



## **Storytelling and gamification as core elements in experience design – case kekrihunt2021 in Viaporin Kekri**

Helina Lohoff

Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences

Bachelor's Thesis

2023

Bachelor of Hospitality, Tourism and Experience Management

## Abstract

**Author**

Helina Lohoff

**Degree**

Bachelor of Hospitality, Tourism and Experience Management

**Report/thesis title**

Storytelling and gamification as core elements in experience design – case kekrihunt2021 in Viaporin Kekri

**Number of pages and appendix pages**

66 + 40

Within today's emerging experience economy, it has become crucial for tourism and hospitality providers to stand out by offering memorable and engaging experiences. It is uniqueness, multisensory engagement, and stimulation on the mental, physical, emotional and intellectual level, that is exceedingly craved by customers.

This product-based thesis expands on that exact notion, while branching out into the core elements of storytelling and gamification in experience design. Within these elements specifically the notion of theming, the relevance of multisensory perception, the structural techniques of telling a story and the gamification concept in tourism are discussed. By exploring, extracting, and connecting the aspects of those concepts, a theoretical framework was built, which served as the basis for the creation of the experience product called kekrihunt2021.

The thesis' outcome aims to create a scavenger hunt experience for an event called Viaporin Kekri, that is specifically targeted towards the teenager segment, draws its core from its fictional storytelling and gamification concepts, partially incorporating multisensory perception and its details to complement the experience and unite it with the core themes of the event.

Aside from literature review, service design thinking was used as the primary method to create the product. The author empathized with the target of teenagers as well as the Kekri brand, formed a clear design challenge based on relevant insights, ideated on new ideas with students, and rapidly prototyped and tested the solutions. Both methods were an integral part in transforming the idea into a tangible experience product.

The product kekrihunt2021 was created for Viaporin Kekri, an annual one-day festival that celebrates the start of the dark season in a mystical atmosphere on the island of Suomenlinna at the coast of Helsinki. The kekrihunt project was planned, designed and executed in autumn 2021, as part of the larger event's project by a dedicated Concept Design Team, including the author. Viaporin Kekri took place on Saturday, 6<sup>th</sup> November 2021, however, the actual writing of this thesis occurred in spring 2023.

Kekrihunt2021 is an experience, and quest for teenagers, crafted to be in harmony with Viaporin Kekri and its ghostly theme. Its fictional story of the protagonist and the key events were told weeks before the event via digital means to establish the purpose of the guest's participation. However, the physical quest itself took place on the day of the event.

The product is evaluated compared to the initial aims and objectives, which were almost entirely achieved. The thesis concludes that kekrihunt2021 and its theoretical framework can be used as a basis to create a similar experience product in the future.

**Keywords**

Experience design, storytelling, gamification, quest, Viaporin Kekri

## Table of Contents

1	Introduction.....	1
1.1	Aims and Objectives .....	2
1.2	Project kekrihunt2021 in Viaporin Kekri .....	3
1.3	Methods .....	5
1.4	Key Definitions .....	6
2	An examination of experiences, storytelling, and gamification.....	8
2.1	An introduction to experiences and experience design .....	8
2.1.1	Experience Realms .....	11
2.1.2	The Experience Pyramid .....	12
2.1.3	Multisensory Perception concept in experience design.....	14
2.2	Story, storytelling and its relevance in experience design .....	16
2.2.1	Servicescape and stories .....	17
2.2.2	The authentic story element in experience design .....	18
2.2.3	Theming and harmonization.....	19
2.2.4	The structure of a story.....	22
2.2.5	The Freytag’s Pyramid .....	23
2.2.6	The Hero’s Journey and the element of contrast.....	24
2.3	The concept of gamification and its relevance in experience design .....	27
2.3.1	Gamification, game mechanics and its difference to games .....	27
2.3.2	Gamification in tourism experiences .....	29
2.3.3	A brief introduction to the MED framework .....	31
2.4	The experience journey as a whole.....	34
2.5	Visual summary of the theoretical framework .....	34
3	The planning and implementation of kekrihunt2021.....	37
3.1	Background of kekrihunt2021 in Viaporin Kekri .....	37
3.2	Project timeline and deliverables.....	39
3.2.1	Kick-off and pre event (April – November 2021).....	42
3.2.2	During the event (6 <sup>th</sup> November 2021).....	44
3.2.3	Post event and writing (November 2021 – May 2023) .....	44
3.3	Methodology.....	46
3.3.1	Empathizing .....	47
3.3.2	Defining.....	49
3.3.3	Ideation .....	50
3.3.4	Prototyping.....	51
3.3.5	Testing .....	52
3.4	Limitations and Risks.....	52
3.5	Product Evaluation.....	54

4 Discussion .....	59
4.1 The thesis process.....	59
4.2 Learning outcomes .....	60
References .....	62
Appendices.....	67
Appendix 1. Product kekrihunt2021 .....	67
Appendix 2. Feedback for kekrihunt2021 by participants .....	105

## 1 Introduction

Viaporin Kekri is an annual one-day festival celebrated since 2015 on All Saint's Day on the island of Suomenlinna, a former sea fortress by the coast of Helsinki, Finland. The event is created by the collaboration of The Governing Body of Suomenlinna, its regional culture and service providers, businesses from Helsinki mainland, and students and teachers of Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. The mystical event invites visitors to daringly welcome the darkness and remember loved ones that have passed. Past Nordic traditions and an intentionally crafted story make up this unique and multi-sided event. The combination of components such as gastronomy, art, history, and a story world rooted in a unique setting of a sea fortress make the event interesting and worth visiting for everyone at any age. The event has also been playing a vital role in inviting visitors to the UNESCO World Heritage Site – not only in the popular summer season – but specifically in the dark season, when the number of tourists usually drop immensely. It has been a beneficial project for all stakeholders involved.

“HOTEM” Students – students from various years of the Degree Program “Hospitality, Tourism and Experience Management” – have had the opportunity to co-design memorable experiences for the event based on their experience design knowledge learned in class. Also, the author of the thesis participated in the project of the event in 2019, to put her various skills and knowledge in practice. As a first-year student, she made use of the opportunity to be a little part of its design and creation. Back then she was responsible for ideation and execution of the scavenger hunt concept for the Suomenlinna library venue. At the time, the event was lacking in concepts for the teenager segment. Hence, the collaboration with young adult novel writers seemed like an ideal starting point. The interactive adventure game called “Glitch in Kekri” designed in 2019, planted the seed for further development of a scavenger hunt concept for teenagers in Viaporin Kekri.

Furthermore, the author developed personal interest in pursuing the topics of experience design and creation. Having worked on “Glitch in Kekri” as a first-year student, opened her the door to the multifaceted field of experience design and its practice. She has always been interested in the practical and creative side of studying that stretches beyond the classroom. The involvement in Viaporin Kekri has made a remarkable impact on her development personally as well as professionally as an aspiring experience designer. Over the years, she grew very fond of the event and its creation. Throughout her studies, the student grew an even greater interest in the field of experience design and Design Thinking. Actively working on many projects within the field was particularly meaningful to her, as she found her passion for designing, sense-making, and connecting elements of expe-

rience design as well as leading and managing a team of like-minded and inspiring people. The experience and knowledge she gained throughout the studies gave her strength and a valuable future advantage of creating an improved concept for the event that is innovative, worthwhile, and multifaceted.

With that in mind, to fully explore the possibilities of a promising concept for Viaporin Kekri 2021, it was obvious for the author to approach this thesis from a more practical angle. This makes this paper a product-based thesis, while the product of kekrihunt2021 is the result and the deeper exploration of its theory its origin. The project itself and its outcome alongside with the theory will be explored in this paper. Theories that were studied, extracted, and connected stem from experience design, storytelling, and gamification concepts. The first ones are the Experience Realms, the Experience Pyramid, and the five key experience design principles; the second are the Freytag's pyramid and the Hero's Journey; and the third are gamification theories in tourism and the Memorable Experience Design Framework. Further on that in chapter two.

It is also to be noted, that the “Cite Then Right – Harvard 12<sup>th</sup> Edition” referencing style is used throughout this paper.

## 1.1 Aims and Objectives

Since Viaporin Kekri has over the years struggled to offer experiences for teenagers, the first main objective became very clear early on to the author – *create a scavenger hunt experience for Viaporin Kekri that is specifically attractive towards teenagers*. As she worked on a similar experience already in 2019 for Viaporin Kekri, the author saw a lot of potential in creating something related or extending its original version.

Due to the notion of effective experience design, which will be discussed later in chapter two, both elements *of storytelling and gamification* shall remain the main building blocks of the scavenger hunt. Hence the second main objective became the following – *create an experience concept that relies on a strong story with gamified elements to immerse the participant in the experience*.

The author always had special interest in intentionally crafting an experience that draws its success from its connected details and the attention to its unity. With that in mind she was able to define the sub-objective – *create an experience concept that makes use of multisensory perception and its intentional details to complement the whole experience*.

In order to achieve these objectives, the author aims to explore and define key concepts such as experiences, gamification and storytelling in a light that fits the notion of this paper. Her aim is to study the field, so in essence find relevant theories and frameworks. She will also examine the experience design elements as a frame of reference by applying and capturing them, in order to create a cohesive experience. Elements of Viaporin Kekri are investigated and applied as well. Once the experience has been designed, planned, and executed, the student aims to describe the planning process and final implementation of the project. Finally, she aims to evaluate the results of the practical implementation of kekrihunt2021 compared to the original theoretical planning.

## 1.2 Project kekrihunt2021 in Viaporin Kekri

Kekrihunt2021 is a project done by students of Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. It was part of the main project of the event Viaporin Kekri, that was led by the “Kekri Core Team”. The Core Team for the event includes leading managers as well as teams for marketing, communications, and concept design, just to name a few.

The 2021 Concept Design Team consisted of four main managers, including the author of this paper. That team's job was to come up with experience concept ideas for the 2021 edition of Viaporin Kekri. After brainstorming with their own management team of four, they were able to recruit students as helpers from the first year of the HOTEM Degree at the time. After rough ideas were presented to the new students, new teams were formed based on the venue and its concept. Those teams were the following:

- Hallways/ Escape Room concept Team
- Pajasali/ Children’s concept Team
- Scavenger Hunt concept Team

The essence of Viaporin Kekri is to offer a memorable experience for visitors as a whole, as well as individual experiences created by concepting managers and their teams. Through the students’ voluntary work, free experiences can be offered for various segments of the target. Kekrihunt2021 is the result of one of those individual experiences, that emerged from work done by the scavenger hunt concept team of the Kekri Core Team. This free experience shall further engage the visitors and enhance their experience. Hence, the product of kekrihunt2021 was an integral achievement for the Kekri festival and it is discussed in detail in this paper, as well as further outlined in the appendices.

Kekrihunt2021 is a *hybrid digital-physical quest* of one and a half hours played on Suomenlinna on the day of Viaporin Kekri. Here it is also important to mention that even though the team started out with the idea of a “scavenger hunt” concept, it later revealed

itself to be a “quest”. Quest is defined as: “a long search for something that is difficult to find, or an attempt to achieve something difficult” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023c).

The experience is made for anyone above the age of ten. The quest relies strongly on its fictional storyline, which unfolds itself already weeks before the event on the Social Media Platform “Instagram”. Anyone interested can follow what is happening to the teenager Aaron and his four friends, while they get caught up in the happenings of Kekri, the spirits and the so called “In-between” – a new invented realm of Kekri, where the teenagers find themselves between the worlds of life and death. All characters and storylines are created from the team’s imagination for the sake of the quest. Inspiration was taken also from movies, games, and social media.

Aaron’s blog on Instagram, called “Aaron’s Peculiar Blog” (APB), serves as the basis for the storytelling where Aaron posts anything mystical, spooky, and spiritual. During the pre-stage of the event, we get to know about the background of Aaron’s investigation of tales about mysterious spirits and his disappearance on Suomenlinna. The social media users get to meet his friends who are planning to find him and figure out what happened, while getting lost themselves. Witnesses also get to know a “strange” fellow named Louis, who opens the gate to the mystical World of Kekri. The story is told from Aaron’s, his friends’, the spirits’ of Kekri and Louis’ point of view. We get a glimpse of the story from different perspectives in order to truly understand what happened on the verge of Viaporin Kekri.

The main gist for the participant on the day of Kekri is to save Aaron and his friends from being lost forever, before the Kekri buck is burned – which is the main ceremony of the event. They get instructions from Louis and a map that gives them guidance through the checkpoints and clues on the way. The teams that participate in the quest need to find ingredients, solve puzzles, find their way to Aaron, and make a special potion, before the time is up. Only then the kids can be saved from the Kekri spirits. Once Aaron and his friends have been saved, the participating teams will be rewarded. They also receive a thank you letter sent via email, that reveals “easter eggs” to bring a close to the experience.

The product itself with its details is outlined in Appendix 1, however, the following illustration (figure 1) attempts to show a brief overview of the participant’s journey – the three experience phases that they go through:



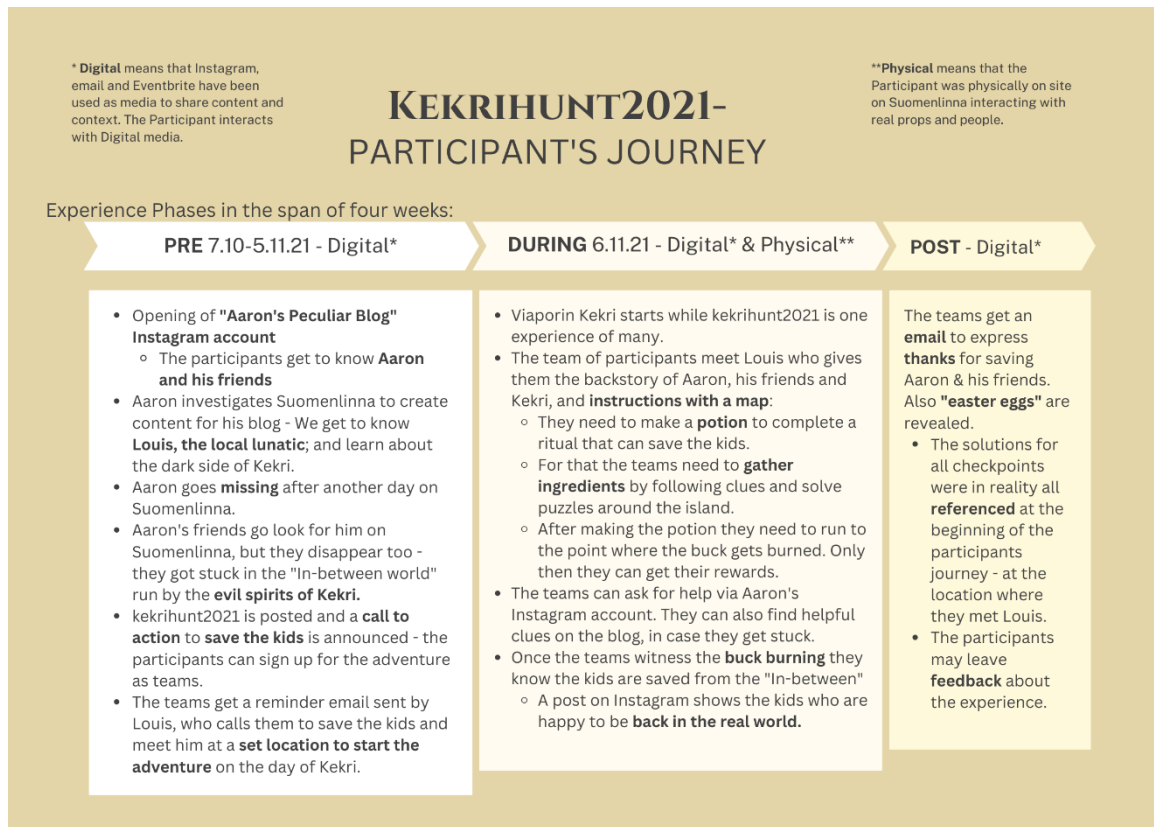


Figure 1. kekrihunt2021 – Participant’s Journey (Lohoff, 2023)

### 1.3 Methods

The methodology will be described in-depth in chapter 3.3, however, as follows will be the methodology content in brief. Two distinct methods were applied and used for the sake of the creation of kekrihunt2021. Both methods were an integral part of the creation of the product as one would not work without the other. The methodology used is the following:

1. Service Design Methodology (Design Thinking)
2. Literature Review of related Experience Design theories

The author has made use of “The Five Stages of Design Thinking” (d.school at Stanford, no date) as the primary method to design the experience with the human and the target needs in mind. The student empathized with the target of teenagers and the Kekri brand, defined the challenge in context of Viaporin Kekri and Suomenlinna, ideated with students and the team to come up with creative ideas, prototyped the solutions in quick and easy ways and tested the solutions.

