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Live Brand Experience in City Branding context

Case study: #HelsinkiSecret Residence campaign

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Description

The aim of this thesis is to describe the relevant impact of live brand experience and blogging within the branding of Helsinki city. In order to achieve this aim, the author first did literature review for theoretical background about live brand experience, city branding and blogging.

Helsinki Marketing Ltd company organized the campaign. #HelsinkiSecret Residence campaign was chosen for description due to its justified relevance and uniqueness as a single case study. Even though the campaign last for one year, being constrained by time schedule, the research should be considered as only a snap-shot view of the first two months January–February.

Qualitative methodology was main research approach, in order to obtain an in-depth understanding of three contemporary concepts through a new case study, which does not have thick available secondary data. Five interviews were made with people involved in the campaign from different roles and perspectives. The interviews were implemented in February 2016, both face-to-face and through Skype. Two focus groups were conducted in the end of March–April 2016, recruiting tourists from generation Y representing blog readers.

Research results revealed Generation Y tourist's current level of understanding about city brand concept: from organizing events on mega scaled to an attempt of 'marketing ploy'. Millennial tourists seek for authenticity while travelling. Their consuming behavior directly affect to how blog might or might not impact their decisions of going to a destination. However creating awareness is one main success that all interviewees believe the campaign would gain; branding a city can result in making the city too commercial for local citizens.

People see blog as a tool for self-expression. Nevertheless, the ending result yet left a pertinent question of whether experience with blog can be categorized as an experience.

Keywords (subjects)
City brand, experiential marketing, live brand experience, Helsinki, blog

Miscellanous

Contents

Figures

1   Introduction

City branding practice exists, owing to globalization as its main cause. As much as being a business with tangible product and intangible services, the city is also urged to create its own identity within the market, as well as reduce particular stereotyped images delivered through media transparency. The idea of branding a city is said to have been in practice since "cities have competed with each other for trade, populations, wealth, prestige or power" (Kavaratzis & Ashworth 2005, 510). On the contrary, its definition in academic research only gained attention in the 19th century. The benefit of branding a city is directly related to tourism in a country, but also indirectly serves factories, companies, local citizens and potential export markets (Morgan, Pritchard & Pride 2010, 46). Through branding, a city can be recognized and create or change its image in the global market, enhancing positive economical values as well as attracting new residents or businesses (Kolb 2006, 6). Nevertheless, there exist few questions suspecting surrounding how the city brand concept actually works, the answers to which are some of the objectives of this thesis.

Along with the city brand concept, there are other new relevant concepts created such as corporate branding, experiential marketing and customer experience management. Pine and Gilmore (1999) were the first one foreseeing this new economy of experience. An experience is not only a tactical element wrapped around services or goods, but it is in fact the selling item itself. When a consumer is engaged in a brand experience, the brand will be more memorable, which is in fact the reason why experiential marketing concept was built. Smilansky (2009, 1) explicitly says that the belief in "the brand that shouted the loudest getting consumer's attention" has been outdated.

Experiential marketing with live brand experience at its core, allows brands to have personalities like human beings and to communicate as such to consumers. Consumers tend to choose brands, which represents their own personalities. Brand personality is a driving factor for a consumer to choose one brand over

another, under same type of product. As a matter of fact, this is all what branding is about. The live brand experience platform enables two-way communication, in which consumer voices back their opinions to be heard. It might also be the best way for brand personality to come alive, as the consumer can immerse himself in it and absorb the personality on his own without being forced.

The complex levels for city branding is based on the complex levels found in the definition of a city. With such a complex brand message, experiential marketing with live brand experience at its core, is most suitable. Place and city branding are products of the new era of value-based marketing. Edelheim (2015) describes how a tourist attraction remains the physical unchangeable object but the experience tourist has of the place varies. The traditional approach might not be compresensible enough for city brand practices but experiential marketing is believed to deliver a "fabulours brand-relevant customer experience" to the audience, giving true value to their lives (Smilansky 2009, 1).

In addition, the theory about branding evolution and the existence of user-generated-content websites only shifts more decision power to consumer in current market. Hence, instead of fighting against it, businesses worldwide, including cities, should embrace this shift. It seems to be the time that a tourist organization let its consumers interpret the brand through their own perception, based on elements related to the brand throughout consumer's experience journey; rather than being told what the brand is, consumers are given the power; in fact, they might even demand the power, as the traditional branding approach could seem as manipulative and not trustworthy. This marks the power shift from producer to consumer, which is main reason for all such changes in marketing today.

The third subject is the blogging phenomenon. Live brand experience campaigns are described to operate with a logic: people will spread word-of-mouth if they feel connected or ideally, loyal to the brand. Word-of-mouth (WOM) then is a valuable source of marketing for businesses and cities. According to Smilansky (2009), when a consumer is engaged with a product, he is likely to tell 17 other people. WOM is an act representing a firm position of certain standing in the

consumer's mind. This result requires a long-term investment from the producer's side. WOM expands to even a wider area through social media channels. Shaw and his colleagues (2010, 81) say, "Social media are changing everything and at the same time they are changing nothing". The existence of social media demands businesses and cities to respond with development. Social media is not to be avoided, but integrated into strategy. As Shaw and others show us with their work, customer experience is no longer only limited to real interaction. Customer experience management can instead fall into the realm of psychological study as well.

According to Pan, MacLaurin & Crotts (2007, 36), a tourism product is "in essence, an experience good, the final product is a composite of services and experiences, which, by their very nature, are hard to assess prior to purchase". Therefore, blogs—acting as descriptions of such experiences – are important since they give the tourists a holistic understanding of the place they might visit (Edelheim 2015, 203). Their travel decision is thereby influenced.

Due to everything mentioned above, blogging can be seen as a success measurement tool for live brand experiences in the campaigns of cities. On the other hand, blogs generally, and travel blogs specifically, have their negative sides. The readers might question whether the content is authentically written according to a person's true experience. The fact that businesses nowadays are starting to implement their own blog sites or have bloggers writing about their products and services, is raising the suspicion that the blog content can be a tool to manipulate consumers. Some of those limitations have been mentioned earlier, and will be more deeply described in the result findings of this thesis.

2   Research Problem and Questions

The main objective of this thesis is to describe the relevant impact of live brand experience onto branding a city. Live brand experience will be elaborated as a increasingly important developmental step organizations need to consider for their branding strategies. An argumentative problem in this thesis lies in the transition from the consumer product branding concept to the city branding

concept. There have been many academic research studies discussing the subject; and, in pursuing the literature review, the author of this thesis noticed a possibile answer. Anholt (2003) believes that branding places is not different than branding manufactured products because it also evokes values and triggers emotions in consumer's mind.

If city branding operates quite similarly to traditional branding, another argumentative problem is how live brand experiences can be applied. Since a city is different from a physical product, branding its experiences appears to be more abstract. If cities have not yet obtained their defined "brand experiences", it is unclear for them what positive experiences can be emphasized. In addition, many marketing companies for cities might question via which channel to implement live brand experiences: would tourists have to physically be present in the place, or would there exist online channels to explore?

These two problems form up the main research problem for this thesis: to examine a city with a campaign that can be acknowledged as a live brand experience platform enabling two-way communication. Consequently, this thesis wants to describe benefits of two-way communication and brand experiences in city branding practices, including physical interactions and remote interactions through social media channels. The blogging phenomenon is included as another theme for this thesis, as it represents such a remote interaction. The blog is said to be two-way communication tool itself. Its characteristics of subjectivity and personal connection also allow a blog potentially to capture complex messages as brand personalities for tourists. This thesis will examine on which levels experience with blogging can be listed as consumer experience with city brands.

Due to logistic limitations, the initial selection of a city for this thesis's author was Helsinki. In the process of researching information, the thesis's author found a campaign named #HelsinkiSecret Residence —attracting international bloggers worldwide to come to Helsinki, to experience life of a local and to produce blog content about the trip. Thesis's author realized that there was much potential resemblance of this campaign to her research aim; hence, the campaign was

chosen as a case study for research. Further justification for the choice of Helsinki and the campaign will be provided later.

Based on the research problem, the author composed two relevant research questions:

- What are the ways in which foreign tourists experience the Helsinki Brand currently?

- How has blogging affected their decisions in travelling?

3   Helsinki City

Compliant with the theoretical background about city branding, it appears that every city should have an organization responsible for its marketing and branding. Reviewing academic resources, some authors address such an organization as a Destination Management Organisation (DMO). For the city of Helsinki, Helsinki Marketing Ltd. works with a purpose similar to a DMO, being responsible for the "operative city marketing operations, including tourism, congress, event and business marketing and the application procedures of major events and congresses, as well as tourist information services and some of the city's event productions" (Heinrichs 2014 , 6). The website Visithelsinki.fi is also run by the company. Visit Helsinki, then, presents to tourists 12 reasons why it is worth travelling to the city.

1. **Friendly locals**

With a range of different events such as Restaurant Day, flea markets, Sauna Day, We Love Helsinki; Helsinki is described as alive throughout the year, sending out the friendly and welcoming vibes to wishful visitors. Even greater emphasis is placed on summertime in Helsinki, conveying the lively spirit of the people crowding in the streets and parks. Local citizens have good English skills and are willing to assist visitors. The city is also international, having a certain number of international students attending different Universities.

2. **Good connections**

There exist a variety of choices to travel to Helsinki, by plane, ferry services from and to Estonia, Sweden and Germany. The airport is ranked among the best in the world and it takes approximately 25 minutes from there to the city center; by taxi, Finnair City Bus or bus 615 of the Helsinki Region Transport. If the tourist wishes to travel around Finland, the trains from Helsinki is able to reach almost every other part of the country, as well as St. Pethersburg and Moscow in Russia. Besides the train, buses are another good choice. Helsinki, according to one expression, is a "pocket city" (Chinavia project), since tourists can reach most places in the center area by foot, or using rented bikes.

3. **Main attractions**

Tuomiokirrko is the popular white cathedral – identified as the symbol of Helsinki – located above *Senate Square*. These two attractions are filled with tourists, and especially during summertime it is hard not to notice groups of foreigners lining up on the stairs to take pictures. Situated near to Senate Square are *Market Square* and *Esplanade Park*, "where locals and visitors alike can catch their breath amidst the hustle and bustle of the city center". *Tori Quarter*, lies between Senate Square and Market Square, with abundant coffee shops and restaurants that exude a cozy atmosphere through their own unique boutique design. South of Esplanade Park is the *Design District*. It is no surprise that one of the main attractions is the district itself, owing to the fact that Design is among the elements building up Helsinki Brand. Helsinki brand will be researched and elaborated later through the case study. Other attractions listed are *Uspenski Cathedral* (the largest Orthodox church edifice in Western Europe), *Temppeliaukio Church*, *Olympic Stadium* (an iconic example of Functionalist architecture that was completed in 1938 and eventually hosted the games in 1952), *Ateneum Art Musem*, the Museum of Contemporary Art *Kiasma*, National *Museum of Finland, Natural History Museum, Open-Air Museum* at Seurasaari that "reveals how Finns lived over the centuries", *Helsinki Zoo, Linnanmaki Amusement Park & Sea Life*. Visit Helsinki webiste presents short descriptions of each attraction. Moreover, *Suomenlinna* is also included because of its popularity among the international and domestic tourists. The attraction is "one of the world's biggest sea fortresses".

4. **Design**

As mentioned in the above point, design is "a factor deep-rooted in the urban lifestyle of Helsinki". It has become even stronger element since Helsinki won the title World Design Capital in 2012. The website gives a list of most famous names in Finnish design as *Alvar Aalto, Marimekko, Nokia, Rovio Mobile, Iitala and Arabia*.

Design District has been stated as one main attraction, it is not limited to only the district that immerses this element of the city brand. There are events such as

Late Night Shopping, permanent exhibitions at the Design Museum and the area *Abattoir* in Kalastama district – "bringing together design and cuisine in delightful new ways".

5. **Architecture**

Helsinki possesses many buildings and attractions reflecting diverse styles of architecture. "Overall the city's architecture is typified by Nordic minimalism and refinement."

6. **Maritime appeal**

The city is surrounded by sea on three sides. It has nearly 100 kilometers of shoreline and around 300 islands. This indicates Helsinki's brand cannot lack maritime appeal. Tourists can take different ferry services to tour islands such as *Korkessaari, Pihlajasaari, Uunisaari* or *Porvoo*.

7. **Nature**

Finland has always been popular for its beautiful nature. In Chinavia research, one element that makes the Helsinki Brand appealing to the eyes of Chinese tourists is "cleanliness and harmony". Such a statement reinforces a special characteristic of the city "as one of the greenest metropolies and cleanest capital cities in the world".

8. **Events**

Fulfilling its promise of being a year-round destination, Helsinki always has events underway: Lux Helsinki in January, Shorvetide holidays in February, ice hockey season, Via Crucis–Staes of the Cross when the spring comes, Vappu in May, Helsinki Week, Helsinki Day on 12th June, and so forth. There are more events on the list; emphasizing for tourists that there is almost always a reason to travel to the city.

9. **Between East and West**

Helsinki presents a combination of East and West, which "are visible in the city's architecture, culinary culture, events, traditions and other elements".

10. **Food culture**

Food culture is another unique aspect of Helsinki. Food is among the motives for tourists to travel to a destination, leading to the birth of a food tourism definition – "travelling to a geographical place for the purpose of tasting food in its place of origin" (Heinrichs 2014, 8). This thesis does not focus on food tourism as a concept, but recognizes the important highlight of food tourism and its impact on Helsinki Brand. The thesis study of Heinrichs has provided a good base of how the city has been adapting food culture to its brand, complying with its marketing theme: Hel Yeah. "Hel Yeah has three sub-themes that stand for Helsinki's urban culture: design, food and nature (maritime location)" (ibid.) Her study is also a result of producing the food map for tourists travelling to Helsinki, acting as a "strategic decision of Helsinki Marketing Ltd".

11. **Shopping**

In every capital city, shopping always seems to be among the reasons for visiting, owing to the desire of the tourists to purchase something local to that destination. In Helsinki, a tourist can visit Finnish design shops such as Marimeko, Vuokko Nurmesniemi's clothing creation, Hyötyläinen at the Miun Shop, Paola Suhonen of IvanaHelsinki fame and Tiia Vanhatapio. If tourist does not demand a luxury iconic design brand, they can also visit available shopping centers in the city as Kamppi. Foorum and "the most legendary" department store—Stockmann for "a comprehensive range of goods from books and clothing to interior design, electronics and cosmetics".

12. **Year-round destination**

Helsinki is not a city with famous beaches, sea and sun; nevertheless, the city is attractive in its own way. In summertime, tourists can visit terraces, parks, and seaside boulevards and nearby islands. In Summer, when the light at night last longer, tourists may experience what is called a "white night" with many

entertainments continuing into the early morning. In wintertime, the day is shorter; however, the city still offers outdoor winter activities such as skating, cross-country skiing, something new for people with a tropical background.

History of Helsinki dates back to the year 1550, when Sweden's Kind Gustavus Vasa founded Helsinki on the mouth of Vantaanjoki River. The center of Helsinki was moved to its current location in the 1600s. Suomenlinna Maritime Fortress was built in 1748, in order for Sweden to cope with the growing threat from Russia. In 1809, Russia conquered Finland. In 1917, Finland became independent with its capital Helsinki. The city hosted the Summer Olympics in 1952, resulting in an international reputation for Helsinki as an efficient and friendly host city. In 2000, Helsinki was recognized as one of leading European Cities of Culture in 2000, and then was declared the World Design Capital in 2012, and received the City of Design status in 2014, as part of the Creative Cities Network established by UNESCO. (Visit Helsinki website [History of Helsinki in a nutshell].)

4   #HelsinkiSecret Residence Case Study

The idea of #HelsinkiSecret Residence project is to invite popular bloggers around the world to apply for a chance to live in Helsinki for 3–6 days in a local apartment in the central area. This evoked the worldwide bloggers' interest because it gives an authentic side to bloggers as tourists, experiencing daily local lives. Heinrichs (2016) says their reason for putting the term "residence" into the name is to have the participants somewhere being between tourists and locals. The Aallonkoti Apartment also participated as an accommodation partner. The organizers wished to deliver a home-liked atmosphere in the bloggers accommodations .

Aallonkoti is placed in a new area, next to the Toolonlahti bay. It is two years old. There is a park being built around this area and new city library. The area is not far away from the train station but there is a building between the train tracks and the apartment building, hence, people inside cannot hear the noise of the trains. Aallonkoti is a functioning apartment hotel with 18 furnished apartments for rent. Fitting to the purpose of this campaign, Aallonkoti, with Visit Helsinki,

cooperated with Finlayson, NaturVention, Artek & Marimekko to decorate the apartments for bloggers in the most sensible Finnish way. Finnish brands are implemented well at different spots inside the apartments through interior design. Moreover, the bloggers were given a surprise: they did not have many prior pictures of the place and the bloggers were not limited to only one apartment. (ibid.)

