



THE IMAGE OF TAMPERE IN SOCIAL MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

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The aim of this bachelor's thesis was to examine and analyze the image the city of Tampere has as a destination in chosen social media channels, and also to describe the most discussed issues and thoughts concerning the city. The topic was chosen to emphasize the importance of social media on potential consumers' decision-making process as well as the power of Word-of-Web, which can have a larger effect on consumers than advertising messages by suppliers. The comments made in social media can also be considered as valuable feedback from the visitors, which is always important when developing the destination and marketing of it.

A number of social media platforms were chosen for this research and all primary data were collected from these platforms. The data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis in order to understand the texts' deeper meanings and interpretations. Theoretical framework for this thesis consists of the concepts of destination marketing, destination brand, brand image and brand positioning in order to provide background information relevant in understanding the phenomena.

The analysis indicated that as a destination Tampere was not discussed much in chosen social media during the time period of the analysis. However, the discussions are mostly raising positive awareness rather than conveying a negative image. Tampere is perceived as a lively and diverse city with plenty of options for culture, nightlife and other activities. The scenery is complimented, and it is indicated that in Tampere tourists can gain the authentic experience of Finnish culture.

One issue to be faced by the destination marketers is how to get social media users more active and communicative than they currently are. Another important issue is that Tampere was mainly considered as a destination for short visits by these social media writers. There was some hesitance, whether or not the city offers enough to do for a longer time period, or if the city should be visited at all. Differentiation between Tampere and other cities in Finland was considered difficult. These are issues that should be addressed by the destination marketers in order to attract more travelers to the city and to satisfy their needs and wants.

Key words: Tampere, image, brand, social media

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1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis was to examine and analyze the image the city of Tampere has as a destination on number of different social media channels. Additionally, other thoughts and issues discussed about the city of Tampere in social media are analyzed in this research to provide as complete information of the discussions as possible. The topic was chosen to emphasize the importance of social media on potential customers' decision-making process and the power of Word-of-Web, which can have a larger effect on consumers than advertising messages by suppliers. Therefore, it is considered important by the author to stay updated what is discussed in social media. The writings can be seen also as a way of collecting feedback from the consumers as they share their opinions in social media.

The purpose of this research was to provide useful information on consumers' opinions and insights concerning the city of Tampere that could further be used to develop the marketing of this destination. Thus when finished, this research can be delivered to Tampere Region Economic Development Agency (Tredea), which is responsible for marketing of the Tampere region. Because of the quickly changing travel trends and fierce competition in the tourism market, destinations need to engage in accurate and continuous marketing research in order to develop the destination to satisfy consumers' needs and wants, and to stay competitive in the marketplace.

In order to analyze the content gained from social media, the concepts of destination brand, destination image and brand positioning are explained in detail with the help of previous tourism literature. Afterwards, social media and the chosen channels are introduced as well as the city of Tampere as a destination and its brand are described to provide background information for the phenomena. The data was analyzed between December 2013 – February 2014, and the writings included in the research were all in English.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter explains what the actual topic of this research is and why it is chosen. The aims and objectives are explained in detail as well as the research questions are presented. Main concepts and theories relevant to this thesis are explained with the help of previous literature. Additionally, the data and methods used to conduct this research are described.

2.1 The image of Tampere in social media

This research aimed to examine and analyze the image of Tampere as a destination on chosen social media channels. In addition, other popular thoughts and issues discussed on social media are presented in this research to provide precise and complete information of the writings. To achieve this aim the following objectives were set; to understand and define the key concepts relevant to this research, to get familiar with the different social media channels and understand their importance currently, and lastly to examine and draw conclusions of what is written and discussed in social media about Tampere as a destination. This topic was chosen to emphasize the importance of social media on consumers' decision-making process, and the importance of Word-of-Web that currently has a greater effect on consumers than the advertising messages by suppliers. As consumers share their opinions in social media, the discussions on different social media platforms can be regarded also as one form of collecting valuable feedback from the consumers.

The purpose of this research was to provide useful information on consumers' opinions and insights concerning the city of Tampere that could further be used to develop the marketing of this destination. The results of this research can be delivered to Tampere Region Economic Development Agency (Tredea), which is the organization responsible for marketing of the Tampere region. Destination marketing research is considered important for understanding the actual and potential visitors' needs, expectations and opinions in order to develop the destination, to attract more tourists and to meet the expectations of the travelers. Because of quickly changing travel trends and fierce competition

in the market, research should be conducted accurately and continuously to stay competitive and to create the best value for every tourist. (Wang & Pizam 2011, 109.)

During recent years the importance of the Internet has grown as well as the popularity of different social media channels offered through the Internet websites. Different websites are used to collect information before and during the trip, and to evaluate, to give feedback and to share experiences after the trip. Different social media channels offer a platform for all this, for example on TripAdvisor anyone can evaluate and leave their comments about a hotel, a restaurant, a tour organizer, a water park or any other business related to their trip. These evaluations are read by other people planning to visit a certain destination and based on the comments a travel decision can be made. Therefore, the opinions of other writers do matter in the choice of a destination. Communication in social media can be compared to a word of mouth effect with the difference of not asking the opinions of one's friends and relatives only but strangers as well.

The discussions and writings in social media were reviewed during December, 2013 – February, 2014. The author took into consideration the writings that have been posted within last year and a half (until the summer of 2012) in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the image considering all the four seasons. Additionally, the discussions accepted to this research were only in English.

2.2 Concepts and theories

2.2.1 Destination marketing research

Throughout this research the term destination should be understood according to a definition by Pike (2004): “Destinations are geographic locations with resources, attractions, infrastructure, superstructure and facilities that attract people to visit and stay temporarily for diverse reasons” (Wang & Pizam 2011, 115). Therefore, destinations include a large variety of heterogeneous tourism and other businesses, whose products and services affect tourists' experiences in the destination. Destinations are on the supply side of the tourism system where the production and consumption of tourism ser-

vices happen simultaneously making it demanding to provide expected value and satisfaction to each consumer. (Wang & Pizam 2011, 99-101.)

Tourism marketers need to identify and analyze consumers' needs, wants, requirements and motivations to achieve the highest possible level of satisfaction in tourists' total vacation experience. In most destinations, there is a local destination marketing organization (DMO) responsible for most of the marketing activities in close cooperation with the other tourism suppliers. Following the general marketing guidelines, the most important tasks of DMOs include marketing planning, determining the potential and actual target markets, making the product available for consumers, communicating with them effectively and then monitoring if the results are achieved and objectives are met. Additionally, information needs to be gathered on how to reach consumers effectively and through which channels. (Pike 2008, 100-101; Wang & Pizam 2011, 102, 109.)

Quickly changing travel trends, opinions and preferences of the consumers create the biggest challenges to destination marketing organizations. It is difficult for marketers to answer to ever-changing needs and wants of the actual and potential visitors. In destination marketing the product is also the place combining numerous of different products and services that all need to be promoted and made attractive for consumers to become motivated to visit. In addition, destination marketers often face limited resources making it even harder to keep updated and to react to possible changes in the travel market. (Kolb 2006, 22-23; Wang & Pizam 2011, 99-102.)

As in all marketing activities, also in tourism industry marketing planning must be based on customers' wants and needs in order to be successful. To gain more information about customers' preferences, marketing research usually needs to be implemented. In destination marketing research, the most important goal is said to be "to understand the nature of the interaction between visitors and providers at the destination" (Wang & Pizam 2011, 102). Most often destination marketing research is done by DMOs with the possible help of marketing firms, consultants and universities. However, because of the dynamic nature of the travel market, destination marketing research can cover almost any exploratory research done by any organization to acquire information about the market. In today's highly competitive and ever-changing tourism market, the research needs to be continuous and collaborative between all the suppliers of the destination. Without research, destinations will not have the needed knowledge to

compete effectively and to satisfy the potential and actual target markets. All the marketing and research efforts should be geared towards value creation at all the five phases of vacation experience (pre-trip, travel to site, on-site activities, return trip, and post-trip). (Kolb 2006, 155-156; Wang & Pizam 2011, 102-106.)

Destination marketing research can be divided into five broad areas based on the focus of the research: 1) visitor information, 2) behavioral information, 3) product development, marketing and management information, 4) consequences of travel behavior information, and 5) policy- and investment-related information. In this research, the focus was in the second category, which provides information on visitor behavior and quality of holiday experience. Visitors' expectations, travel motivation, vacation decision making, tourists' attitudes and image of the destination are just few examples of the research areas covered within the second category. (Wang & Pizam 2011, 106-108.)

2.2.2 Destination brand

Kotler *et al.* (2012, 467) defines a brand accordingly: "A brand is a name, symbol, logo, design or image, or any combination of these, which is designed to identify a product or service and distinguish it from those of their competitors." A strong brand creates a sense of loyalty and trust in the minds of the consumers, and it guarantees a certain level of satisfaction. Kotler, Bowen and Makens (2006, 316) state that branding "is really about communicating values, mission, and vision of the company to the employees and customers." A brand often includes certain expectations, emotions, and images attributed to it making it harder for the competitors to duplicate. (Kotler & Bowen & Makens 2006, 315-316; Kotler & Keller 2012, 263-265; Kotler & Keller & Brady & Goodman & Hansen 2012, 467.)

Brand knowledge is an often used term that consists of all the thoughts, feelings, images, experiences and beliefs that are associated with the brand in the minds of the consumers. Understanding brand knowledge is crucial for all the things linked to the brand in the consumers' minds to create the foundation of brand equity. Kotler and Keller (2012, 265) define brand equity as follows: "Brand equity is the added value endowed on products and services. It may be reflected in the way consumers think, feel, and act with respect to the brand, as well as in the prices, market share, and profitability the

brand commands.” (Kotler and Keller 2012, 265; Kotler & Keller & Brady & Goodman & Hansen 2012, 469-470.)

For building a strong brand, the most famous marketing researchers emphasize strategic brand management, which “is the long-term effort of consciously providing an offering with an identity that is understood on all levels” (Kotler & Keller & Brady & Goodman & Hansen 2012, 472). These all levels mean customers, company employees, suppliers as well as resellers. After brand positioning (chapter 2.2.4), strategic brand management focuses on building the brand by planning and implementing a brand management program, which consists of the following features:

- 1) creating and managing brand identities: names, logos, slogans and images;
- 2) managing individual or house brands;
- 3) managing brand extensions;
- 4) managing brand portfolios;
- 5) brand reinforcing and revitalization, and
- 6) growing and sustaining brand equity.

