period 1 Sep 2012 – 31 Mar 2013 from Stlapland.fi (Google Analytics)

On the other hand, the flow of visitors landing on the home page has a bounce rate of about 50%, precisely 43,36%. This means more than half of the visitors continue navigating through the website and consequently the possibilities of a final transaction increases. Most of these visitors that continue the navigation choose the “about us” page to be able to know more about the company and the business. The drop off rate after that page, which is the rate of visitors that leave the website after interacting at least once, is very low, which can mean the message is received by the visitors who continue the navigation onto different pages. The second most visited page includes the holiday-packages, and closely following, are the pages with the “mice” packages, the “weekly program winter” and the “contact” page once again. Desirably, all the visitors should end in the “contact” page because it is there where the final transaction (sale) is happening. There is a discouraging drop off of almost 50% of the visitors who visit the “weekly program winter”. Through that page the customers can create their personalized holiday with St.Lapland, which is the main product the company offers, but a high rate of drop offs shows a possible problem on the page.

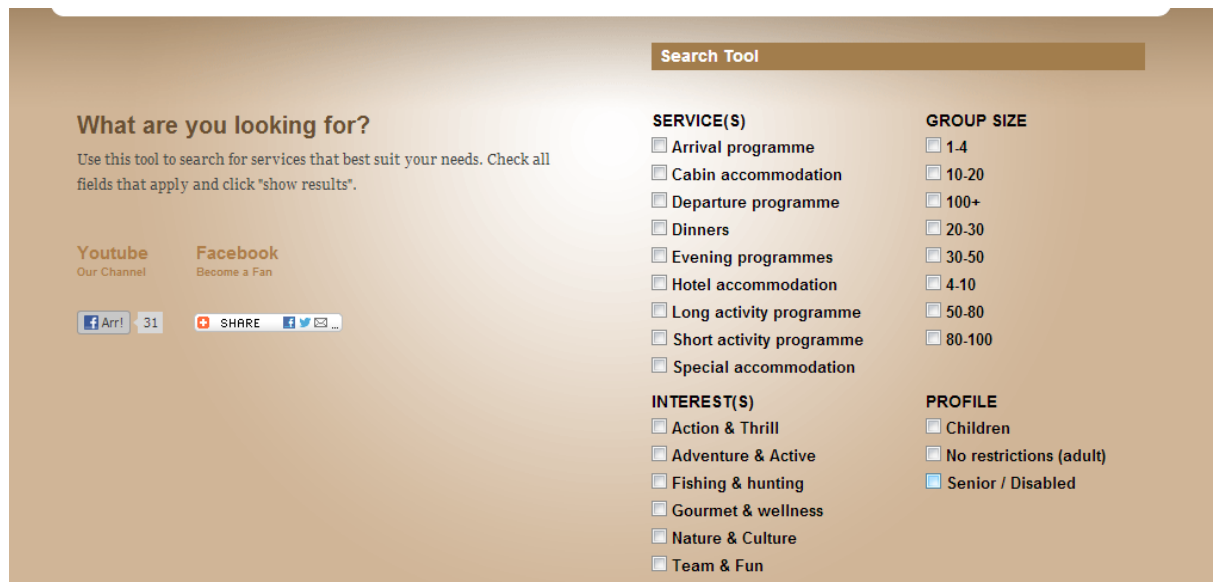


Figure 2. Weekly Program Winter Page in stlapland.fi During the Analysed Period.

Having no technical problems, this high number of visitors leaving the website could be because of the austerity of the page or the lack of instructions on how to use the search tool. It could make the visitor feel confused and therefore leave the page.

The other main product of the company for average customers is found in the page “holiday packages”. In the page the visitor can see the already-made trips the company offers and order them through the contact information given. Around 70% of the traffic stays in the website and explores different options, such as the “weekly program winter” page or the information pages about the region and the company. This can be considered positive since the visitors seem to keep the interest in the products. If we compare this page with the previous one it is possible to see why the success is higher.



Figure 3. Holiday Packages Page in stlapland.fi During the Analysed Period.

The page is more visual and the information given is clear and precise. This is appreciated by the users because it is less confusing and therefore they are willing to continue navigating the website.

The third focus the company uses to sell their products is for a more targeted group, Business and Incentive trips, through the pages of “MICE”. The traffic that landed in this page after the first interaction becomes irregular afterwards. The reason could be the lack of knowledge of the word MICE, widely known by the tourism professionals and the targeted group but not by the average traveller. Consequently, those who are not the targeted group drop off or follow diverse paths through the website trying to find something that suits them. The targeted group, however, may continue through the offered services. The company has a special system for MICE customers which asks the visitor for a valid e-mail account if he or she wants to continue through the list of services and products. MICE customers usually ask for more luxurious, VIP, service. Using this system the company is able to have the e-mail of all the MICE customers stored and thus follow their sales transaction and offer them offers, trying to convert them into loyal customers.

The average customer, labelled “leisure customer” by the company, is only given that service from the point of contacting the company themselves, through a wish list or personally. This discrimination is due to the labour force the company counts with. The company does not count with enough

employees to motivate every customer that visits the website to make a transaction and the cost of it will be higher than the benefits. On the contrary, the relation cost-benefit of motivating the MICE customers to continue the transaction is beneficial for the company with their current labour force. (Sirkiä 2012.)

From the first interaction the rate of drop offs is much lower than the first bounce rate. This could mean the website is not responding efficiently to the search of the users, appearing as a result of not related searches. Once the visitors start visiting the page the percentage of drop offs is reduced, which is possible to translate in a well performing page besides the highlighted problems in this period.

During the second period chosen, which comprise from 1 April 2012 until 31 August 2012, the differences are highly noticeable with the previous period. This period is during the low season of the destination while the earlier covers the high season, and in addition, this period is shorter: 5 months vs 7 months. Consequently the total amount of visits is lower, with only 451. However, that is an average of 2,97 visits a day, still high for the low seasons if compared with the average visits during the higher season. From those visits, 77,8% are new visitors, people who have not visited the website before while 22,2% are returning visitors. The percentage of returning visitors is higher during the lower season. It is possible therefore that the loyal customers use the low season to prepare their next holidays because they are already familiarized with the offers and sale process of the company. This could mean the loyal customers like to beneficiate of discounts or a less stressed booking process because of the amount of time available. However, the bounce rate is 44,57%, that even if it is lower than on the previous period it is still a high bounce rate of almost half of the visits. Once more, the more popular landing page is the home page, with a 64,3% of the total visits. The secondary pages are once more the media pages, except for the “weekly summer program” and the “mice winter” pages.



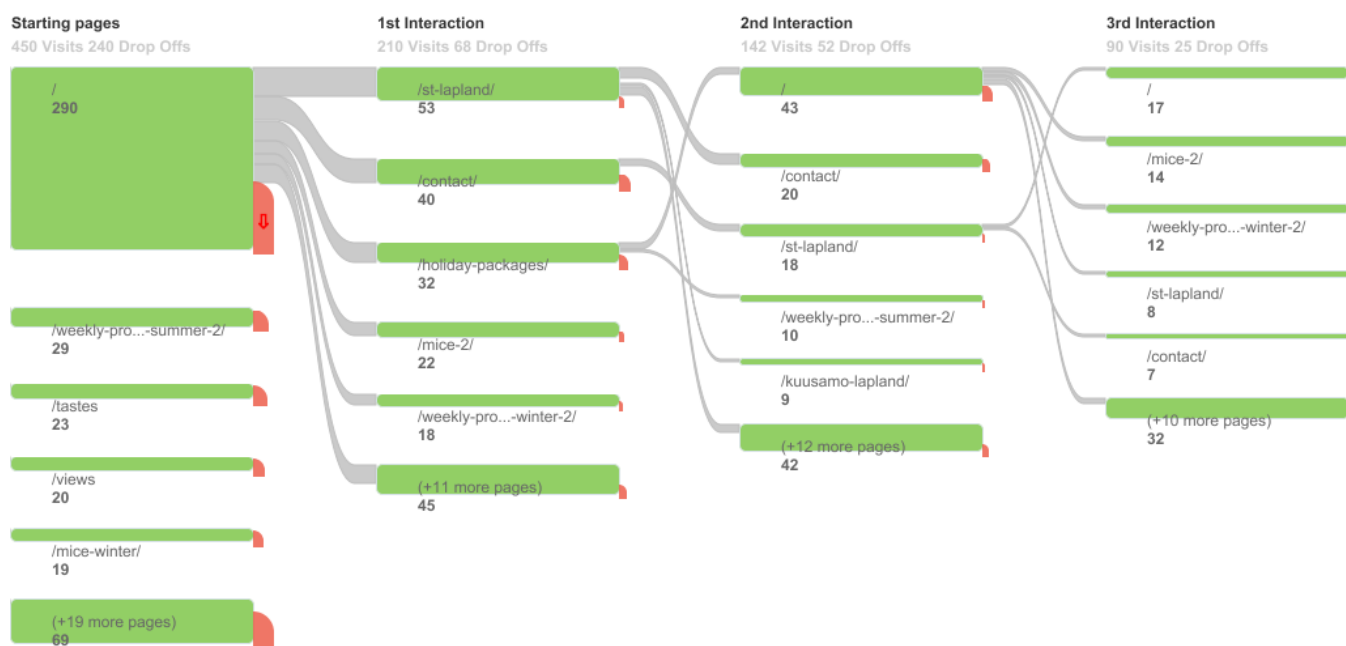


Figure 4. Visitors Flow During the Period 1 Apr 2012 – 31 Aug 2012 from Stlapland.fi (Google Analytics)

The fact that one of the secondary landing pages is the main sales channel for their summer products could be positive, but unfortunately the drop-offs are above 86% which means the page is not effective for the company goal. The “weekly summer program” page has the same style and instructions as the “winter weekly program”, and therefore, it is possible that the visitors feel confused in this page too and that could be the reason for the low effectiveness.

The visitors landing on the page “mice-winter” have the same negative flow, with a drop-off rate of 84,2%. The reason could be the same as with the previous page, since it has the same structure and a total lack of instructions. Moreover, the MICE programs are not suitable for the average customer as the system asks to introduce an e-mail address, which could be an additional reason for the drop off of the customers. Average customers are not expecting to introduce their e-mail address until they make an order or request information.

The traffic through the main landing page, the home page, becomes heterogeneous from the first interaction. As in the previous period, there is a large amount of visitors looking for more information about the company, but there is also many visiting the contact page. This could mean these customers like personalized treatment and look for the possibilities they have contacting

the company. In contrast, most of the rest of the traffic is not looking for the summer program but for the winter ones. There is also a large amount of visitors once again on the page offering already made packages. This could be a sign of misunderstanding. The visitor may think the holiday packages include more products to choose, as well as the time to spend on the holidays. On the other hand, they may understand “weekly program” as already made packages for one week holidays. It is then important to prove if this is a language misunderstanding and with other titles the visitors will find easier the offered products and follow the desired blueprint of the company.

In the course of the third period, from 1 February 2013 until 15 April 2013, the number of total visitors was 184. This is an average of 2,49 visits a day. It could seem an encouraging number for such a short period of time and for a small company that counts with alternative selling points, especially since it is not their higher season, but the bounce rate is 50,54%. This means more than half of the visitors leave the page without interacting with it. The number of returning visitor is similar to the summer period previously analysed, with 21,2% and therefore, 78,8% of new visitors. As before, this could be because the loyal customers know the sales process and prefer a less hurried booking and thus they start preparing their holidays with more foresight. The traffic flow, however, follows closer the lines of the winter period, landing on the home page or the media pages mainly. One reason for not having any visitors landing on the summer program could be the lack of updating. The website is not updated for the new year and consequently the programmes appear as “2012” programmes. It is possible therefore that search engines ignore the pages or that visitors do not come through because of the written year.



Figure 5. Visitors Flow During the Period 1 Feb 2013 – 15 Apr 2013 from stlapland.fi (Google Analytics)

The popularity of the landing page has slightly increased into 67,93%, but the behaviour of the visitors is also different from the other two periods. Even if there is a common behaviour in the three periods, the “about us” page being one of the most popular, in this period the customers had larger traffic to the mice than to the weekly programmes. The reason could be again the lack of update, which will lead the customers into other pages if the notice, such as MICE or holiday packages. This behaviour could be easily corrected by updating the website and the image of the company will be better to the customers. The visitors trust more an updated page because it shows an active company. Not updated pages can make the customer think of a non-working company.