Figure 1. Aallonkoti (retrieved from bontraveler blog)

The Heklsinki Secret campaign is an international version of helsinkisecret.fi—a project by Radio Helsinki and visit Helsinki from last year. This project was based on locals living in the city, and dessimenated on a domestic scale. On the website helsinkisecret.fi, many locals revealed what their most favorite part of the city
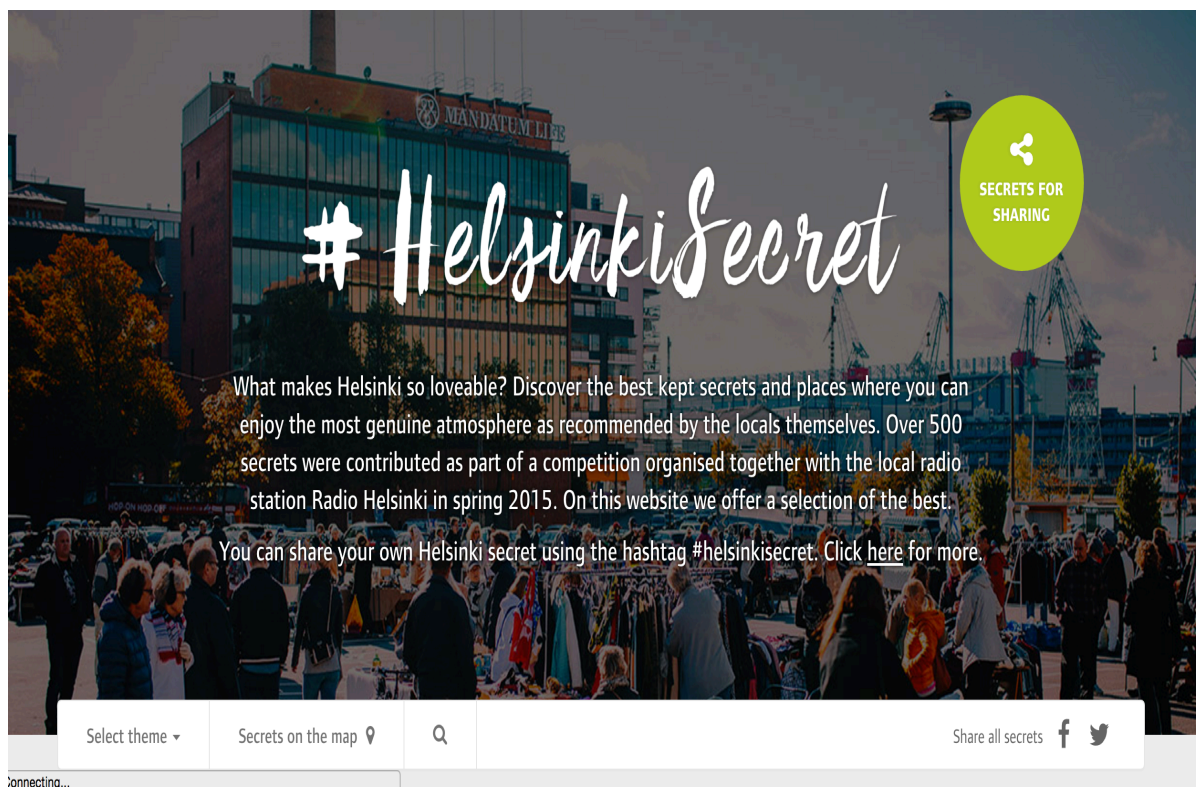
Figure 2. helsinkisecret.fi website

are, and what they thought the secret of Helsinki would be. The project was inspiring, showcasing the locals' pride in their city, which then became a characteristic of the Helsinki brand.

Heinrichs (2016, interview) gladly points out that these 500 answers from the locals, match with the HEL Yeah! lifestyle theme which visit Helsinki has been promoting, despite the fact that they did not know beforehand about these themes.

The bloggers are allowed to choose between staying for 3 nights or 6 nights, and Visit Helsinki usually picks the residents 3 months prior to the selected months. There are no fixed activity schedules for them. #HelsinkiSecret Residence campaign works based on the participants' freedom. They do their own research

about where to visit and what to do before arriving. When they arrive, they meet with the main organizer, and are given Helsinki Survival Kit, containing the local food products, customized accessories based on the themes of the months during which they will stay in Helsinki. For instance, if they come in January and February, which have the *Winter in Finland* theme, a partner company, Makia

provides them with jacket, or handknit cap. In the bag, there are also the tips and recommendations from Visit Helsinki as an organizer, including transportation passes, discount vouchers for restaurants and for many other partners who like to be a part of the campaign. Heinrichs emphasized she herself arranges these

Figure 3. Example of one week survival kit including partners (helsinkisecret.com website)

Helsinki Survival Kits, every week, based on the needs of the bloggers.

There is also a mobile application specifically made for this campaign, called CreateTrips. It was designed by local startup company. Using the mobile application, bloggers are given their personal travelbook under the name of the campaign. In this travel book, there is a description of the campaign, and it includes guides and tips for various activities: restaurants, nature activities, nightlife, shopping (design), sights and attractions. In each category, there are recommended activities and places to visit, with few sentences from a local person giving an initial recommendation, as well as their contact information and social media profile. This application is forwarded to the bloggers, one week

prior to their arrival so that they can get to know Helsinki at a surface level. In addition, the application acts as a suitable platform for bloggers to interact with local people.
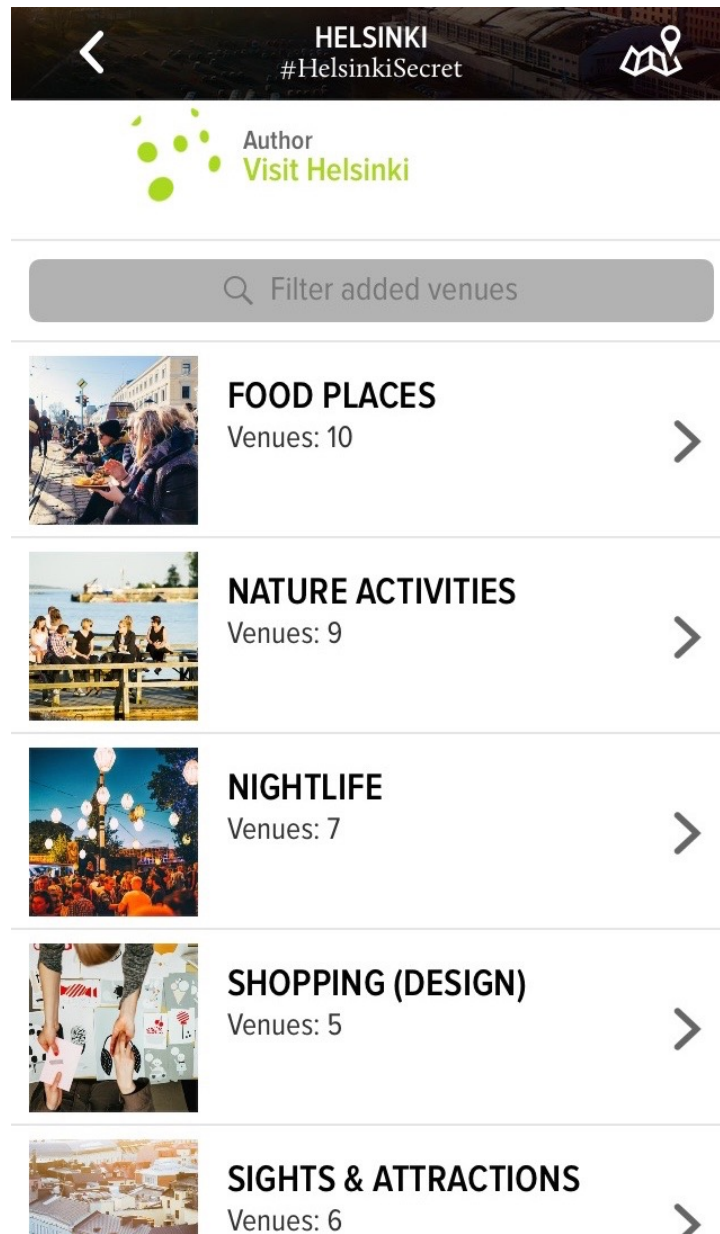
Figure 4. CreateTrip mobile application

The campaign is still evolving, and receiving feedback every week from the participants. The organizers are creating a platform in which they can

simultaneously work and allow changes to develop. On the other hand, this is also a platform where Visit Helsinki "enables conversations" between bloggers and locals, between tourists and the city, and between bloggers and their own network.

5 Research Design

5.1 Methodology

According to Yin (2014, 28), research design is a "logical plan for getting from here to there, where *here* may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered, and *there* is a set of conclusions (answers) about these questions". This plan is also needed to keep the researcher from being lost about "what questions to study, what data are relevant, what data to collect, and how to analyze the result"(Plliber, Schwab & Samsloss 1980). The researcher needs a research design to firm up a logical model of the whole process; it should help researcher avoid choosing the wrong approach avoid providing the wrong data to the original research questions.

There are three research methodologies: quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods research. In addition, development research, action research and case research approaches can also be applied. (Kay-Jones 2015.) Before this thesis author describes her research approach along with why she chose it, it is somewhat useful to describe briefly, as well, other scientific approaches. Davis (2007, 9) says that the purpose of quantitative research is to discover answers to questions through the application of scientific procedures. In another description, Kananen (2013, 33) emphasizes that the researcher choosing a quantitative approach is required to have a prior understanding of the phenomenon as well as its external and internal influencing factors. This research follows a philosophical science trend called positivism—"which encourages us to chart the relation between variables which are operationally defined by the researcher" (Silverman 2005, 9). Its aim lies on objective observation and measurements by means of quantitative variables (Kay-Jones

2015). This research method leans towards numerical data and statistical analytic procedures.

On the other hand, qualitative researchers tend to look for details through people's understandings and interactions. Silverman (2005, 9) believes this is because qualitative research designs use a non-positivist model of reality. Kananen (2013, 31) provides following situations, in which qualitative research is best suited:

- *There is no information, theories, research on a phenomenon.*

- *It is desired to get a more in-depth view on a phenomenon*

- *Creation of new theories and hypotheses.*

- *Use of triangulation or so-called mixed research strategy.*

- *It is desired to get a thick description of a phenomenon.*

Unlike quantitative research, which aims to develop a generalization, qualitative design's purpose is to describe and understand a phenomenon.

> *It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. (Davis 2007, 10.)*

However, Brett Davis, and other authors, also point out that the difference between these two methods is quite thin. Some scholars believe that the choice of methodology is dependent on the nature of knowledge researcher is hoping to make, uncover or construct. (ibid.) Each methodology has its own strengths. Qualitative design is perceived as more "human and perhaps, more in tune with contemporary social thinking". In addition, researchers might find the temptation of following this methodology if they feel uncomfortable with numbers and calculations. On the contrast, there are some researchers who are tempted with choosing quantitative design for "its findings have a certain "definiteness, which make it possible for conclusions to be drawn to a specifiable level of probability". (ibid., 11.)

Mixed method is a third option allowing a researcher to combine both above methods, suitable when answers sought, cannot be assured with one particular method. This is not to say, one particular method cannot provide suitable answers to a researcher, but as each method has its own limitations, they are capable of compensating each other. Campbell and Fiske, in 1959, were pioneer researchers who applied "multiple methods to study validity of psychological traits". Examples of mixed method could be a combination of interviews of qualitative methods and survey of quantitative methods. (Creswell 2003, 15.)

This thesis author wishes to gain an in-depth description about the relationship of blogging phenomena to city's brand, rather than being able to reach a large number of respondents. Moreover, quantitative method requires the author to have good understanding of theories about the phenomenon, to form a proper calculation for measuring. Even though quantitative research design allows her to obtain results from larger sample, the author finds her limited knowledge about the phenomenon's theory and wishes to gain deeper understanding into tourist's preferences, perceptions and attitudes. These justify her choice of qualitative research design. There exist different types of methods within qualitative research design; nevertheless, this thesis is based on *case study research*.

As stated in earlier section about research problems and questions, #HelsinkiSecret Residence proves to be a contemporary, relevant and unique case study. Its described characteristics matches with theory framework; hence, the author believes that by providing an in-depth description of this one case study, the larger phenomenon can be understood. The types of case study depend on the types of research questions. According to Silverman (2005, 127), Stake (2000, 437–438) has identified three different types of case studies:

- The intrinsic case study, in which theories or generalization beyond the single case should be built.

- The instrumental case study, "in which a case is examined mainly to provide insight into an issue or to revise a generalization".

- The collective case studies, with a number of cases are chosen to be researched, investigating into some general phenomenon.

In accordance with the above categorization, this author finds the instrumental case study to be the most suitable option. The thesis aims to describe insights drawn from the #HelsinkiSecret Residence case study as a critical case for matching patterns with theory findings—which was developed during the literature review phase and secondary data collection process. The author does not attempt to develop any new theories but to filter the data into the range of topics. Then, she would collect primary data about this current case study, which should be able to provide a rather "complete" description of what she wants to study through the thesis. In this sense, theories provided here act as "a framework for critically understanding phenomena" (Silverman 2005, 127).

Case study, however, has its limitations and concerns. Firstly, people tend to believe "case study research is the exploratory phase for using other social science methods (i.e., to collect some data to determine whether a topic is indeed worthy of further investigation)". Secondly, case study can cause a lack of trust in the credibility of a researcher's procedures, for not being able to generalize further. (Yin 2014, 6.)

5.2 Research Methods

Having decided on the case study research as the main methodology of a thesis, the next important step of a research design is determining the specific methods of data collection and analysis (Creswell 2003, 17).

According to Yin (2014, 50), a single case study can have either a holistic or an embedded design, depending on the number of the available units for analysis and the characteristic of information the researcher wants to collect at the end:

> *The holistic design is advantageous when no logical subunits can be identified or when the relevant theory underlying the case study is itself of a holistic nature.*

However, the design has its strength, it is also easy to be shifted while the case is examined further, without the researcher's awareness (ibid., 52). Then, it is suggested that the researcher prepare a set of subunits, leading to the strength of an embedded design. As applied to the context of this thesis, the research questions aim at points of view from three subunits: organizers who encode the planned messages, bloggers who participate and act as ambassadors and the potential blog readers as receiver. In addition, as the case is new and with the campaign going on—which does not give out much online public information, it is highly possible that more subunits will be involved and should be included in the description of the implementation of the data collection process. Therefore, the author considers the embedded design as most suitable. Illustrated in the communication model below (which was cited from Smilansky (2009) and included as appendix 1), the orange circles represent the subunits that this thesis will mainly focus on.

Yin (2014, 105) also emphasizes that one of the main principles for conducting a case study research is to use multiple sources of evidences, the triangulation of data. There are six sources suggested for collecting case study evidence:

- Documentation (for example: letters, memoranda, emails, personal document as calendars, diaries; news clippings or other articles appearing in the mass media; popular cultural documents: TV, films, radios, photos). (ibid., 106.)

- Archival records (public use files, statistical data, service records, organizational records or survey data produced by others). (ibid., 109.)

- Interviews: there are two main types (ibid., 111):

  o Prolonged case study interviews that would likely take over 2 or more hours, having the interviewee as main "informant" rather than a participant. In this case, the interviewer is able to ask about facts as well as opinions, the respondents' insights about the case.

- o Shorter case study interviews that lasts one hour or less. Their purpose is to "corroborate certain findings which you already think have been established".

- Direct observation, in occasions where the researcher is invited or given chances to have a field visit.

- Participant observation, in occasions where the researcher is also a participant, no longer just a passive observer.

- Physical artifacts (a tool or an instrument, a work of art, physical evidence).

When the author of this thesis chose #HelsinkiSecret Residence as the main case study, the time constraint did not allow the author become a participant observer. The direct observation source cannot be fulfilled either; because the organizer of this campaign, Visit Helsinki, is not the commissioner of the thesis due to their limited time and resources. Therefore, the main sources of data collection for this case are documentation, archival records and interviews. These sources should provide the primary data, as raw-data as they are not widely available through academic sources. In addition, this thesis also applies secondary data from articles, other relevant thesis works and books for the theory based chapter.

It is also worth noting as well that the interview method appears as quite a necessary option, especially when the author cannot observe behavior, feelings of parties involved in the case or how they interpret the world around them. Moreover, the wishes to date back to initial phase, as where the idea comes from, what past events might have affected the current decisions which she cannot obtain access to. (Merriam 2009, 88.) There are three ways to conduct interviews:

- **Unstructured interview**: allowing interviewer to gain in-depth information from interviewee through the act of sharing, and not limited by a prior set of questions.

- **Semi-structured interview**: interviewer and interviewee can agree beforehand certain themes to cover. The interviewer would likely develop certain prior set of questions too; however, they only act as a guide for interviewer to follow through.

- **Structured interview**: Interviewer is usually required to send list of questions to interviewee and the interview should be obliged to follow the list.

As interviewing is only one of main methods for qualitative methodology, this thesis's research is a study of small sample and parties from the case recruited for interviews follows a strategic sampling rule (ibid., 144): "aiming quite explicitly to select people, objects, situations or experiences that will help you explore question, develop theoretical ideas and give you the opportunity to test before reaching a conclusion".

Yin (2014) also wrote down five analytic techniques which are recommended to apply for case-study methods: pattern matching, explanation building, time–series analysis, logic models and cross–case synthesis. In this particular context, cross-case synthesis cannot be applied since it was highly recommended for multiple cases study only. Explanation building and time–series analysis are described as two other extension forms of pattern matching.

> *Data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining evidence, to produce empirically based findings. (Yin 2014, 132.)*

Explanation building is not suitable as it is mainly meant for explanatory case study, with the aims to reflect some theoretically significant propositions and reasons why such events/phenomenona/case studies happen.

Time–series analysis focuses more on time period surrounded a particular phenomenon that lies at the main goal for case study. For example:

> *the case study then presents effect on crime reduction understandable and plausible; time series of the annual rates of specific types of crime over a 7-year period. During this period, crime initially rose for a couple of years and then declined for the remainder of the period. The case study explains how*

> *the timing of the relevant actions by the police department matched the changes in the crime trends. (Yin 2014, 151.)*

However, for the fact that #HelsinkiSecret Residence project is still an on-going busy project, makes it rather difficult to access to information, this method should be eliminated.

Lastly, logic model technique appears to be at higher level of complexity and difficulty. This technique is valuable, under the intention of explaining how an intervention eventually affects or produce ultimate outcomes. It requires presenting the flow of boxes conveying the mattered events; so that the transitions between those boxes can be seen and emphasized. (Yin 2014, 156.) For applying this technique, the author would be required to invest more time and effort in connecting the small events leading to final outcomes.

She, then, considers *pattern matching* to be the most appropriate. Her main aim is to studying the impact of #HelsinkiResidence Secret project onto Helsinki city brand. Based on descriptive theories she collected, she drafted up the certain patterns of such impact.

- Blog is a source of information-seeking for tourists.

- Description of Helsinki through blogs provides tourists a prior perception of city Helsinki.

- The blog's content motivates tourists to travel to certain city.

- The blog's content motivates tourists to spread the word about Helsinki city.

- Having a platform for tourists to immerse themselves into the city is essential for city branding.

- Involvement of local citizens into creating and delivering brand of a city is important.

These patterns represent different dependent variables, and the author would assess them during the interviews with key informants and focus groups with the target audience. On the other hand, rival independent variables can also be raised up at the end of data collection process, which should be noted for their role in examining validity of this thesis. (Yin 2014, 146.)

