

Sustainability in tourism – case studies from Finland

The new digital channels and social media platforms offer to SMEs in tourism business a lot of opportunities to target and access markets at low cost, and to achieve business and sustainability goals. This article describes the Sustainable Manager in Tourism Sector course, including four case studies on sustainability. Sustainability in tourism is studied from the viewpoints of business, culture/society and environment. In the article the author focuses on marketing and especially on the multitude of channels and platforms for online, mobile and social media marketing.

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Sustainable MANageR in TOURism Sector (SMARTOUR) course

SMARTOUR project will provide training in business operations, environment and culture with a view to improving sustainability of the organisation and of the tourism offer in the region. The project outputs include the course and an online tool. The course includes several modules, such as energy, marketing and social media, supply chain, managing seasonality etc. SMARTOUR project is funded by the European Union under Erasmus+ Key Action 2 Strategic Partnerships.



Picture 1. SMARTOUR team members (Photo: Prof. J. Fairburn)

The marketing and social media module includes the learning outcomes, the key concepts of marketing and tourism, the transformed marketing environment, marketing objectives, strategies, activities, tools and channels, case studies, tasks etc. Today, people use more and more TripAdvisor and other similar platforms, the Internet, Facebook and other social media as information sources. The amount of online bookings has increased rapidly.

Integrated marketing communications mix includes personal selling, advertising, sales promotion, publicity and public relations, events and experiences, direct and database marketing, online, mobile and social media marketing, word of mouth, etc. There is a multitude of channels and platforms for online, mobile and social media marketing. (Kotler & Keller 2016, 583; Cooper, Fletcher, Fyall, Gilbert and Wanhill 2008, 514-523; Smith & Taylor 2006, 8; Wood 2014, 36-40.)

All aspects of sustainability form basis for destination marketing. The new digital channels and social media platforms offer to SMEs a lot of opportunities to target and access markets at low cost, and to achieve business and sustainability goals.

In this article four case studies from Finland about business, cultural/social and environmental sustainability in tourism are presented. All case studies have been considered by the author as very good examples of sustainability. In some of them the emphasis is especially on low cost marketing.

Case studies from Finland about business, cultural/social and environmental sustainability in tourism

The Serlachius Museums



Picture 2. The Serlachius Museums

The Serlachius Museums, attracting over 100,000 visitors per year, is a case study about business, cultural/social and environmental sustainability in tourism. The product/service offering of the museums include art, exhibitions, experiences, entertainment, events, food, training and services. The market offering, and the used marketing tools contribute to business sustainability. The museums pay attention to environmental issues and accessibility. Local quality ingredients are used in the offered food according to seasons. On the website there are numerous links to service providers in the region. Through networking and cooperation partnerships the museums increase economic, cultural and social sustainability in the region. The museums have received several notable awards. The website in five languages can be found at <http://www.serlachius.fi>



Picture 3. The Art Museum Gösta - The Serlachius Museums

In marketing, the Serlachius Museums use targeted online and traditional marketing and marketing communications tools and various digital and social media channels. The website, digital and social media are widely used in marketing. Trade fairs and events are used for marketing. For b-to-b customers direct contacts and direct marketing are used in addition to other marketing tools, the website, digital and social media. In international marketing it is especially important to do well-defined targeted marketing and provide program and tour packages to be sold. In selected markets the museums take part in sales events for tourism and travel business and they cooperate with Visit Finland. Events are organized for the media, and press releases and photos are available on the website.