The secondary method for the creation of the product of kekrihunt2021 has been literature review: The student studied the field of experience design, storytelling and gamification including its elements. Related theories, articles, books, and websites have been reviewed by the author. To be specific, as part of the exploration, related theories have been

extracted and applied in order to craft an experience that brings value to its participants as well as Viaporin Kekri as an event on Suomenlinna.

#### 1.4 Key Definitions

The following key words are the main concepts of the thesis:

- Experience
- Multisensory perception
- Storytelling
- Gamification

*Experience* is “an immediate, relatively isolated event with a complex of emotions that makes an impression and represents a certain value for the individual within the context of a specific situation” (Boswijk *et al.*, 2012, p. 61). In their book “Sustainable customer experience design: Co-creating Experiences in Events, Tourism and Hospitality”, the authors conclude that experiences always require active involvement, attention and engagement in an activity, situation, or event. The one experiencing will be taken out of their ordinary life somehow or another and will create memories stimulated by distinguished emotions during the experience. (Smit and Melissen, 2018, p. 16.) Additionally, experiences are characterized as truly personal to each individual:

The customer experience originates from a set of interactions between a customer and a product, a company, or part of its organization, which provoke a reaction. This experience is strictly personal and implies the customer’s involvement at different levels (rational, emotional, sensorial, physical, and spiritual). Its evaluation depends on the comparison between a customer’s expectations and the stimuli coming from the interaction with the company and its offering in correspondence of the different moments of contact or touchpoint. (Gentile, Spiller and Noci, 2007, p. 397)

It is important to make a distinction between the meaning of experience. They can be defined as firstly, “(the process of getting) knowledge or skill from doing, seeing, or feeling things” and secondly, “the way that something happens and how it makes you feel” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023a). The focus of this paper lies in the latter. A better way to grasp the concept is by defining the term experience according to the German word “Erlebnis” – “An encounter or event that someone had that left him or her deeply and profoundly impressed” (DWDS, 2023).

The adjective *multisensory* is defined according to the Merriam Webster Dictionary (2023) as follows: “relating to or involving several physiological senses”, while *perception* is defined as “the quality of being aware of things through the physical senses, especially sight” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023b). In the context of an experience, multisensory perception plays a huge role, as one takes in their environment through all senses, while receiving, trying, recognizing, acknowledging, and starting to be aware of the experience product, as discussed by LaSalle and Britton (Tarssanen and Kylänen, 2005, p. 148). The authors

Tarssanen and Kylänen (2005, p. 145) define the term as such: “Multisensory perception means that the product should be capable of being experienced with as many of the senses as possible.” Pine and Gilmore (1998, p. 104) argue that the more engagement of the senses is present during the experience, the more memorable it will be.

In the simplest terms, the English meaning of *storytelling* is “the activity of writing, telling, or reading stories” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023d). In the context of the experience creation of kekrihunt2021 one may extend the definition. The National Storytelling Network (2023) attempts the definition as follows: “Storytelling is the interactive art of using words and actions to reveal the elements and images of a story while encouraging the listener’s imagination.” In the article “Serious storytelling - a first definition and review” the authors demonstrate four components of storytelling: “Perspective”, meaning there are ultimately subjective views of the story shared; “narrative”, meaning the actual content of the story; “interactivity”, which often refers to the interaction particularly with digital media; and lastly “the medium”, which describes the technology and means used to tell the story. (Lugmayr et al., 2017, p. 6.)

Defining the concept of *gamification* is still an ongoing process. There are a lot of different definitions in the academic world, even though it has become a continuous trend within the tourism field (Parapanos and Michopoulou, 2021, p. 13). It can be said that gamification is “the use of game design elements in non-game contexts” (Deterding *et al.*, 2011, p. 9). More specifically, Kirsh defines gamification as “using game-based mechanics aesthetics and game thinking to engage people, motivate action, promote learning and solve problems” (Parapanos and Michopoulou, 2021, p. 14). Seaborn and Fels add that “game elements are patterns, objects, principles, models, and methods directly inspired by games” (Bulencea and Egger, 2015, p. 29). In addition, gamification does not refer to the full game experience, but only contains game elements according to Fleming et al. (Xu and Buhalis, 2021, p. 4). It is also crucial to mention that even though there are different and reasonable definitions of gamification out there, it is still a questionable term as it cannot refer to all its complex aspects: “the complexities of game design are made to look easy” (Bulencea and Egger, 2015, p. 30).

## **2 An examination of experiences, storytelling, and gamification**

The following chapter builds the foundation, or the theoretical framework, for the creation of kekrihunt2021. Exploring and combining aspects from several related theories and ideas is one technique of building a memorable experience product, which has been ultimately attempted here.

In fact, taking a more multidisciplinary approach, when researching tourism experiences in their design context, has been emphasized by Tussyadiah (2014, p. 559): Given the nature of tourism experiences, which involve many diverse touchpoints throughout, it is encouraged to use groundwork rooted in diversity from different disciplines, as opposed to staying within the same field. Disciplines not normally used in tourism context may be an advantage in the experience design of a tourism experience product.

In the following subchapters, the concepts of experiences, storytelling and gamification are explored from different perspectives. The author starts with the introduction of the concepts of experiences and experience design, including the theories of Experience Realms and Experience Pyramid of which are unpacked to set the stage of what is to come. Then, she goes into the notion of storytelling in the light of experience design, especially theming and harmonization, while also delving deep into what makes a good story and how to structure it. Namely, discussing the relevance of stories in experiences and introducing the servicescape, the Freytag's Pyramid and the Hero's Journey. What follows is the definition and exploration of gamification from multiple point of views including the tourism angle, while also touching briefly on elements of the Memorable Experience Design Framework. Above all, each subchapter includes brief reflective paragraphs on the kekrihunt2021 concept supported by its related implementation characteristics. The author brings a close to chapter two by explaining the experience as a whole and presenting a visual theoretical framework that was utilized to create the experience product of kekrihunt2021.

### **2.1 An introduction to experiences and experience design**

In 1998, B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore welcome us into the emerging experience economy. In their article "Welcome to the Experience Economy" in the Harvard Business Review, the two authors refer to "The Progression of Economic Value", which describes the transition from the agrarian, to industrial, to service; and now ultimately to the experience economy as goods and services are commoditized. The article is mainly dedicated to companies and businesses, encouraging them to focus on creating memorable customer experiences to keep up with the customer demands, meet customer specific needs and stand out in the market. It is to be pointed out that businesses and companies

not only need to uplevel their services, but also intentionally design engaging experiences that require a reasonable fee. (Pine II and Gilmore, 1998, pp. 97–98.) Even in 1992, the German sociologist Gerhard Schulze took note of the so-called experience society in which the individual keeps their attention more focused on themselves, while seeking abundant and valuable experiences that make an impact on their personal inner life. (Tarssanen and Kylänen, 2005, p. 135.)

Experts have basically already predicted the inevitable progression into experiences that dictate the future economy as during the growing economy, people’s time and personal experiences became more valuable than goods and services (Hunnicuttt, 2020, p. 14). Therefore, time has made it clear that keeping intentionally designed and memorable experiences in the centre of the emerging economy, including the tourism and hospitality industry, is inevitable. With the rise of technologies, high speed internet and easy access to products and services, people crave extraordinary experiences more than ever. (Bulencea and Egger, 2015, p. 14.)

Nowadays, “emotions are bought and sold” and satisfying the consumer’s basic rational need is not sufficient. Emotion and feelings have to be prioritized during experience product creation. (Tarssanen and Kylänen, 2005, pp. 135–136.) “Tourists now desire for: their inclusion in unique activities, multi-sensory engagement and for mental, physical, emotional and intellectual stimulation” (Bulencea and Egger, 2015, p. 14). It can even be said, that consumers expect higher quality of tourism products and might even take them for granted. Therefore, it is crucial to keep intentionally designing experiences that are engaging and memorable, in order to maintain a healthy economy. (Tarssanen and Kylänen, 2005, p. 135; Bulencea and Egger, 2015, p. 14; Pine II and Gilmore, 2019, p. 7.)

The event of Viaporin Kekri is no exception in that. It is an intentionally crafted experience to engage the visitor in multiple ways: The concept including the story are created to be out of the ordinary; and the event offers unique activities in a setting that is one-of-a-kind – a sea fortress in the darkness. The following quote brings to light its uniqueness:

On Kekri, the past breaks into the now, and the new arises from the old transforming the fortress and revealing its secrets. The souls of the dead return to the world of living, and people wallow in food, music, art, and games celebrating the last rays of light and the rich harvest (Viaporin Kekri, 2022a).

It is to be noted that when addressing the design of experiential products, one cannot solely assume that there is the “one and only tool” or “model” for its ultimate success as creating an experience is a complex process (Bulencea and Egger, 2015, p. 55).

The main reason for that is the fact that the experience itself only occurs “inside” the person (Mossberg, 2007, p. 60), so experiences are highly emotional and personal (Gentile, Spiller and Noci, 2007, p. 397). According to Christian Jantzen (2013, p. 146) experiences

are mental, physical, and psychological phenomena; and they happen regularly in each of our lives whether they are designed for us or not. We remember experiences as chunks of stories, while those stories may also impact the way we sense and feel the next experience, and what we make of it later. Even though a tourism experience product may be designed, marketed, and produced for the consumer to be successful, the consumer themselves is the actual producer of their own quality and value of the experience: “Designers, manufacturers, marketers, entertainers or retailers are at best merely providers of the frames and elements of a specific experience.” (Jantzen, 2013, p. 146.) It has been emphasized that the process of experiences is not as easy to describe, as the experience highly depends on one’s mood, goals, expectations, attitudes, and capabilities, which on the other hand may change in an instant. That makes this concept so subjective. (Jantzen, 2013, p. 146.)

Hans Gelter (2006, p. 34) affirms it is only the “person living the experience”, who can declare what it meant to them or in which context it mattered; hence the stager of the experience may only stage the setting and conditions for the experience. Schulze and Mossberg are referring to the circumstances and the environment, in which the guest experiences the experience which can be provided by an organization, rather than the experience itself (Mossberg, 2007, p. 60). Pine and Gilmore (2019, p. 16) specify that “no two people can have the same experience – period”. Nevertheless, the memory of the experience is valuable for each individual, despite the experience being intangible, as it stays with the guest. In fact, being engaged in a well-done experience is often much more valuable for the guest than purchased goods as studied by Carter and Gilovich. (Pine II and Gilmore, 2019, pp. 16–17.)

Gentile, Spiller and Noci (2007, p. 396) even go on to claim that because experiential products are closely connected to the emotional value acquired by intangible elements, it becomes more important to look at the “person” – as opposed to the “customer” – who undergoes a holistic experience in which each touch point matters in which the guest interacts with the experience producer. It is not about selling or staging the memorable experience, but rather about creating the right context including its intentional artifacts, that the guest can use to create their own distinct and personal experience exceeding their expectation at every touch point.

This may be important to keep in mind while a further analysis and discussion takes place throughout this paper. It is especially relevant when assessing the product in the end. Kekrihunt2021 was designed keeping in mind existing theory, while the objectives were formed based on reasonable assumptions about the visitor of Viaporin Kekri. However, the subjectivity of the experience product may always influence the outcome of the guest’s

experience value. Nevertheless, the kekrihunt team was aiming to build the right conditions with fitting and suitable artifacts that guide the guest towards a memorable experience. In addition, as debated above, experiences are wanted and expected by people, and there are ways to make them memorable and valuable for each guest.

Pullman and Gross state that even if there are experience design constraints, by keeping the focus on specific characteristics one may boost the possibility of a memorable experience for the guest (Bulencea and Egger, 2015, p. 27).

According to Komppola and Boxberg, even though emotional experiences are personal and subjective, there are nonetheless valid attempts to create the fundamental preconditions of a good experience by making use of the methods of service concept, service process and service system (Tarssanen and Kylänen, 2005, p. 138).

### 2.1.1 Experience Realms

One way to set the stage literally and figuratively when creating a truly engaging experience is by analysing the experience based on the “The Four Realms of an Experience” (see figure 2).

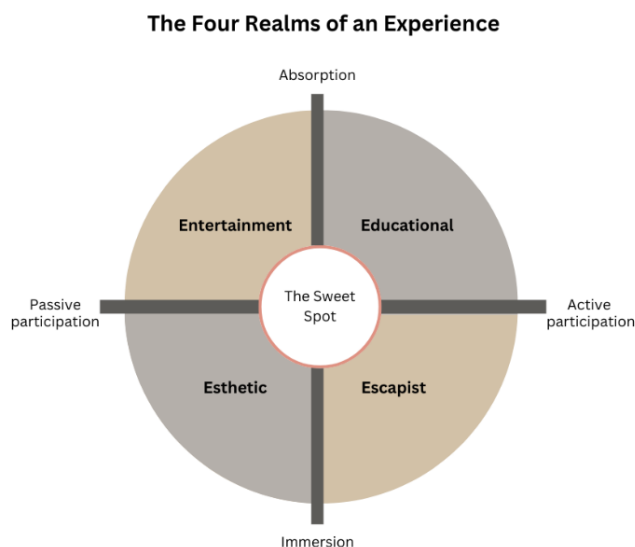


Figure 2. The Four Realms of an Experience (adapted from Pine II and Gilmore, 1998, p. 102)

According to the model, an experience can be influenced to be engaging on multiple levels, in this case on two distinct dimensions: Firstly, on the dimension of the guest’s participation which may be active or passive. And secondly, on the dimension of the connection or environmental relationship that unites the guest with the experience – the guest may be immersed in the experience, or may just absorb the event from a distance. The level of passive to active participation, and the level of absorption to immersion may vary in the

light of the experience and of the guest themselves. The guest may be educated, entertained, escaped, or “esthetically” pleased. (Pine II and Gilmore, 2019, pp. 39–40.) The goal in designing a compelling experience is to incorporate elements of all realms in a suitable way, which can then be referred to as “the sweet spot”, located right in the middle of the circle. Exploring all realms, or at least two, may enhance the experience and help to create new ones. (Pine II and Gilmore, 2019, pp. 50–52.)

The author likes to reveal that with the concept of kekrihunt2021, the team aimed to combine the two realms of “Entertainment” and “Escapist”. Pine and Gilmore (2019, p. 56) would refer to this combination as the “Escatainment”. The participant is in their own way passively absorbing the online and offline content of the story as well the acts of characters. Meaning the story of Aaron (the main character of kekrihunt2021) in this unique setting is told by digital, physical, and human means, while the guest passively absorbs its content. This is the primary focus in this realm. The participant is, however, also actively participating and immersed in the kekrihunt2021 on the day of Viaporin Kekri. It is the participant’s job to solve puzzles and riddles while gathering ingredients around the island to finally make the potion and save the kids. Basically, the participants have escaped their regular day-to-day lives, and are immersed in the world of the spirits of Kekri and Aaron, as well as the setting of dark Suomenlinna, while having to actively perform tasks to further shape the story themselves. This realm is mainly related to the gamification aspect of this paper; however, not entirely, as the story, location and details of the experience are also a big part of creating the feeling of escapism.

All in all, it can be observed, that the lines of the experience realms are blurred, and the experience cannot entirely be “packed in a box”. Nonetheless, they may serve as the big picture and give an overview of the experience as a whole.

In order to start the exploration of further details of how to design an experience, the Experience Pyramid is described in the following paragraphs. The Experience Pyramid is essentially one of numerous tools used to design an experience, and it was ultimately used as the starting point for the concept design of kekrihunt2021.