6 Branding, Place Branding and City Branding

6.1 Brand as a concept

Within the marketing industry, the term "brand" has become such a common term that people rarely question what a "brand" actually means (Mclaughlin 2011). When we are exposed to a thing, an event, term or even phenomenon with an appropriate amout of time, the thing become normalised and behaves as an obvious statement. Mclaughlin (2011) also states that to him, "brand" is one of those words widely used but unevently understood. Its first definition resembles contemporary meaning of the word "trademark" —a name given to a product or service from a specific source:

> *Before Coca-Cola could get a customer to reach for a Coke, it needed to be sure the customer could distinguish a Coke from all the other fizzy caramel – colored beverages out there.*

Today, brand as a concept represent the connection between customers and companies; their products and services. A brand then is a promise from a company to a customer. On a higher level, Roberts (2014) believes such a connection is driven by emotion by claiming "heart rules the head in decision-making". As the definition is still evolving with time, and rather than providing particular definition for such an abstract word, it might be more appropriate to describe briefly here branding development from the beginning to the present; so that the reader can grasp the changing nature and its future trends.

According to Farquhar (1995, 10), current branding theory has been built on the examination and collection of new phenomenona, into the market industry due in part to the development of commercials within the mass media. Branding was not only important for companies to distinguish themselves in the market, but

also to consumers. Nevertheless, Hampf and Lindber-Repo (2011, 2) says that attention to the importance of branding was generally neglected until Marquardt et al. (1965) conducted an investigation, revealing that a well-known brand *was* demanded by consumers by up to 75% of respondants.

> *Beginning in the later part of the 20th century, marketers began to grasp there was more to the perception of distinctive products and servcies than their names—something David Ogilvy described as [the intangible sum of a product's attributes]. Marketers realized that they could create a specific perception in customers' minds concerning the qualities and attributes of each non-generic product or service. They took the calling this perception the brand. (McLaughlin 2011.)*

Since that point of realisation, brand as a concept, has become not only just a name for a product. Kapferer (1997, 169) defined a brand as "the product source, its meaning, and its direction". Using the word brand, people relate it to other aspects as well: their unique characteristics, the special benefits customers choose that product among other choices and their own feeling attached with the brand—an unconscious aspect to consumer.

A counterpoint to this realisation of ever important branding prominence was the suspicion by companies that the higher the importance for companies to understand these theories, the more scepticism of whether it was worth to invest in branding. According to Hampf and Lindber-Repo (2011, 6), it seemed companies needed a quantifiable measure to branding; and this led to another phenomenon to be explored by Cunningham (1956), brand loyalty —retaining the loyal customer in order to generate profits for the company from this type of customer. Roberts (2014) says the original idea behind this concept is placing focus on repeating customers more than attempting to acquire new ones. Even though such an idea has not yet lost its relevant meaning, even though the reality of business has become more challenging:

> *New research from behavioral marketing company Silverpop, an IBM company, reveals that while people are extremely loyal to the brands they love the most and will seek out products made from their favorite manufacturers over competing options, consumers only have five 'Best Friend Brand' companies from which they will repeatedly open emails and buy products (Silverpop 2014).*

This illustrates the concept of brand loyalty by expanding the broader concept of loyalty as repeat buying, to one of a brand loyalty through active favouritism. Brand loyalers will drive word-of-mouth (WOM), develop trust and establish emotional connection. Despite possible changes in how businesses should perceive brand loyalty, its importance has never and should ever be decreased. (Roberts 2014.) A tentative reasoning behind this is one of the core points of this thesis work: that branding is all pervasive in this mordern knowledge economy, because of high affection generated by brand loyalty.

According to Hampf and Lindberg-Repo (2011, 5–8), at the same time when the brand loyalty concept was first introduced, Smith (1956) also addressed the concept of segmentation, claiming to be necessary due to the increasing diversity of markets and consumer's profiles.

Segmentation allows business to have different variables to reach different types of markets and customers. This can be seen as a first step away from mass marketing concept, in which company obtains only one strategy for the whole market, to a second step. This second step was led by Lazer (1960) when he introduced the lifestyle marketing concept—applying lifestyle analysis logic—proving that there were more factors for a marketer to consider than simply what products a customer was consuming. Lifestyle marketing goes further in examining the customer's interest, their daily activity, opinions and any other possible elements which shape their consuming behavior. The third sequential step from this was positioning. After acknowledging the need of having different strategies for different market segments and examining each segment with lifestyle analysis logic, business's next goal was to put the product into the mind of right customer. Positioning strategy does not aim at changing core product but that product's surrounding factors, for instance, a product's name, a product's package or its price, but placing or positioning the product in the right area in the right mind. (Hampf, & Lindberg-Repo 2011, 5–8.)

As a consequence of lifestyle marketing developments, Hampf and Lindberg-Repo (2011, 4) says in 1958, Martineau provides theoretical foundation of a brand personality concept. It addresses as consequential act from lifestyle

marketing because this concept, the effort of company to build & deliver desired personality to consumers, which is ultimately based on lifestyle analysis logic. According to Martineau, brand personality is the reason why customer choose a certain product brand over another even if both have equal attributes. it builds upon loyalty, lifestyle and positioning to give a consise personality to a brand that is at once meaningful and understandable.

Brand personality views brand as something normal human beings do, and is more rooted in Anglo-American presumptions of the culture of individualism (De Mooji 2004, 97). This point is highlighted as a consumer from an individualistic culture values his unique identity standing out from the crowd. Unlike collective cultures where consumer might follow the lead of of bigger groups, consumers from individualistc cultures wish to express their independence by buying an unknown or a less well-known brand, as an example of the impact of cultural background. (ibid., 98–100.) Such an affection from cultural background is one of the elements to be examined during data collection and analysis of this thesis.

The core for building up brand personality is through brand image, which is believed to reflect the psycholigical and social needs of the consumers. These needs are implicit and mostly subconscious to even the consumers. Customers tend to choose the brands with images reflecting their own personality or desired ones (Hampf & Linberg-Repo 2011, 4).

Another concept connected to brand personality and brand image is brand identity. Brand identity helps the companies to answer the question: "Who am I?" through the names and the moments entering into the markets. It usually includes a logo and a trademark. Brand identity should give guidelines to what parts of the brands are to be kept the same and what elements could be modified, allowing brands to evolve in time. (ibid., 12.). It is worth noting that brand personality is not the only factor affecting brand identity, but how the companies position themselves towards the segmented customers, also matters.

In 1980, brand equity concept developed so that companies could measure the value of a brand. There are three view points suggested (ibid., 6–11):

- Financial-based: Simon and Sullivan (1993) were among the first authors presenting the mathematical calculation for brand equity. By doing this, they wanted to imply that brand equity could become an asset of the firm.
- Consumer-based: when brand equity is highly connected with brand personality as it measure consumer's reaction to a brand (Keller 1993; Shocker, Srivastava & Ruebert 1994).
- Combination of two above, as a result of global brand equity model from Molaniemi & Shahrakhi (1998).

During this period (1970s–1980s), one particular phenomenon appeared: Relationship Marketing; which then was expanded to the branding area as Relational Branding in 1990s—until today. Both of the concepts are consequences of the market becoming more customer-centric and relates in part to the individualistic culture mentioned previously. Relationships with customers and other partners should be more taken into account to maintain and enhance future profit, which connects with brand loyalty. (Hampf & Linberg-Repo 2011, 6.) Its existence also highlights the emergence of the concept of customer relationship management (CRM)—a business strategy designed to improve human interactions in a business environment and focus on a product or service that satifies customers (Greenberg 2010, 414). CRM strategy depends on customer transactions, marking initial changes of customer-focused business. As a matter of fact, Greenberg's work is mainly about the new and necessary transformation of CRM to CRM 2.0 (or social CRM). Differences between CRM and CRM 2.0 will be included as appendix 8 to this thesis, for its relevant to target audiences of thesis's case study.

The evolution of branding has followed a shifting perspective of its connection to consumers and its wider role in companies, from branding to loyalty to personality and ultimately in how to manage relationships between customers and companies (their products and services) that led to contemporary important characteristic of the term brand. In conclusion, the chapter has defined the main terms involved with branding and its revolution as a concept, such statements by Elliot & Wattanasuwan (1998) highlight this trend, namely: "brands are not only considered as valuable assets of a company, but furthermore, as some experts

believe in post-modern consumer culture, brands plan a vital role in the construction of consumer identity".

With the broad and particular terms now defined, the thesis will expand on new and contemporary concepts relating to branding. once such contemporary development is the movement of branding into the domain of place branding.

1950–1970: Segmentation, Smith (1956). Brand loyalty, Cunningham (1956). Brand personality, Martineau (1958). Lifestyle marketing, Lazer (1960).

1970–1980: Positioning, Relationship Marketing and Brand Equity.

1990–Today: Relational Branding. CRM & CRM 2.0. Social consumer.
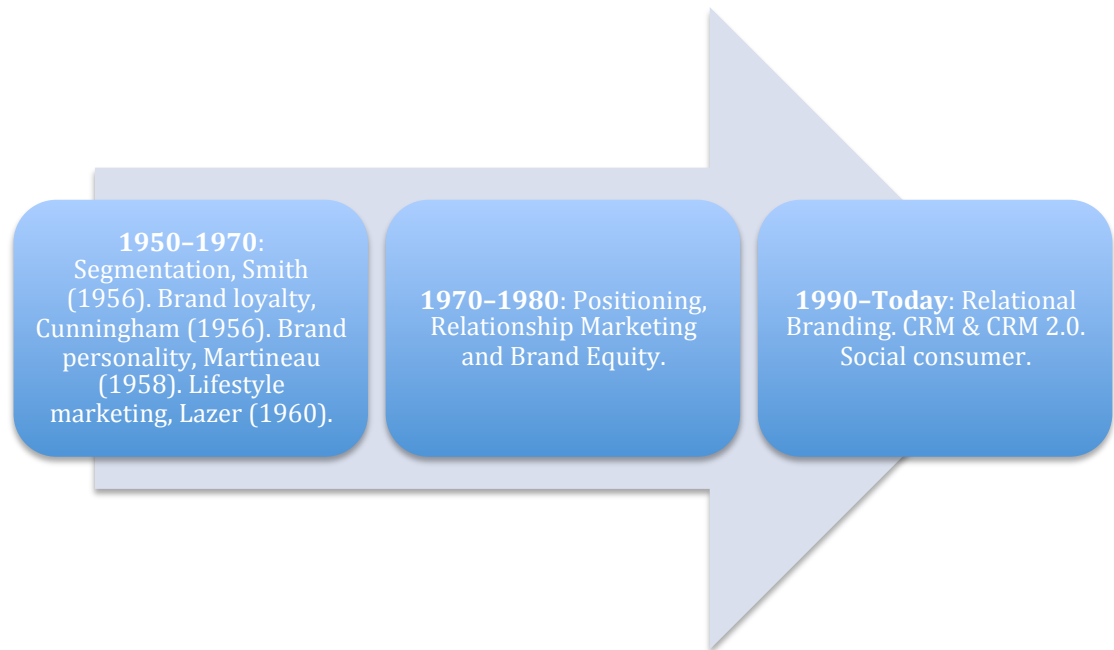
6.2 Place Branding

Complying with the previous chapter of this thesis discussing the evolution of branding, Kaplan, Yurt, Guneri & Kurtulus (2008, 1286) says that company has slowly acknowledged branding as potential tool to their advantage in achieving competitive strength in the market.

> *Enhanced awareness of brand management as a major instrument for differentiation gives rise to academic interest in the implementation of branding in products that lie outside the previous focus of brand literature (Kaplan et al. 2008, 1287).*

According to Kaplan and colleagues, Ashworth and Voogd (1994) state that due to developments in the concept such as non-profit organization marketing, social marketing, and image marketing, the product definition has expanded. And Hankinson (2004) points out such expansion results in places, persons and ideologies to be branded as well, besides goods and services. Those studies are not minor nor new. Papadopoulos and Heslop (2002) note a total of 766 publications on place marketing and branding during the time period 1952–2001, which indicates that place branding stands among other major fields of study today.

Braun and Zenker (2010, 3) attempt to define place branding as:

> *network associations in the consumers' minds, based on visual, verbal and behavioural expression of a place, with its involved through the aims, communications, values and the general culture of the place's stakeholders and overall place design.*

Place branding is a wide context and the word "place" does not necessarily refer to any particular objects. The branding of a place covers all the aspects of the place, including inward investment and outward attraction. "Nation branding is simply place branding where the place is a nation. The same goes for City Branding" (Place Branding FAQ.)

Among a range of their presented relevant case studies, Morgan, Pritchard and Pride (2010, 26) emphasizes the highlighted point of Anholt (2003), in which Anholt believes that a place brand is no different than a manufacturer's brand; because it evokes values and triggers emotion in a consumer's mind about particular values of any products that comes from that place. A traditional product branding process consists of three elements: brand identity, brand positioning and brand image and have parallels to the branding definition described in the previous chapter. These elements describe the core of a producer's branding process: from the starting point of how a company envisions the brand to be perceived, through the part where it starts communicating to a target group with its competitive advantage, then eventually, how the brand is seen by the consumer.

A more specifically comparable description to product branding, and a place is:

> *A place needs to be differentiated through unique brand identity if it wants to be first, recognized as existing, second, perceived in the minds of place customers as possessing qualities superior to those of competitors, and third, consumed in a manner commensuaret with the objectives of the place (Ashworth 2005, 510).*

On the other hand, according to Kaplan and colleagues (2008, 1289), Fan (2006) points out that place branding does appear to be more complicated, since it involves many other factors such as geography, tourist attractions, natural resources, local products, residents' characteristics, instituitions, and insfrastructure. The ownership of the place brand is unclear as well, because multiple stakeholders are involved. Nevertheless, several authors have noted resemblance patterns of characteristics between place branding and corporate branding. Einwiller & Will (2002, 101) defined corporate branding as:

> *a systematically planned and implemented process of creating and maintaining favorable images and consequently a favorable reputation of the company as a whole by sending signals to all stakeholders.*

The table below summarises the resemblance between the two concepts, in accordance with Kaplan and colleagues' (2008, 1290) summary work, indicating a deeper understanding of place branding:

Corporate Branding	Place Branding
The image is based on values, behaviours and characteristics of the organization's employees and management (Schultz and De Chernatony 2002; Hulberg 2006; Keller & Richey 2006).	The perception of place branding may rely on the values and attitudes of the citizens (Kaplan et al. 2008, 1290).
Emphasizing internal marketing activities (Vallaster 2004; Punjaisri & Wilson 2007).	Members of the branded place; including citizen, governments; should be involved in the brand building process as well as communicating brand values to other stakeholders at multiple contact points and in

	variety of ways (Lomax & Mador 2006; Hullberg 2006) .
A corporation can be rebranded (Girard 1999).	Olins (1999) presented his argument in [Trading Identities—Why Companies and Countries are Talking on Each Others' Roles], proving that a place can also be rebranded.

It is important to present these resemblances here because corporate branding invariably leads to a power shift from a Produce/consumer relationship to a "Prosumer" view (Pine & Gilmore 2004), which is an important indicator to establishing the concept of Experiential Marketing and Live Brand Experiences. Concepts which will be further elaborated later.

Since there are neither accurate measurements of the above similarities nor definitive agreements for shifted meanings of product branding to place branding; there are at least three different types of place branding which—while often confused in the literature—can be categorized as follows (Kavaratzis & Ashworth 2005, 511–512). They are listed as:

- Geographical nomenclature, in which "a physical product is named for a geographical location, for example, the sparkling wine 'Champagne' ". This type cannot be seen as a place branding practice since linking a place's attributes to a product is not accepted as a conscious attempt.
- Product-place co-branding, "the attempt to market a physical product by associating it with a place that is assumed to have attributes beneficial to the image of the product, for example, Swiss watches". Because place images are both multifaceted and unstable, this practice is quite dangerous.
- Place branding equals place management, whereas in fact, place branding should only be part of place management. (ibid.)

As described in the chapter about brand, the branding practice has been applied to products for over a century. Nevertheless, places have only pursued branding strategies theory and practice since the 1990s. (Morgan, Pritchard & Pride 2010.) Its recent existence does not decrease its rising importance for many destinations to "see place branding as major part of their amoury". Branding can become a valuable marketing asset for places—whether on national, regional or city level—"in their efforts to combat increasing product parity, substitutability and competition". (ibid.)

City Branding

As stated ealier, "place" in place branding can be a country, a region or a city but this thesis will mainly focus on the city level, as it is the lowest level of all to approach. A region, especially a whole nation, would require wider picture.

> *A consumer product can be so new and revolutionary that the company merely has to promote its features and benefits to have consumers willing to purchase. Such products often incorporate new technology or are existing products with a significant improvement in quality. Cities face a different situation. Since tourists have any different cities they can potentially visit, a city must carefully brand itself in the consumer's mind. Branding involves promoting the unique benefits that the tourists will experience while visiting the city, rather than the city itself. Branding answer the question [Why should I visit your city?]. (Kolb 2006, 18.)*

Being under the umbrella term "place branding", city branding does not yet possess an explicit definition, but has a common academic understanding. According to Kavaratzis & Ashworth (2005, 510), even so, city branding practices exist and have existed "consciously or unconsciously for as long as cities have competed with each other for trade, populations, wealth, prestige or power".

Kotler & Gertner (2002) thought that the new economic order was the reason for the transformation from economic development into a market challenge. Nations compete with other nations and strive to devise sources of competitive advantage (Porter 1989). There are more benefits these days coming from city branding: not only tourist attraction but also factories, companies, talented people and potential export markets (Morgan, Pritchard & Pride 2010, 46). Even though the idea of depending on tourism to improve economic development is

new and may not be the main answer, it should be seen as a potential solution. Through tourism development, a city is able to manage its image to international market, enhacing positive economic changes as it can attract new residents and businesses. (Kolb 2006, 6.)