Other interesting data to take into account that Google Analytics provide is the source of the traffic. This means how the visitors land in the website. The traffic can be search traffic, which is the traffic that arrives using search engines; referral traffic, who are the visitors that through another website find a reference link to the website and click on it; and direct traffic which refers to the visitors who type or copy the address directly in the navigation browser. Not only is it useful data to know more about the behaviour of the customers but also for many other factor to optimize the online strategies of the website.

During the first period the percentages on the three sources were about even, with a 32,4% of search traffic, a 32,4% of referral traffic and a 35,2% of direct traffic. 94,92% of the search traffic arrived using Google, which gives an extra reason to use this search engine in the SEO plan. The percentages of the rest of search engines were between 0,39% and 1,17%. Moreover, Google Analytics also provides the keyword used to find the page in the search engines, which is very helpful for the keyword strategies. There is a small gap in the data, because the visitors using the embedded Search bars and the Google users that are signed in when conducting the search are listed under the label “not provided”. This means that because of the privacy terms and other system algorithms the keyword used cannot be provided with Google Analytics. If this word was provided it would make the choice of the keywords easier, but does not affect the analysis. In this particular period the percentage of “not provided word” as the keyword is of 30,47%.

The second most popular word used was “st Lapland”. This means the user was looking in purpose for the company, as it is not using keywords for the services but the name of the company. This can mean they are returning customers or that they have heard of the company before. There are some variants of the Search keyword “st Lapland”, including punctuation marks or different speciation, but the profile of the visitor remains the same. This compounds 16,01% of the visitors.

There is a 6,64% of the visitors that arrived to the page by looking for “example of lappland drum sound” and a 1,17% by using “Lapland noises”. We can see here why there was a large amount of visitors landing in the media pages. In fact, is surprising St.Lapland’s website is the best ranking page for those search words. It could be used positively to improve the position of the website in Google, but the target market is different to the one the company is aiming and therefore, the sales-conversion will be too low. Moreover, the landings on the media page “tastes of Lapland” is due to the search of “smoked vendance”, with 4,29 of the Search traffic. St.Lapland ranks at the end of the first page for this search word, and in addition, the first image in “Google images Search” in from St.Lapland as well. As we will

explain during the strategies, this is one of the reasons images need optimization as well, because they can drive traffic into the website.

The last search word used by 4,30% of the search traffic is “nuorunen”. Nuorunen is a fell in the Karelian region, part of the region where St.Lapland works. The reason is that 2 images from the fell appear in the first line of results in Google images when looking for the word, and therefore have the opportunity of generating traffic. One again, this result ends in the media pages, reasoning therefore why they were so popular as landing pages.

The second period counts with an increase in search traffic, with 52,3% of the traffic, having 28,6% being referral traffic and 19,1% direct. Once again, the traffic source being Google in over 90%, with 95,34% precisely. On the contrary with the previous period, only 18,22% of the keyword used by the visitors is listed under “not provided”, which gives more percentage of the traffic to other keywords that can be analysed. However, once again the most popular word used is “St.Lapland” and its variations, conducting 35,63% of the Search traffic. As in the previous period, “nuorunen” and “smoked vendace” are popular words, with 2,54% and 1,69% of the traffic respectively. In this occasion, there have not been used words conducting the visitors to the “Sounds” page of St.Lapland’s website, also appreciable in Figure 4 previously, as it does not appear as part of the popular landing pages. There is a very curious group of keywords used during this period conducting 3,81% of the visitors. The keyword is “+358 hotels+guesthouse @info.fi finland”. It is a very rare search query that surprisingly returns St.Lapland’s website in the first result in Google. The bounce rate, however, of those searches was of 100% and therefore the visitors where not looking for St.Lapland but another concrete business or website.

During the last period, the search traffic was 44%, while the referral counts with 32,6% of the visits and the direct with 23,4%. 97,53% of the search traffic was conducted by Google, being the highest percentage from the three periods. In this occasion, the keyword list is similar to the one of the first period. In part it is reasonable since this third period includes 2 months of the first period. Therefore, once again we have a high percentage of “not provided” keywords, with 55,56% of the total traffic, and 11,11% to

St.Lapland and its variations. We find once again “example of lapland drum sound” with 2,47% of the visits and “vendace” for the same amount of visitors. However, there is some new keywords. “Kuusamo song” counts with 2,47% of the traffic as well, reasoning the popularity of the media pages once more. One of the new groups of keywords is “course centre of oivanki in kuusamo”. When searching through Google using this as keyword, St.Lapland does not appear. However, through Google images a large amount of pictures from the company appear. Another group of keywords used is “eu stöd lapland.fi”. When typing that on Google, one of the first results is St.Lapland because it contained “Lapland.fi” on the main URL. However, the link is to the MICE programmes and the bounce rate was of 100%, and thus the visitor did not find what he or she wanted. The two other keywords used were completely out of the field and only drove a single visitor with a bounce rate of 100%. The two words do not return any of the St.Lapland pages when using Google, and therefore it is not possible to analyse the reason of the driven traffic.

### **3.5 Designing the Strategies**

#### **3.5.1 Keywords**

The selection of the keywords for a website is not a random choice. In fact, the keywords play a very important role for SEO, but also for the informative approach towards the customers. The keywords are the words or phrases that best describe the products or services of the website and at the same time can create traffic.

It is very important to start the strategies from the keywords since they will affect many of the elements of the plan: content, tags and metadata, blog and social media. Very general Keywords tend to be highly competitive. Therefore, it is better to focus on more specific keywords that have less competition and describe the services effectively. (Jones 2008, XVI.)

The choice of the right keywords can be done through a process as explained by the author Ron Jones in 2011 in “*Keyword Intelligence: Keyword Research for Search, Social, and Beyond*”. The four steps of the process are: Brainstorm, Refine, Categorize, Test. (Jones 2011, 42.)

It is very useful to use a mind map during the brainstorm. A mind map is a visual diagram that combines words and lines to relate the words and thoughts. (Jones 2011, 85.)

To be keyword effective and attract organic traffic, in other words non-paid traffic, it is important to focus on three kinds of keywords: sale-converting keywords, traffic-producing keywords and lead-producing keywords. (Roetzer 2011, 107) Sale-converting keywords should be used to drive customers to finish the sale process once they are already on the website. Traffic-producing keywords should be used to rank higher on Google and attract customers to visit the website. Finally, lead-producing keywords should be used in personalized campaigns, social media and the website itself to create leads, in other words, opportunities on the right market, potential clients.

Using the advice of the different mentioned above experts and the image of the company the author has created the following mind-map.

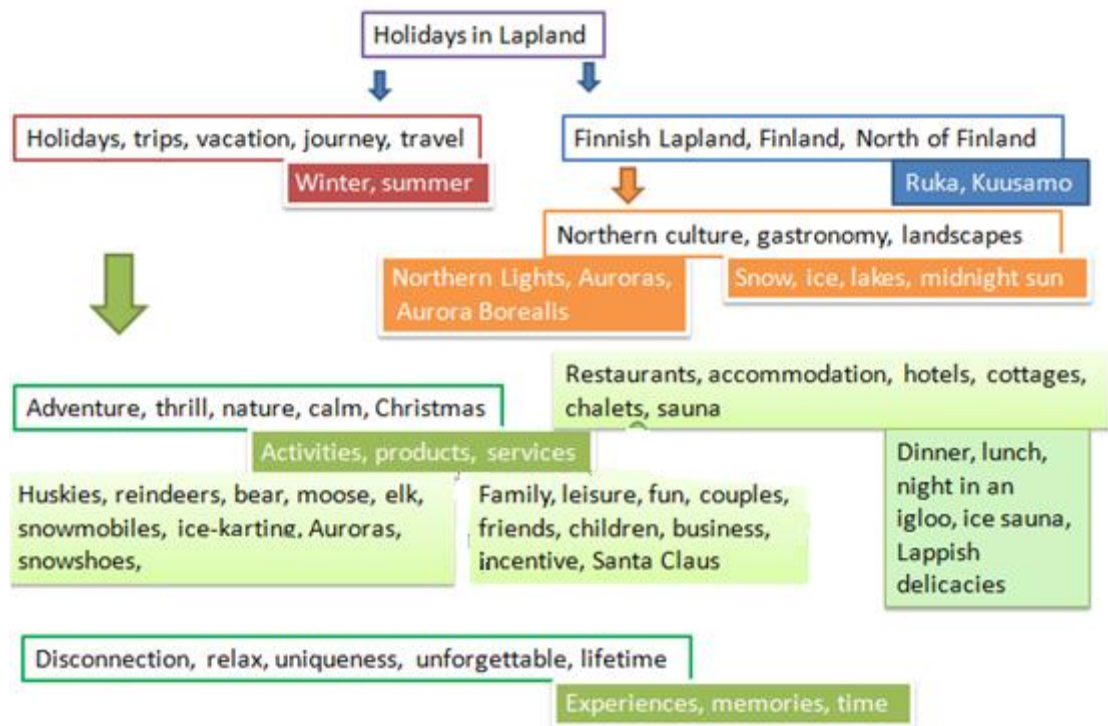


Figure 6. Mind Map of Keywords for St.Lapland

Also the most used keywords of the visitors to Lapland from Great Britain France and Germany have been taken into account. These are the major markets.

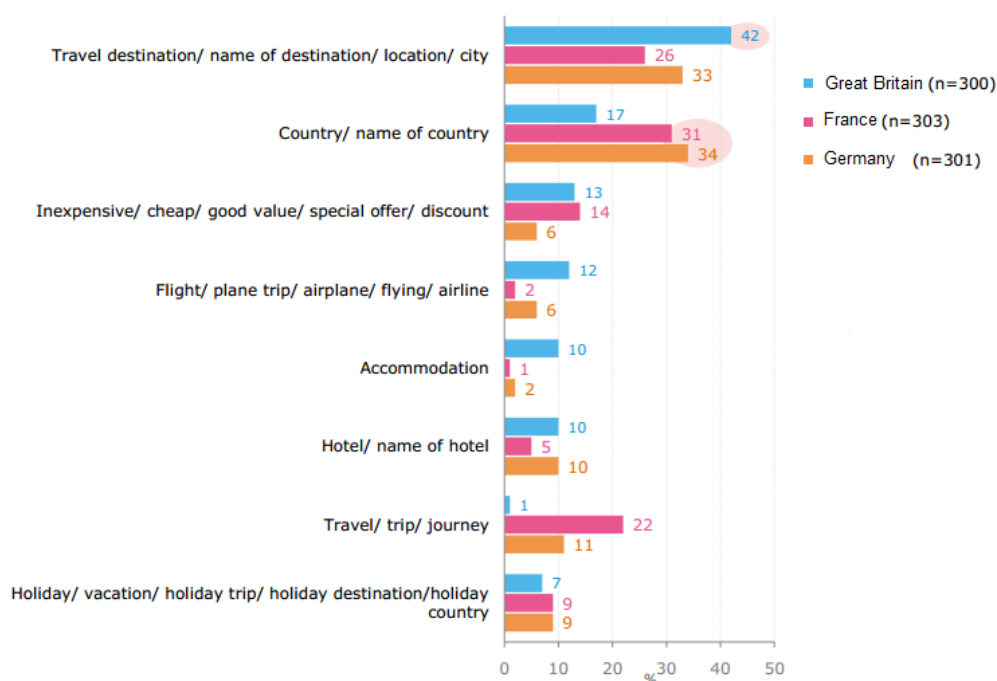


Figure 7. Use of Keywords by the Three Major Lappish Tourist Markets (Matkailu ja sosiaalisen median käyttö, 2011)

By using the Keywords Tool provided by Google AdWords and the mind map, a list of the most relevant keywords to use for St.Lapland's website was created. This list will be the base to create optimized content for the website and related sites, as well as a starting point for any future campaigns the company may be willing to enroll, such as Google Ads. The Google Adwords tool offers data over the searches in Google to the keywords or groups of keyword that are introduced. It gives an approximation of the monthly searches for the words and the competition that particular keyword has. In other words, how many companies are bidding for that keyword for pay advertising. Even if in this plan we are only optimizing for organic search this data can be a useful starting point to know the most popular keywords used by the customers and the competition.