### **2.1.2 The Experience Pyramid**

Mika Kylänen and Sanna Tarssanen (2005) attempted to sum up and analyse the content of an experience: They created their model (see figure 3) for producing experiences based on related theory. It was one of the first models to answer questions such as: How can an experience be produced? And what makes an experience worth producing? They take a touristic approach to this vast world of experiences and try to define distinguishable elements to offer special guest experiences. The model is only one tool of many to use



when analysing an experience product, that does not include factors such as “basic technical quality features and profitability”. It is purely a framework “for designing products that provide customer a true meaningful experience” (Tarssanen and Kylänen, 2005, pp. 138–139). Nevertheless, it appeared obvious for the author to inspect its contents as it essentially ties to the building blocks of designing a memorable experience.

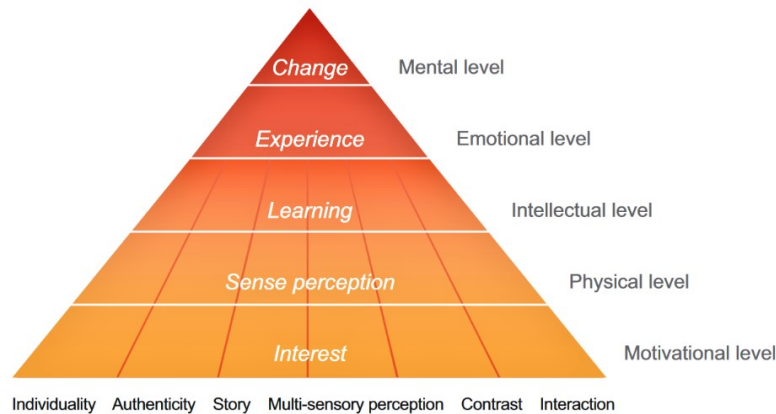


Figure 3. Experience Pyramid (Tarssanen and Kylänen, 2005, p. 139)

The Experience Pyramid studies a tourism experience from two angles. As seen on figure three, the horizontal axes represent the various influential variables of the experience: Individuality, authenticity, story, multi-sensory perception, contrast, and interaction. They are defined as the influential factors on the guest's experience. Therefore, once these experience elements are considered, a memorable and unique experience can be built. According to the authors it is important to note, that when all experience elements are used in accordance with the concept and especially at all stages of the product – from pre, during, to post experience – the most beneficial experience foundation can be constructed; hence an experience can be created that will be remembered positively by the guest. (Tarssanen and Kylänen, 2005, pp. 139–140.)

Aside from the experience elements on the horizontal axes, the pyramid also describes the guest's perspective on the vertical axes, which refers to the stages of experience they go through on each level of experience (Tarssanen and Kylänen, 2005, p. 139). The levels of the experience will not be focused on in this paper, however, understanding the Experience Pyramid as a whole, may give a better understanding of how the guest undergoes the experience. The guest ideally goes through all levels, but at least the first three can be influenced by the stager of the experience. Firstly, the guest essentially develops interest on the motivational level; secondly, they experience the product through all of their senses, so the product is experienced on a physical level; and thirdly, they move to the intellectual level, in which they process the sensory information received by the environment and ideally learn something new from the experience. According to the creators

of the Experience Pyramid, once stage three is reached, the final effect on the guest's experience is out of hand of the producers. If, however, all the previously mentioned experience design elements were properly used in the first three stages, the guest may reach the emotional level, meaning they underwent a meaningful experience. The authors mention that in this case, a positive emotional response has occurred as a result of the experience. Finally, the highest level the guest can reach is the mental level, in which the guest can conclude that they have personally changed in one way or another, as they experienced a positive and strong emotional response to the experience. (Tarssanen and Kylänen, 2005, pp. 147–149.)

In this paper, the author will mainly focus on four features of the horizontal axes of the Experience Pyramid: *Authenticity, story, multi-sensory perception, and contrast*. Essentially, as briefly touched on above, the model of the Experience Pyramid was used as a starting point to be able to branch out in different directions of theories, while remaining within the scope of the paper. The features mentioned will be explored throughout the whole theoretical framework at suitable stages and in different ways. First, the author will dive into how the element of multisensory perception matters in experience design and in *kekri-hunt2021*.

### **2.1.3 Multisensory Perception concept in experience design**

As mentioned, and acknowledged in chapters 1.4 and 2.1, the way we experience basically anything is first and foremost through our senses (Gelter, 2006, p. 35).

This makes the concept of *Multisensory perception* an important factor to consider during the design process, as will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

Moreover, before getting deeper into this feature in experience design, it may be necessary to define the term “multisensory experience”. In 2020 Velasco and Obrist have defined multisensory experiences as “. . .impressions formed by specific events, whose sensory elements have been carefully crafted by someone” (Velasco and Obrist, 2021, p. 1). Essentially, the multisensory experience has been created with intention and keeping in mind sensory elements. (Velasco and Obrist, 2021, pp. 1–2.) In other words, a day-to-day experience, for example watching a movie at home, is an event that involves sensory stimuli; however, a multisensory experience would be the complete cinema experience, as it is *carefully crafted by someone for someone* through sensory input.

According to the authors Tarssanen and Kylänen, “Multisensory perception”, as shown in the Experience Pyramid above, is an experience element which suggests that the experiential product shall be created in such a way that all the guest's senses, or at least as many as possible, are stimulated in order to get the full experience. Most importantly, a

total harmony needs to be designed in which the sensory inputs complement each other as well as the overall theme of the experience. Diversity in the ways of engaging the guest using sensory stimuli ensures that the guest recalls the experience as memorable. (Tarsanen and Kylänen, 2005, p. 145.) Tuominen and Heikkinen (2017, p. 70) point out that the customer experience in hospitality and tourism shall be viewed as sensory “immersions of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching”, so that the visual image enhances the soundscape, the physical features of the experience are consistent with the impression created prior to the event, and the location should set the stage for all of these sensory touch points of the whole experience. Agapito, Valle and Mendes (2014, p. 225) argue similarly: In order to achieve the desired outcome of the guest’s experience, incorporating the guest’s five senses into the experience externally, meaning intentionally staging the surrounding, has been emphasized in this context, as the guest’s perception is ultimately impacted by their immediate surroundings.

In addition, due to the notion of experiential consumption for individuals being characterized by pleasure, the need for creating the optimal multi-sensory environment has been pointed out, which basically contributes to value creation for both customers and businesses. Hence the use of all senses in an experience has been identified as an important technique for promoting distinct and engaging holistic guest experiences. (Agapito, Valle and Mendes, 2014, p. 225.) Goldstein argues that it is our sensations that serve as the producer of how we perceive our surroundings. In this process we select, organize, and interpret our sensory information, which makes it a “conscious sensory experience”. (Agapito, Valle and Mendes, 2014, p. 225.)

Boswijk et al. (2012, pp. 170–171) stress the sense of smell to have one of the most profound impacts on the guest’s experience, as that stimulus makes its way directly to the brainstem, determining straight away whether we like or dislike something or someone. Generally, it is the subconscious perception we process throughout the experience, that might leave us positively or negatively impressed. At the same time, perceptions that we are not aware of might bring about a strong emotional response, such as the beauty of the surroundings, the ease of getting to a location, or the way the host interacts with the guest. These things are important factors to consider when designing an experience, so it is memorable and positive.

Pine and Gilmore (2019, p. 77) also emphasize the importance of using sensory stimulants during an experience as it deepens and enriches its theme and makes it more memorable. It is essential to ask oneself, which exact sensations should be used as cues that convey the theme, for which the guest came to experience. Moreover, not every sensation or combination of sensations fits into an experience. As a result, in the sensational context, it is critical to ensure that negative cues are eliminated and positive cues are refined. This way the guest will get an impression of the experience through senses that match the

theme; and hence, make it more believable and engaging. (Pine II and Gilmore, 2019, pp. 78–79.)

On the other hand, it may be counterproductive to use too many sensory cues at the same time as it might only lead to overstimulation and confusion. At times it may be wise to incorporate just one sense at a time, as opposed to mitigating the enhancement of the experience with too many senses. It is essential that the use of senses is purposefully designed and even scripted. The author refers to the “dramaturgy of the senses”, where the creator times and pitches the different senses, so they are symphonized in harmony while complimenting each other. (Gelster, 2006, p. 42.)

Kekrihunt2021 fits into this notion, as it has been designed in way that incorporates all five senses with appropriate cues, while aiming to eliminate negative ones that do not fit into the experience concept. In fact, most checkpoints throughout the quest make use of one or more senses to complement the experience (see Appendix 1). Basically, they are all functioning as positive cues that fit the theme of the experience and make it consistent with the storyline of Aaron and Kekri, enhancing the experience for the guest.

Using features to ensure consistency, in other words the element of theming and harmonization, will be further discussed in chapter 2.2.3. The following chapter investigates the concepts of story and storytelling, while going into a detailed investigation of their importance in experience design.

## **2.2 Story, storytelling and its relevance in experience design**

When it comes to stories and tales, it can be said that they are “means of socialization” as stories have been part of our human existence for a long time. For example, by listening to a story, children learn how to distinguish the good and the bad. (Tarssanen and Kylänen, 2005, p. 144.) In fact, according to Adaval and Wyer (1998, pp. 207–208), we humans receive a lot of our social information in our daily lives presented to us as stories, meaning we construct a story in our memory that is made up of a sequence of thematically and temporally related events, to process our personal and social experiences, and consequently give meaning and value to them. Also, Daniel Pink states the following: “Stories are easier to remember — because in many ways stories are HOW we remember” (Andy Sontag, 2020). Mathisen (2014, p. 158) implies that it is the stories we listen to and create that help us to understand the meanings of our experiences. Jensen, Salzer-Mörling and Twitchell define stories as our basic human need, because values and principles, and history and background, are communicated through stories from generation to generation. We use stories to create meaning in our lives, encourage creativity and stimulate emotion. (Mossberg, 2008, p. 196.) Hence, there is a lot of power in storytelling in the

context of tourist experiences, as we humans innately connect with stories. (Mathisen, 2014, p. 158.)

### **2.2.1 Servicescape and stories**

As studied by Lena Mossberg (2008, pp. 195–196), there are many tourism and hospitality concepts developed around a story or fictitious characters, as it has become a global trend to do so; for example in theme parks, destinations known from popular movies, guided tours, and events based on stories and myths. Storytelling is a powerful tool to show the organizational values and features, while also being able to offer experiences for consumers in a particular “servicescape” to complete the image of the concept holistically. Servicescape is a model,” which demonstrates the relationship between the physical ambience and place and its impact on service delivery and perception, both for customers and for staff” (Oxford Reference, 2023). It has been examined that the physical service setting can very well transmit a story to the guest, and hence create more meaning for the consumer (Mossberg, 2008, p. 196).

In 2007, Lena Mossberg opened the debate of substituting servicescape with experiencescape in the tourism context: According to Bitner (1992), the servicescape is a commercial place controlled by the organization that tries to get people to make purchases. Experiencescape, however, is not limited to one physical place or ambience, but refers to the guest in the core of the space: The guest does not only take in their surroundings by sight, but through all the senses of the body while co-creating their own environment and hence creating personal meaning to the place. She refers to experiencescape “as nested products of inputs from organizations and tourists. They are produced through substantive and communicative staging.” (Mossberg, 2007, p. 63) In addition, Mossberg (2007, p. 63) mentions Steinbecks concept of the mindscape, which describes a dream world that guests can escape to. This dream world consists of phases the guest escapes to, in which they can explore novel roles, places, interactions and ultimately experience something completely new.

In short, experiencescape may be a concept that better describes the multifaceted space, in which the tourist undergoes the experience product. However, the author will keep the focus on servicescape throughout this thesis, as it is a more simplified concept. In the context of this paper, the experiencescape may stretch beyond the scope of this thesis. Yet, it is a concept worth mentioning, as it highlights the complex notion of experiences, which has been addressed in earlier paragraphs.

With that said, servicescape is a suitable concept in the context of the event Viaporin Kekri and its story. The event would not exist without the setting (the UNESCO World Heritage Site and island called Suomenlinna), as well as its historical aspects. Viaporin Kekri was born from an ancient Finnish tradition and was reinvented in the light of today. The day of Kekri, which was both the end of the harvesting season as well as the end of the calendar year, used to be a positive celebration with plenty of food and drinks. It used to be believed, that when having a full feast that day, the harvest of the following year would be prosperous. The Kekri Buck, the main character of the festival, was a man dressed in a goat's costume, asking for food, while in return making promises of a rich harvest next year. After the introduction of Christianity, Kekri was celebrated by leaving food for the spirits of dead ancestors, as it was believed that they came back from the dead for one day, checking in on the harvest. With the industrialization, the traditional Kekri and its festivities gradually disappeared. (Viaporin Kekri, 2022b.)

The event now, in its setting of Suomenlinna, serves as an opportunity for locals and tourists to explore Suomenlinna's and Kekri's past, customs, and traditions, while being surrounded by a mystical atmosphere where the Kekri spirits set the tone. It is the modern interpretation of an old tradition. The experience in this unique servicescape, where the guest is able to experience the island from new perspectives, bring to life the old and new story of Kekri. (Viaporin Kekri, 2022a.)

With that in mind, it is essential to note that the story of Aaron and his friends in kekri-hunt2021 emerged from the narrative of the modern Kekri festival. In Aaron's world, there are not only good Kekri spirits, but also dark and evil Kekri spirits, that take people every year around the time of the festivities. The reinvented Kekri story serves as the foundation for Aaron and his friends' storyline.

The following paragraphs go deeper into why stories matter in experience design, including the notion of theming and why it plays a role in the creation of kekrihunt2021.

### **2.2.2 The authentic story element in experience design**

As examined by the creators of the Experience Pyramid, the "Story" element is one that connects all other experience elements together, while giving them meaning and purpose. It is the reason for the client's engagement or disengagement in the experience, as only a genuine and believable story can give a relevant explanation for the client to be interested in the first place. In other words, without a credible story, the contents of the product crumble, and the client's interest and engagement fades. (Tarssanen and Kylänen, 2005, pp. 144–145.) Besides, Mathisen (2014, p. 157) indicates that good storytelling increases guest involvement in the experience and makes the guest more likely to want to co-create

the experience. In addition, it helps the client to process all sensations and happenings during the experience, as it gives direction and meaning to the client's participation, and even makes it more memorable. (Tarssanen and Kylänen, 2005, p. 145.) Furthermore, storytelling may enhance the value of the guest's experience – an expressive story has the power to influence the guest's emotions and cognitions, leaving the guest more profoundly impressed, as they are able to construct meaning out of the experience, and consequently are more likely to feel engaged and even co-create the experience themselves. In other words, it is especially the stories that have an emotional allure, the right story structure, and are aligned with the tourist's values and personal goals, that have the most power to engage and enhance the guest's overall experience, by giving them the opportunity to create their own meaning. A good story may also make it more likely for the guest to remember the experience, as opposed to facts or plain information. (Mathisen, 2014, pp. 157–163.)

In the same way, the "Story" element is directly linked to the second influential variable of the experience, which is "*Authenticity*". Even if the story is a good one, if it is not authentic and does not fit the culture of the region and what it entails, it may not be a credible experience product. (Tarssanen and Kylänen, 2005, p. 142.) One may not need to invent a completely new story or tale. More so, write the story by combining relevant features of facts and dramatization. A compelling story emphasizes the experience product's authenticity. (Tarssanen and Kylänen, 2005, p. 145) The authors of "Economy of Experiences" invite designers to pay attention to authenticity as one of their design principles for the experience co-creation process – sometimes the setting of an experience feels unnatural, which makes one feel uncomfortable, hence while crafting the specific elements, the concept must be designed in a way that welcomes the guest so the elements feel right, natural and authentic. (Boswijk et al., 2012, p. 171.) Creating an experience based on an authentic story that fits the local setting and values, may make the guest perceive their own experience to be more authentic, and hence influence their view on it altogether, making it more positive. (Mathisen, 2014, p. 160.)

### **2.2.3 Theming and harmonization**

Most importantly a genuine story needs to be designed to make sense, for its details to be consistent with each other, and there are no contradictions between different aspects of the experience. The key word here is coherency. (Tarssanen and Kylänen, 2005, p. 144.) Antonovsky refers to this phenomenon of the experience to "make sense" as a "sense of coherence", when all of the guest's internal and external stimuli are "structured, predictable and comprehensible" (Gelter, 2006, p. 43).