Similarly to the topic of place branding, city branding is also questioned, to whether it can be seen as an entity, or one thing that a tourist forms a relationship with while encountering the city. A city's complexity is beyond a traditional product, whether it is tangible good or a service. City is both a place of residence for those who live in it and a destination for people to travel to, at the same time (Kavaratzis & Ashworth 2005, 512). It composes of buildings, streets, parks, transportation (physical features) and the visit experience, services, events (non-physical features). Hence, all of those factors contribute to the city image and city branding, are expected to reflect that true image. Kolb (2006, 19) says city image development should not be a top–down process; instead it should involve participation of as many parties inside the city as possible, such as government officials, tourism agencies, cultural venues' managers, university officials, civic organizations, hospitality managers and so forth. This statement, once again, supports the resemblance between corporate branding and city branding—existence of multiple stakeholders.

A pertinant question here is: why is city branding starting to be seen as a wordwide phenomenon? Anholt (2007, 1) believes that the rootness of all is globalization, unconsciously pushing:

> *every country, every city and every region must compete with every other for its share of the world's consumers, tourists, investors, students, entrepreneurs, international sporting and cultural events, and for the attention and respect of the international media, of other governments, and the people of other countries.*

Such globalized marketplace blinds consumer with an overwhelming range of choices, from physical products to places. The consumer navigates through this complexity under more simple lenses with typical stereotypes. (ibid.) These stereotypes can be picked up through media. An individual learns through the media what significance he should ascribe to different places, people and issues

with which he has no contact. It is because of this power, the media is an effective instrument of social control. (Avraham & Ketter 2008, 79.) Media is a driving force for one important aspect of city branding: image management. It is not within one country's control to manage how its nation identity is perceived on a global scale. It is also difficult for one country to stop the possible stereotypes that might be established. This is the reason cities must manage and control their branding. City branding practices can create new brand with new image, re-brand or promote true city's identity. (Morgan, Pritchard & Pride 2010, 47.)

Strategic image management (SIM) is a key part of city branding—a process of determining the city's image among its audiences, segmenting and targeting to such demographic audiences, in order for positioning the city's benefits. This strategy is applicable for city to support an existing image or creating new one. City branding is a way of communicating those benefits to the target audiences. (ibid.). In spite of such description, city branding should not be considered as a simple solution to fix all image problems since it demands long–term commitment, deep strategic planning and comprehensive changes (Avraham & Ketter 2008, 17).

The final definition of city branding may not be obtainable at present as the concept is in flux and much of the theoretical framework is exploratory in nature. Instead, an emphasis on how and why such concept existed may be possible and will provide useful in answering the research question for this thesis. Morgan & Pritchard (2001, 12) explicitly wrote that "the battle for consumers in tomorrow's destination marketplace will be fought not over price but over hearts and minds—and this where we move into the realm of branding".

7 Experience Economy & Experiential Marketing

Experiential Marketing

In the traditional sense of marketing communication, consumers sometimes make a purchasing decision simply based on "the brand that shouted the loudest got their attention" (Smilansky 2009, 1). However, Smilansky believes such an

approach has been outdated. This statement, in one way, complies with the transition of power from producer to consumer in branding evolution. Within this new era of value-based branding, company realizes that it should be able to give back to consumer, for the purpose of gaining true brand loyalty. The relationships between brands and consumers have been revolutionized into a new phase, in which consumers remember the brand because it gives them an unforgettable experience. Traditional marketing was not fully developed enough for such a revolution of branding and marketing communication nowadays (Schmitt 1999, 55).

Place and city branding are products from this new era of value–based branding. Smilansky (2009, 1), then brings to academic world the practical guidance for experiential marketing, which focuses on designing a "fabulous brand-relevant customer experience" to the audience, giving them true values to their lives. Experience is not only the trend of marketing communications but also the trend for tourism. The demand for experience in consumption, once again, is resulted from globalization (Richards 2007). The term itself is already difficult to measure or to be expressed in a more definite way than vaguely saying, as "experiences are real; they are true life" (Smilansky 2009, 1).

According to Smilansky (2009, 5),

> *experiential marketing is the process of identifying and satisfying customer needs and aspirations profitably, engaging them through two-way communications that bring brand personalities to life and add value to the target audience.*

This phenomenon's revolution goes hand-in-hand with the branding evolution. Along with the introduction of relationship marketing and CRM in late 20th century, which has already been described in chapter about branding, experiential marketing brought up another strategy also aimed at retaining brand loyalty, Customer Experience Management (CEM).

CEM represents strategic management of a particular customer's entire experience, "from the retail environment to the customer services phone attendants, is brand relevant, differentiated and positive". Involving brands

throughout such a whole journey required companies to create a platform, in which the consumer can engage and sense the existing communication with the brand. The importance for such communication is due to the added value one might feel towards a particular company or its product. Because of all the above statements, company started to consider the experiential marketing approach. A successful experiential marketing campaign enables an organization to convert its consumers into brand advocates. Another term expressing with meaning can also be used: the *brand evangelist*—"who preaches the brand, its personality and core message or features to their friends/ families, colleagues and communities". (Smilansky 2009, 5.)

When we ask the question: why is personal recommendation or word-of-mouth (WOM) important in marketing? The answer follows that once the consumer feels strongly enough to recommend the brand to their network/society, he has already developed trust with that brand (ibid., 13). In order to engender this personal recommendation, Smilansky (2009) states experiential marketing is the key. Through experiential design, customer is encouraged to try the product, play with it, eat it, drink it, touch it and press it. These senses provide the benefit for company to "immerse consumer into essence of the brand". (8.)

Up to this point, the reason for an industry to consider experiential marketing as an effective part of their marketing has been described. It creates a tremendous WOM if executed correctly, beyond the ability of traditional marketing. In addition, experiential marketing also "truly adds values to the consumers' everyday lives". A normal approach of customer–focused traditional marketing would be identifying the needs of the target customer and producing products, which satisfy his or her needs. However, with the affluence of branding, the company is given a chance to reach a higher benefit that will be able to gain from experiential marketing. The higher benefit mentioned is shown when customer "automatically affiliate emotional values with the product and its brand". (ibid., 13–16.) A consumer chooses the brand, not because it is familiar or it offers better promotion.

In fact, it is quite difficult to be successful in the market industry nowadays with such belief. The Internet revolution and Web 2.0 creates many new fluctuations in consuming trends. Human are more exposed with a big variety of choices and suddenly, the fact that they want to be unique and different from the rest of society is no longer new. Edelheim (2015) refers it as the attempt to establish modern identity. Schouten's article in another book of Richards (2007, 30) also says: "the more the world turns into the global village, the bigger the need is to identify with what is at hand". This modern identity acts as an invisible force pushing consumer towards authentic experience and more reasons to establish brand loyalty than plainly good price.

Smilansky (2009) uses the AIDA model to show the wide benefits live brand experiences can bring. AIDA is a common acronym used in marketing.

- **Awareness**: the range of reaching by live brand experiences seems not to be wide enough for raising consumer's awareness about the brand/ product. However, "it has been shown that consumers who engage in a live brand experience is likely to tell 17 people".
- **Interest**: in this area, live brand experiences is even more effective by building up interest with consumer through stronger emotional connection with the brand personality, not only the advantages and benefits of products.
- **Desire**: live brand experiences can "create the subconscious sense that using the product or service will bring them the lifestyle that they desire".
- **Action**: With the affluence of all above factors, there proves experiential marketing with live brand experiences at the core, motivating people to make the final purchase decision higher than any other tactical marketing tools. (6–8.)

On the other hand, experiential marketing has also been misinterpreted to be similar as other marketing concepts such as field marketing and even marketing.

> *Field marketing involves traditional face-to-face promotional and sales promotion tactics. Its activities usually involve the use of promotional staff on a tactical basis. The promotional staffs are deployed to distribute leaflets,*

> *samples, merchandise displays and in store promotions, mystery shop and*
> *capture data. (ibid., 23.)*

This concept relates more closely to sales promotion tactics since its goal is to increase number of customers buying a product or service. Smilansky (2009, 24) points out that "it does not create a brand relevant interactive and engaging experience", which also does not make field marketing equal to experiential marketing. Williams (2016, 5) also says experiential marketing definition is bigger than one-off events, sponsorship or sampling; but it should provide a certain depth of experiences to consumers, shaping their final purchase decision.

Live Brand Experiences

Experiential marketing is believed to be successful and meaningful only with live brand experience at its core. The available academic sources convey more about the benefits of live brand experience than what it accurately means. In fact, there seems to be no definition of the concept, but certain key design characteristics: two-way communication, engagement and emotional evoked stimulus. Smilansky (2009) does not directly use those words in describing live brand experience, even though the term is quoted from his book. However, he mentions the linkage between experiential marketing with CEM: "when CEM is partnered with experiential marketing; astonishing business results can be achieved". (10.) Shaw and colleagues (2010) described motives for CEM is for understanding the psychological elements within consumer behavior. Traditional marketing does provide a wide enough platform for business to think about detailed steps: from the cues or information customers gather before entering a store, what prejudices they might have from an article they read many years ago. (9.)

On the other hand, since live brand experiences does not claim a definition, this thesis author finds it best to include examples of how it can be utilized, depending on the business's original goals—the BETTER model, as in Appendix 2. However, there exist different models for carrying out experiential marketing strategy. BETTER is first essential step to bring the big idea into a real campaign. In addition, other models appear to be more specific for physical products and not particularly for cities. For such reason, the thesis only focuses on the BETTER

model. Complying with this model are the business's objectives (Smilansky 2009, 81–90), which are

- bring brand personality to life,
- drive WOM,
- create a memorable brand experience,
- communicate complex brand messages, and
- position the brand.

For the sake of readers' understanding, there are examples presented for each objective, in the table as Appendix 3.

However careful the planning is, there will always be unpredictable factors. This leads the thesis author to describe now the possible methods for gauging the effectiveness of the live brand experiences:

- The number of interactions, number of people participating in the activity since this data will be used for estimating the WOM reach later.
- The feedback from the brand ambassadors or event staff, who work as the activity is carried out.
- Return on investment—ROI, implying the sales uplift and increasing in sales promotion. Another way to measure ROI is within the context of a long-term experiential marketing strategy: checking how far the campaign succeeds in moving the consumer through the advocacy pipeline.
- More specific and relevant term for long-term investment context is Long-term Return On Investment (LROI). This calculation (which is included as Appendix 4) helps company to quantify the impact of live brand experiences. (Smilansky 2009, 193–207.)

Experiential marketing, at this time being, is no longer such a brand new concept as when it was researched and written by Smilansky. It should have been acknowledged more widely and the evidence for this can be seen through how companies nowadays try to establish stronger interaction and engagement with their customers. However, Smilansky's theories remain valuable, as he provided readers with practical examples showing how experiential marketing campaign

should be designed. On the other hand, despite the fact of his repeated emphasis on the fact that live brand experiences can also be performed remotely, he provides no practical examples of this. The next chapters of the thesis will elaborate this missing point of live brand experiences moving to digital platforms.

8   Social media and Blogging as series of happenings

8.1   Web 2.0

According to Constantinides and Fountain (2008), many academic researches on branding and marketing communications have mentioned the term Web 2.0 or "the transition of Web 1.0 to Web 2.0" and its effects on consumer behavior. The term Web 2.0 has been used widely and mainly understood under its core difference compared to Web 1.0: User Generated Content attribution. In spite of that, the exact nature of the meaning of this term Web 2.0 still yet to be identified. The authors attempted to define Web 2.0 as:

> *the collection of open-source, interactive and user-controlled online applications expanding the experiences, knowledge and market power of the users as participants in business and social processes. Web 2.0 applications support the creation of informal users' networks facilitating the flow of ideas and knowledge by allowing the efficient generation, dissemination, sharing and editing/refining of informational content. (233.)*

This definition was developed in close relationship to the marketing context. Since O'Reilly proposed the term Web 2.0 in 2005, the phenomenon highly affected marketers' strategies, rather than the software industry. The reason is that Web 2.0 influences traditional marketing tactics. Web 2.0 conveys three main principles:

- It is operated as a service-based and open source for online users.
- Consumers are encouraged to participate in contributing, reviewing and editing content.
- Businesses producing low-wolume products are given more opportunities to reach the customers through the service-based model

Breaking down these principles into details, Web 2.0 brings the focus onto the consumer. Their voices are expressed, communicated, heard and most importantly, a company also has to act on the feedback. All the Web 2.0 applications depend on the user; "the more users who participate, the more advanced and valuable the service becomes". (ibid., 233–236.)

The application types fall into five categories:

- Blogs, also combined with Podcasts (digital audio or video that can be streamed or downloaded).
- Facebook, Twitter, Myspace, etc.
- Community websites that share a particular type of content, for example: YouTube, Wikipedia, Flickr, etc.
- Forums in which people are given the possibility of exchanging ideas and information about particular interests.
- Content aggregators – "applications allowing users to fully customise the web content they wish to access". (ibid., 233.)

The existence of Web 2.0 led to the blogging phenomenon

The term blogging is not such a new concept nowadays to us. It is quite commonly used by different generations around the world.

> *The earlier applications of blogging were originally used in the late 1990s as web-based project management tools for technology-based organizations. The purpose was to facilitate collaboration among various functional areas within an organization. (Singh, Veron-Jackson & Cullinane 2008, 284.)*

At the time, blogging was attractive for its convenience and simple application. The user did not have to obtain extensive computer knowledge to use blogs. They were only required to have access to computers since the programs were server-based. In 2003, the words "web log, web logging, web logger" were added to the Oxford dictionaries, defined "as a web site on which individual or group of users produce an ongoing narrative". (ibid.)

One special characteristic of blogs is their conversational nature. "A blog is a communication channel". A blog is not only about letting ordinary people voice their opinions and get widely seen and heard in a big network on the Internet; but it also provides two-way communication. (Demipoulos 2007, 5.) Mostly the bloggers are encouraged to activate the comment/feedback functions for their readers. Therefore, everyone is welcome to join the discussion and exchange ideas. Blogging can in fact be seen as an online conversation and people engaging in it should follow the same rules as in normal social daily life. The fact that people can fake information and hide behind their computers does not justify rude behavior (ibid., 21).

Blogging is a two-way communication

Singh, Veron-Jackson & Cullinane (2008, 285–286) mentioned six ways, in which explanations for two-way communication can be seen:

a) Blogging is a new way for companies to stay relevant to their customers; since bloggers provide the points of view as seen through the customers' lenses.

b) As thesis' author discussed earlier in chapters on branding evolution, the transition on the Internet, from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 has demanded a lot of changes in how firms market, brand and communicate with their consumers. The markets are still in the process of changing. Web 2.0 is "customer-centric, user-generated, interactive, dynamic, fosters community participation, and builds on collective community intelligence" (ibid., 282). Customers demand higher participation in the production, want their voices to be heard and their suggestions for action should be acted upon as well. In a marketer surveyed by the agency Draft Chicago, it was reported that less than 20% of respondents believed their own industries had been effectively coping with continuous changes of mediascape and the challenges that it brought. This is to again emphasize the neccessity for companies to use the many available tools available for building up communication with consumers, "targeting them in an integrated manner so the message remains focused, differentiated, and relevant" (ibid., 283). Blogging brings in such differentiation.

c) Generation gaps are another challenging fact in current business environment, and blogging is believed to bridge the gap. Millennial customers nowadays refuse to believe in the marketing messages sold to them, as they are more exposed to technological revolutions and variety of online sources. This also means such a group of consumers participates in blogging activity more than the rest. Statics show that "72% of 16-34 year olds in the U.S use blogs three times more often than people of 35-49 yeard old". Their blogs involve discussions about pop culture and personal information whereas the older bloggers use blogs for sharing and analyzing topics from political climate to product information. These blogs become valuable sources to marketers, for example: identifying what "Gen-Next customers" like and dislike. In addition, a blog attracts a wide network of readers and establishes connections with diverse audiences, irrespestive of their ages. (Universal McCann 2006, 5.)

d) Blogs can also be used by thought leaders of particular groups, communities or companies. They can be identified as "boss blogs"; or they are the "leading consultants, writers, and academics sharing their expertise in their most respective fields". (Singh, Veron-Jackson & Cullinane 2008, 285.)

e) Again, owing to the fact that blog is global in its nature, it can reach audiences worlwide.

f) The blog is a way for the company presents its establishment and appreciation towards consumer; which means consumers are given a platform on which to communicate directly back with producer. (ibid.)

Due to its relevance to business industry, blogs should be applied as marketing communication tools. "Blogs offer firms the ability to connect with customers in a unique and personalized manner where everything from brand promotions to new product ideas can be effectively communicated" (Singh, Veron-Jackson & Cullinane 2008, 286).

There are two ways suggested for applying blogging in business: tactical and strategic. In the tactical application, company uses blogs to drive traffic to their site; engages consumer in posting stories about its products/services and maybe

provides consumer special promotions at the same time. The purpose here is to build brand loyalty and generate buzz about company's products and services in consumers' networks. In the strategic sense, the company applies blogging more as a whole: internal communication, external communication and feedback, market research, new product ideas testing, competitive intelligence, etc. The company collects customer's insights through these activities and establish two-way communication with consumer. The result will not only affect brand loyalty but also consumer connectedness. (ibid., 287.)

Despite its importance, blogging also has limitations. Firstly, it is its lack of control and boundaries. If the blog's content is negative, it is hard for company to investigate the root of the problem. On the other hand, some published content may have been evaluated and chosen by company with the result that that the targeted consumer hears the messages marketers want to deliver, rather than the ones the consumer truly cares about. However, if the company smartly allows bloggers to truly engage and understand its core business, and have an opinion about it; then they can become a valuable allies. (ibid., 289.)

Secondly, consumers, once they are aware of a company's blog, will expect their feedback to be valuable resources. It means that the company should demonstrate its commitment and continuity by acting on the information gained from the customer. Moreover, in order to remain relevant to the consumer, the company's blog needs to be updated regularly. (ibid.)