(Kotler & Keller & Brady & Goodman & Hansen 2012, 476.)

For companies, a strongly branded product or service can be seen beneficial because it increases the customer loyalty and thus should increase profits, provides a certain level of protection against competitors, and provides a possibility to charge a higher price for the product without losing significantly customers. As for consumers, branding can ease the decision-making process. A brand should guarantee a certain level of satisfaction that should always meet the consumers’ expectations. If succeeded, the consumers will be loyal for the brand and continue buying it. (Kotler & Bowen & Makens 2006, 315-316; Kotler & Keller 2012, 263-265.)

Branding of services has become popular as this will help to bring benefits to often intangible products. It is seen growingly important as consumers are getting more information and variety to choose from, and therefore consumers can have difficulties to distinguish the destinations in their decision-making process. A destination brand provides a possibility for destinations to differentiate themselves among the large variety of competitors fighting for the same target markets. To distinguish clearly, Pike (2008, 179) suggests that destinations should create a memorable brand identity that would stand for a source of value for consumers. This identity should consist of favorable as-

sociations connected to destination, and through marketing these associations and attributes should be linked to consumers' needs. (Pike 2008, 176-179, 190; Wang & Pizam 2011, 113.)

As destinations are seen as large entities with countless of different independent operators and suppliers, a brand is often needed to build a consistent message to attract travelers, exports and investments to a destination. This message should be clearly communicated and integrated in all marketing communications to achieve the best result possible. A recognizable brand with a certain name, logo and color integrated into all marketing activities by different tourism businesses and governmental offices is assumed to result into better synergy than just the efforts of each individual unit. When successful, the brand should be identifiable and memorable for target markets, create higher customer loyalty and thereby increase tourism revenues. Additionally, a well branded destination should evoke expectations and emotions, and to create a bond between the consumer and the destination. (Kolb 2006, 219-221; Wang & Pizam 2011, 115-116, 122-124.)

In tourism related literature, destination branding is still quite a debated topic. While many researchers have adopted this term and agree it being possible and beneficial, some researchers have raised criticism. The main arguments against branding of a destination focus on the large amount of products and services within a destination as well as the heterogeneous nature of them. It is argued that the large variety of offerings and of different suppliers within a single destination is hard to control and unsure because of the limited influence on the products and services by the destination management organization. (Holloway 2006, 135, 144-145.)

In practice, destinations have adopted branding as a part of their marketing strategies. For example, Vienna as a destination has launched a new brand-specific marketing campaign with a slogan "Vienna: now or never". A brand manual can be found on the website of Vienna brand and in the manual the brand development process, the core values of the brand, challenges as well as brand elements are explained in detail among other information. Additionally, corporate design manual has been created with guidelines and instructions for all advertising resources. Through the website, Vienna Tourist Board tries to engage all tourism providers to follow the mission and vision of the brand. (Vienna brand 2014. <http://b2b.wien.info/en/brand>.)

2.2.3 Destination image

When marketing tourism destinations and services, marketers always face the following issues; intangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability and perishability of tourism services. Since tourism products are services and have quite a challenging nature, they often compete via images. Brand image expresses what the actual image held by consumers is. Therefore, image contains all objective knowledge, perceptions, imaginations, stereotypes, prejudices and emotional thoughts of an individual or a group. (Cooper & Fletcher & Fyall & Gilbert & Wanhill 2005, 574; Pike 2008, 200-201; Wang & Pizam 2011, 131.)

Tourists' behavior, attitudes and preferences towards a destination and a vacation depend on the image they have in their minds. With that said, an image plays a crucial role in tourists' motivations to travel to a certain destination as well as in their decision-making process and buying behavior. In order to compete efficiently, destinations need to acknowledge the importance of image and try to assess it. Many different tourism researchers have emphasized that the marketing of destination should then focus on enhancing the positive image rather than trying to change the negative. (Cooper & Fletcher & Fyall & Gilbert & Wanhill 2005, 62-63; Pike 2008, 206-207; Wang & Pizam 2011, 130-133.)

Gunn (1988) proposed that an image is formed by going through the following process:

- 1) accumulating mental images of a destination (organic image)
- 2) modifying the initial image after more information (induced image)
- 3) deciding to visit a destination
- 4) visiting the destination
- 5) sharing the destination
- 6) returning home
- 7) modifying the image on the experience in the destination

As seen in this process, the destination image is not only the image perceived before the actual travel, but it actually is present all the time during the trip and after the trip. Image is modified then based on individual's experiences and learning. Therefore, image varies between those who have visited the destination and who have not, and these im-

ages should be differentiated. This research mostly focuses on induced image as well as the modified image after the experience at the destination since they are the images to be gained from social media. (Cooper & Fletcher & Fyall & Gilbert & Wanhill 2005, 682; Molina & Gomez & Martin-Consuegra 2010, 727.)

Organic and induced image (steps 1 and 2 in the previous image formation) are suggested to be separated by Gunn (1988) and afterwards these terms are used in large amount of tourism literature. According to Gunn, the difference between these is the amount of influence by tourism marketers. Induced image is formed by deliberate promotion whereas an individual forms an organic image from everyday information, for example geography lessons at school or (editorial) mass media. Therefore, influencing one's image should focus on modifying the induced image. Figure 1, originally presented by Stabler in 1988, is to illustrate the factors that influence on consumers' image of a destination. The demand factors can be compared with Gunn's organic image described before whereas the supply factors correspond to induced image. (Cooper & Fletcher & Fyall & Gilbert & Wanhill 2005, 63; Jenkins 1999, 2-3; Pike 2008, 205.)

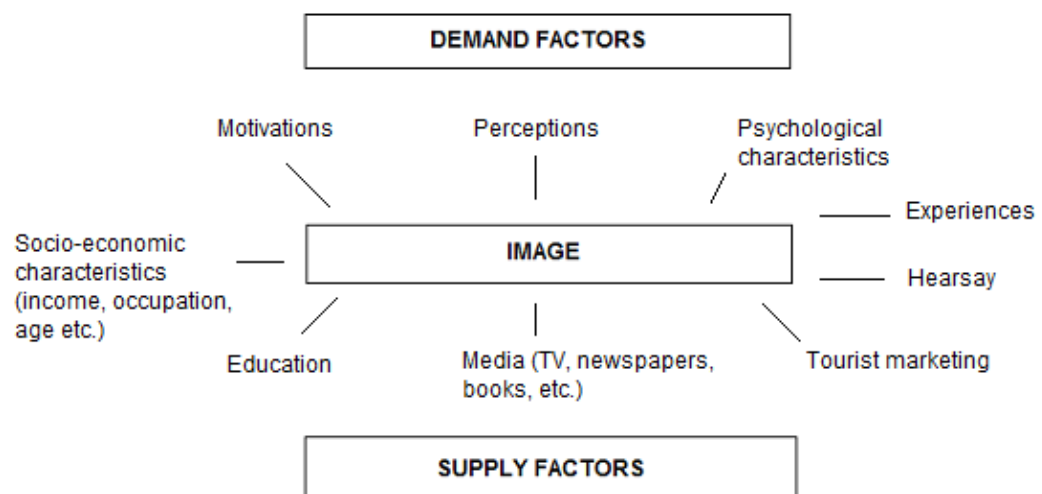


FIGURE 1. Factors influencing the formation of consumers' tourist image. (Jenkins 1999, 3.)

However, according to Jenkins (1999, 1-3) and Pike (2008, 202), destination image definition and the understanding of image formation are quite debated in tourism research. They argue that the destination image concept is sometimes used vaguely and in many different contexts. The understanding of 'image' also can vary between different disciplines, for example psychology, behavioral geography and marketing, thus creating

some confusion in the tourism literature. Additionally, lack of conceptual framework and theoretical framework concerning the destination image is criticized. (Jenkins 1999, 1-3; Pike 2008, 202.)

2.2.4 Brand positioning

Figure 2 is meant to demonstrate three different components of a brand. First, brand identity defined in chapter 2.2.3, is the self-image and preferred image by the organization whereas the second component brand image (chapter 2.2.4) represents the actual image in the minds of consumers. The third component, brand positioning, is overlapping the other elements representing the connection needed between them. To establish a preferred place in the minds of the target markets, a destination brand needs to be positioned correctly to distinguish it from the various other competitors. In the travel markets especially, differentiation through brand positioning is important because destinations are easily substituted. The positioning elements used are for example destination (brand) name, symbol and positioning slogan. (Pike 2008, 218-221, 229; Wang & Pizam 2011, 118-119.)

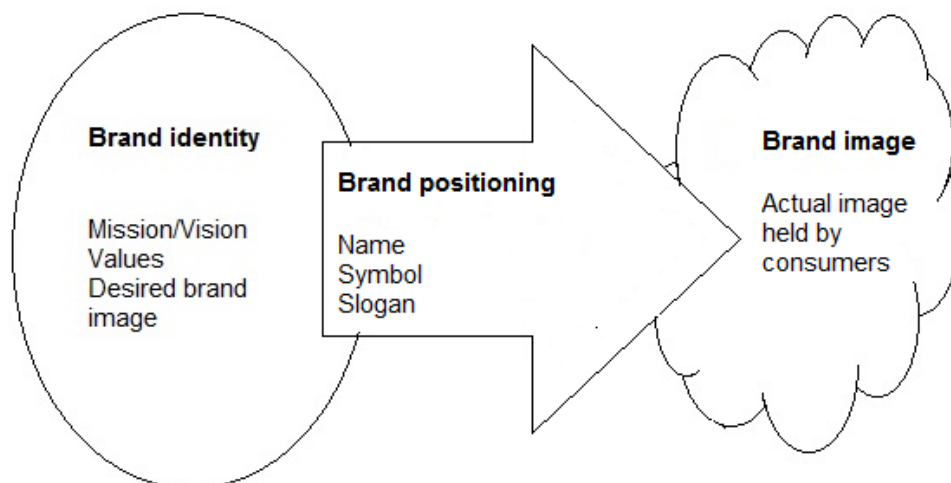


FIGURE 2. Brand identity, brand positioning and brand image. (Pike 2008, 218.)