At the same time, when using the story as an experience design element, it is crucial to apply it “holistically and constantly throughout the experience” – so the story should be enhanced via all touch points and supported by visuals. (Bulencea and Egger, 2015, p. 126.)

In fact, coherency, does not only apply to the story element of the Experience Pyramid, but truly to the experience as a whole. In other words, it is all about thematization. As already briefly expressed above, all components of the experience shall be consistent with one another, so they can tie the experience together in a common theme, making the experience engaging and concise: “A perfect product is scripted under one well-knitted theme so that the guide can lead the group of individuals towards the experiential setting.” (Tarssanen and Kylänen, 2005, pp. 144–145.) The purpose of theming, according to Shell, is to facilitate the design of all experience components in a way that they support one another, while reaching toward a common goal. Moreover, establishing a common theme for the experience is a useful method to assist the designers with the process of ideation. (Bulencea and Egger, 2015, pp. 147–148.) “Theme the experience” is also one of Pine and Gilmore’s key experience design principles, amongst five, which are also known as the acts of “THEME-ing”. The principles represent ways to design experiences that are “compelling, engaging and memorable” (Pine II and Gilmore, 2019, p. 80.), and they are the following:

1. Theme the experience
2. Harmonize impressions with positive cues
3. Eliminate negative cues
4. Mix in memorabilia
5. Engage the five senses

Pine and Gilmore (2019, p. 59) emphasize that without a consistent theme, the guest has nothing compelling to formulate their impressions around. It is a well-defined theme, that acts as “the dominant ideas, organising principle, or underlying concept” for every element of the experience. According to the authors, it is the impressions of the experience that fulfil the theme. Cues trigger the impression, or the “takeaways” of the experience. Positive cues that fit the theme shall be incorporated throughout the guest’s journey, while negative ones, meaning cues that are misleading, distracting or inconsistent with the overall theme, shall be eliminated. (Pine II and Gilmore, 1998, pp. 103–104.)

It has been emphasized, that traces of unpleasant impressions may be left behind when irrelevant items are scattered throughout the servicescape, removing the potential of a well-rounded positive experience. The ease of a customer should be prioritized, which means that intruding elements should be avoided so that the guest feels like everything, down to the smallest detail, is taken care of. (Boswijk et al., 2012, p. 170.)

An inconsistent or poor signage of directions can weaken the impression of the experience and it may leave the guest lost and confused – clearer, better, and consistent design of directions would fix that problem and at the same time strengthen the experience for



the guest. (Pine II and Gilmore, 2019, pp. 71–72.) Disney cast members always stay in their character role when onstage, to make sure the guest consistently stays engaged in the experience without getting disrupted of “reality”. (Pine II and Gilmore, 2019, p. 73.) These are two tangible examples of the two principles of “harmonize impressions with positive cues” and “eliminate negative cues”.

“Mix in memorabilia” is the fourth principle of THEME-ing. The authors discuss how it is natural for us humans to keep items from an experience, for example a ticket stub stored in a personal place in the midst of other valuable items, as “they represent a cherished experience”. We want to remember these positive experiences; hence we tend to want to keep such physical reminders in a safe space. (Pine II and Gilmore, 2019, p. 74.) Moreover, people tend to see these physical reminders as a way to show others what experience they have gone through, while also triggering social conversations and a little bit of envy. Memorabilia that can be showed off, such as a T-shirt displaying the band, date and place of the concert, may attract new guests, while at the same time representing immense value for the one who visited the concert. Attaching memory and meaning to the physical artifacts can be the result of a well-designed experience and its memorabilia, sold or provided, and furthermore extending and enhancing the overall experience. (Pine II and Gilmore, 2019, p. 75.) Bulencea and Egger (2015, p. 156) suggest that it is best to provide a mix of memorabilia that the guest can choose from, in order to make the experience more memorable. Gelter (2006, p. 43) refers to physical memorabilia being as essential to the guest as the actual memory of the designed experience. In other words, the physical artifact reminds the guest about the experience, supporting their pure memory about it and making it more likely to be promoted to others.

“Engage the five senses” as the last experience design principle, has already been notably examined in subchapter 2.1.3. Basically, making use of all senses constitutes a key component in theming and harmonization, as it essentially creates the impressions via certain cues stimulated by the sensory input. This process shall be done in a way that supports the theme and story throughout the whole experience, in order to make it engaging and memorable.

All in all, the theme is the driver for all other elements and events of the experience to work together smoothly and at last create a united storyline. In other words, it sets the tone for all intentional details at play, as well as attracts the guest in the first place. (Pine II and Gilmore, 2019, p. 68.) Essentially, the theme and storyline of an experience concept need to paint the guest a clear picture of what they are experiencing (Boswijk *et al.*, 2012, p. 169), so they can better process what they are feeling and understand the significance of their participation at all stages of the experience (Tarssanen and Kylänen, 2005, p. 145).

Theming and harmonization play a significant role in Viaporin Kekri, and simultaneously in kekrihunt2021. The story world of Kekri with its mystical and dark theme builds the experience from the ground up. In other words, the Kekri story world and theme build the roots, while other experiential concepts, such as the kekrihunt2021 quest, represent the branches of the Kekri tree itself. In the kekrihunt2021 experience, cues such as the Kekri spirits, props that represent themes of darkness and mysteriousness, and fitting design of for instance the map, give the guest the opportunity to formulate an impression that goes hand in hand with the theme of Kekri and the story of Aaron. The consistent features and their details are intentionally designed to comply with Viaporin Kekri's theme and story world, and hence immerse the visitor by supporting their level of understanding of the concept and ultimate engagement at all stages of the experience. The theme is visualized in Appendix 1.

As discussed, stories have a vital role in experience design, as they make it is easier for the guest to process their experience, create more meaning for the guest and at last make the experience more engaging. However, it is important to keep in mind elements such as the story's credibility in its servicescape, its authenticity within the setting and the people, and the design of consistent details that unite the experience into a compelling theme. The next part of this subchapter explores how to structure a story. The techniques described below were used to craft the story of Aaron in kekrihunt2021.

#### **2.2.4 The structure of a story**

According to Fog et al., stories are "built on common fundamental elements in dramaturgy, such as message, conflict, division of roles and action" (Mossberg, 2008, p. 199). A good story starts out with an introduction of the hero, and the audience gets to know details of what to expect from the story. The conflict is then presented, and something happens in the regular world, causing a conflict that indicates the course of the rest of the storyline. In addition, adversaries may be introduced then. Over time, the tension builds up and the story reaches its climax in the Special World. Then the hero does or offers something that resolves the conflict. After the resolution, the hero usually reaches a goal. Then, all characters are making their way back into the Ordinary World, signalling the end of the story. (Mossberg, 2008, p. 199.)

The most traditional way to build a story is using the "three-act structure". It is merely a way to distinguish the beginning, middle and ending of a storyline. It consists of the following acts (Maio, 2019):

- Act 1 – Setup (set up of the world, characters, the character's goals, conflicts, and obstacles)

- Act 2 – Confrontation (enhances the stakes for the character's success, heightening the tension of the conflict)
- Act 3 – Resolution (completes the narrative with achievement or failure)

In simple terms the kekrihunt2021 follows the same structure (see Appendix 1):

- Act 1 – Prologue
- Act 2 – The Hunt
- Act 2 – Epilogue

Basically, it all boils down to the dramatic structure of a story. Here, it is not only about the structure of Aaron's story, but also, as Boswijk et al. (2012, p. 171) suggest, the dramatic structure the guest goes through, to ensure the captivity of the experience concept.

As the three-act structure is a very simplified way to help with building a story structure, the author wants to refer to "The Five Stages of Freytag's Pyramid" which essentially showcase an outline of a dramatic structure. The Pyramid with its main stages is described in the following subchapter.

### 2.2.5 The Freytag's Pyramid

Most stories in the world use the structure of the Freytag's Pyramid, at least to a certain degree. The Pyramid developed by Gustav Freytag in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, consists of the following stages: *Exposition*, *Rising Action*, *Climax*, *Falling Action*, *Resolution/Denouement*. (writers.com, 2020.) Figure four shows the stages in a diagram form.

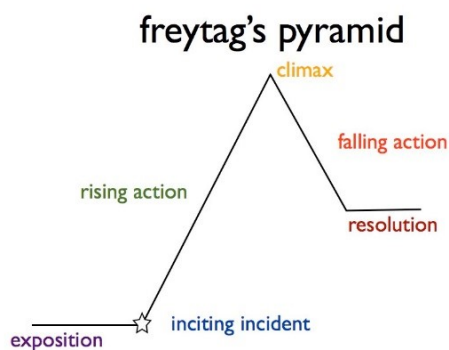


Figure 4. Freytag's Pyramid (writers.com, 2020)

The *exposition* is the stage where everything relevant to the story is introduced, for example the setting and the characters. The story world where the conflict happens is built here from scratch. In essence, we get to know at least a little bit about the backstory. The exposition ends with the "Inciting Incident", which is the event that initiates the conflict.

The *rising action* stage goes deeper into the story's conflict and complications, so it is the plot of the story, while also revealing interesting key aspects of the backstory. In this

stage, we get to know more about the character's motives, the story world, other themes and maybe even a foreshadow of the climax. The pieces and plot points should make sense throughout the rising action, climax and aftermath, once the story is written.

The *climax* is fundamentally the most important stage of the story. The story's conflict reaches its highest point, and the fate of the main characters is decided. It is the "turning point" in the story's plot structure, where no one can undo what happened.

The *falling action* explores what happened after the climax; this could be exploring new conflicts that emerged as a result of the climax, shedding light on relevant themes of the story, or focusing on character remarks. It is important in this stage to reveal any unresolved issues of the main conflict and move to the "new normal", while building on the setting of the story, the secrets that exist within that story world, and everything else that makes the story fascinating. Finally, we move to the *resolution or denouement*, where the falling action and climax come to a conclusion in one way or another. The resolution gives ideas of the story's themes to think about, after the story came to an end. The denouement can also be used here, which is referring to the last event that happened to give a close to the story, often occurring in the story's epilogue or closing scene.

It is exactly these five stages, that the story of Aaron and at the same time the quest's participants go through. The story is presented in the product section of this paper (see Appendix 1).

### **2.2.6 The Hero's Journey and the element of contrast**

In addition to the models mentioned above, many stories follow the structure of the Hero's Journey, which was discovered by Joseph Campbell, as he made observations and comparisons of myths and legends of different cultures, to comprise them all into the "Hero's Journey". Christopher Vogler adapted Campbells version in the light of storytelling in movies into the Twelve Stages of the Hero's Journey. The model (see figure 5) is often used in storytelling in movies to describe the adventure of the hero in twelve stages but can be tinkered around with for multiple purposes according to need of one's unique storytelling. (Voytilla, 1999.)

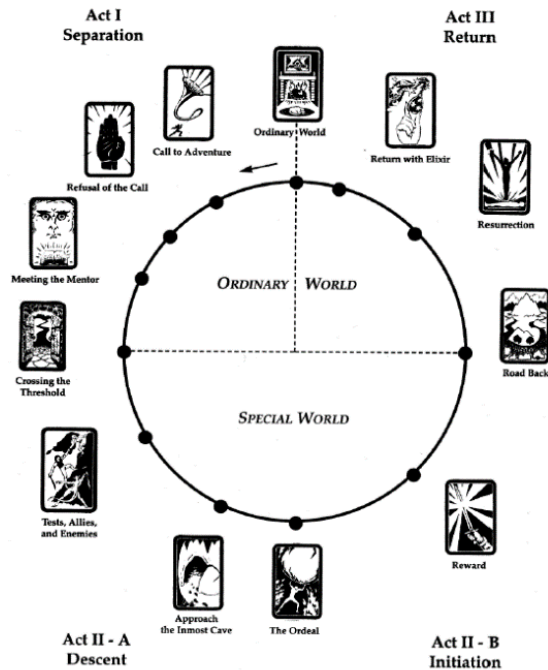


Figure 5. The Hero's Journey Model (Voytilla, 1999, p. 6)

Even though the model is a useful way in structuring a story, explaining all parts of the model might lean over the scope of this paper. Thus, the author focuses on the notion of the Ordinary and Special World of the Hero's Journey.

During their journey, the hero moves between the Ordinary and Special world. They start out in the Ordinary World, which can be described as the normal world, where they are introduced to the audience. It is the starting point of getting to know the hero's characteristics, flaws, and problems. Mostly, the audience experiences the journey through the perspective of the hero themselves, which makes it easier for the audience to identify with and relate to the hero. All of this happens in the Ordinary World. The problem or central dramatic question of the story causes a disruption and shifts the dynamic in the Ordinary World. Now, it is the hero's task to make their way to the Special World to solve the problem or answer the dramatic question. There is a big contrast between the Ordinary and Special World, which is told in multiple ways: The Ordinary World is the hero's safe space, whereas the Special World allows the hero to grow in a world that might have distinct physical and emotional characteristics, rules, and inhabitants. When the hero returns to the Ordinary World with the Elixir, all story lines have been cleared and balance has returned to the Ordinary World. (Vogler, 1998.)

Mossberg (2008, pp. 200–201) also refers to the Hero's Journey in the context of tourism experiences: In an extraordinary experience, the guest escapes from their ordinary day to day world into the non-ordinary or Special World. She concludes that in order for the guest to stay engaged by the story and in the experience, they need to escape the ordinary.

Mossberg indicates that the servicescape, as mentioned in the previous chapter, can be made to be the Special World. In this Special World the guest is engaged in unique activities in multiple ways in an exciting, but still safe servicescape, before going back to their day to day lives in their Ordinary World.

Tarssanen and Kylänen (2005, pp. 145–146) refer to this aspect as the “*Contrast*” on their horizontal axes of the Experience Pyramid (introduced in 2.1.2). The designed experience for the guest needs to be distinct from their everyday routines. This way the guest has the chance of experiencing something novel, unusual, and unique. They get the freedom of seeing themselves from a new viewpoint, as their environment and external stimuli have changed completely. The authors point out that this is exactly what tourism is all about: the playful act of one’s “roles, identities and places”. The nationality and culture of a place shall still be kept in mind, as a too strong contrast to one’s norms and values, may only have the unwanted effect of confusion on the guest’s side.

The story and quest of kekrihunt2021 was also inspired by the concept of the Ordinary and Special World, and its notable contrast. It is not only Aaron and his friends who get to experience the Special World, but especially the participants of the quest.

In the Ordinary World of Aaron and his friends, we get to see the kids lead a regular school life. In this setting, the audience gets a chance to relate to the main characters. However, not much happens here, until Aaron goes to investigate Suomenlinna and its myths about Kekri. He is transferred into the “In-between”, which is a newly invented realm of Kekri, where he finds himself between the worlds of life and death. Aaron’s friends are taken by the evil spirits of Kekri too and get stuck in the In-between, meaning the Special World of Kekri. In this world nothing is as it seems, nothing is “normal” or “boring”, and nothing works like we know it from the regular world. The evil spirits of Kekri rule the Special World, while the participants of the quest face the exceptional challenge of finding all ingredients around the island in time to make the final potion that can save the kids. The story’s characters, the way they speak and look, the props used, and the general storyline and mood generated by various techniques all illustrate the contrasting characteristics of the Special World to the Ordinary World. Once the children have been rescued from the In-between, it was the participants, who re-established the balance to the Ordinary World, which ultimately brings the story to a finish.

It was also the participants, who became the heroes of the story. Thus, the Hero’s Journey is here not used in a traditional sense – in which the main character is the hero, and the audience passively empathizes with him –, instead, the scenario is reversed at the point when the children need serious help from the participants. This idea corresponds to the experience design feature of escapism outlined in chapter 2.1.1, in which the visitor feels as if they are actively writing the story, thus influencing the fate of the children. The level

of immersion and engagement is far higher than if they would simply read or watch what happens passively.