8.2 Blogging and Customer Social Media Experience

The second chapter of this thesis discussed the importance of live brand experiences within experiential marketing in building customer brand loyalty nowadays. The key to the new era of value-based branding is experiences, due to the power shift from producer to consumer. According to Pine and Gilmore (1998), experience is the new distinct fourth economic offering as the consumer demand participation in one, better supporting their final purchase decision. Pine and Gilmore even call such changing the "progression of economic values", in which an experience is not only a tactical element to wrap around services or goods, but it is in fact the selling item itself. These two authors, as the first

pioneers building up research about Customer Experience, stated that an experience is seen "when a company intentionally used services as the stage, and goods as props, to engage individual customers in a way that creates memorable event". (3–4.) They suggest two dimensions for addressing the characteristics of an experience:

- Customer participation
- Connection – "or environment relationship, that unites customers with the event or performance" (ibid., 7)

A more detailed and visualized model of these two dimensions is within the *four realms of an experience* illustration below.
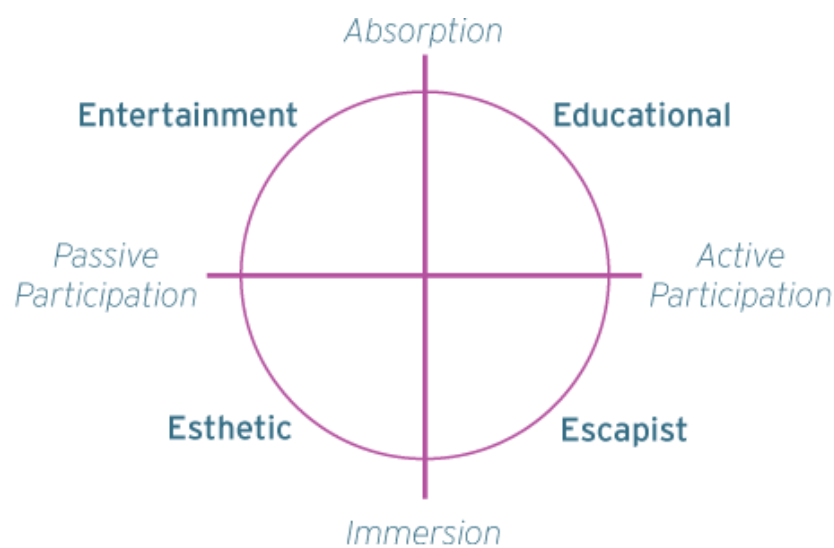
Figure 5. Four realms of an experience (Pine & Gilmore 1998)

This pioneering study about entering the Experience Economy urged other authors, such as Smilansky, to conduct his work about Live Brand Experiences and Experiential Marketing. As a matter of fact, he even emphasized what this thesis will quote here again: maximum benefit of the live brand experience platform can only be achieved together with Customer Experience Management concept. Brand personality can only be brought to life within a context of interactive experiences. (Smilansky 2009, 15-16.) The concept does not stop

there. The existence of Web 2.0 & User-Generated Content resulting in social media applications have expanded the definition of customer experience.

Shaw and others (2010, 88) address that expansion, human social media experience. This context contains no surprises. In this current society, people do not need to go to University or get a degree in English for becoming a journalist, as long as they have a PC and connection to the Internet. (ibid., 75.) The consumer does not have to actually be in the experience in order to have the experience. They can be far from the experience, but their emotions are still evoked and their human needs can still be shown through social media. "Social media are changing everything and at the same time they are changing nothing" (ibid., 81). Shaw and colleagues (2010, 98) have proven through their research that "people's social media experiences are absolutely driven by emotion and Maslow's theory (see figure 6) is live well in social media experiences".

Figure 6. Maslow' hierarchy of need (Shaw et al. 2010)

Shaw and others (2010) provide readers each level of needs from the hierarchy pyramid in details, within the context of social media but the author will also apply it more closely to blogs.

Self-actualization: "*self-actualization can be about helping others; it is about values, not about monetary success...In fact, 72 percent of bloggers are hobbyists and blog for fun, and 76 percent do it to express themselves*" (ibid., 85).

Esteem needs: "*The need for respect is a very powerful motivator, and nowherre is this more true than in the social media experience*" (ibid., 85). Online social media world provides an opportunity for everyone to voice their opinions, by producing a blog content on particular subject based on your own interest and more exposed experiences with it; and by commenting on other people's work. According to Shaw and others (2010), you do not need to obtain an educational qualification to have someone "following" you.

Social needs: here lies one of the main goals for social media applications initially, to allow people to keep in touch within their network.

Safety need: within the world of Internet where digital crimes of thieves can happen as normal as in real context world, people also demand to feel safe and confident their personal information will not be used for any unsuitable purposes. This is the reason popular social media applications as Facebook, have stricter privacy regulations for their consumers. Shaw and colleagues (2010) say one of element affecting this safety feeling, is predictability of the circumstances and people. Another key element is transparency. "If things are transparent, then people trust them". (82–83.) Applying on blogs, blog readers and followers need to be acknowledged the same trust with the writer. Once the trust is established, the blog content is able to act as personal recommendation/online WOM.
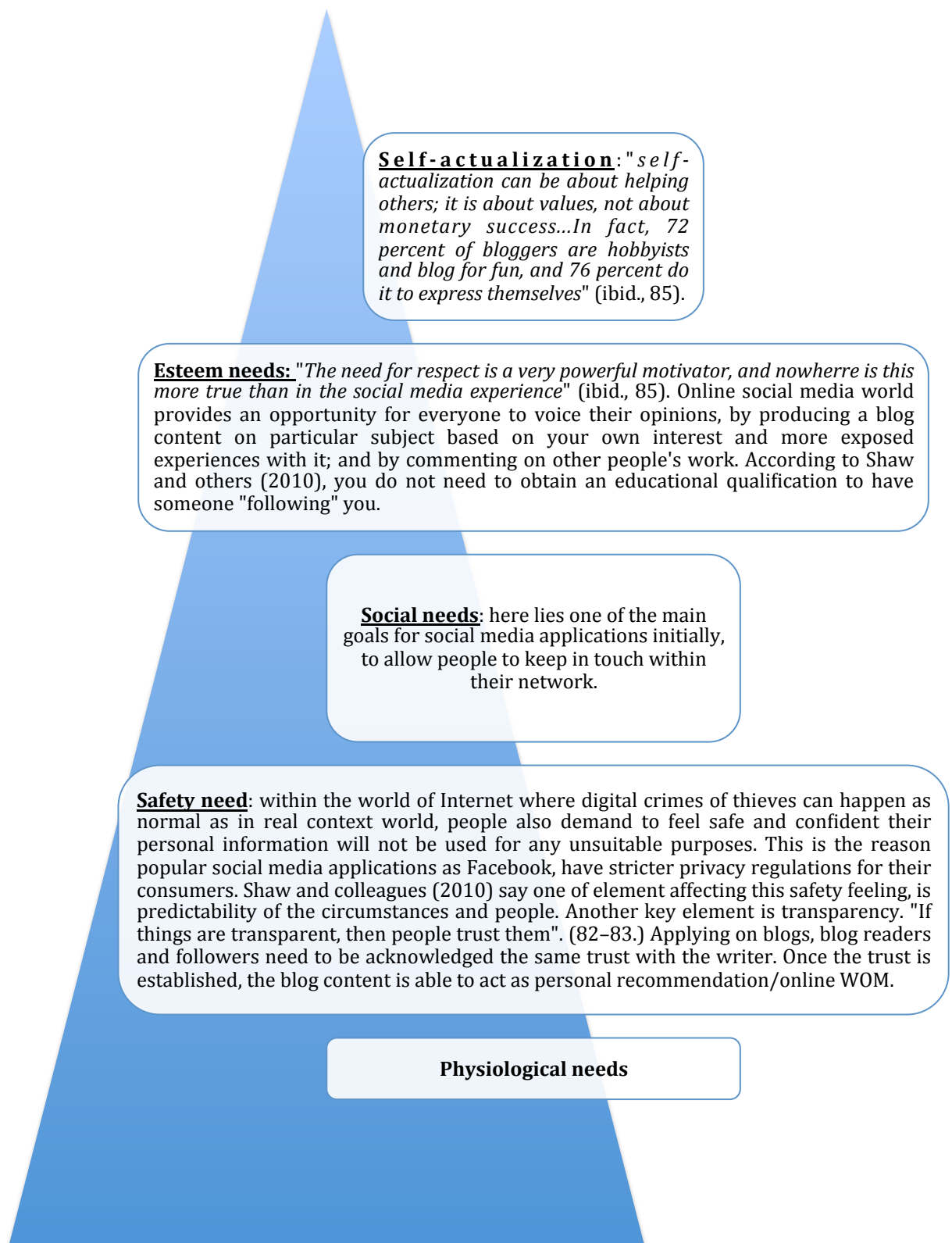
Physiological needs

Figure 7. Thesis's author reflection of Maslow's theory on social media using

As described in the chapter about blogging phenomenon, the blog is a social media application. This means that the customer experience with blogging belongs to human's social media experiences. Hsu & Tsou (2011, 512) say

> *customer experiences of blogs can be viewed as consumers' emotional responses to environmental psychology while they are spurred by the environmental cues.*

According to their research, when a consumer is evoked by "attractive stimuli" while reading blog's content, such as "creative activities, vivid information", it can be addressed as "positive customer experience" with a blog. They also propose that customers' experience on blogs does drive customers closer to intention of purchasing. (ibid.)

In conclusion, there exist few research studies that prove customer experience is not entitled to only physical interactions, especially in current social communication evolution. Human do not only communicate and interact face-to-face. Statistically the numbers of people who have mobiles, spend time on the Internet and have blogs continue to rise. Greenberg (2010, 410) points out that these numbers illustrate that this growing pattern in communicating has transformed "not only how customers and companies interact, but also the use of a new approach to knowledge as a source for customer insight". This new customer insight creates a new group of customers called social customers. Greenberg (2010, 411) defined this customer type as people

> *trusting their peers, are connected via the web and mobile devices to those peers as much of a day as they would like...and the desire to share and socialize that information with those same trusted peers—whether they actually like them or not.*

Social customers strive for transparency and authenticity from the companies they are in business with; they put emphasis on the connection and such connection affects whether they will become loyal. Social customers are company's voluntary advocates the moment they feel satisfied with the business.

(ibid.) Blog users are social customers. Information about a business, a company, a place, a city is not only convenient for accessing online; but is also shared widely. Here is the challenging point for many organizations–when they cannot control what information might be written about them on Internet. Despite that, it is an undeniable necessity for businesses to embrace, rather than resist. The human social media experience concept is created as a result of the act of embracing it.

Travel blog

As a result of the Internet revolution as well as the birth of Web 2.0, online information has become a major source of information for tourists prior to their travelling destination purchase. As a matter of fact, researches have shown that consumers might rely more on the articles, websites with reviews than professional guides or travel agencies.

> *Tourism organizations were some of the first to utilize the resources of the Internet, but we are seeing one area of significant internet innovation over the past 2 years in the widespread development of user generated content and peer-to-peer applications, variously known as Web 2.0, which would appear to have enormous potential for tourism organizations. (Akehurst 2009, 51.)*

According to Pan, MacLaurin & Crotts (2007, 35), Travel Industry Association (2005) reported that 67% of travellers (who have Internet connection) search information about destinations and check prices and schedules via Internet. This statistic generally shows the enormous use of the Internet by tourists today; and due to the power provided to consumers with User Generated Content of Web 2.0 (which was discussed before), travellers are able to "email one another, post comments and feedback, publish online blogs, and form communities on the Internet" (ibid.). Nardi and others (2004) also says Internet users' blogging varies in accordance with their intended purpose: "as a document of one's life, as a social commentary, as catharsis and outlet for their feelings, and/or as a thinking tool". These reasons support the argument of whether travel blogs reflect the writer's experiences in an honest way. If the bloggers produce their blogs based on such intrinsic motivation, the genuineness of travel blogs and

their potential similarities to travel journals should be stimuli evoking readers' connections (Pan, MacLaurin & Crotts 2007, 37.)

Blogging has been described as a two-way communication tool, as a form of social media customer experience and here, it should be further described as customer engagement form—which is also another phenomenon appearing from all revolutions of communication channels & the Internet. Customer engagement marks the shifting focus from transactional to non-transactional customer behavior, including WOM, blogging, customer ratings, etc. These behaviors are driven by motivational driver, during the phase after they make the purchase, or in this case, after they have travelled to a certain city. (Verhoef, Reinartz & Krafft 2010, 1.) This side of blogging has been mentioned few times in this thesis; and important to note such detail, because it can be used as a measuring tool indicating whether the brand has successfully connected with consumers. The power of WOM is stronger than being acknowledged, especially in the cases where consumer relies greatly on his or her community's opinions or the majority's reviews. Westbrook (1987) writes that the consumer's loyalty, product evaluation and purchase decision is influenced by both positive and negative WOM.

On the other hand, Word-Of-Mouth is also an aimed target for live brand experiences strategy, allowing consumers to immerse themselves and understand the brand in their own interpretation by clues given. With their shared common goal, blog can be seen as a tool, establishing online platform for consumers to have brand experiences. Travel blogs, then, appears as a convenient and contemporary opportunity for cities to integrate into their branding strategy, in order for delivering social media customer experiences to their potential tourists.

9 Research Implementation

9.1 Data collection

As described in an earlier chapter, thesis's approach is qualitative methodology and corresponded main method is interviewing, together with focus group. There are two research questions:

- What are the ways foreign tourists actually experience the Helsinki Brand currently?

- How has blogging affected their decisions in travelling?

In order to answer the first question, the author first approached the organizer of the #HelsinkiSecret Residence campaign—Visit Helsinki. Contact with them started during the theory framework-building phase, and were ended after a short time due to their unavailability for providing supporting resources. Eventually, the author managed to reach Elisabeth Heinrichs —social media coordinator of the campaign. The interview with her is important as it provides aa background for the case study. It was mentioned before that #HelsinkiSecret Residence campaign was first organized this year. Hence, background information is not widely available.

In addition, in order to look at the campaign from variable angles, the author attempted to contact all bloggers—campaign's participants who went to Helsinki during the months January–February, with the intent of experiencing Finnish winter. The author was aware of the possibility that a certain number of bloggers would not respond, due to their busy schedule and other personal factors. Fortunately, Cory Lee, who is an accessible travel blogger and went to Helsinki on January 31st 2016, agreed to an interview. The interview was conducted through Skype, for Cory was back in the USA at that time. The author used the Piezo software for audio recording. As with other bloggers, the author built up an insight to their experiences of Helsinki, based on reading their blogs and noting relevant patterns.

The representative from the partners' angle is Helena Hämäläinen, Planning Officer at the Admission Services at the University of Helsinki. Even though it was not yet the time for promoting the study theme in September, which would have involved the University of Helsinki more extensively, Helena provided the author with valuable opinions about the campaign, and about the University's expectations at the time.

The campaign also has "local friends", whose roles were to be ambassadors of Helsinki to the participants. The author, then also sent emails to those contacts provided on the campaign's website. Omar El Mrabt, who is a photographer and a Digital Media student, was firstly interviewed. The interview was also done through Skype, because the author was in Stockholm on personal matters. After that, Kathrin Deter, Digital Media & Campaign Consultant and a Helsinki, a blogger herself, was the other interviewee.

The table of time, date and location of each conducted interview is attached as Appendix 6. At the beginning of every interview, the author asked for permission to record as well as to quote their names in this thesis. For the following semi-structured interviews, the author prepared a certain number of guideline questions. During the interviews, she improvised a number of questions she found suitable to each interviewee.

Nevertheless, interview was not the only method used for this thesis. The author also collected information from documentation sources, which were blog posts produced by participants in this case, along with archival records, which are the campaign's website, as well as *helsinkisecret.fi* website for references. In addition, the second research question could not be answered fully through these data collection sources; therefore, the author conducted a focus group to examine how blogging might impact their travel decision to places in general and to Helsinki specifically.

The focus group is also a common method for qualitative research. The focus group process "creates 'safe spaces' for dialogue in the company of others who have had similar life experiences" (Denzin & Lincoln 2005, 898) and is recommended for strategic use if researcher wishes to "cultivate new kinds of

interactional dynamics, and thus, access new kinds of info" (ibid., 903). However quantitative approach (for example: sending out surveys) is another option to answer this particular research question, the author wished to continue with qualitative methodology because of its ability to understand a phenomenon on an in–depth level. The focus group appears to be a good tool for a researcher to observe and listen to subjective reactions of group members, in order to understand their needs in a way that short answers on a survey might not be able to capture. According to Krueger and Kasey (2007, 7–9), what a researcher looks for from a focus group is an individual's opinions within a group setting; hence, group members should be encouraged to feel comfortable expressing themselves in a non-judgmental environment. In most of the cases, an ideal number of participants is five to ten people, but it is also indicated that four to six people is an appropriate number for a beginning researcher (Davis 2007, 140–142).

Because the second research question was a sequential step from the first one, participants to be recruited for this focus group should reflect the characteristics of the blog posts' readers. The blog is described as global in nature, in the theory section above. Therefore, to generalize from the large big scale of the blog posts' readers, the author composes a *blog reader profile*. This profile is made based on a blogger's writing style. The author took advice from a blogger and an interviewee of this thesis herself —blog readers tend to read writings, which reflect or connect to their own personalities.

Since the author used her social media network as the main platform for recruiting, some participants knew each other beforehand. However, as the group size was small, this factor did not affect the environment or the results. A table with list of characteristics is attached as appendix 7. In addition, with permission secured, the author also attached a list of participants' names in appendix 5.

Moorse (1994) emphasized the important of discussion leader role in gaining expected data from a focus group. At the beginning, there should be introduction about the purpose of the study, background information and how the data is planned to be used. The reason behind this is enhancing trust from participants.

It is also important for the discussion leader not to take part in or interfere with the discussion. This must be shown through both verbal and nonverbal behavior. At the end of every guideline question, there should be a summary discussion, in which the leader checks whether he or she understands participants' opinions or not. (231–232.) The author took into consideration all described points while at preparation stage. In reality when focus groups were taking place, the author decided to allow the natural flow, by which means she improvised questions corresponding to the group's atmosphere and answers. The author did provide adequate background information to participants and ended the discussions politely.

Two focus groups were conducted with three participants in each group. The first focus group took place in a coffee shop and lasted one hour. The second one was on the JAMK campus and lasted nearly 2 hours. All the participants agreed to allowing the focus group discussions to be audio recorded and their names to be mentioned in the thesis. In each focus group, each participant was given one blog post, summarized by Visit Helsinki, and was asked to spend five minutes reading it. After that, they were given paragraphs written about different places to visit in Helsinki, taken from Visit Helsinki website. They spent another five minutes to read these. They were then asked to share with the group about how they feel after reading two different styles of information about Helsinki. Despite the fact that ideal context for them to respond would have been had they never been to Helsinki before, the author did not find this a highly constraining factor. In cases where they had been to Helsinki, they were asked to imagine themselves as being newcomers to the city.