Tampere Hall Congress and Concert Centre



Picture 4. Tampere Hall

Tampere Hall Congress and Concert Centre, with 350,000 annual visitors and hosting almost 700 concerts, congresses/conferences, cultural events, music and other performances, meetings and other business events per year, both national and international, is a case study about business, cultural/social and environmental sustainability in tourism. The market offering and the used marketing tools contribute to business sustainability. The environmental issues and accessibility are

very well taken care of. A strong emphasis is also given to using ecologically grown foods in the restaurant. In 2014, Tampere Hall has become the first ever congress centre in the Nordic countries to obtain the Nordic Ecolabel (The Nordic Swan Ecolabel), the official ecolabel of the Nordic countries. On the website Tampere Hall gives practical tips for arranging a sustainable meeting. Tampere Hall supports the cultural, economic and social sustainability of the region. Information about Tampere Hall is available at <http://www.tampere-talo.fi>



Picture 5. Tampere Hall's interior

In marketing, Tampere Hall uses targeted online and traditional marketing and marketing communications tools and various digital and social media channels. The website is used for marketing, too. The marketing tools are selected according to the market and target audiences. Social media is widely used in marketing. Tampere Hall has created a profile on a multitude of social media channels. It also has its own blog in Finnish on the website. For b-to-b customers direct contacts and direct marketing are used in addition to other marketing tools, the website, digital and social media. Events are organized for the media, and press releases and photos are available on the website.

Iloranta – a farm tourism resort



Picture 6. Iloranta – a farm tourism resort

Iloranta, situated in Hauho, offers peaceful accommodation, various nature activities, relaxation, recreation, well-being services, and delicious food. Iloranta is a SME case study about business, cultural/social and environmental sustainability in tourism. Iloranta offers farm vacations, full board holidays, conference and training services for businesses, events, camp schools, and programs based on nature and the history of the house, together with exercise and well-being theme weekends. There are many different kinds of saunas at Iloranta, and it also offers a wide range of fishing opportunities and boats for the guests. Iloranta serves the guests great Finnish food from first-class fresh and tasty locally grown produce. Home-baked bread and smoked fish, along with organic potatoes, roast and forest mushrooms - everything is homemade and straight from the clear-water lakes, forests, and fields of Häme. The website can be found in Finnish, English and German at <http://www.iloranta.fi/>



Picture 7. Iloranta

In marketing, Iloranta uses online and traditional marketing and marketing communications tools and various digital and social media channels. Today, targeted online marketing is very important. The website and Facebook are used for marketing. Iloranta can be found on Instagram and on TripAdvisor. Iloranta has own brochures and videos on YouTube. For b-to-b customers direct contacts and direct marketing are used in addition to other marketing tools, the website, digital and social media. Iloranta has participated in trade fairs, and its representative participates in a roadshow, organized by VisitFinland, to meet travel agents and tour operators. Iloranta has received several certifications and quality labels. Booking can be done by phone and email, and via the website in English and Finnish by using the Contact us –link. Iloranta can also be found at My Stay -portal (VisitFinland).

Hyvölään Talo – a rural tourism enterprise



Picture 8. Hyvölään Talo

Hyvölään Talo, situated in Ähtäri, is a SME case study about business and cultural/social sustainability in tourism. Hyvölään Talo offers a wide selection of services: B&B and cabin accommodation, food services for groups and a wide selection of leisure activities, meeting services, camp schools, fishing services etc. Sauna services for groups are offered all year round. There is a smoke sauna and a hot water tub outside, and also other saunas for groups are available. Hyvölään Talo offers the guests delicious homemade food. Fresh fish from the nearby lake, berries and mushrooms from the forests and other local, quality ingredients are used according to seasons. The website can be found in Finnish, English, German and Russian at <http://www.hyvolantalo.com>



Picture 9. Hot water tub outside the smoke sauna

In marketing Hyvölä Talo uses online and traditional marketing and marketing communications tools, including digital and social media channels. The emphasis is on targeted online marketing. The website and Facebook are used for marketing, and Hyvölä Talo can also be found on Instagram. For b-to-b customers direct contacts and direct marketing are used in addition to other marketing tools, the website, digital and social media. Hyvölä Talo can be found on TripAdvisor and Trivago. Booking can be done online via the website, by email and by phone. Booking can also be done via the online travel agent Booking.com and online via the holiday cottage rental agency Lomarengas Oy, also from local online service Ähtäri Zoo Resort Oy.

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All photos in the article are used with the respective companies' permission.

More information about the project at <http://www.smartourproject.eu>

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