In order to succeed, the positioning needs to differ of that of the stronger competitors, to be specific enough and not to promise everything for everyone, and to have a positive destination image. The positioning campaign ought to reinforce the positive image rather than try to change negative opinions. When the positioning is successful, the brand will gain a competitive advantage against the other competing destinations as it should

then maintain its place in the consumers' minds. The concept of positioning is therefore concerned with three issues: the market segments, the image of a destination brand in different target markets and the attributes of a strong destination brand for each target market since it cannot be expected that same attributes attract each target market. In establishing and maintaining the brand image and in positioning, constant promotion is needed. Promoting a destination is done through diverse means, for example trade fairs and events, public relations, online advertising, brochures of tour agencies and hotels, and media campaigns. (Pike 2008, 219-222; Wang & Pizam 2011, 118-119.)

2.3 Research questions

To provide relevant and accurate information of the state of discussions on chosen social media platforms, the author has chosen the following research questions:

- What is the destination image of Tampere according to discussions and writings made in English in chosen social media?
- What are some other issues related to the comments in social media that would need to be addressed by the destination marketers?

2.4 Data and methods

The data used in this research consisted of opinions, comments and thoughts written by individuals on different social media platforms. As the aim of this research was to analyze the destination image and other discussions concerning the city of Tampere in social media, the author had to collect the data from these specific websites, which are also introduced in this thesis later. Therefore, the data of this research can be categorized mostly as primary data as it was collected specifically for this research for the first time from the actual world. Secondary data, the data collected originally by someone else for his/her primary purposes, was also used in this research in the form of different tourism and marketing related literature and articles. The literature written by the professionals of these fields helped the author for example to understand the key concepts more in-depth and to use them in the analysis of the destination image. The primary

data for this research was analyzed between December, 2013 and February, 2014. (Brotherton 2008, 64.)

As the data is mainly in the form of text, the approach of this thesis must be seen as of qualitative nature. Qualitative research refers to analyze often more variable data, for example texts, pictures or videos, than just numeric data, which is included in quantitative research. The qualitative nature of data means that the analysis often tends to be more challenging as it is more flexible and interpretative compared to the established techniques and standard procedures that can be applied to analysis of quantitative data. Thus, results of the analysis of qualitative data rely much of the interpretation of the researcher. (Brotherton 2008, 207-214.)

As noted by Shani and Wang (2011, 134) destination image is usually measured by applying structured techniques (quantitative) but can also be done with unstructured techniques, in which the respondents are able to express their opinions freely (Wang & Pizam 2011, 134). Since the author of this research collected the data from the already existing free-form descriptions in social media, the qualitative techniques had to be implemented and for this analysis, Shani and Wang suggest the method of content analysis. Through content analysis “textual information is screened and systematically analyzed to identify patterns and categories”. (Wang & Pizam 2011, 134-136.)

Content analysis can be applied in all media, ranging from traditional media, such as newspapers and broadcast media, to modern social media (Twitter, Facebook). Harold Lasswell introduced media content analysis as a systematic method to study mass media in 1927 with the initial purpose of studying propaganda. Most often in media content analysis, coding the data is a labor-intensive process though some aspects of data collection, annotation, analysis and visualization can be done with the help of computing programs. As the data analysis is mostly done by humans, it depends greatly on the interpretation of the reader and therefore, it is criticized in some literature as being unreliable. However, qualitative analysis of texts is necessary “to understand their [texts] deeper meanings and likely interpretations by audiences”, as noted by Macnamara (2005, 5.) He continued by stating that understanding meanings and interpretations is the ultimate goal of media content analysis. (Macnamara 2005, 1-7.)

2.5 Content of the research

Chapter 3 describes the city of Tampere, tourism in the city and the brand created for the Tampere region. The next chapter 4 continues to present the social media phenomenon and the social channels chosen for this research. The final analysis of the image of Tampere in chosen social media can be found in the chapter 5. Additionally, in this chapter the other important issues and discussions in social media are explained. Finally, chapter 6 concludes this research and gives further suggestions for development or future studies. In the end also references are listed.

3 TAMPERE

Tampere is located in south-west Finland, around 170 kilometers north of the capital city of Helsinki. With the population of over 210 000 Tampere is the third largest city in Finland and the largest inland city in the Nordic countries. The city was founded in 1779 and was originally one of the most important industrial cities in Finland. Afterwards, Tampere is developed to a popular student city with three different universities as well as quite a lively cultural life with many theaters, museums, restaurants, and other facilities. (Visit Tampere 2013. <http://www.visittampere.fi/tampere-all-bright>.)

3.1 Tourism in Tampere

Tampere has established its position in one of the most popular city destinations in Finland, being the second most visited city after the capital city of Helsinki. Tourism has been a growing sector in Tampere during the recent years regardless of the long lasting recession caused by the Euro crisis. The amount of overnights in the city has been growing reaching its highest peak in 2012 with a little over one million overnight stays. However, a decline in the amount of tourists' overnight stays occurred in 2013. In 2012 the most foreign visitors came from Russia, Germany and Sweden. Tampere has an international airport providing direct flights from different parts of Europe as well as some domestic flights. (Tampereen matkailun tunnuslukuja 2013. <http://www.visittampere.fi/materiaalipankki>.)

Most of the tourists in the city are domestic and the main purpose of travel is leisure (52,2 %), though business travels are increasingly common as well (41,1 %). Summer is the most popular time to travel to Tampere. Some of the famous places to visit include for example Särkänniemi Adventure Park, Finlayson area, Tampere Cathedral, and Pyynikki ridge area. In addition, Tampere region offers plenty of possibilities for outdoor activities with its versatile nature. (Tampereen matkailun tunnuslukuja 2013. <http://www.visittampere.fi/materiaalipankki>; Visit Tampere 2013. www.visittampere.fi.)

3.2 Tredea

Tredea, Tampere Region Economic Development Agency, is according to their website “the force that unites regional economic development activities and a builder of practical cooperation”. (Tredea 2013.) Tredea’s main duties are to tempt new businesses, investments, capital, innovation and travelers to the Tampere region, and to promote the region on national and international level. In this current form, Tredea was founded in 2009. In practice, Tredea represents the Tampere region abroad for example in travel fairs, they help foreign businesses to settle in this region and provide assistance for local businesses to expand to Russia. (Tredea 2013. <http://www.tredea.fi/en/tredea/>.; Tredea 2013. <http://www.tredea.fi/en/>.)

3.3 Tampere brand and Visit Tampere

Tampere - All Bright! -brand was launched in August 2010 by Tredea not only to raise awareness of the city of Tampere but also the surrounding municipalities creating the larger Tampere region. With the new brand, Tredea wishes to raise the awareness of the region both internationally and domestically, to attract more travelers, investments, capital and knowhow, as well as to create better operational environments for the region’s corporations. The core brand values communicated are courageous, open-minded, relaxed and inspiring. According to Tredea, these attributes are all related to the Tampere region, and the essence of the brand is based on these concepts. All Bright! –brand is built to work as an umbrella brand, which aims to create a consistent message to be used in many different markets thus creating a more consistent image in the minds’ of actual and potential consumers. The brand is divided into four specific sub brands: Visit, Invest, Live and Innovate. (Tredea 2013. <http://www.tredea.fi/toiminta/>)

Visit Tampere is one part of the brand of the Tampere region and it was created for promoting tourism and for providing tourists with reliable and diverse information. The aim of Visit Tampere is to ensure customer satisfaction and customers’ willingness to stay longer or return to the area later. It maintains the official Tampere region visitor website, which contains practical information for example about the accommodation and the most interesting sights and attractions in the city, as well as updated information about cultural events and happenings. Additionally, Visit Tampere Tourist Information

can be found at the Tampere railway station to guide and assist tourists if needed. A printed city guide is also published yearly in many different languages by Visit Tampere. (Tredea 2013. <http://www.tredea.fi/toiminta/visit/>; Visit Tampere 2013. www.visittampere.fi.)



IMAGE 1. Tampere All Bright! –logo. (Tampere All Bright! 2013. <http://www.tamperebrand.fi/ota-omaksesi/brandin-maistelua2/>.)

The official website of Tampere All Bright! –brand offers the brand logos and other promotional material for everyone to use in building a consistent message and thus raising brand awareness. Image 1 has been taken from this website to provide an example of the logo of the brand of Tampere. When differentiating between Visit, Invest, Live and Innovate in Tampere, different colors are used in the logos as well as in the design of websites. (Tampere All Bright! 2013. <http://www.tamperebrand.fi/>.)

4 SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media can be defined as a collection of different Internet and mobile tools, which provide people with a possibility to discuss and share information. Through these, one can stay in contact with others, share opinions and ideas, and communicate with anyone with the help of words, pictures, videos and audio. It is also possible for everyone to create content for social media websites. Therefore, according to Leino (2010), social media consist either partly or completely of

- 1) the content created by users
- 2) the community, where the content is used, and
- 3) the technology, that provides the platform for creating the content, communicating and sharing.

He also presents a three M-rule to be remembered with the use of all social media: “Monitor first, then mingle, then measure”. (Leino 2010, 250-251.)

In literature, social media is usually divided into different forms: blogs, microblogs (Twitter), social networks (Facebook), media-sharing sites (Youtube), review sites, and forums just being some examples of the forms (Zarella 2010, 3). There are plenty of different social media platforms; Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Wikipedia, and Blogger being some of the most famous ones in the whole world. However, social media is quickly changing; new applications and platforms are developed all the time. A new, interesting social media platform is usually quickly discovered especially through other existing social media channels. (Forsgård & Frey 2010, 36-37.)