It appears that currently the most popular general keywords related to the tourism industry in Lapland are "holidays in Lapland" and "trips in Lapland", which have high competition. "Tours in Lapland" and "Tours to Lapland" have a high competition even if the amount of monthly searches is less than one



third of the previous keywords. However, "Travel to Finland" and "Holidays in Finland" have low competition even if they are very popular words in the monthly searches. Therefore it is possible to use the search term in our favor by adding the adjective "north": Travel to North of Finland. Google will still rank it in the search results for Travel to Finland, especially if it is add as a tag. The tool suggests many keyword combinations but not all can be used. Some suggestions do not fit the company profile or the products offer. Nevertheless there are some useful suggestions, such as "Christmas holidays" and "visit to Santa", very popular in searches but with very low competition. St.Lapland counts with Christmas special packages and visits to Santa, and therefore it is possible to highlight the products with this traffic generating keywords.

Nonetheless it is important to take into account that Google counts with a synonyms system. The system is not perfect and it is being improved constantly. However, with this system it is possible to use synonyms in context to make the texts more natural without losing keyword ranking. It is important to take into account that even using synonyms the more used word in the website will be the main keyword and therefore the website will have stronger value for that particular keyword than for the rest. (Cutts 2011.) For example, a user is trying to find a second hand car in Google. The user types "used cars for selling". If website A and website B both sell second hand cars but the first one uses the word "automobile", which is a synonym, much more than "car"-the word used in the search query- it is more likely that website B will appear higher in the search of the user.

Since the company counts with many different pages, it is possible to try to optimize them all instead of keeping just the home page. With this strategy it is possible to lead traffic to both the home page and the secondary pages, covering thus the general market and more concrete cases without affecting each other. In other words, the marketing campaign will not affect negatively the different markets but will give the company bigger possibilities without a large extra investment.

The groups of keywords have been divided to serve as guidelines for the company for future updates, campaigns or media marketing. These are “destination keywords” and “offer keywords”.

Destination keywords will be used when describing the location of the destination. The company may put effort in using the phrase “North of Finland” as well as “Lapland” to help the website rank for the searches for Finland. It is a good idea to use also “Finnish Lapland” or “Lappish region” sometimes when there is the necessity of identifying the destination repeatedly to keep the text natural and avoid keyword stuffing.

Offer keywords are keywords referring to all the products and services used. It is possible the destination keyword will be often accompanied by the main product of the company, holiday packages. In these cases the company should use “travel to...” and “holidays” as the main keywords, because of the amount of traffic they generate and the competition they have. When needed it is possible to use synonyms such as “trips” or “vacation”, but they are not so popular as the previous keywords.

“Holiday packages” has high traffic revenue but high competition as well. The same happens with “trip package” or “tour package”. However, the company should still use these words sometimes because they are descriptive with the offer and related words to the image of the company, which is helpful for a high ranking. Nonetheless, there are some other traffic generating words that can be used to differentiate the company. “Online”, even if it can seem somehow redundant, is a very popular word used for travelers looking for packages on the internet. It gives the chance to add it as a complement to the other keywords to give a push with an underused word by companies but very popular for users. Another word in the same situation that can help generating traffic is “book” when it is written in proximity with “holidays” or synonyms. These can be considered thus as traffic-producing words. “Special” is another word that can be used as a complement, as well as synonyms such as “unique”, that not only generate traffic but are part of the current image of the company. Consequently it is recommended to use these words to differentiate the products from the competition. They should be considered as lead-producing keywords.

In addition, every product page has to include the activity as its own keyword. This can also help the ranking for some specific search that are not so popular. It will help as well to give the keyword package a group identity which will be relevant for the crawlers when considering the information the page offers to the users. When the keywords are not related and are only used to produce traffic the relation is lost and the crawlers rank the page lower because of lack of relevance for the search query.

It is important to highlight as well the groups of products the company offers. There are some words which are very descriptive and relevant for users and can become part of the keyword strategy.

“Hotel” is the most popular word used looking for accommodation. However, “Accommodation” counts as well with a lot of popularity. Since St.Lapland offers many types of accommodation it will be better to use “accommodation” as the keyword for this group. In fact, St.Lapland works more with cottages and cabin resorts accommodation and therefore using “hotel” as the keyword may not meet the expectations of the visitors and produce a high bounce rate, which will be negative for the website.

Restaurant does not have many synonyms which will fit exactly the offer, and therefore “restaurant” will be the keyword for this group of products. However, to differentiate from the competition, the company should be using extra adjectives as keywords. Because of the nature of the products from St.Lapland “delicacies” and “traditional” will be the perfect extra keywords.

The different product can be globally regarded as “activities”. However, it is possible to use as well “trip” and “day-trips” for most of them as the keyword. In context it is possible to exchange “activities” with the group of words “what to do”. It does not sound as professional or as direct as activities but is a very popular word in searches that can be perfectly exchanged in context.

In addition, “Aurora Borealis” is a very popular terms in searches. It may be a good idea to use it to rank higher through the social media strategies, relating stories and other attractive content to the products offered by the website.

These keywords need to be included in text in the content of the web, the metadata and tags and when possible in the title tags and page titles. (Jones

2008, XVI). They have to be part as well of the social media strategies. These keywords have to be the base for any online text St.Lapland will create.

### **3.5.2 Content**

Content marketing is part of the elements of a marketing strategy specially important online. It is necessary for the brand to the company, the website and the search engine optimization, and the social media strategies. (Roetzer 2011, 112.) It refers to create some guidelines on the content for the different parts it affects. It is important to have a homogenous brand image in all the platforms the company is using, as well as to feed to search engine crawlers to rank higher and the visitors to like your pages.

In Company Marketing Communication, the message has to be meaningful, pointing out the benefits of the product; distinctive, highlighting why the product is better than in the competition; and believable, which is a difficult objective because advertising raises skepticism. (Alatalo 2012.)

With the experience acquired through my training and the different ideas from all the bibliography, I have translated that message into content marketing.

For the users, the content needs to be practical, interesting and visual. Practical content is useful content for the visitors. It is content that describes properly what the company offers and all the related information the visitor may need, trying to be as trustful as possible. Secondly, interesting content refers to not only practical but attractive content. To create interesting content the words have to be attractive, and in there is where the marketing creativity has to be applied. It is where the company can highlight the positive characteristics of the products and service it offers, explain why they are so special. It is important to use words that sound attractive to the consumers. Finally, visual content is about playing with the visual element to attract the user. The Web offers almost infinite possibilities to be creative and attract the users visually. It can be images or videos, but it also refers to the style of a website, the colors, the typing font. It can even refer to flash animation or interactive actions that can attract the attention of the consumer.

From the point of view of the crawlers it differs a bit. However, it is more important to create content to the users than to the crawlers. If the users do not find the content interesting or useful a website will eventually rank low. Nonetheless, it is only necessary to include some factor into the creation of content for user to make it crawler friendly too. The most important to the crawlers relies on the trustworthiness and usefulness of the content, as well as the keywords. To prove the website is useful and reliable to the crawlers the content needs to have relation in between, as well as with the keywords, page titles and website domain. In addition, the more the users visit the website thanks to its keywords, the crawlers will consider it very relevant for the users and therefore become trustworthy.

Into more specific details for St.Lapland website, it is needed a big change of the content in some pages. Visually the website is working perfectly, with homogeneous style, good choice of colors using the logo of the company, good pictures and other media. However, as seen during the previous SWOT analysis and the analysis with Google Analytics, some pages appear confusing and need instructions. This means the website is failing in giving practical content. In addition, the texts the website contains have not been written with SEO in mind and thus there is a lack of keyword optimization.

### **3.5.3 Tags and Metadata**

Tags and Metadata are part of the off-page strategies. This means they are part of the code. They are not normally visible for the visitors, unless the browser has problems loading. In that case, the code could appear and the metadata will be visible.

Tags and Metadata must include all the keywords of the website. The description metadata must be direct and clear, as it is the information that may appear in the snippet in Google or when the website has problems displaying properly. The snippet is the text that appears under the link Google Search offers as results. Lately Google has given less importance to the metadata to avoid keyword stuffing. Keyword stuffing is the inclusion of popular keywords on Google Search to get a higher ranking, even when the website is not related to the search term. To keep away from wrong results, the importance of metadata is minimized and crawlers give more importance

to on-page keywords and contents than to off-page text. However, with a good relation between on-page and off-page information the metadata can help on the ranking, and will never be negative for page ranking. (Cutts 2012.)

In the case of St.Lapland, the metadata can be filled through the edition site the company uses.

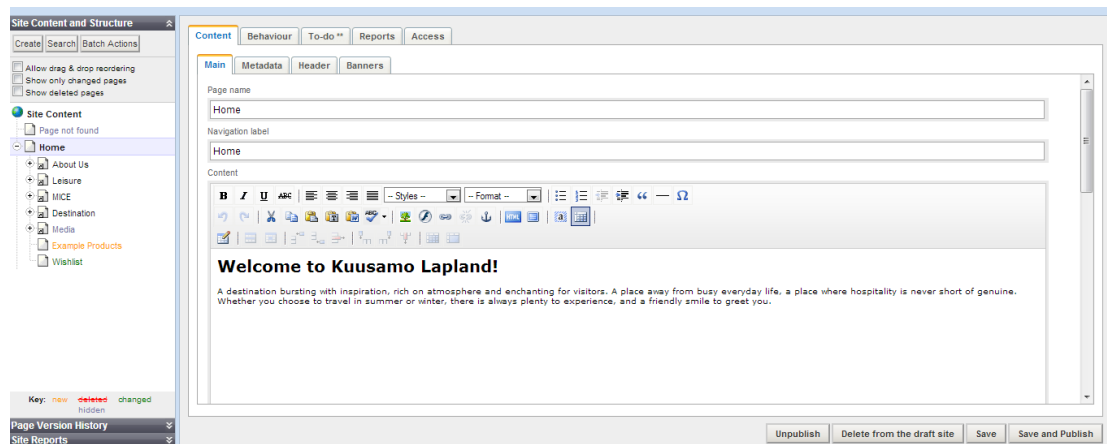


Figure 8. Edition Framework of stlapland.fi, Titles and Content.

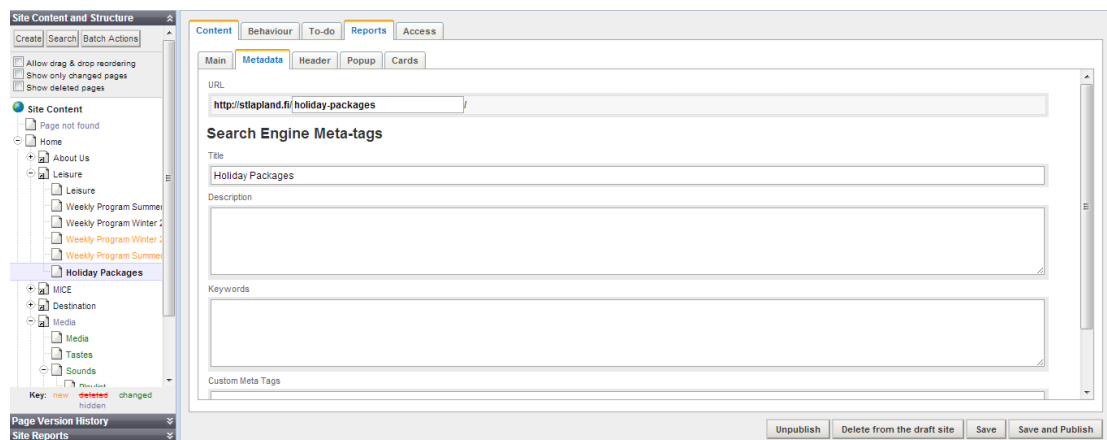


Figure 9. Edition Framework of stlapland.fi, Metadata and URLs.

It is possible to see in the images the total lack of metadata St.Lapland's website has currently. However, the edition page offers easy and fast solution to the problem. It only requires some time to update every page with the right keywords and descriptions.

Some SEO experts suggest optimizing only the home page to save time and labour costs, but they agree that having every page optimized is more positive for page ranking.

### 3.5.4 Images

Images do not have a great impact in SEO but are highly significant for the user experience. Images help creating a more visual and attracting website for visitors, and the lack of images can lead to lose of traffic. Additionally, very large images will slow down the speed of the page and, not only direct traffic to leave the page but influence negatively in search ranking. Slow pages are not appreciated by crawlers nor users.