9.2 Data analysis

Analysis is the search for patterns in data and for ideas that help explain why those patterns are there in the first place (Richards & Moorse 2007, 452).

Davis (2007) describes the qualitative data analysis process as transcribing, commenting in the first round to the transcripts as a thinking phase, and then "identifying the principal emergent ideas in each piece of transcript data" as a coding phase (191–193). Transcribing data helps researchers to get acquainted

with the data. There exists software assisting researchers to transcribe interviews, as this step can be be quite time-consuming. Nevertheless, student researchers are advised to perform this phase manually because they are pushed to go through data many times, increasing their ability to interpret it more suitably (Kananen 2011, 59).

Hence, the transcription done for this thesis was by transcribing word-by-word into written documents while listening to audio recordings. The author always transcribed immediately after each interview was done. Then, she did the thinking phase by going through the transcript, attempting to do a first round of coding by highlighting terms and making notes. Such actions were also needed since the author wanted to see if there appeared any notes for next following interviews.

The first official coding analysis was done before the author organized focus groups, since the information in answering the first research question provided a a base for answers to second one.

> *Coding is not a piece science; it's primarily an interpretive act. Also be aware that a code can sometimes summarize or condense data, not simply reduce it. (Saldana 2008, 4.)*

Coding is an analysis technique that allows researcher to structurally examine what interviewees expressed; so that he or she can notice patterns arising and later categorize them into relevant concepts. Through codes, the researcher is not distracted by the length of interview transcripts and can easily connect the dots between certain pieces of information. The author followed closely to Saldana's (2008) coding manual for this thesis's data analysis. While coding each interview and focus group individually, the author did not allow the theory framework to affect her thoughts, although she did make some memos noticing highly relevant patterns, which might match to the theories. After that, the author looked at the data coded as a big picture and made linkages if needed.

10 Research Results

The categories emerging from the analysis phase are described as follows. Each of the categories includes more subcategories. These categories are organized in appropriate order in responding to thesis's research questions.

City Branding — Live Brand Experiences — Blog — Blog's impact
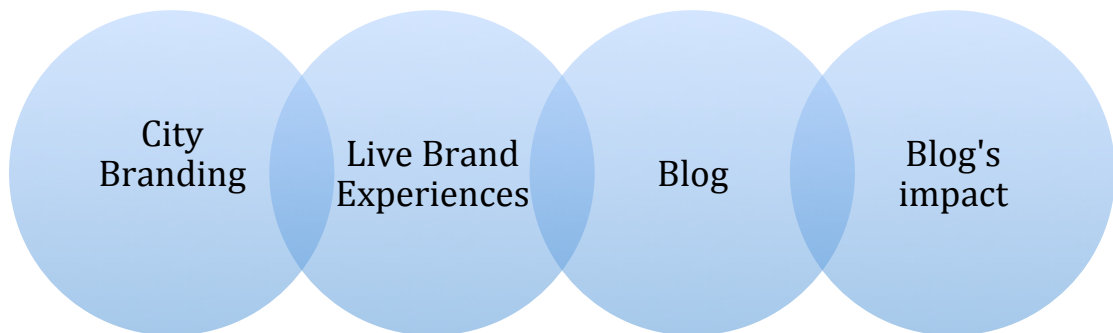
10.1 City Branding

How Helsinki is described from a local citizen's perspective

Four out of the five first interviewees were local people living in Helsinki and the author realized the need of noting down how they described their city, from their perspectives. This is important, as local involvement in a city branding strategy is essential. In addition, these results provided the author with a clear picture of the City of Helsinki, given that she is not a local citizen herself.

> *Helena: This is not such a big city like London or Barcelona or some big cities in the States. Even though this is quite small city comparing to those, it has everything, nature, culture, design. There is like everything for everybody. There is really nice nature area closed to Helsinki. You have really nice museums, Kiasma, modern art museum, for example. Everything is packed in the small area, but there is still everything you cannot personally imagine.*

Helena moved to Helsinki 15 years ago and, as stated in the data collection section, she is currently working for Helsinki University. During her interview,

Helena expressed a high level of emotional attached to the city while attempting to describe Helsinki, in answer to the author's interview question.

Elisabeth's interview also revealed interesting insights about the city's strength, comparing it to its neighbor cities like Copenhagen, Stockholm and Oslo.

> *Elisabeth: Helsinki has good atmosphere for ideas created and it is developing from the core. We cannot compete with our neighbor with history, as Helsinki will only celebrate 100 years next year, but we can compete with future.*

> *Elisabeth (cont.): Helsinki is not the city, where you are in hurry all the time. That is one of the characteristics we believe in.*

The most similar characteristic of Helsinki to be described by the interviewees is its nature. In addition, nature also appears in most of the local respondents' answers to the question: "What is the secret of Helsinki?" presented *on helsinkisecret.fi* website—the original inspiration for this campaign.

> *Kathryn: We are now in a coffee shop but if you walk for 10 more minutes, from here and you can see the nature. The favorite places of Helsinki, and you can even select a theme that when it came to local people, the most popular, the most evident kind of secret, or theme, was nature.*

The necessity of city branding

As city branding is not yet a widely known concept, even though its practice has been available for a longer period of time, the author wanted to examine how much the interviewees might have known about city branding. They were asked to share with the group if they had heard about the term; and if they had, if they could give an example of a city branding practice. These questions were asked before the author provided them with background information about city branding, after which, she asked them what their opinions might be about the importance of branding a city.

> *Emily: I don't think a lot of people know the purpose for it as much as traditional marketing as it is not a product. So people don't actually think of it as actually branding or marketing. So I am not familiar with the psychology behind how they hook people.*

Some other interviewees and focus group participants gave out examples of their understanding about the concept.

> *Phoebe: Once Olympic was held in Beijing, and government was trying so hard to build a good brand of Beijing to attract people to come. To clean everything, and make sure the air pollution is not that bad and we even have cartoon characters for the city.*

> *Khairul: There was this movie "The fault in our stars" showing Amsterdam like half an hour, maybe. They show Anne Frank House, and I really want to go there, maybe I feel really connected to that movie.*

> *Harsh: We watched this video in class at least 3 times, showing how they promote Amsterdam as a place to visit and their slogan is "Originally cool". So they say "cycling is exercising for you, but for us, it is a way of life". And "eco-friendly is technology for you, but for us, it is just technology".*

> *Bailey: I think it was giving the city its slogan, and promoting that slogan.*

According to the interview with Elisabeth, Helsinki has not yet had its own city brand. Up to this point, the work of the Visit Helsinki organization emphasized only the tourism areas in the city. Elisabeth believed the brand of a city is indeed more complex, which is the goal for Brand New Helsinki project. Brand New Helsinki has promised to bring many changes to the city, and will create consistency in the development of the whole city.

> *Elisabeth: ...Then the fact that all departments will speak the same thing, it will be a stronger brand.*

The participants of both the focus groups also stated why they think the city branding concept existed.

> *Harsh: To gain more attention, you need to stand up from the crowd. You need to do more adverts and campaigns.*

> *Khairul: Globalization cannot be avoided anymore.*

> *Annika: Its purpose is to create awareness, especially for less well-known places as Helsinki.*

The challenges of city branding and image management

When being asked about city branding, opinions about its downside and challenges were also expressed. Focus group's participants think branding a city can result in making the city too commercial for local citizens. Harsh and Bailey expressed that it might still depend on the initial agendas of the city itself, whether they wish to attract tourists or not. Their opinions came from their

views that certain popular tourist destinations might be spoiled when tourists do not act sustainably.

On the other hand, Elisabeth's interview revealed certain patterns relating to strategic image management (SIM) concept whilst a city is branding itself. She elaborated the challenge for her company when they began this campaign.

> *Elisabeth: Average 37 different webpages, so it is not realistic to think that visit Helsinki, in our case, will be the only website that a traveller would visit. We would only think that we have to make the best website in the world, about Helsinki, and then what happens everywhere else on the Internet has no meaning. And then you can see that it is contradictive, it does not really work like that so. Already being aware of the fact that, that we cannot master the Internet, in the sense that visit Helsinki decides what everybody the internet is talking about Helsinki. I think it is only realistic to let go of this strength.*

She also pointed out a fact that it should not be destination management organizations giving out certain themes for tourists to coordinate their experiences with cities. This implies connection with second category.

10.2 Live Brand Experience reflected through #HelsinkiSecret Residence campaign

It has been already presented in the thesis why this particular campaign was chosen to be the single main case study, whose information was also based on the interview with Elisabeth Heinrichs. The author believes #HelsinkiSecret Residence campaign conveying certain relevant characteristics of a live brand experiences campaign, which are seen through below subcategories being conceptualized.

The power shift from producers to consumers

Bloggers taking part in the campaign are given opportunities to make their own decision, of number of nights they wish to stay in Helsinki, as well as where they wish to see in Helsinki. The intention of visit Helsinki is providing the bloggers tools and platforms for guidance only. In addition, Elisabeth said one of their promotion strategies, when they applied "Wild Card" option, was believing the campaign created enough credibility to make people spread WOM.

Elisabeth: When you boost these kinds of application on social media, all the people that you boosted to, they see it, and they want to look into it themselves and then they stumble upon the project and so on. We told them about this concept, and then we ask them to recommend to their friends, colleagues in their social media platform, if they found it to be good. As you know, you will not recommend something you do not believe in, especially to your friends, so the threshold to recommend this is actually quite high.

Elisabeth (cont.): Once you let go of the control, you do not know what the result is, so you have to trust that the city delivers. We can only promote Helsinki until a certain limit, and then we have to trust the fact that when people go out to the city, the city itself is actually good enough to create these kinds of good experiences. It's a leap of faith. But we do not say to the social influencers that you are not allowed to say anything bad, if you experience something bad, then it's up them about how they want to talk about it on social media platforms.

Once you give them the freedom to choose what they want to do, why would they choose something they don't like?

Customer Experience Journey

In compliance with live brand experiences, customer experience management is essential. Since bloggers are given power to choose and decide what they want to do, responsibility of Visit Helsinki is ensuring bloggers' experience journey be well managed. The ideal goal for such management is customer brand loyalty. The results from Cory Lee's interview revealed that his experience journey with the campaign might have started when he first noticed their advertisement.

Cory: I actually saw another blogger posting about it in the FB group that I am in, so there are a lot of bloggers in this group, and they share different press trips. Another blogger posted a link to the HelsinkiSecret website, and I went on the website and read all about it, watched the video and everything in it. It seems like something I would love to do, so I quickly filled up the application about, within about 2 minutes. Then I submitted it. And then, I never really thought anything about it, so, you know, I figured I would not get it, just because my blog is only a couple years old and it has not been around that long as long as many others, so I did not expect to get it at all. In November, it was definitely good surprise to hear that I got chosen.

He indicated that information was provided through emails exchanged prior to the trip, along with one basic picture of their accommodation. It is worth noting that Cory's flights were also sponsored. He was told accepted applicants had to cover the flights on their own and he expressed his unsuitable conditions to

Elisabeth. It was a surprising element to him when he received response from Elisabeth that his flights, together with his mother as the optional companion coming along, were sponsored by Visit Finland.

In the interview with Elisabeth, the author did ask her about the topic; and she explained that Visit Finland had its own priority target tourist group, in which Cory belonged to. According to Shaw and his colleagues (2010), such interactions through online social media are also customer experiences with the brand. After being accepted, Cory did his research about Helsinki but in his words, "it was shorter than his normal research, as it takes longer to plan an accessible travel trips". These researches are believed to form his expectation to a certain level about Helsinki. Other forms of expectation might have been shaped based on his past experiences with other cities in Europe. Nevertheless, Cory expressed his wish to arrive at Helsinki without thick background knowledge about the place and as a result, "it worked quite well".

> *Cory: On the first day that we arrived, we met Elisabeth from visit Helsinki. She is in charge of the whole campaign and everything. And she met us in the hotel room that night, and gave us the Helsinki Survival Kit. So I got one, and my companion that went with me, got one. They provided us food, and in our refrigerator, we had bread and meat and cheese and drinks. Then we had a bunch of gift cards to different restaurants in Helsinki. We had passes to use public transportation, we had even beanies that someone in Helsinki made. It was really a great survival kit that they provided. The next day, we did the city tour, in a van. So we rode around and saw the Helsinki Cathedral, the Old Market Hall, Uspenski Catherdal. We got to see on that tour for about four hours, and then, I was interviewed by Radio Helsinki. We ate at a lot of different restaurants, tried some good Finnish cuisine: reindeer, bear, etc.*
>
> *We took a day trip to Tallinn. We saw Suomenllinna sea fortress, which was probably my favorite thing that we did while in Helsinki. It was snowing a lot that day, but we went there and we got a private guide, on the island. We also got to try Finnish sauna. Visit Helsinki left it up to us, to choose what we wanted to do. It was great and definitely different from than other press trips that I have done, that kind of planned out every aspects of the trip. That was really one of my favorite press trips ever.*

From the organizer's perspective, Elisabeth expressed her opinions about planning the customer experience journey.

Elisabeth: Everything else is taken care of, all meals are covered, and then we cooperate with HEL Eats, a local company that promotes local food, so they also get a grocery bag to the residence with local products, because there is small kitchen in the residence, and so the idea is that they do not have to go somewhere else for breakfast. Then we also thought about different senses. As I said, the #HelsinkiSecret Residence has a media partner, radio Helsinki. And radio Helsinki has created 8 different playlists of Finnish music, which is the soundscape of the residence. There is a tablet inside the residence having these 8 playlists, so they can get into the mood of Helsinki, by listening to that music. Then we also thought about the smell or sense of Helsinki. We also have one of the Helsinki survival kit partners providing sense for the apartment. Those sense are very kind of closed to nature, so the sense of snow, the forest, and these kinds of natural sense.

Helsinki Survival Kit, which was also a part of the concept. You can see that we have 10 of different companies involved in the Survival Kit, giving really concrete and specific kind of suggestions of what to do, while they are in town.

These efficient Helsinki Survival Kits might play the role of experience reminders later during the post-experience phase, in accordance with three phases described by Shaw and his colleagues (2010).

Creating awareness

#HelsinkiSecret Residence campaign is aimed at global audiences. However, Elisabeth said there was no particularly determined target group by the Visit Helsinki organization, They cooperated with Finnair and Visit Finland partners, whose priority target groups are indicated as follows.

Elisabeth: But visit Finland and Finn air provide half of the residence, so since they are sponsoring the flights, they also have their own interests. So, Japan, China, South Korea are very important for them. But also Europe, UK, Germany, or US, is also important, then even our neighboring countries as Russia, Sweden. Those are some of the countries I know that these two really focus on. Like I said, we have had already residents coming from other countries, like Belgium, like last week, they are from France. It does not mean that only from these countries, you can be selected, but of course, those are kinds of priority number 1, maybe.

Elisabeth (cont.): But of course, the overall kind of goal of this project is for them to talk more about Helsinki, and it's a well-known fact that, if we look at the Nordic region, Helsinki has the lowest budget, right now. Our colleagues in Copenhagen and Stockholm, they have about 4 times bigger budget for promoting, then you realize that we cannot compete with them, in the sense of money. But we can compete with them, in other ways.

Creating awareness is one main success that all interviewees believe the campaign would achieve.

> *Omar: Helsinki might not be a secret anymore.*

> *Kathryn: Because I feel that Helsinki has always been more an underground destination, it is not Barcelona or London or Paris, where everybody needs to go once in a lifetime. It has always been underdog. And I think it is great that visit Helsinki recognized that, but not try to desperately change it. Instead, they slowly try to make people aware of it.*

Authentic understanding of Helsinki

Another success goal for the campaign is allowing participants to live as a local person for short period of time so that they can have authentic understanding of the city.

> *Kathryn: How life actually feels is what makes travelling interesting. You can just go look at the pictures of Eiffel Tower, but it will not give you the same feeling as sitting in a local café somewhere and slipping a cup of coffee. You can only understand a destination if you live like a local. It is authentic, and nobody wants a fake authentic form.*

> *Helena: Because the campaign takes the whole year, it seems to be quite smart in a sense that when you come here in January, you can see so different sides of the city. And if you come in September, it's totally different again, so, because there is a lot of different things, like I said, nature and design, and the food, and then, there are four seasons. So it is always different city.*

10.3 Blog

Self expression

For half of the time in the focus groups, the author asked participants why they think blogging is becoming more popular. The results revealed that people see the blog as a tool for self-expression.

> *Annika: We have the need for sharing.*

> *Emily: I think, people have really caught on to the fact that they can empower others into telling their opinions/views on global population and not just friends. And uploading online is a way to share experiences and stories and a way to feel heard. Travelling is a big part of world culture now that it's kind of hand-in-hand.*

The interview with Cory, Lee and Kathryn, who are both bloggers themselves, also indicated that blogging allowed people to voice their opinions, helping others who might have the same problems. They also said by reading blogs, readers can find answers reassuring them in certain areas and enable them to "follow footsteps" if suitable. "The need for sharing" expressed by Annika, is a unique pattern of social customer definition, which was part of the theory about CRM 2.0 (Greenberg 2010).

Personal connection

Other characteristics of blogs were also revealed during analysis phase. Since bloggers are writing from their subjective angle, the uniqueness lies in personal connection. Kathryn said that it would depend on what readers might be looking for, but if they found particular blogs to connect with their own personality, the diverse flexibility of blogging is shown.

Positive versus negative advices

This category indicates two different perspectives: bloggers and blog readers. Cory, Omar and Kathryn, who work closely with social media networks, shared their opinions about positive atmosphere of blogs.

> Kathryn: People follow positive advice, and I do not think anyone would appreciate bad talks. There is a code of honor in blogging, that if you have a terrible experience, you will not slash someone online. Because you are still working with them, cooperation partners will use this experience to work with partners, or cooperation person, to make it better. And that's why blogging is so valuable, because also for the destinations, what you get from professional is much more than just an article. As I said, if there is a terrible experience, it will not be a terrible TripAdvisor review even if it will remain to be honest.