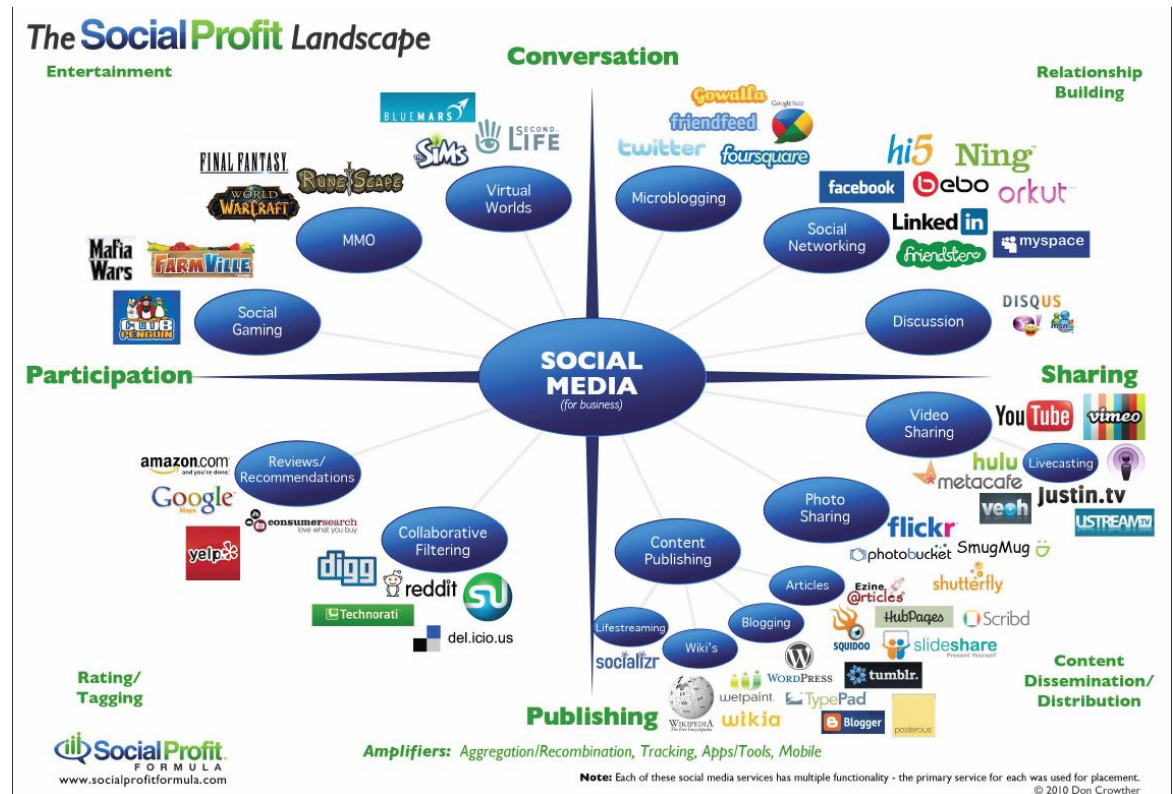


IMAGE 2. Social media channels and grouping. (Crowther 2010.)

Social media is useful for a single entrepreneur or every size of businesses because it is easy to use and it costs almost nothing but still can bring great financial benefits (Zarella, 2010, 8). In business, the main point for social media is to communicate with customers. It may include marketing, sales, public relations and customer service but it can also be used to ask for new ideas and products as well as new developments or features for existing products or services from the consumers themselves. Social media is also a tool for after sales. (Safko 2010, 8; Zarella 2010, 3-8.)

Social media provides an opportunity for businesses to inform consumers about their brands, to reach out for a larger community and possibly, to receive more brand advocates. Usually, these brand advocates talk favorably about certain brands and then convey positive word of mouth, which spreads within communities and the tools offered by social media. Businesses should be aware of that both positive and negative experiences about a brand can be easier shared nowadays and that especially negative experiences travel even faster to others. Kotler, Bowen and Makens (2006, 695) also describe this phenomenon of sharing information online as Word-of-Web. By using social media, it is possible for companies to follow what is written of them, their products and brands,

and to take part in the discussions, to explain their decisions and to fix some images consumers have got in their minds. (Kotler & Bowen & Makens 2006, 695; Leino 2010, 253-254.)

In tourism, more and more travelers are searching for information online to fulfill their travel needs. When faced with the countless of opportunities offered, consumers start to actively seek out opinions of others to find relevant and unbiased information and to ease their decision-making process. Social media has made it possible for virtual travel community to form that makes it easy for consumers to obtain information, maintain connections, develop relationships, and make travel-related decisions. According to the book by Wang & Pizam (2011, 210), the most cited definition for this community is “A virtual community is a group of people who may or may not meet one another face-to-face, and who exchange the words and ideas through the mediation of computer bulletin boards and networks.” Social media offers a great platform for this particular group to function and its importance in the tourism business cannot be ignored. (Wang & Pizam 2011, 210, 225, 235.)

The social media applications used in this research are introduced in more detail in the following. The following social media have been chosen for this thesis in order to find enough accurate and relevant data for image analysis.

4.1 TripAdvisor

World’s largest travel site, TripAdvisor, was launched in 2000. It is a website aimed to help travelers in planning of their perfect trip by reading about variety of travel choices as well as other fellow travelers’ suggestions, recommendations and reviews. The website contains information about more than 134 000 destinations and over 3.1 million tourism businesses including hotels, restaurants, attractions, and tour operators. The amount of monthly visitors exceeds 260 000 and the website operates in 34 different countries over the world. Nowadays, TripAdvisor also offers a mobile application. (TripAdvisor 2013. http://www.tripadvisor.com/PressCenter-c4-Fact_Sheet.html.)

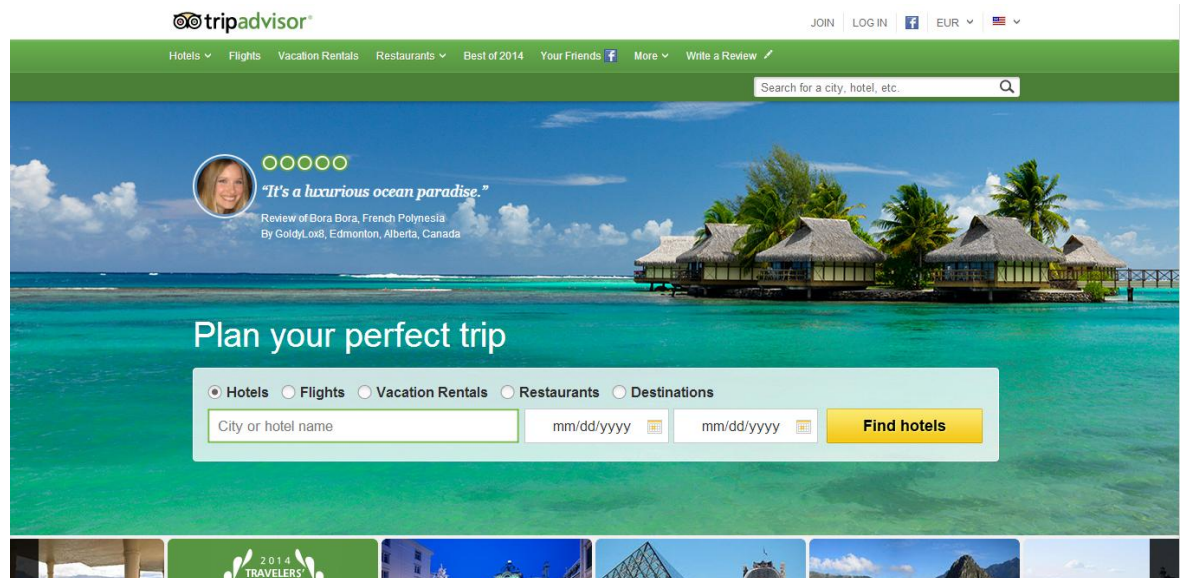


IMAGE 3. TripAdvisor webpage. (TripAdvisor 2014. <http://www.tripadvisor.com/>.)

On TripAdvisor website, it is possible to get familiar with destinations and read reviews of other users. Additionally, anyone can publish own opinion and comments on hotels, restaurants, attractions and other services consumed in the destination. At the same time, the website offers a possibility to search for information based on price, location or good reviews to find one's ideal choices quickly. Also, a general forum is provided for travelers to share and discuss, and this forum is on the scope in this research. To get an idea for the next trip, TripAdvisor offers Travel inspiration -page. Award winners are yearly chosen based on the reviews of the website users. For tourism businesses, a different site is offered for them to enhance their marketing and customer satisfaction. This can be used free of charge but with an additional fee more opportunities are available. (TripAdvisor 2013. www.tripadvisor.com.)

TripAdvisor is the leading review site in the travel industry, the forum being just one of the tools when planning the perfect trip. Therefore, the author wants to take an example of these review sites also to emphasize the importance of them in marketing as well as in individuals' decision-making process. When writing 'Tampere' in the search field, the site offers the main page of the city where everything useful can be found. Hotels (37), B&Bs/Inns (4), Restaurants (234) and Things to Do (76) (results on 30th January, 2014) just being some examples of the amounts and types of businesses reviewed of Tampere. An example of the Särkänniemi Adventure Park review site is in the image 4. Shortly, the basic information of the adventure park is offered on the top of the page and when scrolled down, the visitor rating can be seen followed by the comments written by

the people visited the business. These comments are their opinions and they cannot be affected by the people owning or working in the adventure park. However, the businesses should be aware of this phenomenon as they can reply to these feedbacks, thus getting an opportunity for increased customer service. (TripAdvisor 2014. http://www.tripadvisor.com/Tourism-g189948-Tampere_Western_Finland-Vacations.html; TripAdvisor 2014. http://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g189948-d604969-Reviews-Sarkanniemi_Adventure_Park-Tampere_Western_Finland.html.)

Sarkanniemi Adventure Park
Tampere 33230, Finland
358 (0)207 130 200 Website Update attraction details

Ranked #2 of 41 attractions in Tampere
84 Reviews
Certificate of Excellence 2013
Type: Amusement/ Theme Parks
64 visitor photos

84 reviews from our community
Write a Review

Visitor rating

Excellent	44
Very good	28
Average	11
Poor	1
Terrible	0

84 reviews sorted by Date Rating English first

“Great view of Tampere and Dolphin Show”
Reviewed December 28, 2013
Due to off season not all the rides and park were open. But the Observation tower had fantastic view of Tampere, luckily the Sun was out that day we had a good view of the city Dolphin show was good

Hotels travelers are raving about...