However, it is possible to make the images influence positively in SEO. One of the most important factors is to keep the images small. When talking about small images it refers to the amount of kilobytes, not the size in centimetres, in other words how heavy is the image to download in the browser. Small images are much faster to load.

Another factor to take into account is the name of the image and its title and description. Crawlers do not index images as visual element, but as words. If the name of the image and its description include some of the keywords the crawler will consider it relevant and in addition the website will count with more keywords without spamming. The description has a second purpose as well. When images are not displayed the name and description is what the user can read. There are mobile devices that may not display the image or the user may choose personally to not display them to speed up the page. In those cases the name of the image and the description are the information the user has. Therefore, the description has to be able to explain the content of the image for the user. The description can appear too in some cases when the user explicitly wants more about the image and clicks on it or stays with the cursor over it. In that cases, providing a short, clear and informative description will satisfy the visitors' desires.

Lastly, well tagged images can rank high in Google Images and drive traffic to the website, helping to reach more popularity.

Currently St.Lapland's website has a high speed loading time even if it counts with many images. This makes the site very attractive to visitors without interfering on their user experience. The images' information, though, is not completely optimized. Some images have been uploaded with

descriptive names and titles but not all the images. To add titles and descriptions with keywords is necessary to edit every image individually.

### **3.5.5 Flash and Javascript**

Flash and Javascript are the most popular programming system for animation and other media in websites. Their purpose in the website is similar to the images. They help creating a visual entertaining experience for the users. As well as with images, they become negative when they have a slow speed loading time for the same reasons as previously. On the other hand, normally it is not possible to include descriptions and titles as an average user, to help crawlers.

St.Lapland's website uses some flash animated media in the home page. The loading time is fast and it is very attractive to visitors. However, the reason to include this element on this plan is the minor problem it faces. Flash animation does not display in some mobile devices. The use of mobile devices for internet navigation has increased rapidly, with a rise of 82% from July 2011 to July 2012 (Nielsen 2012) and it is expected to continue growing.

Javascript does display on mobile devices and therefore the company may want to consider changing the technology from Flash to Javascript. However, this will need an investment and needs to be done by an IT professional.

The problem does not affect drastically the user experience since the only flash animation used is on the slideshow in the home page. When flash does not display, a unique image appears instead of the slide show. The image hides part of the gadgets that normally display over the slide show which direct the user to the media pages. Summarizing, when the website is visited using a mobile device the slideshow in the home page is not displayed. Instead, a unique image that covers the link to the media pages appears.

If the company can afford the investment it is recommendable to change it to maintain the full visual experience and permit the access to the media pages when users navigate in their mobile devices.



### 3.5.6 Links

As seen previously, links are an important factor in SEO because crawlers give a lot of importance to them. It is not only about the links that the website itself publishes (outbound links), but the links that other websites that refer to it (inbound links or backlinks). Moreover, is not only the amount of links but the “quality”. Linked pages have to be related to be considered positively by the crawlers. In addition, the more popular is a site A when linking to website B, better will be considered B by the crawler when deciding its ranking. What is more, when a very popular website links to another site the crawlers can find that second site faster and thus indexing sooner. (Cutts 2012.)

It is not possible to interfere in which links another website publishes directly. It is important also to carefully choose which links are being published in your own website. Even if it will be a rare case, since any quality link will help a website, some companies may not want to be published in some sites. Therefore, it is important to have agreements with other companies or websites to have a reciprocal link publishing.

As inbound links, the best recommendation is to have links from sites related in the field and popular and relevant for Google. In this special case the author recommendation is to contact the following sites to concrete an agreement:

VisitFinland.com is the principal tourism page from the country of destination St.Lapland's works on. They actually have a directory of links to activities, accommodation and other tourism services. St.Lapland counts with a link on the list, but is not optimized. The link name is “St.Lapland Accommodation and activities”. It will be better if written “Accommodation and Activities by St.Lapland” because it will catch easier the attention of the visitor, who is looking for the services, not the companies. In addition, the company is not right categorized since it only appears when filtering for accommodation, but not for activities. The company should ask for that change in the directory of links in VisitFinland. It has to be done by the company's representative since it could be possible that Visitfinland.com requires some agreements only the company's representative can decide on.

Ruka.fi is the website of the region St.Lapland works on. It promotes other companies in the field and thus it is possible they will accept to promote St.Lapland as well. However, as previously, only the company's representative has the authority to make agreements.

Lapland.fi is the special website for the northern region in Finland, destination that St.Lapland offers, and therefore highly related. It is one of the first websites that appears when looking for Lapland in Google. However, there is a major problem St.Lapland can face here. In this website they do not advertise directly, not even in a link directory, any private companies. What it does advert is regions, their official website and tourist information related centres. However, the Ruka-Kuusamo area is not included. It has been debated for a long time about considering Ruka-Kuusamo Lapland or not, since politically it is not properly Lapland. However, because of the characteristics and services it offers, for tourism it has been included in the region, as it is possible to see in VisitFinland.com. It will be good for the company if they will include the region, because it could attract some tourists to look for it in Google. In addition, if the link in Ruka.fi becomes active and Lapland.fi includes Ruka in the regions, it is possible to get traffic through this relation and more link relevance as ruka.fi would be linked by a very popular site.

Rukakuusamo.com is a travel blog from the area St.Lapland performs its services. Besides the normal blog entrances, it includes a lot of useful information for tourists. It has almost 600 followers on its Facebook and probably the around the same amount of blog followers. The amount of daily visitors is impossible to know without asking the owner of the page, but taking in account the followers in Facebook we can assume it is a quite popular blog. It is a page regularly updated, related to the topic and very useful for all travellers in Ruka and the rest of Lapland. It is therefore a good idea to try to get some link of St.Lapland published in this blog.

In addition to this very important pages, all the company websites from the partners should have a link to St.Lapland as well. Most of them already count with it, but some others do not.

As outbound links, the first St.Lapland should do is link to the partners website. It will increase the cooperation and will also permit the visitors to know more specifically about the service providers. This will increase the confidence of the customers as they can have a clearer picture of the structure of the website. From a purer SEO point of view, the reciprocal links as well as the field relation will count for the crawlers. Also, any referral visitors coming from the partners websites will help in the popularity.

If the agreements are positive, St.Lapland should include links to VisitFinland.com, Ruka.fi and Lapland.fi too. It is very positive when the links are reciprocal from the point of view of the crawlers, especially if the topic of the page is related, since the link will be evaluated as a relevant link and therefore as a quality link.

Quality links are not only positive when they are inbound but also outbound, because the aim of Google is to bring the most useful pages to the users. When a page includes relevant links to the users they become quality links. (Cutts 2011.) Consequently St.Lapland can include useful links for the visitors in its website as well. These links should be informational for the customers, such as links to check the weather, a very important factor for customers. My recommendation for the weather link is the following website: <http://www.holiday-weather.com/lapland/>.

The reason is a combination of information purposes and SEO purposes. The website gives live forecast of different regions in the world, as well as previsions and month average, very useful tools for travellers, and the information tends to be accurate. From the SEO point of view the link is not only relevant but the title words are positive for the keyword strategies. The main link includes the words "holiday" and "Lapland", two very helpful words for our strategy. In addition, the website counts with a link directory and travel tools that could be interesting to St.Lapland. The company can contact "Holiday weather" to be included in the list and even in the holiday booking tools if the agreement offered is positive for the company sales strategy.

There are many possibilities on how to include the outbound links. The best practice is to avoid direct links, especially in a list. It is better to include the links using keyword links. For example, including the weather page, it is

possible to do it in the informative page about the destination. It can be included by writing “You can find live weather in Lapland and the average for your month of travel in this very useful [site](#) to be aware of the weather during your travel.”, where “site” will include the link to the website.

Another good practice is to put the links in gadgets, small images or logos in a side bar or at the bottom of the page. Like this the links are not directly visible and so the image of the website is not affected, but still the visitors can find the different partners.

### **3.5.7 Social Media Elements**

As seen previously, social media has a great impact over the audience. Moreover, it can be a completely free of costs tool for branding, promotion and customer service.

Facebook is the preferred social media, with 22% of the total visits to the different social media services. The second most popular social media is Blogger, with 8.4% of the total visits and with 5.3% of the visits stays Twitter in the third place. (Nielsen 2012) In fact, 30% of traveller looks for information about their trips in the social media. (Deschamps 2013)

St.Lapland counts with its company presence in Facebook, Blogger and YouTube. For this plan we are focusing on Facebook and Twitter for St.Lapland in the social media elements, dedicating a different subchapter to the company’s blog. The reason is all the practices and business created around blogging, with its own particular tips and strategies. The strategy does not include YouTube because it requires especial resources and extra budget to create good quality videos for the channel. In addition, YouTube is not as effective as Facebook, Twitter or blogging for SEO purposes because is less popular as a social media channel and there is less freedom to personalize the page and relate it to the main website. Therefore, is more difficult for crawlers to consider the links relevant and of quality.

We are including the newsletters in this strategy as well. They are not commonly referred as part of social media but they are definitely related. With newsletters is possible to contact and share with the subscribers, as well as relate it with the rest of social media platforms. St.Lapland counts with

a newsletter that can be definitely optimized for the SEO and other social media and marketing strategies.

Facebook is the first tool the company should use in its social media strategy, since 70% of travellers are active on Facebook as Phocus Wright Traveler Technology Survey 2011 highlighted. The main purpose of social media in SEO strategies is the creation of referral traffic and thus increase the popularity of the website trying to be optimized. social media, however, can be used in different marketing strategies, such as Market Research or special campaigns free of promotion costs, or for Direct Sales, Customer Service or Product Development (Deschamps 2013.)

The strategy the author is suggesting for Facebook is to use it as an engagement tool and promote St.Lapland's website and services. To achieve that goal, St.Lapland need to update the Facebook page with regularity trying to give interesting or useful information. This information needs to be related with the destination, the products, the holiday season or any special events that may be interesting for visitors. It is possible to update also greeting in public holidays or special days, to give a more natural image of the company and its Facebook page, not using it only for promotion. The updates need to be regular. Updating the status, adding pictures or sharing links at least once every day or every two days is the best manner to get followers. On one hand, too many updates, if they are not highly interesting, can make the followers unsubscribe from the feeds and therefore the company loses the influence. On the other hand, a lack of updates makes harder the goal of engagement, since the possibilities of having many followers reading the updates and sharing them drops drastically.

It is important to keep English as the main language in the updates since the customers are international. It is possible to add second languages in the same post, to reach also other people that may prefer to read in another language. In addition, it is important to keep in mind to use the keywords from the plan. By doing this the referral links may gain more relevance because they are in context and include the keywords of the website.

The posts do not have to be simply sales speech. In fact, any sales text has to be subtle, since followers may lose interest in the text or may feel used for the only purpose of advertising.

It is important to include the links to St.Lapland's website in the updates, but it does not need to be very clear. That can give the same advertising feeling as previously. It is perfectly effective to add the link at the end of the post by leaving a few white lines, especially when updating pictures. By doing this, when the feeds are shared only the first sentences of the text will appear, avoiding the advertising feeling. Nonetheless, when the users click to know more, the link will appear.

Another part of the strategy is that St.Lapland follows other related pages, with the destination or even competitors pages. In fact other agencies are more likely to share your content if it is interesting, (Roetzer 2011, 104) and it is possible to do the same with your company Facebook page. This allows to update the status without writing new posts, but still giving useful information to the followers. Paul Roetzer says "Agencies and professionals that focus on collaboration over competition will have greater opportunities to thrive in the emerging marketing agency ecosystem." in his book "Marketing Agency Blueprint : The Handbook for Building Hybrid PR, SEO, Content, Advertising, and Web Firms".

The second social media tool that needs to be used is Twitter. In 2012 Twitter grew 13% in the number of users, becoming the third most used social media platform. With 37.033.000 users in 2012 the growth is expected to continue. (Nielsen 2012.)

St. Lapland does not count with a Twitter account currently, but it is free of costs to create one. When creating the username in Twitter it is important to take into account the maximum number of characters is 15 and it is going to be the URL of the profile. Therefore, it needs to be descriptive and attracting (Deschamps 2013) but for SEO purposes the best will be to include as well the company keywords. In this case, the suggestion of the author is to use "StLaplandTravel". By using this name we create a descriptive name, including the name of the company, the destination and the business, and in addition we have two of the keywords together.