> Cory: If I have a terrible experience at it for some reasons, then maybe I just will not post it up that museum on my website at all. I am not necessarily telling like, lying to people and saying like "oh yea this museum is fantastic", when it is really not. I try to just focus on posting the good things about a destination.

> Omar: ...So same in the blogs that if they have positive vibe, people keep reading them. But if everything is too negative, nobody will read them.

On the other hand, Emily expressed her views as a reader as well.

Emily: I do not want to those weird experiences but I want those negative thoughts so I can be prepared than not. I agree that people are looking for positive experiences when you read blogs. Someone has the negative blogs, and you would not even read that because you only thought in your head "well that sucks for them".

10.4 Blog's impact on millennial tourists

Generation Y & their consuming behaviors

At beginning of both focus groups, the author examined participants' consuming behaviors, in order to generalize a description of consumers from generation Y. They were asked questions regarding both consumer products and holiday purchasing. As this thesis's main purpose is about city branding and, in a sense, tourism, the author will use the term *millennial tourists* to address the participants on a general level.

Millennial tourists do not want to spend too much on careful research. They wish to have quick orientation rather than long descriptions. All of the participants are price-oriented and comfortable with taking risks when purchasing.

Bailey: I buy things I have never used or got to experience before, and just hope that they are good. I'd like to get the most bang for my bucks, so I definitely look for good bargains! But I think quality always comes before price. So even if there are two products, saying shampoo, and one is 1 euro cheaper but it is terrible, I would not buy it anyway. I want something that works well, and the cheapest of the products that do work well.

In addition, they are mostly not brand-consumed. They indicate that they do not necessarily have brands they have to use. They do pay attention to the package, and make decisions based on it. Some of them might base their decisions on what ingredients are within or whether a brand seems to be ethical or sustainable. It is also essential to note, they often make purchases based on their emotion, since this generation of consumers tend not to take a long time examining different brands.

Nevertheless, depending on what types of products they are, these patterns might vary. Khairul, Phoebe and Harsh have definite cosmetic brands that they are connected to and would not likely to change. Bailey described herself as not

being attached to any particular brands and easily persuaded by her network. Emily and Annika might allow their emotion to drive their purchase decision.

> *Emily: I feel like, if I want, I would buy to try it out. But if I don't want to experience it, I don't get it.*

They were also asked to share their opinions about brand experiences before buying.

> *Khairul: Essential when it comes to items that are going to last, electronics or cosmetics, because you are going to use it for a long time. But, it is kind of contradictive. When you buy things from Internet, you do not have these kinds of experiences. That is why you are depending on like photos and the reviews by other people.*

> *Phoebe: There are always cosmetic testers, allowing you to try before to see if it suits you or not.*

> *Annika: I think it goes for a lot of products, such as clothes; you cannot just buy it because it looks nice. You have to actually put on, and see what it looks like before you can buy it.*

The importance of experiences is not only shown through consumer products. On the other hand, when it comes to cities, participants link "experience" with authenticity. Millennial tourists seek for adventures and different stand, away from average tourists. They might prefer to be seen and described as travellers. Edelheim (2015, 3) calls such mindset "tourist angst"—"the dissatisfaction tourists have with 'merely' experiencing staged attractions and an urge to learn how the attraction is to be perceived 'in reality' ".

> *Annika: I usually would like to experience what a local would experience, rather than just following certain tourist guidelines. And I like going to places that people usually do not see.*

> *Khairul: I want to go to metro, and ride the train, and get lost, you know, get back to the city and being lost. It is pretty much an experience. I do not want to go to parks and take pictures. I am really not that kind of person. So I want to immerse myself into the city, rather than taking a map and going to one place after another.*

Experience Helsinki brand

After recording patterns of their consuming behavior, the author gave them small exercise to explore their own feelings reading two different style of writing about

a destination. The idea of this exercise was to observe their reactions to blogs, whether their emotions were evoked. Shaw and his colleagues (2010) describe throughout their work that emotions evoked are factors making the social media experience to possibly be an experience.

> *Phoebe: I can actually picture myself, my toes numbed or rolling in the snow, you know, like you actually feel it, like you potentially could be that person.*

> *Emily: You can look at the tourist guide all you want and you can be like interested, but when you look at blogs and their experiences, you always have this envy inside you. Well in a way, more as I want to go there and experience that too.*

> *Annika: Because it is a proper personal experience. Blogs are telling you about what the person actually thought while doing it, even what they did not like, when they get lost and just make you feel more part of it in a way.*

Interestingly, the second focus group conveyed contrasting ideas. When being asked whether participants feel they are experiencing Helsinki in psychological sense with the blogs, they expressed different opinions.

> *Khairul: It has little effect on me, because I am reading the articles and I would process it as their story, their experience, and not a way to persuade me to go along with them. I would say, I am happy for you to experience Helsinki but that does equal me buying tickets to go there.*

> *Harsh: Yes, it is kind of the same for me. For me to experience something, it has to have personal connection, you know. By reading this, which I see it as too general and you can insert any city instead of "Helsinki", it is just a city at the end.*

> *Bailey: I think photos and words cannot give you the experience.*

> *Harsh: And there are so many blogs online. So you have to do something really good to stand out. For example, you go search about students doing Erasmus, you find a lot of photos about people having fun and doing a lot activities. For me, now it comes to a point where I am getting tired of it, like I really do not want to see one more photo of you climbing mountains.*

Travel inspiration versus information source

They were given another style of writing taken from visit Helsinki tourist guide itself, which is believed to be more formal and informational, for comparison. Such action might help the flows of focus groups, allowing them to expand the areas so participants see directions of expressing their individual thoughts.

> *Annika: If you actually want to go there, I think the blogs are making decision easier because they are actually telling you how other people feel about the place. And of course, if you look at the tourist brochure, they would just all be like "oh, this is the best city you have ever been to!" But reading from a person perspective makes it a bit more interesting for me.*

Being the same as the earlier subcategory, there were also opposite ideas in the second focus group, which were in contrast to the first three participants.

> *Bailey: I do not think I want to experience anything before I go somewhere, because you only get real experience. For example, if I am in the USA, and I want to travel to Helsinki, there is no point in me eating Finnish particular pie before I come, because it will ruin real experiences.*

> *Bailey (cont.): I think if this was formatted in like a Buzzfeed style articles, as with the title "there are 17 things to do in Helsinki", then it would be better. Because I am sure that not all of them are the most popular things, I would only pick one among them. There will be photos and they tell you about delicious food and activities.*

> *Harsh: I would prefer the informational tourist guide, since it was more specific about opening time of places, whereas my blog just said about coffee culture, and memorizes something. I would not know where to go anyway.*

One last thing to present is how all participants expressed skeptical opinions towards blogs and branding. They would address them as a "marketing ploy" effort done by companies. Nevertheless, they are also aware that marketing is contemporarily happening. As Bailey pointed out, she would not mind buying products because of marketing's persuasion. On the other hand, Annika implied that instead of avoiding marketing, people should just not take it for granted.

> *Bailey: If they got me to like a product, then they did a good job.*

> *Annika: Because a few times, I travel, I read people's tips on the blogs, and then I go there, and there are so such things. And maybe that was 10 years ago. Or maybe it's closed down. I'd like to think that, with any kinds of advertising, like you should not take anything for granted, but I still think they are a really good way of getting ideas about the place.*

11 Conclusions

The aim of this thesis was to describe the relevant impact of live brand experience and blogging on the branding of the City of Helsinki. In order to

achieve this aim, the author first did a literature review for a theoretical background about live brand experience, city branding and blogging. These three core themes have remained rather consistently throughout the whole thesis, while guiding the data collection process and supporting the conceptualization at the analysis phase. There were two research questions to answer and the author chose one particular case study approach. Since the three main themes all include a number of subtopics, this thesis recognized the #HelsinkiSecret Residence campaign as an ideal single case to both narrow down these three themes and to connect them. By interviewing those who are involved in the campaign, from different angles: (participant, organizer, partner and local friends), the research results revealed which ways foreign tourists are currently experiencing the Helsinki brand and how the Helsinki brand is in part perceived in these ways.

Among the four categories that were conceptualized after coding and analyzing, City Branding and Live Brand Experience categories directly answer to the first research question. As a matter of fact, the City Branding category acts as a background source, drawing a picture of the Helsinki's brand for readers to understand what experiences with Helsinki the campaign wants to deliver. The ways foreign tourists are experiencing Helsinki brand is the campaign itself. The Live Brand Experience category provides patterns, matching the theories collected from Smilansky (2009). The other two categories respond to the question of whether a blog is a city brand experience tool and what impact it has on millennial tourists, prior to their purchasing decisions.

Millennial tourists were chosen to be the target group of tourists for this thesis during the data collection process. The original research questions were targeted at foreign tourists, and the author expected to reach more participants in the campaign. Nevertheless, due to the time constraints and the fact that this thesis remains only a snapshot of the campaign during two months January–February, the author adapted her approach. All the interviewees belong to the class of millennial consumers, or in other words—generation Y consumers. The blog posts, under the theme *Winter in Finland*, are also produced by generation Y bloggers, except for one case. Noticing such patterns, the participants in the focus

groups were accordingly recruited. This led to no theory being offered about generation Y consumer behavior, except for the results arising from the focus groups, which gave a some reliable description of the millennial tourists.

Helsinki & #HelsinkiSecret Residence Campaign

Helsinki is chosen for research because the city has not yet officially had a brand. According to research's results, there is a project named Brand New Helsinki, which was started in 2015, aiming to develop a concrete brand for the city. At the time being, the city has had different marketing campaigns before; nevertheless, they have been based on the main themes provided by Visit Helsinki: HEL Yeah! Lifestyle. This theme consists of three main elements: design, food and urban nature.

Being among other popular Nordic capital cities as Stockholm, Oslo and Copenhagen, Helsinki has its shining advantages. Peacock (2016) points out "Helsinki is a capital that's finally found its voice". Helsinki is described as the hub of "design-art obsessed graduate", a waterside attraction gathering, and a place hosting the opposites: between aged-old atmosphere and modern urban lifestyle of the youth generation. Elisabeth emphasizes Helsinki does not possess a rich history but the city has not stopped growing and changing flexibly. Owing to this fact, Helsinki proves to be a suitable choice for single case study, as being revelatory and unique.

#HelsinkiSecret Residence campaign first approached local people by developing the website *helsinkisecret.fi*, realizing the secrets shared by locals are in fact matching with Hel Yeah! theme. On the other hand, Brand New Helsinki project has done many interviews and organized platforms, to which locals were invited to be a part of this new brand creation. This is important to note as it matches with one main characteristic of city branding practices, internal stakeholders' involvement. On the other hand, "residents or local people are the ones who 'make or break' the destination" (Braun, Kavaratzis & Zenker 2013, 23); hence, creating a brand for the city without local involvement can be a wrong choice. This campaign lasts for a whole year, marking one of its uniqueness. It allows participants to see a multifaceted city, at different seasons of the year. It breaks

through a boundary that had been noticed and raised up during the first focus group, "almost every promotional material about Finland is only about summer time".

#HelsinkiSecret Residence also shows two highly relevant characteristics of a live brand experience platform: the voice of consumers and word-of-mouth. Results in the subcategory Smart Marketing, demonstrate how the Visit Helsinki organization let go of being in control and not limiting bloggers in their decision-making. The organization encourages international bloggers to immerse themselves into the city however they see fit, which reflects core of the live brand experience (Smilansky 2009). The campaign even considers Customer Experience Management, plants clues throughout the participants' experience journey so that they can notice Finnish touches in their accommodation. Elisabeth, with the role of a service provider, makes her best effort of being available throughout their journey. "Local friends" ideas are not only showing local involvement in participants' experiences, but they also display the friendly nature of Helsinki. Such friendliness was among common words used to describe Helsinki, throughout the interviews.

Comparing with strategy (appendix 2) that Smilansky (2009) describes, the main goal of this campaign—to encourage people to spread WOM, is matched with Reach and Exponential Element.

> *The main goal of the project is to make Helsinki the topic of social conversation in 2016. This is measured by the reach of the hash tag #helsinkisecret. Initially (last year) the goal was to reach at least 1,5 million people with the hash tag. This was made with the thought that each social influencer would reach at least 30 000 people monthly, and that times four for each month, times 12 for the whole year (30 000 x 4 x 12). This goal was reached very quickly as the first Chinese residents of the residence reached together that amount as one of them had 900 000 monthly reach and the other one had a reach of over 700 000 people. Therefore, we will now during spring set the goal of the reach again, so that it is valid. We will also monitor a large number of things: applicants, partner satisfaction, social influencer feedback, gained traditional media & PR value, podcasts, partner engagement and content creation (see the content creation terms stated to the residents on the helsinkisecret.com website in the info section).*
>
> *On a long-term (2–3 years) basis, we will also see if the concept has increased overnights and/or prolonged stays in Helsinki. Finally, we will*

have the answer to the question: what is Helsinki's secret, seen from an international point of view. This secret (marketing theme) can then be used in our future marketing material and/or actions. (Elisabeth's interview, 2016.)

Helsinki is developing from the core, letting its citizen feel afresh the making of creative and bold business decisions. This campaign is one example. Another essential model to have the campaign compared with is communication model (appendix 1).

So the bloggers, in this case, are actually kind of ambassadors of Helsinki, because I am sure, by reading through engagements that they have on the blogs, very much talking about Helsinki, people are asking them a lot of tips of what to see and to do in Helsinki. (Elisabeth's interview, 2016.)

In addition, a city is more complex than a consumer product. A city has buildings and supportive infrastructure and, without them, people would not have experiences to share. However, the factor of "standing out from the crowd" lies in the ways people live in and feel the city, and how they bring the word to outsiders. A city is a mirror in which persons see reflected themselves, their lives, or part of their lives when they use the city's name in speaking about it. (Kolb 2006, 18.) A city brand, in a way, can be compared to a human being with a personality, and communicating brand personality is most successful with live brand experience platform. Williams (2016) expresses main logic behind such experiential market thinking as "consumers can feel the essence of the product by being a part of it". He also says accepting the progression of economic value, which was referred by Pine and Gilmore (2004), equals "the transition from the marketing of services to the marketing of experience, all tourism and hospitality offers are acts of 'theatre' that stage these experiences". (485.) Edelheim (2015) is another author implying idea of 'staged experiences'.

Tourism is still haunted by the myth of a host and a guest...Staging can also be seen as the way in which people at a destination guarantee the value of the tourism product, while at the same time safeguarding their private lives. (31.)

This remains a challenge for city branding practices, for the fact that it can be easily seen as another "marketing ploy". Nevertheless, as two participants in the second focus group did say "globalization cannot be avoided anymore".

Globalization exists. This means also generating the urge for having unique identity among the crowd, despite whether product is a daily grocery item to a certain city destination. Live brand experience concept is created as a responsive developing of organizations.

> *In addition, experiential marketing has the potential to reframe our thinking about marketing practice in an increasingly fragmented global marketplace. (Williams 2016, 484.)*

Morgan & Pritchard (2004, 226) say branded cities can fall into four following categories:

- Celebrities, in which Amsterdam, Barcelona, London, Paris—as examples used in the research results—belong to.

- Problem places: low emotions attached but remain to be quite well known.

- Potential stars: high emotions attached but low profiles on the market.

- Loser, implying unfortunate cities who fail at branding themselves.

The category about Helsinki is described by locals in research results, is demonstrating the ground for high emotions attached to the brand, which is pattern of a 'potential star' city. Even though Helsinki has not yet finalized or publicly announced its brand, the city has one strong advantage: the locals' pride and their willingness to show Helsinki to the world. It is described as a strong advantage, since the second focus group's results indicated if the city is not welcoming tourists, branding it might not be smart. Local citizen would not deliver the city's brand to tourists, leading to inconsistent strategy and failed results. The locals are ambassadors of the city brand to its tourists. Their involvement affects to millennial tourists' perception of an authentic experience, as Gen Y seeks for adventure in the sense of living life as a local while travelling. More consuming patterns of millennial tourist will be elaborated later.

Even though both city brand and live brand experience concepts are positively recognized, they can still be easily misunderstood, which result in wrongly

executed. Research results demonstrated how people might relate to organizing mega-scaled events as city brand's definition. As stated in the theory, events are not necessarily city brand or live brand experience itself. Events should be considered more as a part of both concepts. On the other hand, it is true that Bailey described her understanding of city branding as "giving the city a slogan and promoting it"; however, it also appears as a reason why cities should consider live brand experience in their strategies to make their city be seen beyond one slogan. Quite often, the slogans also fail to capture all the essences within cities.

Experiences with blogs and blog's impact on millennial tourists

> *Contemporary consumers are as likely to be driven by thrift as to they are to be hedonistic, they use consumption to make statements about themselves, they use consumption to create their identities and they develop a sense of belonging through consumption (Williams 2016, 483).*

As described earlier in research results, millennial tourists seek for authenticity while travelling. To experience local lives is one of the ways for them to find authenticity. For gen Y tourists, price factor seems to highly affect their decisions, because they are most likely to be constrained by finance, especially with travelling fees. They do not relate price with quality either, meaning they can still have good quality products even when the price is cheap. Travelling is an adventure in their sense. Quite often, they might not realize the urge to create identity is guiding their reactions. Even though they are aware of being tourists, they neither prefer to be addressed by such a term nor want to follow a "beaten path". As quoted from De Mooji (2004), in theory, cultural background might be another factor affecting consumer behaviors. Bailey, Annika and Emily appear to have patterns of an individualistic culture. Consumers from such culture take risks with new brands of products. Possessing their own identity is important. Khairul, Harsh and Phoebe represent the general patterns of collective culture, in contrast to individualistic consumers. Nevertheless, this detail may fall into presumptuous generalization because all participants in both focus groups have spent time living abroad and interacting with adaptation to new cultures. The adaptation changes one's behavior. Millennial tourist 's consuming behavior

directly affects how a blog might or might not impact their decision of going to a destination.