- Omena Hotel Tampere 51 Reviews
- Solo Sokos Hotel Tammer 45 Reviews
- Omena Hotel Tampere II 40 Reviews

Browse nearby
Things to Do (76) | Hotels (33) | Restaurants (234)

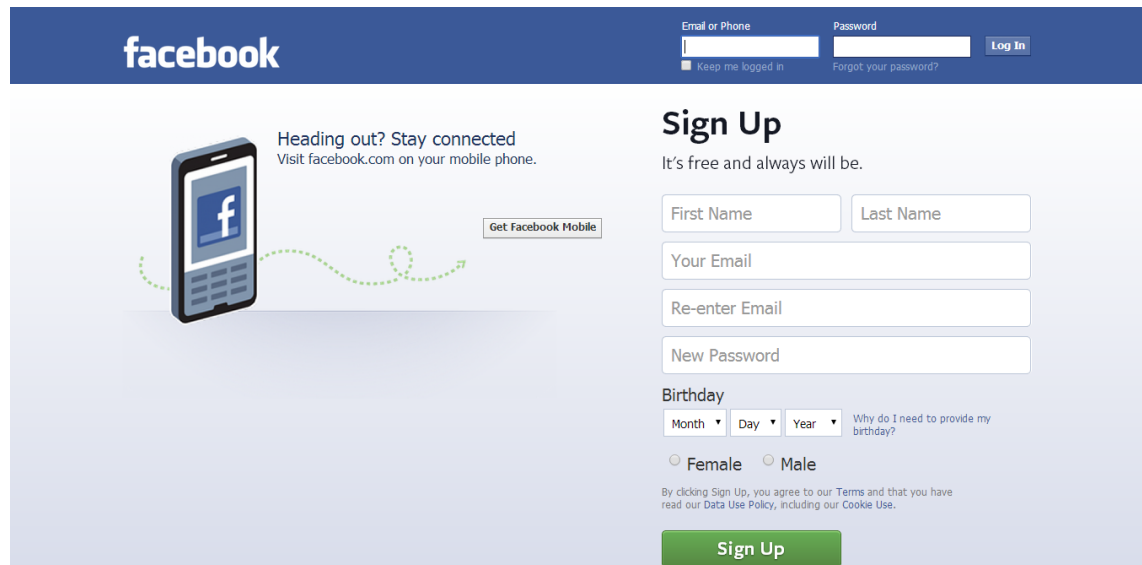
Which Tampere hotels are on sale?

IMAGE 4. Särkänniemi Adventure Park on TripAdvisor. (TripAdvisor 2014. http://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g189948-d604969-Reviews-Sarkanniemi_Adventure_Park-Tampere_Western_Finland.html.)

4.2 Facebook

Facebook is one of the most popular social media platforms in the world with 1.19 billion monthly active users in September, 2013. Founded in 2004 by Marc Zuckerberg in the United States, Facebook was originally meant to be used in universities only. The headquarters is still located in California, USA, but the company has many other offices

around the world. In September 2013, nearly 5,600 employees worked for the company. Facebook is available on the Internet as well as on mobile phone applications. (Facebook newsroom 2013. <http://newsroom.fb.com/Key-Facts.>)



The image shows the Facebook front page interface. At the top, there is a blue header with the Facebook logo on the left and login fields on the right. The login fields include 'Email or Phone' and 'Password', with a 'Log In' button and a 'Keep me logged in' checkbox. Below the header, there is a promotional banner for the Facebook mobile app, featuring a smartphone icon and the text 'Heading out? Stay connected. Visit facebook.com on your mobile phone.' with a 'Get Facebook Mobile' button. To the right of the banner is the 'Sign Up' section, which includes the text 'It's free and always will be.' and several input fields: 'First Name', 'Last Name', 'Your Email', 'Re-enter Email', and 'New Password'. Below these fields are 'Birthday' dropdown menus for 'Month', 'Day', and 'Year', and radio buttons for 'Female' and 'Male'. At the bottom of the sign-up section is a green 'Sign Up' button. A small disclaimer at the bottom of the sign-up section reads: 'By clicking Sign Up, you agree to our Terms and that you have read our Data Use Policy, including our Cookie Use.'

IMAGE 5. Facebook Front Page. (Facebook 2013. <http://www.facebook.com.>)

According to Facebook's websites (2013), their mission "is to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected." Sharing can happen in the form of texts, pictures, videos and many different applications. Facebook is used to connect with friends and family near and far away, to share one's experiences and to express opinions, as well as to keep updated in the events all over the world. (Facebook newsroom 2013. <http://newsroom.fb.com/Key-Facts.>)

Businesses and brands can build their own website inside Facebook, which can include for example videos, competitions, news, and discussion forums. Content on this site can be easily modified by the company. Facebook also provides an opportunity for e-commerce. (Leino 2010, 272-273.)

4.3 Lonely Planet

Lonely Planet is a world famous brand known for publishing over 100 million travel guides in various different languages. The company was established by Tony and Maureen Wheeler. In 2007 they sold a 75% share to BBC Worldwide, and then 2011 BBC Worldwide acquired rest of the shares as well becoming the sole shareholder.

However, just in the spring of 2013, Lonely Planet was sold to US company NC2 Media according to BBC news. Lonely Planet guidebooks differ of those from competitors by being the first guidebooks to be aimed for budget travelers. Also today, the books have a reputation of offering information about the off beaten tracks meaning about places and destinations not visited by many tourists. The company assures that everything written by the Lonely Planet authors, are their honest and non-commercial opinions, and that readers can trust that the destinations have actually been visited by the authors. Lonely Planet employs over 450 people and in addition, over 200 writers both in-house and freelancers. (BBC News 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-21841479>; Lonely Planet 2013, <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/about/>.)

Nowadays, Lonely Planet offers also eBooks, a magazine, different mobile and digital travel products as well as an awarded website. The website provides travelers with plenty of information about hotels, restaurants, attractions, shopping possibilities and other topics covering over 8 000 destinations worldwide. Additionally, an online shop can be found at the website as well as a section for different travel services, for example car rentals and tour bookings. To inspire travelers, the website offers theme pages where anyone can find some ideas where to go according their own interests, for example some honeymoon destinations, road trip suggestions as well as the best in travel nominated yearly. (Lonely Planet 2013, <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/about/>; Lonely Planet 2013, <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/about/lonely-planet-digital/>.)

The website of Lonely Planet also brings together like-minded people offering a platform for travelers to ask questions, to give advice, to share experiences and search for traveling companion. Thorn Tree forum (image 6) provides a possibility for travelers to discuss about every possible topic since 1996. Anyone can register free of charge and then join the conversation or start a new topic for discussion. The discussions in this particular forum were searched by the author to discover what has been written about the city of Tampere. (Lonely Planet 2013, <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/thorntree/index.jspa>.)

lonely planet Destinations Themes Shop Thorn Tree Forum Bookings Insurance

Thorn Tree Forum

Branches Who's On Polls

Welcome to the Thorn Tree Travel Forum, travelling together since 1996

Join fellow travellers to exchange travel information, advice, hints and tips. Get help, get connected, get inspired and have your say. Our [Community Guidelines](#) and [Community FAQs](#) will help you get started. When you're ready, sign in and start posting by choosing the right forum branch for you.

Who's on: 488 guests, 126 signed in

Departure Lounge

Branches	Topics
Africa Sub-Saharan and North Africa forum	78,408
Americas - Canada Travel tips for Vancouver, Montréal, Toronto, Banff and Quebec	9,793
Americas - Caribbean Including Aruba, The Bahamas, US Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Jamaica and more	8,166
Americas - Central America Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama	38,699
Americas - Cuba	12,070

BOOKINGS & SERVICES

[Compare & Book Flights >](#)
[Travel Insurance >](#)
[Adventure Trips & Tours >](#)

IMAGE 6. The Thorn Tree forum website. (Lonely Planet 2013. <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/thorntree/index.jspa>.)

4.4 Blogs

Blogs are publicly shared journal style entries that are usually on reverse chronological order. They consist of posts, which can be of any length and should concentrate on one topic at the time to be most effective. Posts are written texts combined with for example pictures, links or videos. Blogs provide also different social features, including a possibility to comment on posts and sharing them on different social media platforms. As blogs are easily integrated with all the other social media platforms, they can be used for marketing purposes as well. Blogs became popular during 1990s but the growth in the popularity of social media radically expanded the amount of them. A blog provides an opportunity to write more thorough point of view or opinion with complete arguments on any topic, issue or interest by anyone. (Forsgård & Frey 2010, 66-67; Zarella 2010, 9-13.)

For organizations and businesses, blogs are also a chance to explain their point of view with their own terms and in a more flexible and informal way than on their official website. Therefore, these two should also be separated to achieve the best outcome. In the blog, the company can write background stories for products and employees, make quick updates on certain issues or get the readers interested in upcoming releases to give a couple of examples. Information about a new blog entry is then forwarded to other social media platforms to attempt new followers and commentators, and thus increase

the amount of awareness and communication. Additionally, as emphasized in the book by Wang & Pizam (2011, 110), “Blogs are one way to gather information (preferences, motivations, brand image, loyalty) and can provide useful info, also authentic opinions” and thus, they are currently also used by individuals to learn about destinations as well as services and products offered. Lastly mentioned is one of the main reasons, why blogs are considered important also by author, and therefore chosen to be investigated in this research. (Forsgård & Frey 2010, 66-67; Wang & Pizam 2011, 110.)

5 ANALYSIS OF THE IMAGE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

In this chapter, the author reviews and analyses the discussions taken place in the social media channels presented in the previous chapter. The most relevant and frequently appeared images and issues are presented, and always an example from the writings is added to illustrate. In the beginning of each subheading a short overview is provided as well.

5.1 TripAdvisor

On TripAdvisor site, the main focus was on Tampere Travel Forum for it was thought to provide the most relevant and accurate information for this research. The forum offers a platform for people to ask any question in mind about the city, and mostly these questions are answered by the people living in or having visited Tampere. There are 124 topics posted (30th January, 2014) but all of them do not fit the timeframe defined for this research. The most frequently asked questions concerned transportation, things to do in Tampere, tips for shopping, sports or bars, as well as cottage rentals in the surrounding municipalities. (TripAdvisor 2014. http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowForum-g189948-i1536-Tampere_Western_Finland.html.)