The strategy for Twitter follows the same lines as for Facebook, encouraging the use of the keywords and links to the website. However, Twitter is what is considered “microblogging” technology. Microblogging refers to the limited amount of characters a story, in Twitter called “tweet”, can have. In this case, is limited to 140. With this limitation it is not possible to advertise products or share stories, but this is not the goal of Twitter in our strategy. The goal of Twitter will be to publish regularly links to St.Lapland’s website, Facebook and Blog with a short introduction. For example “Enjoy the Auroras Borealis this season!” and a link to St.Lapland’s website, or “Read the new story about husky sledges in our blog” and a link to the blog. This is the main use of Twitter for companies, to refer to other pages to move the traffic. Of course it is important to keep the users interested, as in Facebook, by publishing news or pictures attractive to the visitors. The use of the keywords is again positive to include the links in the right context for SEO purposes.

Since the time required to update a Twitter status is minimal, it is recommended to update it at least once a day. In addition, when a new post is added in Facebook or the Blog of the company, Twitter should be used to promote it.

Lastly, the company should use Twitter and Facebook to encourage social care. Through Social care the customers can express their doubts or complaints, as well as positive comment in the different social media platforms of a company. This is a free-of-cost, growing tendency for customers, but also for companies. To have successful social care the company has to interact with the customers to give them the answers they need and improve the image of a caring company. In addition, the responses need to be fast, because that is one of the main reasons customers engage in social care.

By being successful in social care customers become more involved and therefore interact more with the company’s different websites, increasing the popularity and helping positioning in the search engines.

The last strategy the company should engage in is Newsletters. Newsletters are bulletins with new, information, greeting or offers the company can send to the subscribers. A very positive facet of newsletters is that the customer

will not miss the update, as it can happen in the rest of social media platforms, since the e-mail stays in the inbox until the user decides to read it. Another positive side is that newsletters allow to include many topics in the same email, as well as pictures and links, giving the possibility to the company to promote many products at the same time. Lastly, it is possible to include links to engage the rest of social media platforms of the company, acting as a final link. (Eckerling 2013.)

To have a successful newsletter, however, the content needs to fulfil the expectations of the customers. It needs to include attractive texts and pictures, but it needs as well useful information or offers to get the attention. The need of using the keywords becomes less important in this platform for SEO purposes, since Google does not index personal emails. However, it is recommended to use them because they help creating the image the company wants and helps the user to find thus the website in future search engine queries.

Newsletters do not need constant updates, as the rest of social media. In fact, too many newsletters in a short period of time can bore the customers and result in un-subscriptions. In addition, it becomes harder for the company to keep the content fresh and interesting.

St.Lapland started a newsletter campaign in March 2012, but the newsletter was stopped a while after. The newsletter was provided by the free software MailChimp, which allows to create different lists, schedule newsletters, design completely the newsletter in images, colours and texts and gives reports of the performance of the newsletter after being sent. It would be easy to recover that campaign and keep on sending newsletters. The lists are already created as well as a sample newsletter for the design. It should be considered as well to give the opportunity to subscribe through the other social media platforms and the principal website.

### **3.5.8 Blog**

Blogs are search engine friendly by default and to update regularly a blog is a very effective SEO technique. Blogging can be used to elevate a website in



the search engines (Holtz 2006, 202.), which is the main goal of this SEO plan.

By updating regularly the content in the blog it becomes dynamic, which is well considered by the crawlers. In addition, comments on the blog add dynamism to the site too.

St.Lapland's website count with a blog which is currently not updated. The blog is well integrated into the main website: it has the same visual style and the website counts with a plug-in that highlights the blog in the home page. Therefore, the company counts with a very useful tool already installed and prepared which just needs regular updating.



Figure 10. St.Lapland's Blog Plugging in the Home Page.

However, the text needs to be natural and interesting to readers to get followers. It needs attracting stories, related pictures to highlight the content and heterogeneous content. The blog entries need to be different each time and have unique content, otherwise the readers lose the interest and the crawlers could consider the blog spam or having copied content. (Amorrich 2012.) At the same time it needs to include the different keywords, even if it is not necessary to include them all. The keywords have to be well integrated in the text to create a natural, not forced blog entry. Lastly, Including links to the website is one of the most important factors. With the links the blog redirects the traffic to the main website to motivate the visitors to complete a transaction and at the same time can give the website link relevance for the crawlers.

Regular updates of the blog are highly important as search engine booster. Therefore, it is very useful to make an schedule for blog updating, with the dates and the responsables. Many companies count with a person or a team to control all the online marketing (Blog, website, Social Networks) but it requires a budget St.Lapland may not count with. Nevertheless, it is still possible to run the blog without extra budget.

My suggestion, knowing the structure of the company, is a collaborative blog. St.Lapland is formed by 8 companies around Kuusamo area so it has potentially enough labour force to complete the task. The idea of a collaborative blog is that all the workers involved with St.Lapland can update the blog.

To make it possible all the employees should have access to the blog and to the keywords list and blog practices described in this plan. In addition, the creation of a schedule will allow all the companies to know when is a good moment to update. It is more useful to have regular updates divided in time than many updates in a very short period. The schedule can be prepared through Google Calendar, which the company already uses to share information. The recommendation from the author is to update always on the same day if possible. By doing it the readers are prepared for the updates, which adds an expectation factor to raise the interest.

My suggestion is that once a week the blog will be updated by a different company from the 8 former parts. Every company can decide privately who is the responsible. This is not only positive for St.Lapland but also to the companies as individuals. Every company can write about their field and the products they provide in St.Lapland, including links to their company website and to St.Lapland's website. This will be therefore a "coopetition" strategy, which highlights the individual company who is updating but also St.Lapland.

Following the guidance of the experts that can be found in the bibliography and the advice of a successful blog writer, Julián Amorrích, the author has elaborated the following list with the basic practices the company should follow to create an interesting blog positive to the SEO goal.

- Use the keywords provided in this report to help create the image of St.Lapland in the search engines and attract the targeted customers.
- As discussed previously, the use of synonyms makes the text more natural to the reader and does not affect the ranking negatively.
- Try to write always unique content, or in other words, avoid repeating topics and, highly important, never copy the content from other pages. Crawlers will rank the page down if the content is not original. It is even possible that the site is banned on base of copywriting rights. Form the point of view of the readers, they will be more interested if they can find something new in every entry, and consequently bored if the content is always similar.
- Do not always write as advertising products. Blog readers like stories, not advertising. Write about a special day, a personal experience, some breaking news. It is not hard to advertise in a more subtle way by using links, and the entries will be more attractive to the visitors if they are entertaining stories.
- Focus in only one topic per entry. Including many topics in the same entry is not an effective blogging technique: The readers may lose interest, become confused or be overwhelmed; the entry will probably become too large; the redaction of future blog entries may become harder because of the lack of new content. By focusing on one topic every entry the chances of including right keywords maintaining a natural flow in the text are higher. In addition, by following this and the previous advice, the blog can become relevant to many keywords and in many fields and thus, reach more readers and possible customers.
- Try to keep the length of the blog entries between 150 and 300 words when updating often. With this length the entry is fast to read but is possible to include all the information needed. When the updating the blog is not very often is possible to write longer entries. Around 500 words is a good length, but if the entry is longer it should never exceed 1000 words, not for this kind of blog. Different blogs require different strategies over the text length. In this case, the company uses the blog to promote the products in a more natural, less advertised style. Especially with these kind of blogs, very long entries have the

possibility of being ignored because the reader feels discouraged since it seems very time consuming.

- Include always pictures related to the topic. There has to be a relation between the text and the image to not confuse the reader. There has to be also a logic relation between the amount of pictures and words. In a short text is better to include fewer images to keep balance. It is also good if the name of the image includes a description of it and, always when possible, the keywords. Doing this if the image is not displayed the reader can still imagine the content and the crawlers can index extra keywords.
- Title the entries with short and informative titles which describe what is the topic. Include always some of the keywords to make it visible. The title is the first to be read by crawlers and visitors.
- Include always the link to St.Lapland's website at the end of the entry. It is always better if it is integrated in the text. An example sentence could be: "Experience this and other adventures through our holiday packages in <http://www.stlapland.fi> ." Since the recommendation in this plan is a collaborative blog between the companies in St.Lapland, the writer of the entry should include also a link to their company. Once again, it is better if it is integrated, but in this case is better to include it at the beginning or during the text through a "word-link". A "word-link" is a word with a link embedded. The blog technology offers this option very easily. By using it the text in the blog continues fluent to the reader, but also allows him or her to click and visit the page if desired. The reason is to avoid very clear advertising all at the end of the blog entry. An example could be, in an entry explaining different Lappish delicacies, "Restaurant Tundra offers many typical Lappish dishes..." where "Restaurant Tundra" will be the "word-link".
- Try to reply to the posts of the readers. It creates an image of a caring and active company when the readers find their posts replied. In addition to the image of the blog, it will encourage the readers to become regulars, which will promote the blog and the company. Regular readers even share the entries of the blog in their own blogs eventually and therefore promote the blog to its followers.

Once the blog will start being updated again, it will need promotion to fasten the attraction of readers. There are many strategies to promote a blog. Reading and commenting other blogs can be time consuming but very effective. Every time that the blog of St.Lapland is used to comment another blog a direct link to it will appear. When applying this strategy it is better to read and comment blogs related with the company, in other words, travel blogs. In the same manner, following other blogs can encourage the owners of those blogs to follow yours and consequently make the blog appear in the home page as “followers”. This is indirect marketing for the blog and thus for the company that is free of costs. It is possible to combine this strategy with what bloggers refer to as “guest blogger”. A guest blogger is a writer from a different blog that has the chance to write her or his own story in the blog of another person. If the stories are good the followers of the other blogger may become followers of your own blog. It is possible to also highlight articles of other bloggers with a direct link to their blog, another popular practice for bloggers.

Some suggestions of blogs to follow and try some cooperation:

<http://www.rukakuusamo.com>. Already mentioned in the links strategy, this blog can be a good source of visitors and is highly related with St.Lapland’s blog.

<http://www.elblogdefinlandia.com>. This is the blog from Julián Amorrích. The blog has almost 2.000 followers in Facebook and more than 800 in twitter. The blog itself has more than 100.000 visits a year, with an average of more than 280 visits every day. This blog is written in Spanish and therefore the market is more concrete. However, it is such a popular blog that is one of the first links in Google when you search for “Finland” “holidays in Finland” and similar queries in Spanish. Therefore, this can help to give a push in the Spanish market for St.Lapland.

It is also possible to follow some of the competition’s blogs, such as <http://www.laplandsafaris.com/en/blog>, the blog of Lapland Safaris, or <http://uniquelapland.com/category/blog-and-news/>, the blog of Unique Lapland. By following the competitors and maybe them following St.Lapland’s blog, a network of cooperation is created. In addition, it is very good to read

other blogs in the same field to get ideas, especially for starters on the blogging world.

Another strategy is the word-of-mouth. The employees that update the blog should be encouraged to share the blog with friends or family to create a network that can eventually convert readers into costumers.

The use of the rest of social media is the third strategy for blogging, free of costs, for promotion. St.Lapland counts already with a Facebook and thus can promote the blog every time it is updated. The employees should be motivated too to promote the blog in their social networks as well. In addition, the blog already includes the plug-in that allows readers to share the blog home page and any particular entry, not only in Facebook but as well in Twitter and Google+.

Lastly, it is possible to submit the blog to free directories such as [bloguniverse.com](http://bloguniverse.com) for an extra push in the promotion.

### **3.5.9 Site Map**

The site map is the coded structure of the website. It is part of the off-page strategies since the visitors do not directly see it, but is very important for crawlers. They use the site map to navigate through the website. The reason to include the site map in the plan is to help the crawlers index the page by submitting it to the search engine, and therefore, appear faster and better in the rankings on Google. There are two manners a site map can be created: manually and automatically. To create it manually it is necessary an advanced knowledge of website development which neither the author nor the company counts with. However, to create it automatically no advance coding knowledge is needed. There is many programs that can create the site map ready to submit it to Google or any other search engine.

In this particular case the author has chosen one of the approved programs Google lists in their Google Help site. The program's name is GSite Crawler. This program uses a crawler technology to emulate how Google crawlers index the website and creates the site map in the format Google requires. After the creation of the site map it can be submitted to Google, but it is recommended to check it before it is sent. Because of the crawler technology

the program uses it is possible to see where they find errors and fix it before submitting.