While the story has its own set of contrasting characteristics and dynamics, it is the overall servicescape of Viaporin Kekri in Suomenlinna that serves as the Special World in general – the visitors get to escape the world they know and dive into the mystical world of Kekri, where regular life has ceased and the rules have changed for a moment. The combination of both Aaron's and the participant's journey and Viaporin Kekri's servicescape make the event exceptionally engaging and unique for the visitor. In other words, the event is immersive, as Aaron's story together with the participant's role in the quest and the story of Kekri together with Suomenlinna, make up the Special World in a way that rounds off the overall experience.

Storytelling techniques with its related experience design elements were not the only means used to create the experience of kekrihunt2021. The author also explored the notion of gamification within the world of experience design. In the next few pages, the author will firstly, provide a quick overview of what games and gamification are while giving a brief introduction to game mechanics. Then, she will delve deeper into how gamification plays a role in tourism and experience design.

### **2.3 The concept of gamification and its relevance in experience design**

Games together with digital media have been studied to be more and more connected to experience creation; it can be said that the development of game design in the emerging experience economy makes up a new opportunity to design meaningful and entertaining experiences. (Kylänen, 2006, p. 6.) In fact, according to Behrmann, the industry of gaming may be “an innovation catalyst in the society”. Games literally play a role in consumer behaviour, as they serve as the bridge between consumers and new technologies and innovations. Generally, gaming and storytelling through digital multi-media do not only have entertainment value, but also value in our daily lives due to its use in a wide range of business sectors. (Kylänen, 2006, pp. 7–8.) Those statements were already made in 2006. Since then, the use of games and digital media in experience design has exceedingly evolved, as will be discussed below, referring mostly to the concept of gamification.

#### **2.3.1 Gamification, game mechanics and its difference to games**

The term *gamification* was first introduced in 2008 within the digital media industry, however, it only started to become a common term used, and a popular trend within a wide range of different industries, after 2015. (Deterding et al., 2011, p. 9.) Also, it is to be

pointed out, that even though digital technology is used in the vast majority of modern examples of “gamification”, the term should not be limited to it (Deterding *et al.*, 2011, p. 11). Hence, all terms used in this context can be applied in their own ways to the digital and physical sphere.

As already mentioned in subchapter 1.4, gamification can be defined as “the use of game design elements in non-game contexts” (Deterding *et al.*, 2011, p. 9), which seems to be the most popular, but also very simplified, definition out there (Parapanos and Michopoulou, 2021, pp. 13–14). Schacht and Schacht (2012, p. 186) have extended Deterding’s definition with the works of Thom *et al.*: “Gamification is the use of game design elements respectively mechanisms in non-game contexts to “... create a sense of playfulness [...] so that participation becomes enjoyable and desirable.”

Schacht and Schacht (2012, pp. 187–188) refer to in-game mechanics that are commonly used in digital gamified applications. In-game mechanics are for example achievements, points, and bonuses that the player can get when carrying out certain tasks successfully. In addition, there is the levelling up mechanic where the player is able to level up after a certain number of points are collected, while unlocking new tasks and challenges. Those mechanics refer to the display of the player’s progression in the game. In-game mechanics also aim to provide feedback via appointments, when the player made it to play on time, hence collected additional rewards; extinction, which concerns the concluding action that allows the player to keep track of their tasks; countdown, which is like a forced extinction, in which completing the assigned activity in a particular length of time of is rewarded; and finally leader boards, that portray the player’s ranking in comparison to other players in regards to their personal achievements, levels and status. (Schacht and Schacht, 2012, p. 188.)

Even though the kekrihunt2021 quest did not utilize all the game mechanics out there, the concept itself was approached from a “gameful” angle in the first place. The mechanics of achievement and countdown are ultimately incorporated. Firstly, the teams can collect rewards after the completion of all tasks, which refers to the game mechanics of achievement and points. And secondly, the urgency of completion plays a role, as the quest overall has a time limit (1,5h) including the final task of making the potion (8min).

It is important to note that there is an evident difference between games and gamification. A game is defined by Maroney as: “a form of play with goals and structure” (Liu and Zafwan Idris, 2018, p. 2), while focusing more solely on entertainment and pleasure according to Seaborn and Fels (Xu and Buhalis, 2021, p. 3). Games are characterized by features such as voluntary play, structure, rules (setting boundaries and instructions of the



game), uncertain outcomes (winning, losing, and scoring against a player), conflict, representation, and resolution. (Xu and Buhalis, 2021, p. 2.)

Gamification on the other hand has a different purpose of play, as it focuses on adjusting the player's behaviour and how they engage with their surroundings and other players in order to achieve meaningful interactions and engagement and, potentially, incentives; over just offering a fun and entertaining activity that is a game (Xu and Buhalis, 2021, p. 3.). The system of gamification, however, still makes use of such game design elements, only in a non-game context (Roinioti *et al.*, 2022, p. 191).

Parapanos and Michopoulou (2021, p. 14) conclude that gamification is not only about using game mechanics in non-game contexts, but it also entails a much more extensive process of studying the human behaviour to promote behaviours like motivation and problem solving. Zichermann and Linder also refer to gamification as the “the process of game thinking *and* mechanics to engage audiences and solve problems” (Parapanos and Michopoulou, 2021, p. 14). Essentially, game-thinking, and playful design are means used in gamification (Hsu and Chen, 2018, p. 2), in order to create an experience that is playful, while altering the player's attitude to further encourage engagement and participation in the experience (Roinioti *et al.*, 2022, p. 191). Some game features, such as leader boards and social interaction in a gamified experience can lead to positive emotional, cognitive, and social engagement. The player feels positive emotions such as joy, is cognitively stimulated during the gamified task at hand, and is engaged in their behaviour as their attention goes to the gamified task while interacting with others. In general, catering for incentive, motivation, excitement, action, and purpose, are all aims of gamification in a non-game context. (Roinioti *et al.*, 2022, p. 192.)

Kekrihunt2021 is a gamified experience as it only uses a few game mechanics, but is not entirely built like a game, while encouraging positive social interaction and engagement in a touristic context. The quest is meant to bring about a meaningful experience for the guest overall, compared to just being a fun game. It is created keeping in mind the player's whole experience, such as the servicescape, the brand of Viaporin Kekri, the story, and the theme with all its intentional details. The next paragraphs will go further into the system of gamification used in tourism experiences and provide justification and explanation of why gamification has been used in the concept.

### **2.3.2 Gamification in tourism experiences**

Although research on gamification in the tourism industry is still limited, it seems to pick up its pace (Xu and Buhalis, 2021, p. 5) and become a trend that has gained international

significance, as more and more researchers apply the concept of gamification to experiences in the tourism industry (Bulencea and Egger, 2015, p. 32).

In their book "Gamification for Tourism" Xu and Buhalis (2021) emphasize, how gamification has the power to transform the tourism industry; and in fact, already has. According to the authors, the concept of gamification helps to support tourism experiences, making customers more loyal to the organisations via for example digital gamified applications, rewarding interactions, and overall, more engaging and interactive activities, that make the guest more likely to want to co-create the gameful experience. It is a trend that provides tourism experience providers with several novel opportunities to improve their experiences, while at the same time boosting guest's satisfaction.

McGonial defines being gameful as: "having the spirit of the gamer: someone who is optimistic, curious, motivated, and always up for a tough challenge.", which has been argued to be the main characteristic of a gameful experience that enhances a tourism experience and at the same time makes it more likely to be memorable for the guest. (Bulencea and Egger, 2015, p. 30.) Gamification used in tourism can promote curiosity, exploration, socialising and fun and at last motivate the guest to visit the destination. Game mechanics make the guest's experience more challenging, but also offer a more rewarding experience. The notion of storytelling is crucial here too, as it directly correlates to the fantasy world of games, that can enhance the guest's experience. (Xu and Buhalis, 2021, p. 5.) Games have the power to trigger strong responses of imagination within the player, thus are a way to establish the setting for the guest's experience, making them the ideal starting point in tourism experience design. (Kylänen, 2006, p. 14.)

Roinioiti et al. (2022, p. 192) point out that gamification with its indistinguishable connection to storytelling, is undeniably an integral part of meaningful experience creation in tourism. The authors also claim that gamification enhances the tourism experience by making it more immersive, socially rewarding, and full of a variety of positive emotions.

Making use of gamified digital technology in various contexts and ways may enhance the experience, however, a nearly physical implementation of gamification is beneficial too. Scavenger hunts can educate and provide tourists with useful information about their location, while also engaging and immersing them in the particular sociocultural setting. Those experiences allow the tourist to explore the area, while learning about the destination. (Roinioiti et al., 2022, pp. 192–193.) In 2013, Bulencea showed how applying even the most basic gamified elements with limited time and budget to the experience of a beer museum, can have an enormous impact on the outcome: The gamified experience consisted of challenges that include the five senses, to educate the guests more about beer. The results showed that the experience was more memorable, engaging, and positive for

the visitors, in comparison to a traditional experience. (Bulencea and Egger, 2015, pp. 32–33.)

As discussed above, gamification is a powerful tool to enhance an experience. That is why the author believed, that making the kekrihunt2021 concept more like a game, while focusing on a strong story and other experience design elements, is more engaging and at last more memorable for participants of all ages.

The following paragraphs will bring light to some gamification elements used in the concept taken from the Memorable Experience Design Framework, which will also be briefly introduced.

### **2.3.3 A brief introduction to the MED framework**

In 2015, Paul Bulencea and Roman Egger published a book called “Gamification in Tourism: Designing memorable experiences” in which they present the “Memorable Experience Design Framework”, also known as MED framework. The framework attempts to summarize the experience design process and present the main elements, as well as tools and techniques to create a memorable experience in tourism. The MED is based on experience design, tourism and gamification knowledge, literature, and cases. The book also offers distinct examples for each element in the context of game design and tourism. As explaining the whole MED framework would extend over the scope of this paper, the author will refer to a few of the MED elements that were applied in the kekrihunt2021. Those being firstly, the element of *relaxation and tension*, and secondly the element of *surprise* in the positive emotions pillar of the framework, and lastly, the element of *clear goals* in the engagement pillar.

*Relaxation and tension* refers to the moods of the player during the gamified experience. As games often have a progressive pattern, meaning they start out easy and get more challenging over time, this element would suggest the design of a relaxation period after a challenge has been completed. This way, the player gets the opportunity to gather new strength to be ready for the next challenge. This pattern has been referred to as “tense and release” by Shell, which is often used in design as it is closely linked to human enjoyment. Too much relaxation means too much boredom, while too much tension leads to too much exhaustion. That is why finding an ideal balance between relaxation and tension can lead to “the pleasure of variety” during the experience *and* “pleasure of anticipation” of what is to come. (Bulencea and Egger, 2015, p. 85.) Moreover, the authors discuss why it is important to get the players to experience positive stress, instead of a negative one, as they are going to experience some stress anyways, due to the nature of games. High levels of arousal caused by the challenge, can be perceived as excitement or anxiety. Low

levels of arousal can be perceived as boredom on one hand, or good relaxation on the other. This indicates that the activities shall be designed in a way that they are perceived as challenging, but also as achievable, which at the same time can lead to higher levels of motivation and overall, more feelings of joy and excitement. Also, a safe physical and social environment shall work as a frame, to make sure the arousal is experienced as positive instead of negative – after all the purpose of a game is to engage the player and challenge them in one way or another. (Bulucea and Egger, 2015, pp. 85–86.)

The kekrihunt2021 quest makes use of exactly this element. The quest is designed to contain checkpoints for the team to go through, which involve easy and hard challenges – some checkpoints are easier, so item needs to be found and taken; others are puzzles and codes to solve that are little bit harder. Even the first checkpoint, where they encounter Louis, is designed in a way that Louis basically provokes some stress, as he acts excitedly but also nervously, worried that the kids are lost forever, if the team does not intervene. The tension is continuously built. The team then gets a break in between each checkpoint, in which they can relax, while they are walking through the island trying to follow clues to find the next checkpoint. Positive stress arises once they have reached the next checkpoint that involves a challenging task. Also, the quest builds up tension up until they have gathered all necessary ingredients. The checkpoint of the potion preparation is the peak that generates positive stress, due to the time limit of the task and the presence of the spirit of Aaron in the room to establish tension. Once they have made the potion, the teams can relax again on their way to the last point of reference to collect their rewards. All in all, the participants of the quest experience both moments of tension and relaxation throughout the whole journey.

Another element of the positive emotions pillar is *surprise*, which refers to the fact that there are a wide range of positive emotions generated by surprises. Utilizing a surprise element in a tourism experience and game design has been emphasized in the industry. The authors give examples of unexpected rewards, that are given out unexpectedly for the player, and random rewards that are expected by the player throughout the game. Both types of rewards received stimulate positive emotions such as joy. Furthermore, easter eggs are mentioned here, which refer to small secrets within the game. The player knows there are easter eggs somewhere and constantly looks for them, asking for hints, in hopes to find them. Once the easter egg is found, the player experiences yet again positive emotions. (Bulucea and Egger, 2015, pp. 91–93.)

In kekrihunt2021 the surprise element is utilized especially in the checkpoint of the potion preparation. Over the course of the quest, the team is made to believe that they are “fairly

safe” going through their journey on their own, only to get the surprise of the peak checkpoint where Aaron waits for them, establishing feelings of stress in a good way. It is the moment that no one expects. Moreover, an unexpected reward is given out by the end of the quest to stimulate positive emotions. Finally, during the post stage of the experience, the teams receive a letter referring to easter eggs: the solutions for all checkpoints were in reality shown in the setting of the first checkpoint. The teams are yet again made to be surprised.

Lastly, there is the element of *clear goals* in the engagement pillar of the MED framework. According to Bulencea and Egger (2015, pp. 100–101), setting clear goals in an experience gives the players a “sense of direction and purpose”. Clear goals let the player know what needs to be done to conquer the given challenge. A purposefully designed experience space, that brings about clarity of what needs to be done, gives the player a sense of empowerment. Simultaneously, as the player achieves the goals one at a time, they experience focus and positive emotions while seeing their progress, fostering greater engagement. For example, quests, missions, and objectives are terms that video games use, which also include clear steps and instructions for each challenge. Another example given by the authors are access items: the player might need to overcome many different challenges along the way, by gathering access items in order to pass to the next level or have special access to specific areas within the game.

In the kekrihunt2021 quest, it is the clear goals set within different means that purposefully guide the team and further engage them in the experience. It is the pre stage of the experience, which is the story unfolding on Instagram, as well the reminder and instructive email they receive from Louis, that gives the team a feeling of certainty of what to expect. A clear goal in the relevant context is established. The instructions and map provided by Louis at the start shall give the team a sense of why they are here and what they should do: Save the kids by creating the final potion with ingredients gathered on the island, while ensuring that all challenges are conquered. Directions with clear actions, that are simple to follow at all stages, as well as support from Kekri spirits and the Instagram account, provide additional advice and clarity.

The previous subchapters went through the background and theory behind the creation of kekrihunt2021, focusing on experiences, storytelling, and gamification. To conclude the theory segment of this paper, the following sections will briefly touch on the concept of customer journey and summarize all theories used in the form of a visual theoretical framework.

## 2.4 The experience journey as a whole

As already mentioned above, only when crucial experience design elements of the Experience Pyramid are used at all stages of the experience, the experience can be created as memorable and unique. (Tarssanen and Kylänen, 2005, p. 140.) Tung and Ritchie indicate in the same way that a tourism experience is not only the experience on site, but what happens before the trip, during of course, as well as after (Bulencea and Egger, 2015, p. 26).

Although the tourism experience normally has a clear beginning and ending, it is the pre and post experience management that is so crucial in designing a worthwhile experience, according to Lovelock et al. (Gelter, 2006, p. 42).

Basically, there are several events, situations and encounters that occur to the guest throughout the entire experience, which may even extend to the post experience stage. The notion is best shown by using the customer journey including touch points, which refer to the features of the events, situations, and encounters. In fact, each touch point is a potential interactive experience within the experience itself. Here it is essential to note, that the context of the touch point (personal, social, and physical) might influence the overall guest's experience. The characteristics of all touch points along the customer journey, as well as the impact of each touch point within the specific personal, social, and physical context, determine whether the experience is memorable and unique for the guest in the end. Some touch points might even create a peak experience for the guest. (Smit and Melissen, 2018, pp. 26–27.)