From this particular forum, induced images as well as modified images are to be gained. According to Gunn's theory (1988) of image formation, an induced image is the one perceived by individuals that is affected by the tourism marketers (Cooper & Fletcher & Fyall & Gilbert & Wanhill 2005, 682). Based on the discussions in the forum, it can be argued that the participants have already searched for information about the preferred destination (either the city of Tampere or whole Finland) and they are just asking some details and tips after the information search. Induced images of the participants are positive in tone, emphasizing the variety the city has to offer as well as the proximity of beautiful nature and quietness and thus, Tampere is perceived to offer quite authentic experience of the culture of Finland. The potential visitors seemed to be aware of the size of the city or then having some prejudices of it because most of them are planning only a short visit.

As the people answering these questions have visited or live in the city of Tampere, they have gone through the whole process suggested by Gunn (1988), and therefore have a modified image in their minds (Cooper & Fletcher & Fyall & Gilbert & Wanhill 2005, 682). The comments and suggestions made by these people are trying to convey a positive and realistic image of Tampere as a lively and diverse city. The places recommended in Tampere, are most often museums, Finlayson area, the observation towers, (a stroll on) Hämeenkatu as well as different bars/restaurants, the Plevna Brewery Pub & Restaurant in particular. The nightlife in the city gained attention in a couple of different discussions and image 7 is to provide an example of one of them.

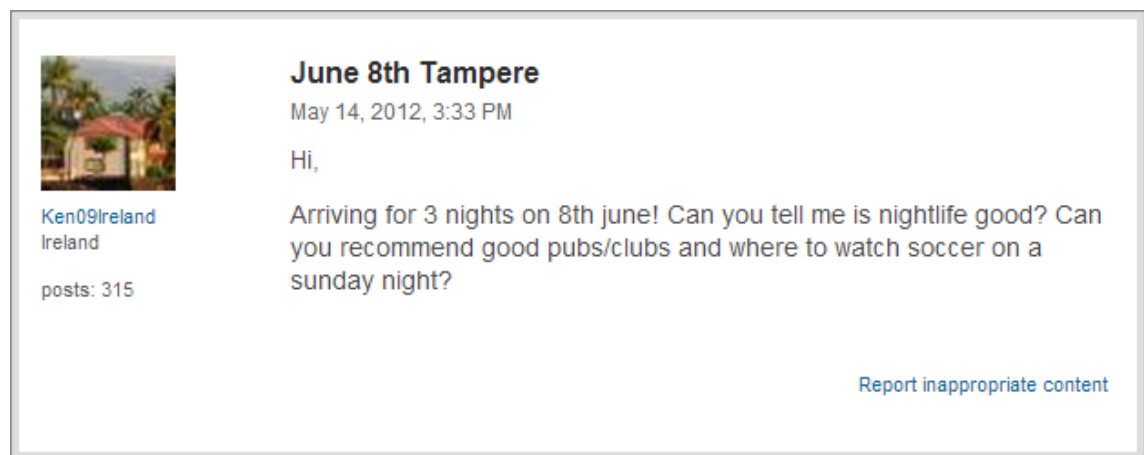


IMAGE 7. An example of discussion starter. (TripAdvisor 2014. http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowTopic-g189948-i1536-k5416662-June_8th_Tampere-Tampere_Western_Finland.html.)

The author would argue that the forum participants with a modified image are working as sort of marketers of the city. They are recommending many different places and services with a positive tone, and delivering a message that in the city of Tampere, there is something for everyone to experience. The participants' politeness and helpfulness are appreciated, with one example comment of "Great forum here and advice, the Finns rock!!" written in the forum. Thus it could be argued, that they are also sending a positive experience of Finnish people, even though all of them cannot be surely identified as Finns. All of these positive comments may help to increase the formation of positive destination images and to increase the amount of potential and actual visitors in Finland, as "virtual communities are gradually becoming incredibly influential in tourism as consumers increasingly trust their peers better, rather than marketing messages" (Wang & Pizam 2011, 209-210).

5.2 Facebook

When 'Tampere' is written on the search field on Facebook, the most popular results to appear are the following: Tampere Finland (City), Happenings@Tampere, Tampere-talo, Tampere Film Festival, Bileinfo Tampere, TAMK University of Applied Sciences, Tampere Tourist Information and Klubi/Tampere. From the list it can be seen that with the search word 'Tampere' many different kinds of Facebook pages are offered including the official Tampere tourism sites, happenings and events, bars/clubs and restaurants, sports teams as well as universities just to name a few. In order to gain understanding of the image of Tampere, the most location specific fan pages (for example Klubi/Tampere) was left out from the research and the focus was directed to pages that could attract more international population.

First page reviewed by the author was Tampere Tourist Information, which is the official Facebook site of Tampere Tourist Information held up by VisitTampere. The site has 2,118 likes (27th January, 2014), and it offers also the information where to find the office in the city and during which hours it is open. On the page, everyone has a possibility to review their page by giving stars (image 8) as well as anyone can post their own comments, pictures and videos. So far, only a couple of people have posted their ratings, which are arguably more about the city of Tampere than the services of Tampere Tourist Information. However, it could be quite a good channel for asking feedback about the office's services if used correctly. (Facebook 2014. <https://www.facebook.com/tamperetouristinformation.>)

Reviews for Tampere Tourist Information



★★★★★

What do you think of Tampere Tourist Information?

Public Review



Melissa Mappelli

★★★★★ The best city in the whole universe: amazing urban architecture (old brick buildings match perfectly with new ones), breathtaking landscapes (the city can be defined as a kiss between the two lakes), history and culture (museums, Amuri and its workers village), lots of opportunities to have fun (bars, restaurants, shops, Särkänniemi, Pynnikki tower, Arboretum, parks) and to have a taste of the Finnish lifestyle (sauna, mustamakkara) and a lot more!! in short: the place where I want to live!!!

Like · about 6 months ago

 Tampere Tourist Information likes this.



Amy Hagen

★★★★★ Lovely ♥

Like · about 3 months ago

IMAGE 8. Tampere Tourist Information reviews. (Facebook 2014. <https://www.facebook.com/tamperetouristinformation.>)

Generally, Tampere Tourist Information Facebook page is used to enhance the city's atmosphere, to provide accurate and up-to-date suggestions for locals and travelers to experience as well as for marketing either the city or the services and events offered. These are implemented through posts about various news articles, pictures, advertisements and competitions just to name a few examples. Questions are allowed and quickly responded by the tourist information with an opportunity for others to comment on as well (image 9). A couple of more precise travel descriptions have been posted by winners of different competitions and/or some foreigners living permanently in Tampere. All the posts made by Visit Tampere are made in English to reach as wide target audience as possible.



IMAGE 9. Tampere Tourist Information question. (Facebook 2014. <https://www.facebook.com/tamperetouristinformation.>)

Places recommended for potential tourists include again museums, some restaurants and bars, public saunas, the market hall, the cathedral, Pyynikki area and Finlayson (image 11). Other comments also highlighted the great experiences gained in Särkänniemi Adventure Park and Vapriikki museum. The beautiful landscape is mentioned many times as well, and a couple of people have added that they have enjoyed the relaxing atmosphere when experiencing the nature. People who have already visited Tampere have got a positive image of the city based on their writings. Image perceived by those not visited in Tampere cannot be discovered on Facebook and the reasons for this are discussed in the following.

All the posts and comments are very positive in tone and the discussion is polite, yet rare. Even though this site is created especially for Tampere Tourist Information, it is not always used for its original purposes properly or on the other hand, it has not raised awareness among the public and people just do not search for that much information on Facebook. Additionally, the author would argue that this page and the one presented next are not engaging enough for the people, who like them, to actually participate and comment. Also, the content of both of these pages is too similar. As noted by Safko

(2010, 8), “social media is about communicating with your customers”. Therefore, content should be created to activate and encourage people to comment, to share their opinions and ideas, not only for advertising events and posting pictures. The content should be more diverse than it currently is to better discover the image people have and to develop Tampere as a destination. Social media could be also used as a tool to collect information on different things, for example what sort of services would be needed more than offered at the moment and what other ideas, the people already visited the city of Tampere, would provide. Images 10 and 11 represent examples of a post that immediately received more comments than other posts but it was only one exception among the posts posted within the period researched in this thesis.



IMAGE 10. Tampere Tourist Information tips. (Facebook 2014. <https://www.facebook.com/tamperetouristinformation.>)



IMAGE 11. Tampere Tourist Information answers. (Facebook 2014. <https://www.facebook.com/tamperetouristinformation>.)

The second page reviewed was Tampere All Bright, the official fan page for the brand of Tampere region. On February 3rd, 2014 there were 1,069 likes. The site offers information, mission and values of the brand, directs visitors to the official website as well as provides an address to which send feedback. There are plenty of pictures posted of the city and surroundings by the organization as well as other people living or visiting the area. Additionally, this site gives an opportunity for anyone to post about the happen-

ings in the city and in the surroundings. However, the content of this page was mainly event and services advertisements, and therefore it does not provide much information for this research. One example from Tampere All Bright Facebook page is provided in the image 12. The second post is to give an example of the most common posts made in the site, whereas the first post is the only exception there that is made by a traveler with a question in mind hoping to receive a response. (Facebook 2014. <https://www.facebook.com/TampereAllBright.>)



IMAGE 12. Tampere All Bright Facebook post examples by others. (Facebook 2014. <https://www.facebook.com/TampereAllBright.>)

Since the site is not the best for gaining any understanding of the image of Tampere, the author performed a quick review of how it represents the Tampere brand. Tampere All Bright Facebook page is integrated to other marketing communication channels as their posts represent the mission and values of the brand. By offering news and information of many cultural and business events, new services and experiences available as well as beautiful and extraordinary pictures, they aim to make Tampere more attractive to both visitors as well as local people. It can be seen that Facebook is frequently and actively

used to communicate a consistent message for consumers to build the preferred brand identity.