The best moment to submit the sitemap is after making all the necessary changes this plan is suggesting, so the page is indexed when it is already optimized.

### **3.6 Implementation of the Strategies**

Not all the strategies listed in this plan have been implemented. The links strategy needs to be performed by the representative of St.Lapland considering the recommendations and considering the possible requirements asked by the different websites. The Flash and Javascript suggestion requires or IT specialists and probably some budget and therefore the author could not implement it. Lastly, the image strategy has not been implemented neither. The amount of time needed to optimize every image is too large to be completed during this thesis project and the influence in the SEO is not very large. In addition, the company counts with a hard-drive with all their images as well as an online driver, but it is impossible for the author to have access to either of them and thus the optimization of the images becomes blocked. However, all the other strategies have been already implemented and improvement is expected.

The author has edited all the pages in the website including all the metadata that was missing using as a base the keywords from this plan. It is possible to appreciate some examples in figures 11 and 12.

Main **Metadata** Header Popup Products Tags

### Search Engine Meta-tags

Title  
Custom Program Summer 2013

Description  
Customize your perfect summer holidays in Lapland! Choose the activities, restaurants and best accommodation for you. Create a unique vacation in the Finnish Lapland.

Keywords  
Lapland, Finland, North of Finland, travel to Lapland, experience Lapland, safaris and excursions, activities, trips, day-trips, restaurants in Lapland, accommodation in Lapland, Fishing, Canoeing, river rafting, gold panning, wildlife, moose watching,

Custom Meta Tags  
Custom holiday packages, day trips, activities, restaurants, accommodation, Travel to Lapland, Holidays in the North of Finland, book online, 2013, Kuusamo

Figure 11. Edition Framework of stlapland.fi, Meta-data After Implementation of the Plan.

Title  
About Us

Description  
Learn more about the provider of unforgettable travel experiences in Kuusamo Lapland, northern Finland. Accommodation, restaurants and activities provided by a group of eight family run companies.

Keywords  
travel to Lapland, kuusamo, North of Finland, exclusive service, inspiring moments, local stories, natural hospitality, tradition, winter, summer, tourism services, accommodation, restaurants, activities, trips, holidays, tour packages, 2013, 2014

Custom Meta Tags  
St Lapland, travel to the north of finland, 2013, 2014, summer, winter, holiday packages, accommodation, restaurants, activities, safaris, tradition, unique, special trips, unforgettable memories

Figure 12. Edition Framework of stlapland.fi, Meta-data After Implementation of the Plan. (2)

The content of the page has been optimized with SEO in mind using the keywords of this plan. It has been solved too the problem of the lack of instructions discovered in the SWOT analysis and the flow analysis of Google Analytics. Some pages had changes in their titles as well because of the same confusion the visitors suffered. Some pages where not named with the customers in mind. An example is the old page “Leisure”. Most of the visitors did not visit the page even if it is the main source for all the offer. Presumably is because leisure is a word used by professionals of tourism but not by tourists. Not only did this page suffer, but the related ones as well. “Weekly program” seemed to confused the visitors, who chose “Holiday Packages” instead. They needed a lot of interaction to find “Weekly programs” to suit their need. In exchange, the page “Leisure” has the name of “Holiday Packages” currently, while “Weekly program” has been substituted by “Custom program”



and “Holiday Packages” per “Holiday Tours”. The change in content, keyword and titles in all the pages can be fully appreciated in Appendices 3 and 4.

The social media strategies have been started as well. A Twitter account for St. Lapland has been created. The design of the pages has some SEO in mind and keeps the image of the company. There have been some activity as well, creating a list of different profiles to follow that are related to St.Lapland or that may be interesting because of its content. One of the features of Twitter is the “Retweet”, which allows to share the updates of other profiles. With this function and the list of Twitter profile St.Lapland is currently following the company can share interesting news about the destination.

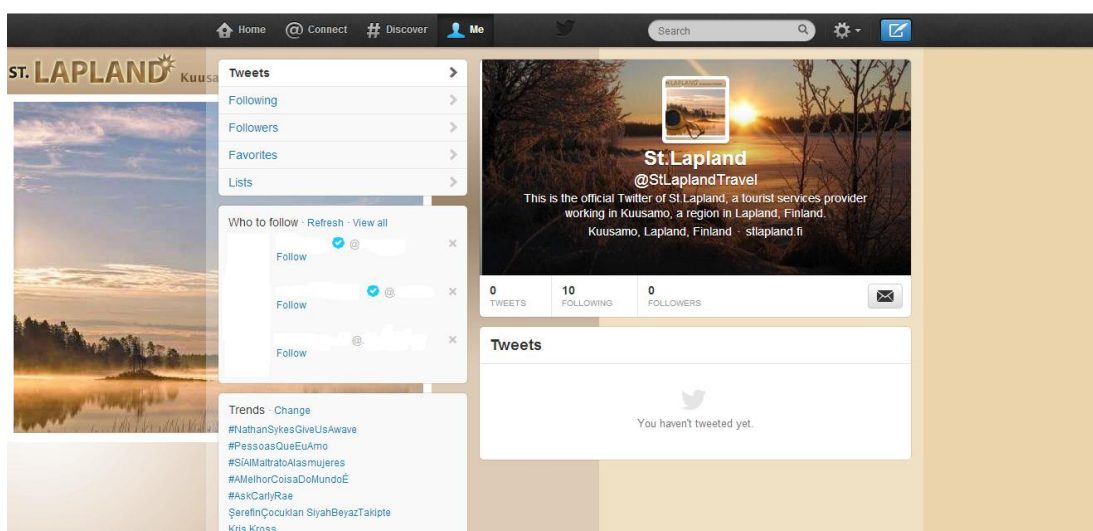


Figure 13. Profile of the New Twitter Account for St.Lapland.

The Facebook page has been updated with new pictures regarding to the new season, following a similar design to the Twitter profile. We can see the previous image of St.Lapland in Facebook and the current one in figures 14 and 15 below.



Figure 14. Previous Facebook Profile of St.Lapland



Figure 15. New Facebook Profile of St.Lapland.

The Facebook information has been updated as well, with new texts inspired in the content of the new website and with SEO in mind.

## About

[Edit](#)

St. Lapland consists of eight family run companies in the Kuusamo Lapland. We offer high-standard accommodation, restaurant experiences serving local delicacies and activities with a story to tell. Discover the North of Finland.

### Description

St. Lapland consists of eight family run companies with a long history in creating unforgettable travel experiences in the region of Kuusamo Lapland. Kuusamo Lapland is an idyllic and beloved area known for first-class services. The biggest attraction is without question the nature, the area is the last in Europe to have such vast untouched wilderness. The area has two border crossing stations from Finland to Russia giving guests the opportunity to explore the Russian Karelia with its special culture and lifestyle. The tranquility of nature and the atmosphere of countryside, combined with the truly unique scenery of Kuusamo Lapland. Together these ingredients form a recipe for experiences you cannot get elsewhere.

### General information

St. Lapland  
 Network DMC and travel services in Kuusamo Lapland  
[info@stlapland.fi](mailto:info@stlapland.fi)  
 Tel: +358 400 794 748  
[www.stlapland.fi](http://www.stlapland.fi)

Figure 16. New “About” Information of St.Lapland in Facebook.

After applying the image changes and content changes, the author has started the engagement strategy with some news in Twitter. Afterwards, a Facebook update informing the followers of the new platform of social media from St.Lapland has been published, with some fast positive responses.



Figure 17. Facebook Update Promoting the New Twitter Account.

Finally, a new post in the blog has been published. The new post announces the creation of the Twitter profile of the company, but it remembers as well that St.Lapland already count with a Facebook page. It has been written with

SEO in mind and in includes word links to the Twitter and Facebook account and to St.Lapland's website.

companies with a long history in creating unforgettable travel experiences in the region of Kuusamo Lapland. We have joined forces to offer you our exclusive and individual services more efficiently.

[VIEW MY COMPLETE PROFILE](#)

YOU FIND ST.LAPLAND ON THE WEB

[www.stlapland.fi](http://www.stlapland.fi)

SUBSCRIBE TO

Posts

All Comments

FOLLOW BY EMAIL

Email address:

SEARCH THIS BLOG

Would you like to share anything with us?

Follow us in Twitter and become fan in Facebook!

And don't forget that Lapland will always welcome you with a smile :)

*St. Lapland Team*

LAHETTÄMYY! ST. LAPLAND KLO 14:41 · 0 KOMMENTTIA

TUNNUSTEET: [CONNECT](#), [EXPERIENCE](#), [FACEBOOK](#), [LAPLAND](#), [MEMORIES](#), [PICTURES](#), [SHARE](#), [ST. LAPLAND](#), [TWITTER](#)

TOIMINTA:  funny (0)  interesting (0)  cool (0)

SHARE IT

[Share this on Facebook](#)

[Tweet this](#)

[View stats](#)


[WordPress Accountment outset >>](#)

FOLLOWERS

Figure 18. Blog Entry Promoting the New Twitter Account and the Facebook Page of St.Lapland.

Finally, some tweets have been written in the new Twitter account to relate all the sites and to start as well attracting followers to the site. Besides own tweets, the author started “retweeting” some interesting updates of other profiles to help on the capitation of followers.

## Tweets




**Green Tourism Finland** @greentourism1

4h

Lapland - Finland ,, [fb.me/1L9SxAqQQ](https://fb.me/1L9SxAqQQ)

Retweeted by St.Lapland

Expand




**St.Lapland** @StLaplandTravel

3h

Did you know we have a blog? [stlapland.blogspot.be](https://stlapland.blogspot.be)

Expand




**St.Lapland** @StLaplandTravel

5h

If you don't know yet what to do this summer, we have some inspiration for you ;) [stlapland.fi](https://stlapland.fi)

Expand




**St.Lapland** @StLaplandTravel

5h

The sun shines and the feeling of summer is arriving. Have you already visited Lapland in summer? There's plenty to do!

Expand



**St.Lapland** @StLaplandTravel

6h

St. Lapland is on Twitter! Connect with us to discover the beauty of Kuusamo, Lapland! Welcome to the North of Finland!

Expand

Figure 19. Tweets for the SEO Social Media Strategy.

Lastly, some entries have been scheduled for St.Lapland's blog.

Publish
Revert to draft
🗑️

1-25 of 25

<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Summer in Lapland and the Midnight Sun <a href="#">bear</a>, <a href="#">kuusamo</a>, <a href="#">lapland</a>, <a href="#">Midnight sun</a>, <a href="#">midnight sun film festival</a>, <a href="#">midsummer fest</a>, <a href="#">St. Lapland</a>, <a href="#">summer</a>, <a href="#">summer holidays</a>, <a href="#">wildlife watching</a></p> <p style="font-size: small;">Edit   Preview   Delete</p>	Scheduled	St. Lapland	0	0	5/17/13
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Äitienpäivä or Mother's Day in Finland <a href="#">finland</a>, <a href="#">Kalevala</a>, <a href="#">lapland</a>, <a href="#">Mother's Day</a>, <a href="#">Pulla</a>, <a href="#">St. Lapland</a>, <a href="#">Vappu</a>, <a href="#">Äitienpäivä</a></p>	Scheduled	St. Lapland	0	0	5/10/13
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>St. Lapland is on Twitter now! <a href="#">connect</a>, <a href="#">experience</a>, <a href="#">facebook</a>, <a href="#">lapland</a>, <a href="#">memories</a>, <a href="#">pictures</a>, <a href="#">share</a>, <a href="#">St. Lapland</a>, <a href="#">twitter</a></p>		St. Lapland	0	1	2:41:00 PM
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The Finnish Sauna <a href="#">finnish sauna</a>, <a href="#">sauna from finland</a>, <a href="#">snow bath</a></p>		St. Lapland	2	400	3/12/12

Figure 20. Scheduled Entries in St.Lapland's blog for SEO purposes.

These entries will keep the content fresh and help on the engagement strategy. These new three entries in the blog, as well as the tweets and the Facebook updates serve as a starting point for the company. They can follow the guidelines of the plan and the examples to keep the strategy going.

### **3.7 Submission of Website Blueprint/Sitemap to Google.com**

The submission of the site map took place 3 May 2013. By this submission the change in the search engine Ranking is expected to be faster. However, it is impossible to know when Google will index the site. Therefore, it is not possible to have a fixed date to appreciate the changes of this plan. Normally the maximum time a submitted sitemap takes to be indexed is two months, but sometimes it is possible that the sitemap has not been indexed during that time. In those cases is recommended to submit the site map again, but it should not be sent more often than once every two months.