The first focus group expressed positive attitude towards blogs even though they all do not have habit of reading blogs. They did admit to reading a blog sometimes but not necessarily following one, except Annika who follows her friend's blog. Despite this, a blog is potentially a travel inspiration to them. A blog is written from subjective angle, expressed in informal and easy style, and it is believed to reflect the honesty of the writers. According to the interviewee Kathryn, these factors create "authenticity" in blogs that people cannot find from regular reviews. Cory told his story of becoming a blogger because he wanted to help others who also wish to be accessible travellers. He started it as an act of self-expression and it has become his professional job. Blogging is now both his responsibility and something he loves to do. Such a genuine approach from a blogger makes readers establish personal connection. Connection is the key to evoking their emotions. Emily felt "jealous" and Phoebe said she could "envision herself" to be that person behind texts.

The participants also say that the informal atmosphere of blogs can make their decisions easier, as they are different from the "forceful" promotional materials of tourism organizations. The jealous feeling Emily expressed might become the motivation for her to go to that destination in future. Live brand experience campaigns do not place their entire emphasis on driving sales. Its aim is creating the memorable factor, which could successfully become a brand purchasing action or brand loyalty. An example from Harsh, a participant of the second focus group, shows how she "got hooked" by Ben & Jerry's ice cream brand.

> *The first time I ate it was half price sale, 6 years ago, in England, because it was half-priced. But 6 years later, even today, the only time I ever buy it is when it is half-priced. Even though it is my favorite ice cream brand in the whole world. I still buy in Finland when it is half-priced. I do not know if that means they get me hooked or not.*

Interestingly, this example matches with new brand loyalty definition suggested by Roberts (2015), CEO of Saatchi & Saatchi Company. According to him, repeat buyers will remain the "physics" of the brand loyalty notion but it is no longer

highly effective for today's consumer market. "Beyond textbooks and algorithms, marketers will be lost if they don't get to the rub of how people feel" (ibid., 3). How Harsh states that Ben & Jerry is still her favorite ice cream in the whole world, represents a sense of brand loyalty. She might not pay full price for it but the brand has gained her emotional connection. It reflects a long-term investment from the company's side to keep the customer. On the contrary, this new perception of brand loyalty is yet debatable since few companies have time and resources for long-term investment.

The second focus group presented opposite attitudes towards blogs. Harsh and Khairul tend to prefer visual effect, rather than presentations and words. Bailey also said she did not believe blogs or videos could deliver experiences. In their opinion, a blog that can "persuade" them to go to a destination has to convey certain unique and personal touch, showing them why their attentions are worth paid.

However, all participants from both focus groups agree that they wish to experience products before they have to buy, results from this group built up rival opposes to statement: *social media experience is an experience itself*. In reality, it is common for people to link word "experience" only to real interaction. Without five human senses of experience, an experience is not real. Williams (2016, 487) addresses this big challenge for tourism marketing when applying experiential marketing, by quoting Frank Garahan, Rancho Las Palmas Resort General Manager: "Hospitality maketing is experiential, how do you explain the sensory excitement of being here? You can't get the ambiance from an advert".

Another contrasting idea appears to be how participants from the first focus group see articles telling people "top 10 things to do" as being not genuine and how the second focus group would prefer the clear approach of writing. This difference links with diverse flexibility of blogs, indicated by Kathryn when she said, "one style of blog would work for certain readers, not all". It depends on what readers search for. It also appears that participants from second focus group do not base travelling decision on blogs, but they do sometimes rely on

personal recommendations from their network. In addition, Harsh provided an example of using 3D lenses for consumers to see the places before travelling.

It is indeed a fact that technology use for producing such a virtual visit is increasing. There is SITRA system in the Rhone-alps, which is a Customer Relationship Management system collecting information from organizations involved in tourism and dispensing it to a range of outlets such as PDA's, GPS, in-vehicle or mobile. There is also another project HOPPY using similar technology to produce a multi-media mapping experience for tourists. (Williams 2016, 492.)

> *...ask yourself which is more effective: a simple pop-up exhibit and promotional literature depicting the benefits of an ocean cruise, or to climb to the top of the bridge to take in the simulated view of the aqua-blue Caribbean waters (Allen 2005, 3).*

11.1 Reliability and Validity

Construct validity

> *One of the assumptions underlying qualitative research is that reality is holistic, multidimensional, and ever—changing; it is not a single, fixed, objective phenomenon waiting to be discovered, observed, and measured as in quantitative research (Merriam 2009, 213).*

One recommendation to ensure qualitative research validity is triangulation in data collection methods. The author described in the research implementation section that this thesis did not solely rely on interviews as its main source. An adequate amount of data was collected, based on websites, blog posts and public articles involving Helsinki's brand or visit Helsinki marketing campaign. Documents used are believed to be most likely contemporary as there is not much secondary data about the case study. Primary data source contributes greatly to description for background information on the case study. The organizers provide data themselves, even if Visit Helsinki was not the commissioner of the thesis, ensuring the data to be fairly valid from a professional point of view.

Internal Validity

It remains a question of how many people should be interviewed in order for research to be valid. Merriam (2009, 219) suggested the best rule to apply here is noticing saturation sense within the data—meaning the researcher might begin to see or hear the same information over and over again. Through the thesis results, it can be seen that similar statements are expressed. All interviewees share similar opinions when asked to describe Helsinki. Regarding the campaign, their opinions might be considered to be biased since they are involved. Nevertheless, all participants in both focus groups think the campaign has positive meaning. The first three participants see #HelsinkiSecret Residence campaign as smart marketing move, different from traditional approaches. Other participants have more complex ideas about the campaign because they are not convinced of the persuasive ability of blogs; however, they do indicate this strategy is a good way to create awareness on a quantity base. Results also revealed patterns that matched with theory presented, especially in how #HelsinkiSecret Residence represents a live brand experience platform.

On the other hand, the fact that contrasting ideas were unforeseen, arising from the second focus group, offering rival explanations to the blogging phenomenon. This ensures the thesis's ability to convey both possible sides of a phenomenon.

External validity

According to Merriam (2009), purpose of qualitative methodology is to understand a particular phenomenon in depth, cannot respond directly to "what can be generally true of the many". It was suggested then qualitative researchers can apply notion of "transferability", in which "the burden of proof lies less with the original investigator than with the person seeking to make application elsewhere, as long as sufficient descriptive data are provided for make transferability possible". (224–225.) The theory provided in this thesis is not limited only to the case study; hence, future researchers can continue from the study or repeat it.

On the other hand, being limited by time constraints, this thesis only looks at the case study from a snapshot view, for the period of time January–February. The campaign is ongoing and there might be more issues appearing later but thesis

author cannot access this. Unavailability of bloggers who participated, also appeared to be a limitation. However, data provided by Cory Lee is valuable, the argument could have been stronger with at least one more participant. This limitation does affect the thesis's ability of generalization. Nevertheless, the interview with the organizer provided the author adequate information to compose a descriptive data about #HelsinkiSecret Residence campaign, which will be helpful for "transferring" to other researchers.

Reliability

> *Replication of a qualitative study will not yield the same results, but this does not discredit the results os any particular study; there can be numerous interpretation of the same data. The more important question for qualitative research is whether the results are consistent with the data collected. (Merriam 2009, 221.)*

As said, the author spent an adequate amount of time coding and analyzing the data, going back and forth through the transcripts. Many analysis memos were made, linking data to theories and to each other. Results presented in the thesis are believed to be most relevant for demonstrating answers to research questions. For each interview, the author spent time connecting with interviewees, for building trust. Most of the interviews were carried out quite informal and natural with free flow. For both focus groups, as the participants are same age as the author, and some of them happen to connect with the author through her network, the atmosphere was friendly enough for them to freely express themselves. As a facilitator, the author also tried not to have one participant speaking and one not. She also did not take part in the discussion or attempt to have participants answering the results she personally expected. Since the author transcribed and coded after each interview, she noted how she could better present herself in the next interviews and modify questions to make them more suitable. Interview questions for the organizer, the participant, the partner & local friends are different, despite them following the same three main themes.

It is worth noting for future replicative research that the researcher should not give out background information about the campaign, prior to the exercise of asking them to read blog posts. It appeared that with such background

information, their answers are affected knowing the blog posts are part of a marketing campaign. They described feeling "a bit skeptical", that the posts "failed to persuade" when being asked about their feelings after reading blogs.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. The author's application of Smilansky (2009)'s communication model

Word of mouth

Encode message

Bloggers experience

Helsinki brand

Bloggers

2-WAY COMMUNICATION

Amplification channels

Decoding message: blog readers

Receiving message: they want to travel to Helsinki

Appendix 2. Desscription & Example of BETTER model application

	Description	Example
B – brand personality	Brand can be seen as possessing personalities as in the context of people. Its definition has been described in the section about branding.	
E – Emotional connection	"Over 50% of a customer experience is about emotions, even in a business to business environment"(Shaw, Dibeehi & Walden, 2010)." The main point is emotional connection leads to a memorable experience. The inspirations to form such connection are through three key attributes and multi-sensory elements. It is important to note, because in the case live brand experience is not delivered face-to-face and multi-sensory approach cannot be fully implemented, the three key attributes will still be able to create, evoke emotion and embed the memory of the experience to consumer's mind. (Smilansky 2009, 56.)	Smilansky gave out an efficient example of the brainstorming process for a fruity breakfast cereal product. In the example, three key attributes are: **(1)** Authentic – the company only uses natural ingredients to make the product; **(2)** Positively connected – the company takes photographs of participants while they are engaging, and then print the photo, putting into a branded frame; **(3)** Personally meaningful – the company runs a competition, asking participants to re-tell their "get-fit" stories and ask them to explain how getting healthier and active has made their lives happier. (58.)
T – Target Audience	It is important to ensure who the company wants the messages to reach to, how his daily lifestyle is, in order to form an appropriate emotional connections. (Smilansky 2009, 60–61.)	
T – Two-way interaction	This factor connects strongly	Smilansky (2009, 62) suggests

	with engagement. Implementing two-way interaction into the design will make the consumers see relationship with a brand similar to a normal human-being relationship. (ibid.).	the interaction is achieved through live brand experiences activities such as game or service in which "brand ambassadors and consumers engage, talk and listen". Such interaction can also create a "life-long friendship where the consumer develops high loyalty for the brand" (ibid.). In the example of Harriet—a marketing manager for a new product that comes in three basic flavors: strawberry, orange and banana; who encourages the brand ambassadors to ask the consumer what his/her favorite flavor is, but relating more to one's identity. Consumers are asked if they are a "sexy strawberry" person, a "brave banana" person or an "organized orange" person.
E – Exponential Element	The consumer who participates in the activity is motivated to spread the WOM to others about the live brand experience since the engagement benefited him. Anything that can be done to encourage this spreading is an added bonus and should be used in the amplification channels. (ibid., 63.)	
R – Reach	It is recommended to consider both the initial Reach (the people who interact with live brand experience) and the combined Reach of the experiential campaign as a whole (including the amplification channel). Smilansky (2009, 65) says it will be, in fact, the best to integrate live brand experience idea into	

the other selected channel.	

Appendix 3. Business's objectives for implementing Live Brand Experiences

Objectives	Examples
Bringing brand personality to life	John is responsible for a breakfast bar with a sporty and active brand personality that aims at healthy males and females aged 18-35. His experiential marketing agency set up a set featured circuit-training elements. Customers were invited to take part in a circuit challenge such as jogging machines, rowing machines, push-up benches and monkey bars. They were also invited to have their pulse taken and heart rate tested. The ones who could complete the challenge in less than two minutes won a good bag containing a sample bar, a sales promotion voucher, a branded T-shirt and a branded stopwatch. After the experience, research showed that the target audience associated the breakfast bar brand with a sporty and active lifestyle. (ibid., 81.)
Drive word-of-mouth	Mark is the brand manager for a new basketball computer game with revolutionary features. His target group is 16-21 year-old city-based males. His PR agency then created a gaming experience held outside basketball courts in his target cities. The set was designed with comfy couches, large surround-sound plasma screens, gaming consoles, and fridges containing free soft drinks (branded with the video game imaginary). The participants were asked to provide their contact details before entering the set and playing video games. High scorers were offered the opportunity to have their own free business cards. Exponential element was shown very clear and strong here; since when the target audience used their business cards socializing with their peers later, they would likely talk about the video game

	and their interactive experience. (ibid., 82.)
Create a memorable brand experience	Sandy owns a travel website that sells holiday to exotic locations in the Caribbean and warm places around the world. She hoped to have a marketing approach, which would result in a long-term effect. This goal motivated her to design a live brand experience that featured a touring Caribbean beach set with brand ambassadors dressed in traditional Caribbean clothing. The live brand experience toured around the country during the summer and targeted families. Consumers were invited to take photos while visiting the "beaches"; then, they were handed out glossy brochures both promoted the travel website and a micro-site where they could download the photos. Before they were able to actually download, consumers needed to enter their contact data, after which they had the option to forward their photos to friends and family, as well as order free hard copies in branded frames. (ibid., 83.)
Communicate complex brand messages	Vladimir is responsible for marketing a premium brand of vodka. There is a five-step purification process for vodka and the experiential marketing agency helped Vladimir to convey the process into the message symbolically. The experience set was implemented at a upmarket nightclubs, in which customers could sit on a luxurious "purification chair", put on a silk blindfold and proceed to be "purified" with an aromatic, facial cleansing wipe and a head and shoulder message from a "purification angel". At the end, each of the customers was given a shot of vodka in order to fully complete the purification process. This activity has helped Vladimir to successfully communicate such a complex brand message, which other marketing channels would have been less likely to convey. (ibid., 86.)
Position the brand	Savio is the marketing and sales director of a sportswear company and he wanted to position the sportswear brand as a trendy. His target groups are opinion leaders aged 16-25. Through market research, he knows that his target

	audience enjoyed street dance, and he decided to gain credibility with his audience by holding a live brand experience tour. The campaign was carried out at music festivals across Australia, where all the visitors had the opportunity to enter and compete. The dancers who competed wore sportswear clothing. The campaign turned out to be a big success and a high topic for discussion of music festivals. (ibid., 87.)

Appendix 4. LROI calculation

LROI= (X:C) x100

In which:

S: number of sales based on 2.6% of W (word-of-mouth reach)

P: profit per sale

X: the profit generated from live brand experience, based on [SxP]

C: cost of live brand experience

N: the number of consumer interaction with the live brand experience

W: the word-of-mouth reach, based on [17N+N]

Appendix 5. Focus group participants

Focus group 1	Emily Auvinen (International Business student in JAMK UAS) From the USA	Phoebe Shan (Exchanged student in International Businnes in JAMK UAS) From China	Annika Sievert (Intercultural Communication student in University of Jyväskylä, Master Degree) From Germany
Focus group 2	Khairul Izwan Shararin (Psychology student in	Bailey Schmit (Intercultural Communication student	Harsh Rodrigo (Intercultural Communication student

	University of Jyväskylä) From Malaysia	in University of Jyväskylä, Master Degree) From the USA	in University of Jyväskylä, Master Degree) From Srilanka

Appendix 6. Interviews' date, time, location and interviewee's names.

Name	Date	Time	Location
Elisabeth Heinrichs (campaign organizer)	February 24th, 2016	14:00, lasted 2 hours.	Helsinki Marketing Ltd office
Cory Lee (campaign's participant)	February 15th, 2016	21:15, lasted 1 hour.	Skype
Helena Hämäläinen (the University of Helsinki representative)	February 24th, 2016	12:00 noon, lasted 20 minutes.	Helsinki University
Omar El Mrabt (local friend)	February 21st, 2016	11:37, lasted 30 minutes.	Skype
Kathrin Deter (local friend and blogger)	February 26th, 2016	15:00, lasted 25 minutes.	Coffee shop in Helsinki

Appendix 7. Blog reader profile.

- They have a passion for travelling.
- They look for inspiration and seek values from blogs.
- They trust personal recommendations and would prefer not reading long & informational tourist guides.
- They are interested at story telling writing style or tips recommended by bloggers.
- Ideally, they should come from USA, India, UK and East Asia; based on blogger's nationalities. However this point was expressed during recruitment process, it appeared to be not important as long as there exist a diverse background in the focus group.

Appendix 8. CRM and CRM 2.0

Table II Differences between traditional CRM and CRM 2.0

Traditional CRM features/functions	CRM 2.0 features/functions
Definition: CRM is a philosophy and a business strategy, supported by a system and a technology, designed to improve human interactions in a business environment	Definition: CRM 2.0 is a philosophy and a business strategy, supported by a system and a technology, designed to engage the customer in a collaborative interaction that provides mutually beneficial value in a trusted and transparent business environment
Tactical and operational: Customer strategy is part of corporate strategy	Strategic: Customer strategy *is* corporate strategy
Relationship between the company and the customer was seen as enterprise-managing customer – parent to child to a large extent	Relationship between the company and the customer is seen as a collaborative effort. And yet, the company must still be an enterprise in all other aspects
Focus on company <> customer relationship	Focus on all iterations of the relationships (among company, business partners, customers) and specifically focus on identifying, engaging and enabling the "influential" nodes
The company seeks to lead and shape customer opinions about products, services, and the company-customer relationship	The customer is seen as a partner from the beginning in the development and improvement of products, services, and the company-customer relationship
Business focus on products and services that satisfy customers	Business focus on environments and experiences that engage customer
Customer-facing features – sales, marketing and support	Customer-facing both features and the people who are in charge of developing and delivering those features
Marketing focused on processes that sent improved, targeted, highly specific corporate messages to customer	Marketing focused on building relationship with customer – engaging customer in activity and discussion, observing and redirecting conversations and activities among customers; participating in those conversations
Intellectual property protected with all legal might available	Intellectual property created and owned together with the customer, partner, supplier, problem solver
Insights and effectiveness were optimally achieved by the single view of the customer (data) across all channels by those who needed to know. Based on "complete" customer record and data integration	Insights are a considerably more dynamic issue and are based on customer data, customer personal profiles on the web and the social characteristics associated with them, and customer participation in the activity, acquisition of those insights
Resided in a customer-focused business ecosystem	Resides in a customer ecosystem
Technology focused around operational aspects of sales, marketing, support	Technology focused on both the operational and social aspects of the interaction
Tools are associated with automating functions	Integrates social media tools into apps/services: blogs, wikis, podcasts, social networking tools, content-sharing tools, user communities
Utilitarian, functional, operational	Style and design also matter
Mostly uni-directional	Always bi-directional
Presumes for customer regularly	Integrates "voice of the customer" into all facets of planning from strategy on

Source: CRM 2.0 Wiki[7]