5.3 Lonely Planet

On Lonely Planet's Thorn Tree –forum, Tampere is rarely mentioned among the discussions on Scandinavia section. Mostly the discussion concerning Finland focuses on Helsinki and Northern Finland. Some relevant issues and most frequently asked general questions about Finland (and thus Tampere as well) consider price level, temperatures, transportation and distances within Finland. In some discussions, Tampere is seen as a transportation hub on the way to Lapland, and by these authors, it is not indicated whether they are planning to spend a longer time in the city or not.

As the Thorn Tree –forum is a place to ask questions from fellow travelers and from the habitants of the country in question, most often the person, who starts a discussion, is in need of some information and help is wanted from the people who actually have visited (or live in) the destination. As an example, one person is asking simply which one is recommended for sightseeing, Näsinneula or Pyynikki Tower, and then the opinion is provided by someone who has been in these locations.

What can be noticed from a couple of different discussions is that there is some hesitation among the participants about what cities they should include in their travel plan. There are problems in differentiating the cities and generally, the author is asking what is so special in Tampere that should not be missed. On the other hand, they are wondering should Tampere be missed and for example visit Turku instead of Tampere or then possibly some other city. This problem can also be seen in the image 13, where a couple is thinking of the cities they should visit in Finland. The example highlights that the destinations are easy to substitute and therefore, a better differentiation and brand positioning could be needed for the city of Tampere. When asked the reasons to visit Tampere, different respondents have mentioned a number of different museums in the city as well as the beautiful lake scenery. Also, pubs, bars and clubs are recommended for potential tourists to increase their interest to visit Tampere revealing that the people visited in Tampere perceive the city to have vivid nightlife.





<p>Anari</p>  <p>May 31, 2013 1:42 PM Posts: 4</p>	<p>One week in Finland - cities?</p> <p>Hi all,</p> <p>My boyfriend and I have about one week in Finland in August and as such can't see everything we'd like to. He's a design student, I like history/culture/languages, and we both like nature (but don't want to camp).</p> <p>Regarding big cities: Turku, Tampere and Helsinki. Assuming we go to one, is it worth going to more than one (given the time restriction, and that we want to see something other than cities)? Which one is best for a compact "Finland" experience?</p> <p>We'd also like to get out into nature (Lakeland if possible), and which part of the country we see for that will depend on which city we go to. We'll be coming from Stockholm and returning to Copenhagen.</p> <p>Thanks!</p>
<p>Alingsas2</p>  <p>Jun 2, 2013 5:43 PM Posts: 77</p>	<p>1</p> <p>Helsinki is not to be missed. Turku and Tampere are small cities, both with a handful of sights including museums. Tampere is slightly bigger than Turku, with a busy main street. Allegedly there are pleasant surroundings as well. Turku has an older history (some older buildings, most are modern though), and the coastal location.</p> <p>-</p> <p>You won't however see many lakes from the train if you travel between these three cities. As for sights in between them, consider Häameenlinna castle, Hanko, Nuuksio national park etc.</p>
<p>johnthefinn</p>  <p>Jun 4, 2013 9:37 AM Posts: 753</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Between Turku and Tampere, I'd pick Tampere every time. It's between two big lakes so there's no lack of lake scenery in the area. It's more Finnish than Turku, which has a large minority of Swedish-speakers and is officially bilingual.</p>
<p>depet</p>  <p>Jul 10, 2013 2:31 AM Posts: 14</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Definitely Helsinki, and between Tampere or Turku, surely Turku is more interesting from a visitors point of view.</p> <p>At least this is how I experienced it. Turku is the old capital of the country and also the city with the most history, and Turku with the riverbanks has a more european feel to it, compared to Tampere which is rather dull.</p> <p>Turku is also the gateway to the largest archipelago in europe so the scenery is rather spectacular.</p>

IMAGE 13. An example discussion. (Lonely Planet Thorn Tree –forum 2013. <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/thorntree/thread.jspa?threadID=2324209>.)

When thinking of Gunn's theory (Cooper & Fletcher & Fyall & Gilbert & Wanhill 2005, 682) of the seven steps in image formation, based on the writings it could be argued that the users of the forum always possess an induced image of Tampere. The style how information is asked about the city of Tampere does reveal that usually some information gathering has been made already and then the forum is used only afterwards to ask opinions, tips and confirmations from the fellow travelers. Among the people

who have visited Tampere, a rather positive, modified image of the city of Tampere can be noticed, though a couple of more negative comments are to be found as well. Tampere is often being recommended as a destination. However, in one discussion, a respondent states that for tourists, Turku could be more interesting destination than Tampere because of the city's history.

5.4 Blogs

For this research, five different blogs were chosen to be analyzed. Four of them are blogs by foreigners who have only shortly visited Tampere and made a post of their visit. The fifth blog differs from the four blogs already mentioned. The fifth blog is written by three different people now currently living in Tampere. It was chosen for this research not only because of the image of Tampere it shares publicly but also because of its role in promoting the city. It is presented more carefully at the end of this subheading, as the focus is first in the other four blogs. The blogs offer only modified images, which the bloggers have formed by going through the whole image formation process proposed by Gunn (Cooper & Fletcher & Fyall & Gilbert & Wanhill 2005, 682).

In the first blog, Passer Domesticus, the blogger has chosen to share her experiences in the form of pictures (image 14). She visited Tampere during the winter 2014, and the emphasis of her experience is the beautiful, snowy scenery. These pictures have also raised a lot of commenting in the blog, most of the comments being really positive and complementing the nature of Finland. For example, one person leaving a comment said the scenery in the picture looks like fairytale. The pictures convey an image of peaceful and quiet nature. The blogger mentioned her visit to Pyynikki observation tower, complementing the café in the tower and saying the scenery seen from the top is magnificent. Expensiveness was the only negative thing she wrote in the comment box. This blog conveys a truly positive image of Tampere region. (Balitro 2014. <http://pollypasserdomesticus.blogspot.fi/2014/02/road-trip-to-tampere-ii.html>.)

03 February 2014

road trip to tampere II.

the night we spent at our friends' place in **Tampere** it snowed all over Finland and the day after everything was white and soft. that morning *Annika* took us to **Pynnikin näkötorni**: a panoramic tower from the 1830's that stands on a hill above the city. from the top of the tower *the view was fantastic* and the freshly fallen snow and a few rays of sunshine made everything even more special.

road trip to Tampere – part II:



IMAGE 14. An example of Passer Domesticus –blog. (Balitro 2014. <http://pollypasserdomesticus.blogspot.fi/2014/02/road-trip-to-tampere-ii.html>.)

The second blog is written by a middle aged man, who decided visit Tampere in September 2013 during his trip around the world. He mentioned having visited Tampere already in 1991 and always wanted to come back again, indicating that the city has been an interesting destination for him during that time as well. In the blog, some points of the history of Tampere are written and for example, the Finlayson area, the factories and the rapids are introduced through their historical importance. Additionally, he has been interested in visiting different museums. Together the blogger's experiences form an image of the city where the history is still present and it can be interesting from a Briton's point of view. In the end, he stated that the city could be better during summer months because the temperature was too cold for him. However, he has added a picture of the autumn colors in the blog. (MyTripJournal 2013. <http://www.mytripjournal.com/travel-756984>.)

Tampere through pictures is the topic in the third blog as well. A photographer has chosen to blog about his weekend trip to Tampere during summer 2013. The blog post does not involve lots of text but the images and feelings are delivered through number of pictures of his sightseeing around the city, including places such as Koskipuisto and

About

Since 2009, Passer Domesticus has been for me the place where to write about what I do, what I like, what inspires me and where to collect some special things I feel like sharing, my projects and especially my photographs. Thank you for visiting and for your comments!

View my profile on Blogger

Links

- Portfolio
- Flickr
- Twitter
- Instagram

Blog Archive

- ▼ 2014 (16)
 - ▼ February (5)
 - last saturday in suomenlinna.
 - winter in kaitalampi II.
 - winter in kaitalampi I.
 - road trip to tampere III.
 - ...

Pyynikki observation tower. The image conveyed through his pictures emphasize a lively and relaxed summer atmosphere with pictures of cafés and their terraces, parks with green grass and trees, as well as people sunbathing in the park. Also, pictures of the centre with rapids and lakes highlight the closeness of beautiful nature as well as the landscapes taken from the top of the observation tower. At the same time a peaceful feeling is delivered through the pictures. The blogger summarizes his feelings of the city by writing “a place full with color, excitement and plenty to do” and expresses his desire to visit the city again. (Thomas 2013. [http://www.shaynethomas.com/trip-to-tampere-back/.](http://www.shaynethomas.com/trip-to-tampere-back/))

The fourth blog found is written by a Canadian woman traveling around the world. She was invited to visit Finland by the Finnish Tourist Board, however she continued by stating that “they [Finnish Tourist Board] did not request that I write a favourable review”. According to Wang & Pizam (2011, 233), destinations are often reaching out for blogger communities as “bloggers can have favourable effects on a destination’s image” because they are looked upon impartial and more influential. Hence, destinations are inviting bloggers to visit in exchange for blog entry/entries, and then making efforts for ensuring that the bloggers have a positive experience at the destination. Based on blog entries, the cities visited by the blogger were Helsinki, Porvoo and Tampere. (Bacon is magic 2014. [http://www.baconismagic.ca/finland/winter-swimming/;](http://www.baconismagic.ca/finland/winter-swimming/) Wang & Pizam 2011, 233.)

Fire and Ice

Tampere, Finland

So the day with Ville and fresh air poisoning was not done. But what was coming was one of the most frightening things I have ever contemplated doing – winter swimming. Yes I know I said biking down a mountain in Montana was scary but at least I was warm!

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I'm Ayngelina and in my mid-thirties. I left an amazing job, boyfriend, apartment and friends to find inspiration in Latin America. Today I share stories about the people and places behind the meals I enjoy around the world.