In the case of kekrihunt2021, it is the whole journey that makes the experience, including all touch points that have been designed purposefully, at the pre, during, and post experience stage: Each touch point of the overall kekrihunt2021 concept holds details of one or more elements that have been discussed throughout the theory chapter. All intentional details have a meaning in each touch point, carrying each other along the way, and at last making the experience cohesive. The customer journey, or in this case the experience journey, is shown in the product section of this paper (see Appendix 1). Essentially, the product itself can be read like a journey, that the guest experiences. It shall give perspective of how all elements were applied to the concept, uniting the pieces into an entity of what is an experience.

## 2.5 Visual summary of the theoretical framework

Because the theoretical framework is an essential component of the design of kekrihunt2021, and especially its multidisciplinary approach, the author saw great value in describing the most important parts of theory in the form of a framework. She saw even greater value in making it a visual graph, as the elements are essentially interconnected

with each other. Table one, provides a brief summary of most theories used, including their authors, in a listed format. Figure six demonstrates her attempt to visually depict all of the theory’s most important features and how they relate to one another.

Table 1. List of theories used in the visual theoretical framework (Lohoff, 2023)

Author	Theory
Pine and Gilmore, 2019	Experience Realms Key Experience Design Principles (THEME-ing)
Tarssanen and Kylänen, 2005	Experience Pyramid
Maio, 2019	Three Act Structure
Gustav Freytag, 1989	Freytag’s Pyramid
Vogler, 1998	The Hero’s Journey
Roinioiti et al, 2022 Xu and Buhalis, 2021	Gamification for Tourism
Schacht and Schacht, 2012	Gamification and In-Game Mechanics
Bulncea and Egger, 2015	Memorable Experience Design Framework

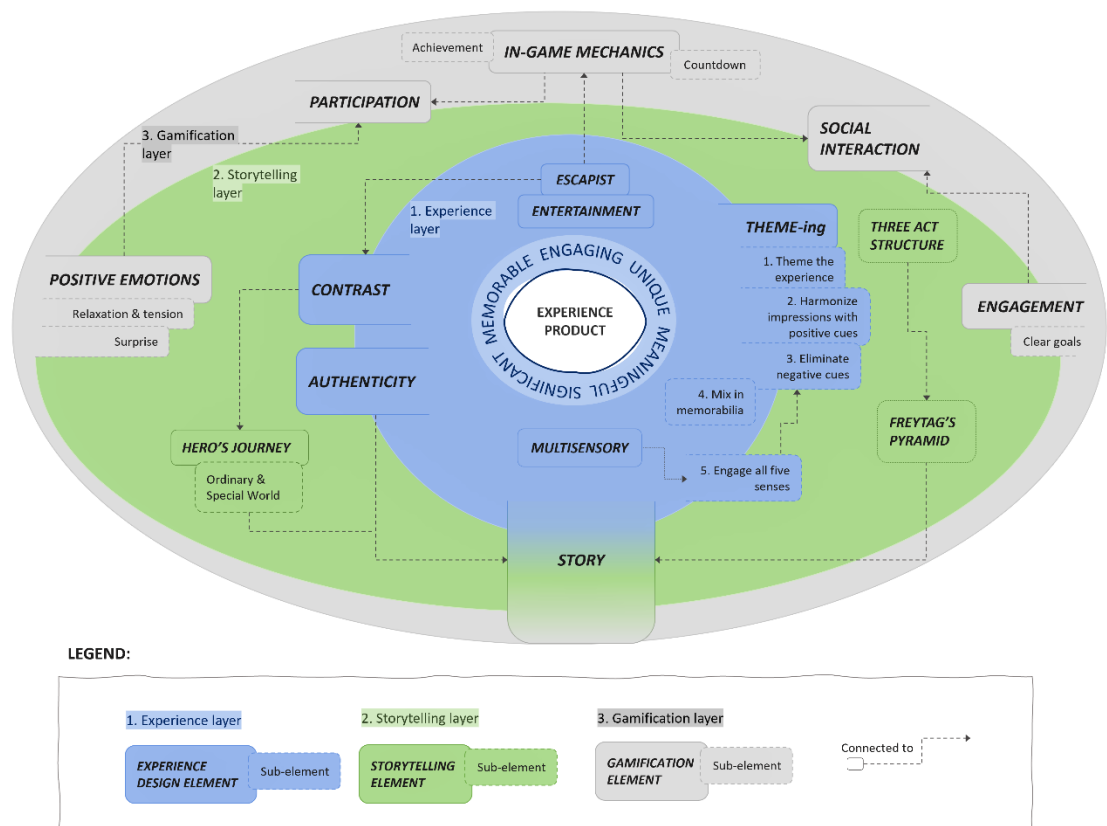


Figure 6. Visual theoretical framework for the experience product (Lohoff, 2023)

Now that the theoretical framework for the thesis has been established, the next chapter delves into the planning and implementation part of kekrihunt2021. The chapter discusses how the creation process went from a project management standpoint, the product's methodology, and finally its evaluation.



### **3 The planning and implementation of kekrihunt2021**

Kekrihunt2021 is the outcome of work done by one of the Concept Design Teams of the Core Team for Kekri 2021, which included the author of this paper, as well as five other notable team members. It is vital to note that the kekrihunt project was part of a larger effort and cannot be viewed as an independent product. In other words, the project was completed in close cooperation with other event organizers of the project's Core Team.

Despite the fact that the theory discussed in chapter two was implemented throughout the design process, it is to be highlighted that the design, planning and project execution can be characterized as a little messy and hazy. However, given the often-unpredictable nature of design and execution of experiential events, this was to be expected. In retrospect, the uncertainty of it all may have made the process not just bearable, but actually truly enjoyable: It was a collaborative effort in which everyone worked together even during the cloudy and confusing times, while learning how to put theory into practice.

The following chapter will dive deep into that process. From scratch the background of kekrihunt2021 will be elaborated on while referring to Viaporin Kekri as an event. It includes a quick outline of the organizational structure for Kekri (the Core Team) and how the project came into existence. The timeline for project kekrihunt, including the thesis deliverables, will then be introduced, along with a further description of the process from beginning to end. Furthermore, the author explains the methodology that has been utilized to ultimately create the experience product. Lastly, risks and limitations of the project are listed; and the product will be evaluated from multiple angles, while discussing improvement points and future possibilities.

#### **3.1 Background of kekrihunt2021 in Viaporin Kekri**

Viaporin Kekri is celebrated annually since 2015 on Suomenlinna, in which the darkness is welcomed with delicious food, music, art, and games amid an eerie atmosphere. It's essentially a one-of-a-kind story world makes up this event, where modern elements are invited into the old sea fortress while its history is being remembered. Visitors get a glimpse of the island from a completely new light: They get to experience the island in darkness, where the Kekri spirits establish the mystical mood, while also getting a new perspective of the island's preserved places. Visitors are also offered unique immersive experiences that fit the theme of Viaporin Kekri. The event comes to an end with the highlight of the tender Kekri Buck Burning Ceremony. (Salonen, 2021.)

The event's project is executed by the collaboration of lecturers and students of Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences and representatives of The Governing Body of Suomenlinna. The students are mainly from the Bachelor's Degree Program named "Hospitality, Tourism and Experience Management" (HOTEM). It is not only a great opportunity for volunteering students to learn how to put their knowledge acquired in class into practice – such as experience design concepting and management – but also, for The Governing Body of Suomenlinna to emphasize the island's local worth and attract attention to tourists even during the darker season. Small to medium businesses from mainland Helsinki are also a big part of the event's asset, while bringing value to their own companies. (Salonen, 2021.)

The kekrihunt2021 experience was part of the event's 2021 version and was meant to match the Kekri concept. The concepting and execution of kekrihunt2021 occurred during the project Viaporin Kekri. As a result, it is critical to shed light on how its project fits into the larger event's project. Thus, the following few paragraphs will briefly describe the organizational structure of project Viaporin Kekri and how the kekrihunt project came into existence.

Violeta Salonen, a Senior Lecturer at Haaga-Helia (HH), is the project leader and the main organizer of the event. She founded Viaporin Kekri in 2015 with the help of past students and supports the students every year. On her side she has the HH student management team with 13 HOTEM students from second to fourth years, as well as the event coordinator Paula Lappalainen, who represents the party of The Governing Body of Suomenlinna. Together they make up the Core Team. The 13 students and managers are further divided into six teams which are the following: Leader Assistants, Student Coordination, Partnerships, Marketing and Website, Concept Design, and Scheduling. In addition, the Haaga-Helia party involves first year students (around 50 students) from the HOTEM Degree Program, who assist the Core Team operationally in many ways partially throughout the project and on the day of the event. All involved have their own responsibilities and roles, while some are more advanced and others less so. The HH party is responsible for the planning process of the event, creating experiences, marketing, and content creation for the brand's sites, organizing volunteer schedules, dealing with practical matters, and more. Communication amongst all involved, especially amongst the members of the Core Team, is crucial as it ensures a smooth planning process, execution, and outcome.

The focus of this thesis lies on one of the Concept Design Teams. The Concept Design Team consists of four key members who are all managers and designers for their own separate team. They work on their own experience products based on venue/concept and

have their own team members of a few first-year HOTEEM students. The teams were the following:

- Hallways/ Escape Room concept Team (1 manager + first-year students)
- Pajasali/ Children's concept Team (1 manager + first-year students)
- Scavenger Hunt concept Team (2 managers + first-year students)

The Scavenger Hunt concept Team is the team in question with two members of the main Concept Design Team. The first member is the manager, Helina Lohoff, the writer of the thesis; and the second member is the co-manager, Zlata Alexina. Both are responsible for design and execution of the product and management of their own four team members from the first year. It was also Helina and Zlata who communicate with the rest of their Concept Design Team, asking for feedback or support, as well as with the Kekri Core Team, to ensure everyone is on the same page with regards to the new Kekri concepts.

### **3.2 Project timeline and deliverables**

In order to explain the whole project process, the author designed a project timeline that depicts the process chronologically, highlighting major project deliverables including its stage in time (see figure 7 and 8).

Following the project timeline, the content is divided into subchapters of pre, during and post event, outlining the project's deliverables in greater depth in terms of the Concept Design Team and team kekrihunt, as well as the thesis methodology and general writing.



Figure 7. Project timeline – Part 1 (Lohoff, 2023)



Figure 8. Project timeline – Part 2 (Lohoff, 2023)

### 3.2.1 Kick-off and pre event (April – November 2021)

The whole project started off in the months of April and May 2021 with the setup of the Kekri Core Team. First meetings were held, and the students were divided into their own management teams, that were already mentioned above. This is the stage where the Concept Design Team was formed based on level of interest and experience.

Once the summer break was over in August 2021, preparations for the event could begin. The start of the autumn semester kicked off the new “Kekri season” and general planning and organization occurred during weekly Kekri Core Team meetings and beyond. Furthermore, the Concept Design Team of four started their own planning while deciding on concepts to ideate on and develop with the first-year students later. In August 2021, it was also the author’s time to start reviewing relevant literature for the thesis. The meetings with the Core- and her own Concept Team allowed her to empathize and define the design challenge starting in August until September 2021.

In September 2021 preparations continued. The Kekri Core Team visit to Suomenlinna with first years and other volunteers gave the Concept Design Team inspiration to develop their experience concepts. In addition, during the Suomenlinna visit, the first year HOTEEM students were able to sign up to help in the actual development of their venue/concept of interest. This way the Scavenger Hunt team, later kekrihunt team, of six members in total, was born. Also, the Concept Design Team held an active brainstorming session on site with the Core Team and HOTEEM first years, in order to define the existing concepts further. A second ideation session with first year students in school, facilitated by the Concept Design Team, delved even further into the concepts, allowing the kekrihunt team to begin the creation process in October 2021. It was especially valuable at the time to continue brainstorming together with all Concept Design Team members, as it helped to design three experiences that were in harmony with one another and the theme of Kekri. The kekrihunt kick-off meeting late September allowed the team to divide responsibilities and get started on an action plan. Overall, the month of September gave the author and her co-manager time to build a solid foundation and plan the crucial upcoming weeks.

October 2021 was the month of deep and fast work – a lot had to happen all at once. Once the kekrihunt team was set, the scavenger hunt project kicked off with more ideation, design, scripting and creating. The team started out with the story-writing including creating its fictional characters from scratch and deciding on the character roles for each of the team members. Accordingly, additional actors and people needed for the performance online and offline were recruited from the first HOTEEM year.

Once the story idea was established, the team was able to create a posting plan for the Instagram content. Captions were written, photos were shot, and videos were filmed every

week. Also, relevant research was done, and content was edited according to the theme. A ready set posting plan helped the team to keep track of posting content and dates. Once the overall concept and title for the experience product were finalized, it was officially listed on Eventbrite, a website where users can search for and book local events and activities of interest. During that time, the team had to take care of bookings coming in, market the product on Viaporin Kekri official social media sites, and make sure the information received by participating team was accurate, sufficient, and matching with the story and idea. By the time reservations closed in late October, eight teams of three to seven participants each had been officially booked.

Throughout the online content creation, offline checkpoints and the quest's route were designed as well, including their puzzles, which matched the story and its attributes. In fact, by that point, further experience design details were finalized. Making quick prototypes and testing those with students helped the kekrihunt team to develop the puzzles further. It was also in October, when the managers took care of all props, such as getting all ingredients and items needed for the quest and designing parts of the checkpoint set up that would be used on the day of the event. Late October 2021, memorabilia were designed and created by the team from scratch.

At the start of November 2021, the kekrihunt team only had one week left to finalize the product. Further prototyping and testing occurred with many students, which allowed the team to create the final instructions, map, and puzzles for the quest. The test run on Suomenlinna a few days before the event gave the team the best chance to put the final touch on the product. Volunteers, meaning actors for the kekrihunt experience, were briefed, and responsibilities and important information was discussed with all involved. For a smooth process on the event day, the manager created a schedule with the purpose of dividing roles and tasks according to bookings, and to ensure that all members get adequate rest. It consisted of times, names, and places, stating where everyone had to be every 15 minutes. Basically, at each checkpoint during the quest, there had to be someone present. Also, a few days before the event, the pump room and small room checkpoint were set up.

Throughout the whole process of design and execution, Kekri Core Team meetings were held continuously, in which the concept designers, including the kekrihunt designers, were able to share their progress with the other Core members and ask for help, if needed. Those meetings fostered feelings of belonging and support. During the deep creation period, ideation sessions and in-depth meetings with the project leader, Violeta Salonen, were especially helpful in assuring the managers that what they were doing was worthwhile and valuable for Kekri. Also, the kekrihunt manager needed to stay in touch with the event coordinator Paula Lappalainen, to make sure the checkpoint locations were free to

use and to get actual access to them in time for planning, design, and prototyping purposes. Props were bought together with her too.

### **3.2.2 During the event (6<sup>th</sup> November 2021)**

On the day of Viaporin Kekri (Saturday, 6<sup>th</sup> November 2021), the Kekri Core Team, the first-year students and other volunteers arrived on Suomenlinna at around 9:00. In the late morning, after a kick-off meeting at the Kekri headquarters, the kekrihunt team was able to set up the rest of the checkpoints on the Island and go through responsibilities, as well as the team's schedule and bookings once again. After lunch, the team members and actors put on their Kekri spirit costumes and makeup. Some kekrihunt members and actors had distinct makeup matching the spirits of the story's characters. Others were regular Kekri spirits. Louis' character had his own costume and makeup.

The event, and kekrihunt2021 with it, officially began at 14:00, with all actors and checkpoints in place. The eight participating teams started the quest in 15 to 30-minute increments over the course of roughly four hours during the day of Viaporin Kekri, with the quest itself lasting around one and a half hours.

The manager and co-manager were making sure that each quest for each team was going smoothly by always communicating with everyone involved via WhatsApp. The day's schedule (14-18:30) helped the team in feeling assured of what was going on, what needed to be done and where they needed to be. Team members needed to rotate their positions every 30 to 60 minutes. It also ensured that the participating teams were in good hands, getting support from acting spirits if needed, while also experiencing a smooth and enjoyable quest without being interrupted by "reality". Meaning the actors had to always stay in their roles of Kekri spirits, or spirits of the teen's characters Aaron, Becky, Caroline, Daisy, and Erik.