## 4 Conclusion

It is expected that the website will improve its ranking on Google search. However, all the strategies need to be considered as an on-going process to keep up to date.

It is possible to see in Appendices 3 and 4 how the website was previously and how it is after implementing the strategies. The content has changed to include keywords, some pages have been updated with instructions, some menus have new names to try to help the navigation of the user and to include keywords and new pages, links and gadgets have been added. There are also new titles in all the pages. These include keywords to help ranking and appear as part of the title name in Google as well. This makes the website more descriptive and attractive to the customers.

There is a new page in the website under the name "Facts & Figures". It is a page with information and facts over the region. The reason for including such a page is the amount of keywords related with the region that can be included. The page is only accessible through an added link at the end of the page of "Destination". Therefore, the page is not changing the outlines of the website and can be indexed by the crawlers.

In the chapter 3.5 Designing the strategies most of the practices for the future have been mentioned. In order to maintain an optimized website all the elements have to work together. It is important to perform regular checks with Google Analytics to discover possible malfunctions. It is useful also to see if there has been any increase of traffic and if there have been chosen good traffic generating keywords. It is possible to change some of them during the regular check-ups when discovering better traffic generating keywords.

It is important to keep the website updated, in prices and pictures, but in metadata as well. If a new keyword is considered for the SEO strategies the changes need to be applied on every page of the website. In the current website, after implementing the strategies, the different product pages include in the keywords the year of the season (2013 or 2014) to help the ranking. When the season has passed and the website updated, those keywords need to be changed for the next season years.

The most consuming practice is going to be to maintain the different social media platforms updated, but it is highly important for the improvement of the website. The blog needs at least one update every week, which can be performed with the recommendation in the chapter 3.5.8. Twitter and Facebook need regular updates as well, if possible, daily. Twitter especially is a Social platform that has its best performance when updated several times a day. To ensure the maximum reach there has to be enough time – one hour, for example– between “tweet” and “tweet”.

The social media platforms need an extra care as well for customer service. As explained in chapter 2.3.2 social care is a growing tendency. Customers will use the different platforms to share experiences, ask questions or express complaints and the company needs to respond. If the requests and comments are not responded, the customers feel abandoned. On the other hand, fast and cordial responses help to create a caring image of the company and gain engagement from the users.



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**APPENDICES**

Survey Results	Appendix 1
SWOT Analysis	Appendix 2
Stlapland.fi before the implementation of the plan	Appendix 3
Stlapland.fi after the implementation of the plan	Appendix 4

## Survey Results

<b>Total responses:</b>	363
<b>Valid responses:</b>	357

<b>Results:</b>	<u>Respondents</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Uses search engines to look for information	356	99,72%
Does not use search engines to look for information	1	0,28%
Uses Google	350	98,32%
Uses Ask.com	1	0,28%
Uses Yahoo!	1	0,28%
Uses other S.E.	4	1,12%

### Other search engines Used

Yandex.ru	2
YaCy	1
duckduckgo	1

**SWOT Analysis****SWOT Analysis of the company website “StLapland.fi” for SEO**

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <p>Very interesting on the visual aspect          Large offer of services          Filter options on services          Possibility to book online          Contact information of the company available to the visitors          Logical, easy to find, menus (proper website structure)          Includes the word “Lapland” on the domain name and website URLs</p>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <p>Use of Pop- Ups          There is the need of some instructions or easier explanations about the use of some menus          Domain “.fi”  <u>Not updated</u>          Static content  <u>Not using any meta-data or tags</u>          Text not optimized for SEO          Does not have links to relevant sites          There are not relevant sites with links to the website while some competitors have them</p>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <p>Attractive to visitors          Potential to improve, is not in a stand-still          Already has a Facebook page that could be used          Already has a blog with a module included on the website that could be used</p>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <p>A lot of competitors on the same field          Without regular updates the competitors have advantage</p>

**SWOT Analysis of St.Lapland’s Services for the Content Management**

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <p>Very captivating product descriptions          Uniqueness on some services          Offers for Families          Offers for individual Travelers          Offers for business travelers (MICE)          Offers for couples          Offers for groups, small and large          Personalized packages          High quality Services</p>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <p>Some offers are very similar to the competitors, not easy to stand out          Seasonality of many services</p>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <p>Not a massive destination          Un-spoilt landscapes and nature          Flexible labor force          Flexible packages          Rising popularity of the Finnish Lapland</p>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <p>Exclusion of Kuusamo area in many Lapland informative websites, books and guides          Difficulties in Transport connections</p>

## Stlapland.fi before the implementation of the plan

### Home page




### PICTURE SLIDESHOW




### About us page



## Contact page

**ST. LAPLAND** Kuusamo Finland About Us Leisure MICE Destination 



### Contact Us

Please don't hesitate to call, email or Skype us at the St. Lapland sales office if you have anything to ask.

**Ruka Adventures**  
 Rukanrinta 7  
 93825 Rukatunturi  
 Tel: +358 (0)8 852 20 07  
 e-mail: info@rukaadventures.fi

**Nordic Holiday Services Oy**  
 Kuusamon Lentokenttä  
 93600 Kuusamo  
 Tel: +358 (0)207 551850  
 e-mail: incoming@nordicholidays.com

You can also use this form to contact us. Please note, that fields marked with \* are compulsory.

**Name**

**Company**

**Email \***

**Phone**


**Message**

Yes please, I would like to hear news from St. Lapland

### St. Lapland companies

The companies providing St. Lapland services. You can read more about the companies on their websites (links open new window).

<a href="#">Jaskentöiden Klubi</a>	<a href="#">Lomalempi</a>
<a href="#">Nordic Holidays</a>	<a href="#">Oivansin Lumakartano</a>
<a href="#">Ollilan Lomamaailat</a>	<a href="#">Pohjoisen Pirtti</a>
<a href="#">Ruka Adventures</a>	<a href="#">Rukan Saloni</a>
<a href="#">Stucko Restaurant Tunturi</a>	

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Leisure page

**ST. LAPLAND** Kuusamo Finland

About Us Leisure MICE Destination

# Unforgettable moments

**St. Lapland for Leisure Travellers**

You won't get bored in Kuusamo Lapland. Whether you're up for action and excitement, culture and tradition, or just relaxation and delicious food, it's all here. We at St. Lapland are happy to help create your dream holiday.

Magical wintry forests hide loads of adventures and during the summer, the Midnight Sun holds fascinating stories. Choose the appealing season and interesting activities and let us show you where the fun begins. Alternatively, browse our exciting options. Click on one of the links on the right to get started!

You will be able to create your own dream holiday by selecting items from the range of activities and dinners and send your request as a wishlist to us.

Weekly Programs

- [Weekly Program Summer 2012](#)
- [Weekly Program Winter 2012](#)

Design by Purova Flow

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Weekly program summer page

**ST. LAPLAND** Kuusamo Finland

About Us Leisure MICE Destination

# Summer Fun!

**Search Tool**

**What are you looking for?**  
Use this tool to search for services that best suit your needs. Check all fields that apply and click "show results".

Youtube Our Channel Facebook Kuusamo & Purova

Art 31 SHARE

**SERVICE(S)**

- Arrival programme
- Cabin accommodation
- Departure programme
- Dinners
- Evening programmes
- Hotel accommodation
- Long activity programme
- Short activity programme
- Special accommodation

**INTEREST(S)**

- Action & Thrill
- Adventure & Active
- Fishing & hunting
- Gourmet & wellness
- Nature & Culture
- Team & Fun

**GROUP SIZE**

- 1-4
- 10-20
- 100+
- 20-30
- 30-50
- 4-10
- 50-80
- 80-100

**PROFILE**

- Children
- No restrictions (adult)
- Senior / Disabled

Show results 46 >>

Design by Purova Flow

© St. Lapland 2012 +358 430 734 740 info@stlapland.fi

Weekly program winter page

**ST. LAPLAND** Kuusamo Finland About Us Leisure MICE Destination



## Winter fun!

**Search Tool**

**What are you looking for?**  
Use this tool to search for services that best suit your needs. Check all fields that apply and click "show results".

**Youtube**  
See Channel

**Facebook**  
Become a Fan

[f](#) [Airt](#) 31 [SHARE](#) [f](#) [t](#) [g+](#)

**SERVICE(S)**

- Arrival programme
- Cabin accommodation
- Departure programme
- Dinners
- Evening programmes
- Hotel accommodation
- Long activity programme
- Short activity programme
- Special accommodation

**INTEREST(S)**

- Action & Thrill
- Adventure & Active
- Fishing & hunting
- Gourmet & wellness
- Nature & Culture
- Team & Fun

**GROUP SIZE**

- 1-4
- 10-20
- 100+
- 20-30
- 30-50
- 4-10
- 50-80
- 80-100

**PROFILE**

- Children
- No restrictions (adult)
- Senior / Disabled

[Show results 33 >>](#)

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Holiday packages page

**ST. LAPLAND** Kuusamo Finland About Us Leisure MICE Destination



## Genuine encounters

**Holiday Packages**

Are you ready for the ultimate holiday?

We have done a bit of mixing and matching to create a variety of holiday packages; all you have to do is pick your favourite. The entire holiday is planned for you, enabling you to concentrate on enjoying the spirit of Kuusamo Lapland.



Countryside Expedition



Two Worlds Expedition



Winter Week in Isokenkälsten Klubi



Ollila Winter Week

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MICE page

ST. LAPLAND Kuusamo Finland

About Us Leisure MICE Destination

# Tradition of hospitality



**Incentives**

Kuusamo Lapland offers a wide range of exciting and unforgettable experiences, many being once in a lifetime opportunities to feel real Lappish spirit. We at St. Lapland offer you diverse and personal services unlike any other.

Our new packaging tool helps you create a travel program to suit your preferences. Try as many combinations as you like and submit your enquiry.

You can begin by choosing whether you are planning to visit us during summer or winter - click on the appropriate link on the right.

[Click](#) you find a 5 day winter sample incentive programme.

[Click](#) you find a 5 day winter sample incentive programme for bigger groups.

[Click](#) you find a 5 day summer sample incentive programme.

[Click](#) you find a 4 days summer sample incentive programme.

[MICE summer](#)

[MICE winter](#)

design by Puumi Puumi


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MICE summer page

ST. LAPLAND Kuusamo Finland

About Us Leisure MICE Destination

# Inspiring moments



Search Tool

Youtube Our Channel

Facebook Become a Fan

SHARE

**SERVICE(S)**

- Arrival programme
- Cabin accommodation
- Departure programme
- Dinners
- Evening programmes
- Hotel accommodation
- Long activity programme
- Short activity programme
- Special accommodation

**GROUP SIZE**

- 1-4
- 10-20
- 100+
- 20-30
- 30-50
- 4-10
- 50-80
- 80-100

**INTEREST(S)**

- Action & Thrill
- Adventure & Active
- Fishing & hunting
- Gourmet & wellness
- Nature & Culture
- Team & Fun

**PROFILE**

- Children
- No restrictions (adult)
- Senior / Disabled

Show results 26 >>

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# MICE winter page

**ST. LAPLAND** Kuusamo Finland

About Us Leisure **MICE** Destination



Unlike any other

**Search Tool**

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Our Channel

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**SERVICE(S)**

- Arrival programme
- Cabin accommodation
- Departure programme
- Dinners
- Evening programmes
- Hotel accommodation
- Long activity programme
- Short activity programme
- Special accommodation

**INTEREST(S)**

- Action & Thrill
- Adventure & Active
- Fishing & hunting
- Gourmet & wellness
- Nature & Culture
- Team & Fun

**GROUP SIZE**

- 1-4
- 10-20
- 100+
- 20-30
- 30-50
- 4-10
- 50-80
- 80-100

**PROFILE**

- Children
- No restrictions (adult)
- Senior / Disabled

Show results 46 >>

design by  
Petteri Niemi

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## Stlapland.fi after the implementation of the plan

### Home page




### PICTURE SLIDESHOW

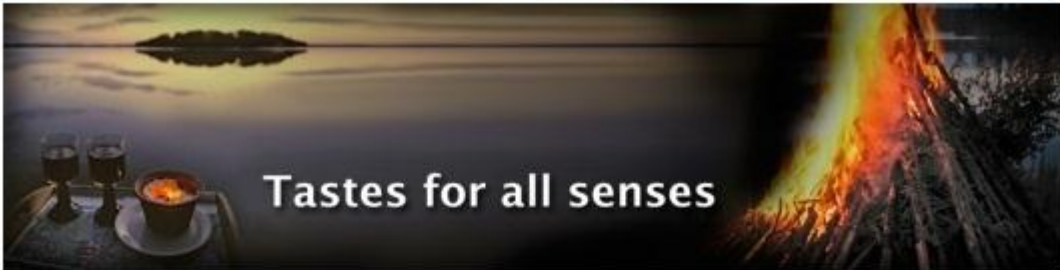


## About us page

13/05/13

About Us - ST. LAPLAND Kuusamo Finland


About Us | Holiday Packages | MICE | Destination



# Tastes for all senses

**Wishlist** You have 2 products on your wishlist

### St. Lapland – Inspiring Moments

St. Lapland consists of eight family run companies with a long history in creating unforgettable travel experiences in the Kuusamo Lapland region. We have joined forces to offer you our exclusive and individual services more efficiently. All our services are based on local traditions, stories, our rich nature, and homely atmosphere. We offer high-standard lodge and cabin accommodation, a wide range of restaurant experiences serving local delicacies and home-cooked meals. Our activities are distinctive for the area and have quite a story to tell. We offer personalized treatment to our clients to create the perfect holiday package to discover the North of Finland.