LATEST VIDEO

How to poach an egg

How To Poach An Egg

YouTube 610

IMAGE 15. A blog post from Bacon is magic. (Bacon is magic. 2014. [http://www.baconismagic.ca/finland/winter-swimming/.](http://www.baconismagic.ca/finland/winter-swimming/))

Image 15 is taken from Bacon is magic -blog to illustrate the different activities that were organized for the blogger to allow her to experience what the potential customer might experience. Other activities were for example sauna, snow shoes, and kick sleds. This blog post differs from the previous ones by emphasizing different unique experiences that one can gain in Tampere whereas the blogs already analyzed were more sightseeing around the city. Therefore, Bacon is magic -blog conveys an image of an exciting destination where one can take part in activities that are not so famous in other countries. With the humorous way of writing, the blogger compliments and encourages people to try the activities mentioned, and to explore the Finnish nature and fresh air at the same time.

According to the blog entries, the blogger also visited Näsinneula observation tower for lunch as well as Tampere graffiti the last one especially not being so typical place to see when visiting Tampere. All of her blog posts combined, she shows very different aspects of the city; the winter activities, fine dining and spectacular views as well as “the raw underbelly of a city” as described by one person leaving a comment to the post. The blog entries have received a lot of positive comments full of excitement towards the activities as well as hope for a chance to visit Finland one day.

What is common for all of these blog entries is that every blogger had decided to visit Tampere only for a short time (a weekend being the longest). This can indicate that Tampere is not considered as a destination for long periods, but can be seen already in a couple of days. Short visits should be addressed by marketers if Tampere as a tourist destination wishes to attract travelers for longer holidays, and thus increasing the tourism revenues. In general, all the blog posts about Tampere found by the author were written in a positive way introducing the city with pictures and offering tips for places to visit. The image delivered through different blog posts most likely will not have a negative effect on tourists planning to visit Tampere.

The last blog chosen for this research is called Dirty Cars And Million Cows (image 16). It has been included in this research because of its special purpose of blogging about Tampere and arguably, advertising Tampere. The blog is written by three people a Dutch, a Brit and a Laplander (all of them living in Tampere) with some visiting authors every now and then. Therefore, the blog offers three points of views about the city and everything the city has to offer. They introduce many different special aspects of the

city, some events, restaurants, and attractions as well as write about Finnish culture (sometimes compared to their own cultures), how to survive in Tampere tips and just some aspects of their lives in this region. The blog is present also in other social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Youtube and Instagram thus getting more possibilities to share the blog posts. (Dirty Cars And Million Cows 2014. [http://www.dirtycarsmillioncows.com/.](http://www.dirtycarsmillioncows.com/))

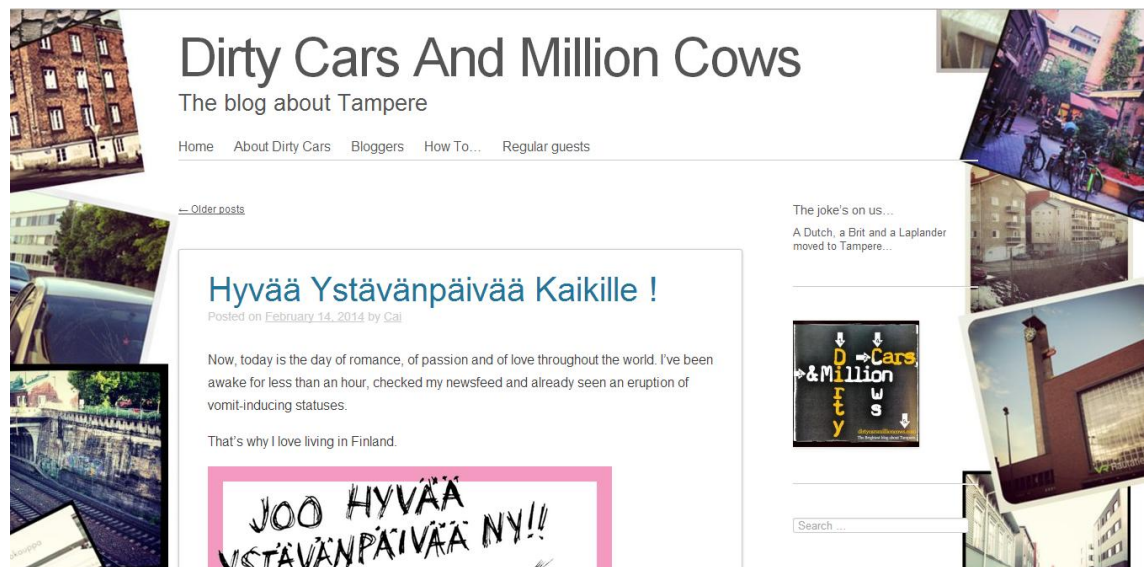


IMAGE 16. Dirty Cars And Million Cows FrontPage. (Dirty Cars And Million Cows 2014. [http://www.dirtycarsmillioncows.com/.](http://www.dirtycarsmillioncows.com/))

The many various topics for blog entries by the bloggers deliver an image of a lively and diverse city, where everyone can find different things to experience and enjoy. A couple of bloggers being foreigners, they assure readers that it is easy for everyone to live and survive in Tampere even without the knowledge of Finnish language by telling about their own experiences and moments they have encountered. The blog is written in positive and humorous way with plenty of pictures.

As mentioned before, the blog arguably advertises Tampere by raising awareness of the city in many social media platforms and enhancing the city's image through various posts of what Tampere has to offer. The bloggers have added different links always to offer more information about events, other cities, businesses, Tampere applications or even bicycle rentals. These links are also to help foreigners as well as locals to find more information and to make the city and its services more attracting. Additionally, Tampere All Bright! –brand as well as a couple of other tourism businesses are sharing their blog posts in social media, too (example in image 17), thus increasing the number

of possible readers. Larger amount of readers for the blog can also raise the number of potential and actual visitors as the blogs (and other social media) are often seen to offer quite honest opinions of the destinations.

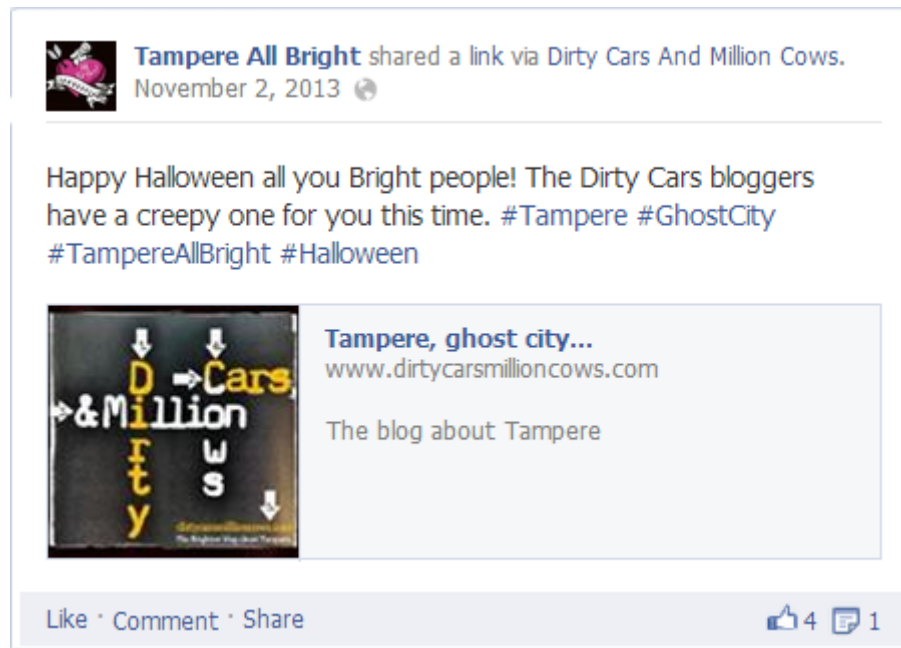


IMAGE 17. An example of sharing the blog posts by Tampere All Bright. (Facebook 2014. <https://www.facebook.com/TampereAllBright>.)

6 CONCLUSIONS

This thesis aimed to examine and analyze the image of Tampere as a destination on chosen social media platforms. In addition, other issues and thoughts discussed about the city were discussed in this research to provide complete information of the writings. As social media is perceived as an important source of information among travelers, thoughts and reviews shared on those platforms are an important source of information and feedback for the destination marketers in order to develop the destination to attract more visitors. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis was to provide information of actual and potential tourists' opinions and insights concerning the city of Tampere. The data was collected from TripAdvisor, Facebook, Lonely Planet's Thorn Tree –forum as well as five different travel blogs and analyzed between December 2013 – February 2014, and the writings included in the research were all in English.

Based on the data collected, the general tone of the comments concerning the city of Tampere is positive. Tampere is perceived as a lively and diverse city with plenty of options for culture, nightlife, and other activities. The scenery is complimented, and many times it is indicated that in Tampere tourists can gain the authentic experience of Finnish culture. However, often Tampere is considered as a destination for short visits by these social media writers. There is some hesitance, whether or not the city offers enough things to do for a longer time period, or if it should be visited at all. These are issues that should be addressed by the destination marketers in order to attract more travelers to the city and to satisfy their needs and wants. Especially, the differentiation between Tampere and other cities in Finland should be examined in further researches.

As a destination, Tampere is not discussed too much on chosen social media platforms during the time period of this analysis but as mentioned, the discussions are mostly raising positive awareness rather than sending a negative message. Positive publicity in social media will work as word-of-mouth marketing and with that said Tampere as a destination has a positive start with this phenomenon and should now focus on enhancing the positive image. As Tampere is rarely introduced as a topic, one issue to be faced by the marketers is how to get social media users more active and communicative than they currently are. First steps have been taken especially with the bloggers, who having visited Tampere, share their experiences not only in their blogs but most likely also on

other social media platforms. As done already a couple of times, more travel bloggers could be invited to the city in exchange of a blog post. On Facebook, it can be seen that the users are not really communicating with the Tampere brand or Tampere Tourist Information. Therefore, it is recommended to look for diverse solutions to engage people more in communication between the consumers and the marketers.

As the research was conducted by gathering already existing data from different social media channels, content analysis was applied for analysis to understand texts' deeper meanings and interpretations. However, as mentioned already in this research, content analysis depends greatly on the interpretation of the reader and is therefore criticized in some literature. When acknowledging this issue, it is obvious that others could interpret the comments differently. To increase the liability of the results, the author has tried to provide screen shots to illustrate the most important points as well as to add clear links to particular websites that everyone can navigate their way to the real source.

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