Because the Kekri Buck Burning Ceremony (18:45) was the grand finale of the event, and at the same time the concluding event for kekrihunt2021, all quests had to be finished before 18:30; meaning the final participating team started the quest at 17:00. Once the Buck Burning Ceremony finished, the official kekrihunt team was responsible to clean up all checkpoints, including the pump and small room, and gather and pack all items for pick up during the next week. The team also had the task to help clean up the Kekri headquarters with other students. After all cleaning was done at around 22:00, the kekrihunt team was able to take the ferry back to mainland Helsinki, and with that, end the long project day.

### **3.2.3 Post event and writing (November 2021 – May 2023)**

A few days after Viaporin Kekri and kekrihunt2021, the kekrihunt team manager sent out a thank you-email to all participating teams while asking to leave feedback of their personal



kekrihunt experience. Hence, the weeks following the event were a time of gathering feedback for the product. At the same time, managers of the Kekri Core Team collected feedback for the overall event of Viaporin Kekri 2021. In December 2021, a post Kekri Core Team meeting was held to review the gathered feedback from attendees. The meeting also had the purpose of discussing individual opinions by the student management team, for example what had been learned and taken away from the overall project. The post Kekri Core meeting mid-December 2021 put an end to the Kekri project 2021.

Also in December 2021, the author had a few more in-depth meetings with her thesis supervisor, discussing the next thesis steps. Here, it is important to mention, that while the product design and project execution was done in the autumn of 2021, the actual writing of the thesis took place in the spring of 2023. Even though the author started to plan the writing in December 2021, there was another project getting in her way of writing in the spring of 2022: The 30-credit specialisation called “Experience Designer”.

After her summer job in 2022, the author wanted to kick off the writing of the paper, but had to take a break from school due to personal reasons. Only in the beginning of 2023, the student finally had the chance to fully invest her time into writing and finalizing her bachelor’s thesis. In January 2023, she kicked off the writing with a fresh meeting with her supervisor, in which deadlines were discussed and plans were made for the upcoming months. February and March 2023 were used for reviewing literature and notes from 2021, writing the theory and building a theoretical framework out of all elements used. In April 2023 the author used her time to document the product in a visual format. She also planned to continue writing the final thesis chapters such as project management, methodology and evaluation. The first weeks of May 2023 would give the author time to finalize the thesis by discussing the project’s outcome and review the whole paper. The thesis presentation and maturity test were scheduled for May, bringing the overall thesis and kekrihunt project to a close.

While outlining the project timeline, parts of the primary methodology for the creation of kekrihunt2021 were already mentioned in brief – meaning the components of empathizing, defining, ideation, prototyping, and testing. These are the five stages of design thinking. Following an introduction to design thinking in general, with the addition of an explanation of the fuzzy-front-end concept, they will be explained in greater detail in the following sub-chapter in the context of the kekrihunt project.

### 3.3 Methodology

Design thinking – a creative problem-solving method that keeps the human at its core, by making sincere observations and trying to understand the target and their needs meticulously. The aim of design thinking stretches beyond just creating a “pretty” product and making sales. Instead of designing an already existing product to be more appealing, design thinkers from all kinds of industries, would try to come up with ideas that better match the real consumer needs and desires, as opposed to what the consumer thinks they need or want. Its creative and iterative approach infused by the human-centred design mindset, allows meaningful innovation to occur in ways that would otherwise be impossible, while at the same time creating new forms of value for the business and target. It is a method that is especially useful in today’s emerging economy, in which not only physical products are demanded, but especially intangible services, processes, entertainments, and ways of communicating. (Brown, 2008, p. 86.) This notion makes this process particularly suitable for the design of experiences – intangible products created *by people for people*.

As Tim Brown (2008, p. 88) points out, the design thinking process is far from linear or milestone-based, but rather considerably messy and diverse, and at first even incomprehensible. A well-done product is not produced in a day, but it can be achieved through creative hard work, a human-centered mindset, and numerous iteration cycles in which the concept is prototyped, tested, and refined repeatedly. Brown (2008, p. 88) recognizes the process as "a system of spaces rather than a predefined series of orderly steps" called inspiration, ideation, and implementation, which the designers will return to several times. The d.school at Stanford has identified their five stages of design thinking: empathizing, defining, ideating, prototyping, and testing (see figure 9).

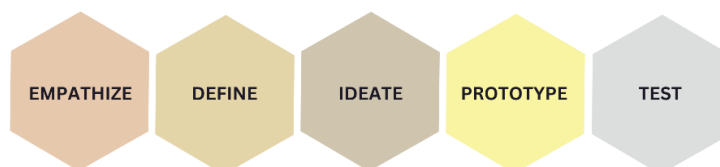
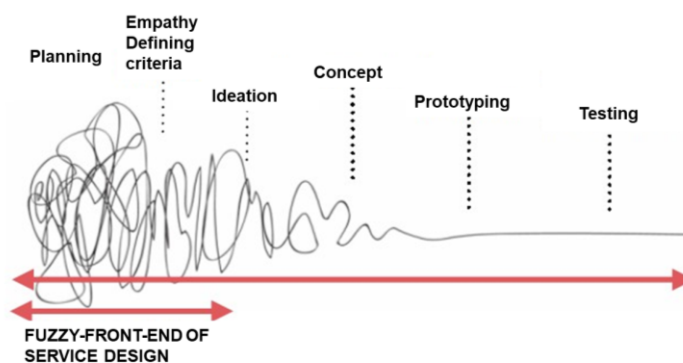


Figure 9. The five components of design thinking (adapted from d.school at Stanford, 2018)

Because the process is iterative and repetitive, “stages” may not be the most accurate way to describe it. In other words, the designer may jump from component to component according to need; however, the diagram serves as the general guide when using the methodology. The d.school also encourages designers to personalize the approach to the

method, tailoring it to their own work and style. Repeating the design thinking process many times and each time in different ways, helps in narrowing down the scope and moving from an extremely broad to a detailed concept. (d.school at Stanford, no date.) The authors Sanders and Steppers (2008, pp. 6–7) have made note of especially that narrowing down process. The first stages of the process are identified as the “fuzzy-front-end” – the stage of pre-design. It is a chaotic and even puzzling phase as a lot of open-ended questions are explored without even knowing what kind of a product will be designed in the end. It is the stage of planning, empathizing, defining, and ideation in which the concept possibilities are investigated from many perspectives, without restrictions or constraints, as there are not any yet. This makes this phase so “fuzzy”. Figure ten shows an adapted version of the fuzzy-front-end from the original authors:



Modified from: Sanders & Stappers (2008)

Figure 10. The fuzzy-front-end in Service Design (Haaga-Helia, 2022)

During the kekrihunt project, the team made use of the five components of design thinking, to eventually craft kekrihunt2021. The method chosen gave the team the opportunity to follow a certain structure without having to attend to it too rigidly, while also having total freedom in the creation process. It also allowed the team to put many different minds together and co-create the product. With design thinking, the complex nature of experience design is embraced, as its approach welcomes the inevitable fuzziness and a bit of chaos. As expected, the process was fuzzy and cloudy from the start, while clearing up towards the prototyping and testing phase. The following paragraphs describe each component of design thinking and justify how it was relevant in the kekrihunt project.

### 3.3.1 Empathizing

Empathizing means connecting to the target on a deep level, gaining understanding and trying to put oneself into the target’s shoes. Making real and authentic conversation with the target as well as observing and engaging oneself in their environment are all ways to empathize. It is about getting to know them in depth to realize their pain points and what

they need. The empathizing component is the most important stage and foundation for what is following; hence it shall not be overlooked. (d.school at Stanford, no date.)

The kekrihunt team started the design process by focusing on their target of teenagers. Especially social media shadowing and observation were some of the most useful ways to understand the target. During their online research, the team tried to find topics and points of interests that seemed to be particularly appealing for young kids. But also, how they communicate, what they talk about and what they do online. Role playing was another useful technique during this phase, in which the team took on roles of 13- to 17-year-olds. It was an excellent way to gain an understanding of a teenager's mind, at least to some extent, and to try to "be" a teenager from the 2020s. It was basically all about putting oneself into their shoes. At the time, unstructured interviews with young siblings and relatives of few team members were also an asset to the team. Even though they were not structured, they still gave the team another way to engage with the target.

It was critical for the kekrihunt team to not only empathize with the scavenger hunt's target audience of teenagers, but also with the Kekri brand – since it is also made for Viaporin Kekri. This was mostly done by having qualitative conversations with the project leader Violeta Salonen and her assistants during weekly Core meetings. Those group meetings, as well as in total four individual qualitative unstructured interviews with Violeta Salonen, and Paula Lappalainen, gave the author a chance to understand how the concept could fit into the larger scheme of things. Topics that were discussed focused on Suomenlinna as a destination including its restrictions due to its heritage value, Kekri as a brand, and what has been done in the past, what is possible in the present and how the new concept could fit into Kekri now. It was these open-ended talks with the management that made the kekrihunt team understand whom they are creating the concept for. It ensured that the eventual product complements the event's theme. The meetings and interviews left the kekrihunt team assured that what they are doing makes sense for the event, allowing them to move forward with defining and ideating.

The main reason for the team to conduct only a few qualitative unstructured interviews, as opposed more planned and structured ones, was the limitation of resources: mainly time and the team's inexperience in following the design process. More to that in subchapter 3.4. The team, including the author, did not really understand the importance of proper empathizing at the time. There could have been put more specific focus on it, as it builds the foundation and ensures the best solution is created for the target based on proper insights. However, the team attempted to embrace the fuzzy-front-end as much as possible and in retrospect, did what they could with the means they had at the time.

### 3.3.2 Defining

Defining is the stage in which the design thinker unpacks all insights gained during empathizing, makes sense of it, and formulates a clear and actionable point of view statement, that is based on true understanding of the target. Through defining, a meaningful design challenge is identified, which has the advantage of being constructed based on unique insights of the target gained in the previous phase, allowing the designer to create a more valuable solution. (d.school at Stanford, 2018.)

The kekrihunt team defined their challenge together with the rest of the Concept Design Team, as well as by keeping in mind the insights gained on the target of teenagers during the empathizing stage.

Throughout the years of Kekri, the target segments of families with kids and adults were always taken care of in terms of offering them unique experience concepts. However, the segment of teenagers was mostly left out. Despite the effort over the years in creating concepts for them, they have mostly been neglected. Only in 2019, “Glitch in Kekri” – the interactive adventure game based on YA-novels –, showed that it is possible to attract teenagers to the event. The success of the first official scavenger hunt concept was the ultimate inspiration for the event organizers to continue with its approach. This made it obvious for Violeta Salonen and her team to plan based on it and to pursue the idea again. Hence, the Concept Design Team already knew, that something for teenagers needed to be designed. Further defining, what concepts will be designed in the end, occurred during Concept Design Team meetings. A few weeks before the official start of the Kekri season, the team discussed multiple ideas from previous years, new ones and tried to find the best solution for Viaporin Kekri 2021. The result was the creation of three concepts: one for adults, one for kids, and one for teenagers. To maintain the overall experience's harmony, all concepts were compelled to follow the same theme and partial story.

Once the design challenge was formed, based on findings from the side of Kekri, and the kekrihunt team was created, the team used their energy to empathize with the target of teenager, as previously described. Those insights from the unstructured interviews, research, and observations gave the team the chance to decide more on what kind of scavenger hunt it would be, that specifically interests the teenagers. It was observed that teenagers spend a lot of time online: chatting with their friends while using slang and emojis, scrolling through Instagram and TikTok and playing video games. This notion made it clear for the team to make use of digital elements in the concept, as that seemed to be the easiest way to capture their attention in the first place.

At this stage of defining, empathizing continued; and as pointed out above, the start of the design process carried on being extremely cloudy. During the first two components of design thinking, the manager and her co-manager had a lot of other management responsibilities to take care of, hence the defining of the clear point of view of the target was neglected. However, the team took as much as they could from the empathizing stage to move forward. The following stage of ideation gave the team direction of where they were going with the actual concept.

### 3.3.3 Ideation

The ideation component means radically generating as many ideas as possible in a short amount of time. It is about “going wide”, as opposed to focusing on details. It is the stage in which any idea – good or bad – is welcomed, and the designers are encouraged to not hold back. “A large quantity and broad diversity of ideas” is supposed to be explored, to have a wide selection of ideas to choose from that can be prototyped and tested with the target later. (d.school at Stanford, 2018.)

For the Concept Design Team, ideation occurred together with first year students and part of the Core Team. By that point the individual Concepting Teams were not formed yet, however, that was not needed. This way, the concepts were ideated on by many different people. A couple of brainstorming sessions on Suomenlinna and in school were facilitated for that. The first-year students were divided in teams in which they could develop each of their own concepts, rotating every 15 minutes. The time constraint would take away the possibility to dwell on details too much and encourage quick and creative thinking, in which there are no bad ideas. As the design challenge was already defined, the following questions were given for consideration:

- How might we create a concept that relates to the Kekri story?
- How might we connect/combine the different concepts with each other? (Through storytelling?)
- How might we create a strong story while adding in gamification elements?
- How might we keep the consistency of the story? (Think about the immersion of the participant)

The questions gave the first-year students the appropriate guidance without giving away too much. Furthermore, even though the previous scavenger hunt concept “Glitch in Kekri”, was briefly mentioned as inspiration, the students were encouraged to think outside of that box and basically start from scratch with idea generating. This allowed the team to not stay stuck in the old ways but to branch out into new and innovative directions. Social media content, games and movies were also used as inspiration by many students.

By the end of the brainstorming sessions, the Concept Design Team combined and chose their favourite ideas. In the end, the kekrihunt team landed on the idea of a teenager, who keeps an online blog and discovers the evil side of the Kekri spirits. YouTube, Instagram or TikTok were mentioned multiple times to make use of. Creative video content and digital games were also ideas to think about. During the sessions, younger students were able to shine light on what teenagers like, and what might be boring to them, so in this case the empathizing persisted. Combined with the Kekri knowledge and experience of the manager, Aaron's story and later quest was born by the kekrihunt team.

### **3.3.4 Prototyping**

The prototyping phase of design thinking transforms intangible ideas from the previous phase into some tangible formats. It is encouraged to keep first prototypes rough and cheap, in order to learn in quick ways what works, what does not and what is possible, in order to design the best solution. Prototypes are also a great way to start a conversation with everyone involved, creating additional empathy and deeper understanding of the target. (d.school at Stanford, 2018.)

For the kekrihunt team, prototyping occurred within the final weeks of the product creation. The ideation stage produced a more concrete concept, after which the team started to make paper prototypes of puzzles and instructions for the quest. Rough drawings made on paper, for example a quick illustration of parts of the storyline, were in fact generally a useful way to demonstrate any idea to fellow team members. However, ideation did not stop here. As the concept became more tangible, new ideas were born constantly, that emerged from conversations had with the team and other students. This way detailed aspects of the product were crafted. Additionally, the managers spent a notable time on Suomenlinna, to go through the quest route and checkpoints while acting out the duration of the quest. This helped the team to design the quest, for it to make sense, while eliminating contradictory elements.

Over time the kekrihunt team felt more certain that what they came up with had good prospects to be a valuable solution for Viaporin Kekri. Also, asking for feedback in meetings with the Core Team, especially the project leader and assistants, helped to not lose track of time and direction. Meaning, overall, the team was moving out of the fuzzy-front-end.

This stage lasted for roughly two weeks. Looking back, the team could have started prototyping sooner. Given the gist of the iterative process, making an idea tangible in multiple ways in the early stages of concept design, could have given the team a chance to create a better solution. However, limitations kept them from following through with the entire process. More on that in subchapter 3.4.

### 3.3.5 Testing

The goal of testing throughout the design thinking process is to collect meaningful feedback after exposing the quickly built prototypes to the target in the appropriate context, and then modify and polish the concept based on that feedback. The testing experience for the target should be authentic in order to gather valuable feedback. The design thinkers are encouraged to maintain a student's open-minded mindset, learning continuously while acknowledging that testing may result in having to get rid of some – at first sight – good ideas, change the entire concept or even the whole design challenge. This phase is all about continuing with iteration and switching back and forth between stages while learning as much as possible from the users. (d.school at Stanford, 2018.)