### St. Lapland Companies

You can discover more about the companies that form St. Lapland by visiting their websites. We are all expert service provider but still familiar that works to help you experiencing the perfect holidays in Kuusamo Lapland. You can read more about them on their websites (links open a new window).

<a href="#">Isokemijoen Klubi</a>	<a href="#">LomaLopetti</a>
<a href="#">Norte Holidays</a>	<a href="#">Oivancin Lomakotit</a>
<a href="#">Ollilan Lomamajat</a>	<a href="#">Pohjojan Pirtti</a>
<a href="#">Ruka Adventures</a>	<a href="#">Rukan Saunat</a>
<a href="#">Studio Restaurant Tundra</a>	

### Unlike any other

The tranquility of Nature and the atmosphere of the countryside, combined with the truly unique scenery of Kuusamo Lapland. Together these ingredients form a recipe for experiences you cannot get elsewhere.

### Tradition of Hospitality

Our region in the border zone of Finland and Russia has always attracted visitors from near and far. The natural hospitality our guests will be treated with here is a tradition. St. Lapland consists of family-run businesses, owned by the people you meet during your stay.

### In Good Hands


All of us working with St. Lapland are native inhabitants of Kuusamo Lapland. We are very familiar with the surrounding nature, fascinating stories and characteristic traditions of the region, and we are happy to share our knowledge with you. Thanks to the experience of our personnel, the safety and comfort of our guests can be guaranteed in all conditions.


[CONTACT US](#)

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## Contact page

03/05/13 Contact - ST. LAPLAND Kuusamo Finland

**ST. LAPLAND** Kuusamo Finland About Us Holiday Packages MICE Destination 



**Wishlist** You have 2 products on your wishlist

### Contact Us

Please don't hesitate to call, email or Skype us at the St. Lapland sales office if you have anything to ask.

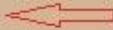
**Ruka Adventures**  
Rukanrinta 7  
93825 Rukatunturi  
Tel: +358 (0)8 852 20 07  
e-mail: info@rukaadventures.fi

**Nordic Holiday Services Oy**  
Kuusamon Lentokenttä  
93600 Kuusamo  
Tel: +358 (0)207 551850  
e-mail: incoming@nordicholidays.com

You can also use this form to contact us. Please note, that fields marked with \* are compulsory.

Name\*   
Company   
Email\*   
Phone   
Message

Yes please, I would like to hear news from St. Lapland



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## Leisure page (now Holiday Packages/Travel to Lapland)

17/05/13 Travel to Lapland - Holiday Packages - ST. LAPLAND Kuusamo Finland

**ST. LAPLAND** Kuusamo Finland About Us Holiday Packages MICE Destination 



### St. Lapland for Leisure Travellers

You won't get bored in Kuusamo Lapland. It's a promise! Whether you're up for action and excitement, culture and tradition, or just relaxation and delicious food, it's all here. We at St. Lapland are happy to help create your dream holiday.

Travel to the North of Finland to discover the magical wintry forests hiding loads of adventures. Or maybe have your vacation during the summer, when the Midnight Sun holds fascinating stories. Choose the appealing season and interesting activities and let us show you where the fun begins. Alternatively, browse our exciting options. Click on one of the links on the right to get started!

We have a large offer of trips, restaurants and accommodation. All sorts of activities to experience the Lappish region.

You will be able to create your own dream holiday package by selecting items from the range of activities and dinners and send your request as a wishlist to us. What are you waiting for?

Customize your holidays!

[Custom Program Summer 2013](#)

[Custom Program Winter 2013](#)

Or choose one of our prepared tours!

[Holiday Tours](#)

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# Weekly program summer page (Now Custom Holiday Summer)

03/05/13

Custom Program Summer 2013 - ST. LAPLAND Kuusamo Finland



Wishlist You have 2 products on your wishlist

Search Tool

## What to do in Lapland?

*It's summer!*

There is plenty of activities to enjoy in the North of Finland during the summer. You can explore the wildlife or canoe in one of the numerous lakes in Lapland. Try hiking or one of our fishing trips. You'll find all kinds of activities in our offer, as well as different types of accommodation and restaurants that will delight your senses with traditional Lappish ingredients.

With this tool you can create your own personalized holidays in Lapland. Create that special trip online with our help!

Use this tool to search for services that best suit the needs of your party. You can filter per age, type of activity or size of the party. Mark the products that fulfill better your desires and click on the button "show results". If you want to see all the trips and services St. Lapland offers, simply click on "show results" without filters.

### SERVICE(S)

- Arrival programme
- Cabin accommodation
- Departure programme
- Dinners
- Evening programmes
- Hotel accommodation
- Long activity programme
- Short activity programme
- Special accommodation

### GROUP SIZE

- 1-4
- 10-20
- 100+
- 20-30
- 30-50
- 4-10
- 50-80
- 80-100

### INTEREST(S)

- Action & Thrill
- Adventure & Active
- Fishing & hunting
- Gourmet & wellness
- Nature & Culture
- Team & Fun

### PROFILE

- Children
- No restrictions (adult)
- Senior / Disabled

Show results 44 >>

Youtube  
Our Channel

Facebook  
Become a Fan

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Pascal Flow

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# Weekly program winter page (Now Custom Holiday Winter)

03/05/13

Custom Program Winter 2013 - ST. LAPLAND Kuusamo Finland



**Wishlist** You have 2 products on your wishlist

Search Tool

## What to do in Lapland?

*It's winter!*

There is plenty of activities to enjoy in the North of Finland. From driving a husky sledge to enjoy a night trip in snowshoes looking for Auroras Borealis, you can find all trips in our offer. We count as well with different types of accommodation to suit all the needs, as well as restaurants that will delight your senses with traditional Lappish ingredients.

With this tool you can create your own personalized holidays in Lapland. Create that special trip online with our help!

Use this tool to search for services that best suit the needs of your party. You can filter per age, type of activity or size of the party. Mark the products that fulfill better your desires and click on the button "show results". If you want to see all the trips and services St.Lapland offers, simply click on "show results" without filters.

### SERVICE(S)

- Arrival programme
- Cabin accommodation
- Departure programme
- Dinners
- Evening programmes
- Hotel accommodation
- Long activity programme
- Short activity programme
- Special accommodation

### GROUP SIZE

- 1-4
- 10-20
- 100+
- 20-30
- 30-50
- 4-10
- 50-80
- 80-100

### INTEREST(S)

- Action & Thrill
- Adventure & Active
- Fishing & hunting
- Gourmet & wellness
- Nature & Culture
- Team & Fun

### PROFILE

- Children
- No restrictions (adult)
- Senior / Disabled

Show results 32 >>

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Holiday packages page (Now Holiday Tours)

7/05/13 Holiday Tours - ST. LAPLAND Kuusamo Finland

**ST. LAPLAND** Kuusamo Finland About Us Holiday Packages MICE Destination



**Holiday Tours**

Are you ready for the ultimate holiday?

You can't decide which activities to do in the North of Finland? We have done a bit of mixing and matching to create a variety of holiday packages in Lapland: all you have to do is pick your favourite. We have arranged activities, accommodation and restaurants for an unforgettable holiday experience. The entire holiday is planned for you, enabling you to concentrate on enjoying the spirit of Kuusamo Lapland.



Countryside Expedition



Two Worlds Expedition



Winter Week in Isokenkäisten Klubi



Ollita Winter Week

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MICE page

17/05/13 Mice - Incentive travel - Business trips - ST. LAPLAND Kuusamo Finland

**ST. LAPLAND** Kuusamo Finland About Us Holiday Packages MICE Destination



**Incentives**

Kuusamo Lapland offers a wide range of exciting and unforgettable experiences, many being once in a lifetime opportunities to feel real Lappish spirit. We at St. Lapland offer you diverse and personal services unlike any other.

Our new packaging tool helps you create a travel program to suit your preferences. Try as many combinations as you like and submit your enquiry.

You can begin by choosing whether you are planning to visit us during summer or winter - click on the appropriate link on the right.

Or if you prefer some inspiration, you can download some of the packages we have already prepared for you using the following links.

[you'll find a 7 day winter sample incentive programme.](#)

[you'll find a 5 day winter sample incentive programme for bigger groups.](#)

[you'll find a 7 day summer sample incentive programme.](#)

[you'll find a 4 days summer sample incentive programme.](#)

Create the perfect trip for every Season in Lapland!

[MICE summer offer](#)


[MICE winter offer](#)

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MICE summer page

17/05/13 MICE Summer - Incentive travel - Business trips - ST. LAPLAND Kuusamo Finland

ST. LAPLAND Kuusamo Finland About Us Holiday Packages MICE Destination



**Search Tool**

**What to do in Lapland?**  
*It's summer!*  
 There is plenty of activities to enjoy in the North of Finland during the summer. We offer you a large selection of activities, as well as different types of accommodation and restaurants that will delight your senses with traditional Lappish ingredients.  
 With this tool you can create your perfect personalized trip to Lapland. Use this tool to search for services that best suit the needs of your party. You can filter per age, type of activity or size of the party. Mark the products that fulfill better your desires and click on the button "show results". If you want to see all the trips and services St.Lapland offers, simply click on "show results" without filters.

**SERVICE(S)**

- Arrival programme
- Cabin accommodation
- Departure programme
- Dinners
- Evening programmes
- Hotel accommodation
- Long activity programme
- Short activity programme
- Special accommodation

**INTEREST(S)**

- Action & Thrill
- Adventure & Active
- Fishing & hunting
- Gourmet & wellness
- Nature & Culture
- Team & Fun

**GROUP SIZE**

- 1-4
- 10-20
- 100+
- 20-30
- 30-50
- 4-10
- 50-80
- 80-100

**PROFILE**

- Children
- No restrictions (adult)
- Senior / Disabled

Show results 26 >>

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design by Panna Flow

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MICE winter page

17/05/13 MICE Winter - Incentive travel - Business trips - ST. LAPLAND Kuusamo Finland

ST. LAPLAND Kuusamo Finland About Us Holiday Packages MICE Destination



**Search Tool**

**What to do in Lapland?**  
*It's winter!*  
 There is plenty of activities to enjoy in the North of Finland during winter time. We offer you a large selection of activities, as well as different types of accommodation and restaurants that will delight your senses with traditional Lappish ingredients.  
 With this tool you can create your perfect personalized trip to Lapland. Use this tool to search for services that best suit the needs of your party. You can filter per age, type of activity or size of the party. Mark the products that fulfill better your desires and click on the button "show results". If you want to see all the trips and services St.Lapland offers, simply click on "show results" without filters.

**SERVICE(S)**

- Arrival programme
- Cabin accommodation
- Departure programme
- Dinners
- Evening programmes
- Hotel accommodation
- Long activity programme
- Short activity programme
- Special accommodation

**INTEREST(S)**

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**GROUP SIZE**

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- 80-100

**PROFILE**

- Children
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- Senior / Disabled

Show results 46 >>

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