During the kekrihunt project, prototypes were largely tested for the sake of the quest, namely its checkpoints and puzzles. The team aimed to know if they make sense and if the instructions were clear. Also, the managers wanted to get feedback on the duration of completion and difficulty level of the puzzles. The paper prototypes were tested with students in school and on site in Suomenlinna. As mentioned before, the prototyping and testing phase could have already started sooner, in order to be able to iterate as much as possible and refine the solution accordingly. However, the testing runs on Suomenlinna may have been the best indicator in showcasing which checkpoints worked, and which did not. The feedback received by participants was valuable. Unfortunately, the team was not able to get teenagers to test the content, but only younger university students. Again, the lack of time and other resources kept the team from being able to fully follow the process. Nevertheless, the testing that was done, helped the team in many ways to modify and polish the puzzles and instructions. The testing phase also resulted in clarity for all team members and helped the project to become what went on to be kekrihunt2021 in Viaporin Kekri.

As already repeatedly mentioned, the project managers encountered limitations in following through with the whole design thinking process. The next subchapter will go deeply into those, as well as describe risks that the team had to expect.

## 3.4 Limitations and Risks

Viaporin Kekri is a low-budget event, run mostly by volunteering students with minimal experience in the industry. This makes it obvious, that project kekrihunt encountered unavoidable limitations and risks. The most evident limitation in this case was the low budget. The fact that the funding of project Viaporin Kekri is very low had been made abundantly clear by leading managers throughout the project. This convinced the team that they could not spend any money on props. In fact, the team never got to know how much budget



they were entitled to. In reality, more money from the Kekri budget could have been made use of. Ultimately though, the low-budget limitation had only given the team the opportunity to find creative ways to save money, while still getting all props needed. The kekri-hunt team kept prop's inquiry intentionally to a minimum by making use of already existing items from their own homes and nature. Many things, such as memorabilia, were also made by the team from scratch, after researching DIY (do it yourself) techniques online. The entire amount spent on props for kekrihunt2021 was roughly 100 Euros.

The other limitation was the short time for the product's creation. The total time from planning to design to execution finally amounted to three months. It seems like three months would be enough time to make an idea into a tangible product, however, it is to be kept in mind that *students* were creating this experience. Even though the Kekri Core Team started their work before the start of the semester on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2021, the actual work with volunteers from the HOTEEM first year only began four weeks later. The fact that students start their studies so late into the year cannot be changed, however, it did give the project an enormous time constraint. Additionally, volunteering students had other courses and commitments to complete during the Kekri preparations. Hence, it took more time to recruit the volunteers than at first expected. This unnecessary delay in kicking off the kekrihunt project made the creation process shorter and more stressful. Nevertheless, the time constraint only gave the kekrihunt team the chance to ideate and decide on ideas quickly, as opposed to stretching the decision making far out without taking any action.

A limitation worth mentioning was also the students' lack of experience in creating such experience products and managing a team. The author had previous experience managing a team, even in Viaporin Kekri 2019 itself; however, the heavy responsibility of making it a valuable experience for the event, designing and creating a lot from scratch, managing time and people, and at last balancing it all, challenged her in many ways. Further, managing new students, who had just begun their studies and had never seen Kekri before, was difficult. It limited the process from being smoother and more planned in the first place.

This limitation of lack of experience in creating such a product for Kekri and the time constraint also resulted in the risk of loss of interest or effort by volunteers, overwhelm or even burn out within the students during the project. Any volunteer has the right to drop out of the project, which may present a new difficulty for the existing team in completing the project on time. Team members could have also gotten sick during the intense work, limiting productivity, and potentially lowering the product's quality. This is unavoidable, but it may be mitigated by allowing for more time and people, which in this case was a very hard task due to limitations mentioned above. However, communication was a way to

manage these kinds of unavoidable risks. The managers made sure that everyone was feeling okay doing the tasks at hand, allowed for questions, and openly addressed problems and challenges. Furthermore, the Concept Design Team prepared the first-year students already during the volunteer recruiting process by warning them what would lay ahead of them, if they agreed to be part of the project: a lot of hard work, effort, and commitment to the project. This ruled out only “half interested” people and mitigated the risk of losing people, or people’s interest or effort, throughout the project.

There were also risks concerning the outcome of the kekrihunt product itself. Mainly the risks of no bookings or no shows, or a complete failure in execution and a low level of satisfaction by participants. These risks were managed by following the methodology of design thinking: Empathizing continuously with the target of teenagers and later defining the challenge was a way to lower the risk of no bookings or no shows. Also marketing the product well was crucial, to make sure the experience was booked by enough attendees. Most importantly, ideation, prototyping and testing helped the team to ensure a well-planned and designed experience product. Testing the prototypes of puzzles and instructions, testing the quest’s route and quest itself on the island, and especially asking for the right feedback, were the most striking means to ensure the experience was positive and engaging for the guest, as opposed to confusing and boring.

The project’s risks of unexpected problems occurring, whether it was a failed booking, an issue with a gamified element for the quest or a mentally and emotionally demanding situation within the team, were managed through open communication, building trust in the team of strong, diverse, and skilful team members, and asking for help if needed. It was the team’s manager and co-manager, who encouraged the rest of the team to think outside the box and solve problems creatively. The project leaders of Kekri were also the ones helping the kekrihunt team with possible obstacles and practical manners if needed, trusting strongly in the team’s capabilities, and thereby mitigating the risk of an unsuccessful project and outcome.

### **3.5 Product Evaluation**

At the start of this paper, the author has identified two main objectives and one sub-objective for the thesis. The next few paragraphs will examine in which way, those objectives were met or not met. The product will ultimately be evaluated from different angles and critically reviewed, while discussing possible improvement points and future possibilities in the relevant context.

Before going into the examination of the objectives, it is essential to note that the event Viaporin Kekri, and with that the experience kekrihunt2021, were already executed in November 2021. This enabled the author to evaluate the outcome of the product not just from the thesis' point of view, i.e., more metaphorically, but also from the participant's point of view, meaning what they truly thought of the experience. A feedback form was sent to all eight participating teams a few days after the event, asking them to rate their overall experience, the difficulty of the puzzles and their most and least favourite part of the experience (see Appendix 2). Even though the feedback gathered was not 100% accurately analysed at the time, it still gives a good overall idea of how the product was received by participants.

In the thesis context, the experience kekrihunt2021 was intended to be specifically attractive towards teenagers due to the event's lack of concept-offerings for that segment. Overall, it can be said, that this first main objective was met. When looking at the story of Aaron, his quirky personality, and the content he posts on his Instagram blog (APB), it is very plausible to state that Aaron truly represented a 15-year-old teenager from Helsinki. The abbreviations, emojis and slang he was using, as well as the way he talked and acted in the posts (photos and videos), were all part of that. It was also the characters of his friends, that made the product well targeted for a teenager – the posts made it clear that these were young kids hanging around in school, with enough time and curiosity on their hands; representing exactly whom it was created for and allowing the teenager to identify with them. Furthermore, it was the fact that this experience started out within the digital sphere, that made it particularly suitable for young kids, as discussed during the empathizing stage of the methodology.

Aside from the storytelling aspect, it is also the gamification and general experience design elements that made the product interesting for teenagers. The overall gist of the quest itself, including the intentional design of the checkpoints, its gamified elements, and the setting itself, speak to teenagers. The theme was ghostly, fun, and quirky. It was scary at stages, but not too much, as it is not made for adults. It was a quest and experience that did not take itself too seriously – one can tell it was fiction and a bit absurd; however, the act of Louis at the start, his guidance on how to save the kids, and especially the final act of Aaron in the small room made it yet feel real and engaging. The product was enhanced by the overall event's theme, meaning it felt more real and authentic for the participants to have to go through the checkpoints on the mystical Kekri day on Suomenlinna, as opposed to on a summer day in a regular park.

Even though the product was overall successful in its design to be created for teenagers; in hindsight it happened to be an experience that is fun for everyone at any age. The

teams that signed up for it ranged from families to university students to teenagers. In this case though, the author believes that it was not the product's design that failed, but rather its marketing that did not succeed in specifically targeting teenagers. For the future, the organizers need to find a better way to put the story of Aaron out there, so it is actually seen by the *right* audience. In this case, the author suggests empathizing more with the target, making greater use of social media, particularly TikTok, and creating a goal-oriented marketing plan targeted towards teens.

Unfortunately, the kekrihunt team had trouble marketing the concept. However, the marketing aspect is not the focus point of this paper, which still suggests that the objective of the thesis was met.

The second objective aims to create an immersive experience by combining a strong story with gamified elements. The Freytag's pyramid and Hero's Journey were effective tools in crafting an engaging story, with the inciting incident of Louis and Aaron's meeting sparking curiosity about the Kekri conspiracy. The climax, where Aaron's friends disappear into the wicked In-between world, creates suspense and excitement, making it the ideal premise for the quest. Aaron's story in Viaporin Kekri successfully engaged the participant, with Louis communicating the reason for helping him save the kids before and during the quest. The unique theme of the story was communicated through various means, including Instagram posts, photos, videos, captions, props and the acting. The Kekri spirits and Louis wearing distinct and suitable costumes and make-up on the island helped participants feel like they were in a Special World, immersed in the odd and ghostly story of Aaron, taken out of their regular routine. By utilizing storytelling and its experience design attributes such as contrast and theming, the first component of the second objective was met, successfully engaging participants.

Making use of gamified elements during the quest was overall well done; however, the second component of the objective was not met entirely. Participants pointed out that some puzzles were too easy, potentially contributing to a lack of engagement and excitement, and potentially a bit of boredom, as there was too much relaxation present. For others, the puzzles were too hard to complete and lasted too long. This means that there might have been too much tension, resulting in feelings of frustration and exhaustion, which diminishes the engagement. A couple of teams also pointed out that the instructions given and guidance received, could have been clearer, which may have resulted in similar unwanted feelings during the experience. It was also pointed out by one team, that they were treated as if they accomplished the quest and got the rewards, even though they did not find the last checkpoint. In this case, the kekrihunt team could have given them more time and guidance, so they could have finished it properly.

In the future, designing challenges that complement the gamification aspect of relaxation and tension, and clear goals, might be important to focus on. According to the author, doing various prototyping and testing runs with the right target would be a great solution here. This way, the aspects of difficulty and duration of the checkpoints and guidance are addressed, and the participant can experience an appropriate balance of positive stress and relaxation. Nonetheless, all teams liked the adventure and had a fun time going through the checkpoints. The addition of easter eggs and rewards towards the end, as well as the entire concept idea and story of Aaron and his friends; and the Kekri spirits in this setting may have created positive emotions, making the total quest genuinely entertaining for the participants. It is the combination of all factors that made the experience worthwhile, rather than a few gamification details that could have been designed better.

The sub-objective of the thesis revolves around the notion of multisensory perception and its intentional details, that shall be made use of to complement the whole experience. It has already been mentioned in the previous paragraphs of how little experience design elements were designed intentionally. They appear consistently throughout the overall experience. For example, the props chosen, and the act of the Kekri spirits function as cues to create the desired impression of the theme for each participant to make sense of the unique and eerie experience. The handcrafted themed memorabilia given out at the end of the quest, may enhance the experience value for each participant.

Sensory stimulants such as the scent box checkpoint, the general soundscape of Kekri and intentionally chosen texture of paper were all ways to enhance the experience and create further harmony within all touch points during the participant's journey. Generally, the sub-objective of the thesis was met by thinking of and utilizing multiple sensory means that fit the concept's theme within Kekri. Nonetheless, the author would encourage future designers in this context to put further focus on the use of sensory stimulants. For example, adding an interesting element to the quest could have been achieved by taking away a sense completely during one of the checkpoints, such as sight. Furthermore, heightening the guest's experience and making it more memorable in the long run could be achieved by making greater use of the sense of smell, which could stimulate the guest more strongly.

Above all, the product of kekrihunt2021 achieved its objectives to the highest degree. Even if little things, such as giving out rewards to a team that did not finish the quest, questioned the authenticity of the experience, it mostly stood by its word of a well thought-out, intentionally designed, and engaging experience with an interesting story and quest at its core. Kekrihunt2021 fits authentically into the local setting of the island of Suomenlinna and the story world of the modern version of Viaporin Kekri. It is a one-of-a-kind product

that embraces its own weirdness, while remaining consistent with the values and norms of the Finnish region, making it well suitable for teenagers from Helsinki. As considered in the theory chapter, despite experiences being ultimately subjective to each individual participant, and their evaluation depending highly on the comparison of their personal expectations and their interaction with the product, the feedback received by all participants supports the premise of a primarily successful product.

In the light of this discussion, the core attributes of kekrihunt2021 could be utilized as an inspiration of future experience concepts for Viaporin Kekri, or even other similar events. There is the possibility of building on its theoretical framework to develop concepts similar to it, while taking note of the previously mentioned areas of improvement. The experience and quest could be taken to the next level; for example, by further exploring ideas from games or by utilizing a variety of experience design tools. The author hopes that this concept will inspire aspiring designers like herself, to keep the human at the centre, approach their work with an open mind, and be willing to explore multiple different disciplines in order to embrace the multifaceted field of experience design.

## 4 Discussion

The final chapter delves into how the thesis process went for the author, the obstacles she had to overcome, how she overcame them and what she ultimately learned from them.

### 4.1 The thesis process

The thesis process for the author could be characterized as an extremely rocky road with many ups and downs, yet a wonderful and rewarding finish. It has been a fascinating, impactful, and frustrating experience all at once. For the author, the whole process took a significant amount of time, mainly because the kekrihunt project and execution happened in 2021; whereas the actual thesis writing took place in 2023, following a year's worth of other studies and a personal break. In retrospect, the author does not consider this to be a bad thing. In fact, the other projects she completed after kekrihunt2021, such as a four-month design thinking project, gave her additional valuable experience regarding the field of experience and service design. The other studies helped her gain greater knowledge and a stronger skillset within the subject, helping her feel more confident in her writing later in 2023.

The kekrihunt project in 2021 went through its own journey of ups and downs. The project's kick-off was quite delayed due to the late start into the semester in August 2021, as described in chapter 3.4 (limitations and risks). It took a while to even form the kekrihunt team. This made it difficult for the author to create a solid base early on, in terms of the team building and the project plan in general. Even once the kekrihunt team was established, the author struggled to connect with her team and get started properly. Only working with her co-manager motivated her to continue with the project. The kekrihunt team, on the other hand, grew together over time. Dividing roles and responsibilities and seeing the product take shape helped in this case. Other obstacles within the team were solved by inviting honest and open communication during meetings. Issues for example regarding the product were usually resolved by discussing solutions with everyone involved and asking help from the project leaders or other students. It was extremely beneficial for the author to always have her co-manager on her side. They worked very closely together and stuck together even in the times when things seemed hopeless. Also, the author appreciated the unconditional support received by the project leader and senior lecturer Violeta Salonen. Ultimately, the steppingstones were conquered by working together as a team and inspiring each other to keep going. The author and her team were in the fuzzy-front-end for quite some time, but thankfully, with persistence and believing in the process, the concept took shape and things cleared up towards the end. In fact, most at first seemingly big issues during the project execution, resolved themselves over time. Eventually,

for the author and her whole team, it was such a rewarding experience to see the participants go through the quest and have fun with it. Despite the uncertainty, the messiness and lack of experience, the outcome was extremely rewarding and worthwhile.

For the author, the active writing in 2023 took roughly three months. Even if the start of the writing was a little sloppy, her ability to persevere in the face of adversity was her most valuable asset in this situation. Asking for feedback and getting reassurance from friends and classmates helped the most at the start. After a while, she developed confidence in her abilities and felt more motivated to write, giving her the boost of energy needed at the time. Looking back, the author struggled sometimes with a perfectionist attitude, as she wanted to make sense of what she wrote about as soon as possible. This was resolved by embracing the mess. The process made her realize over time, that the content will find its logical order naturally.

During the three months, the author put her complete focus on the thesis writing, which gave her incredible strength, belief and confidence, and most importantly enough time to let the process be and flow naturally. The thesis process was supported by inviting enough time to read, write, process the information and enough breaks to get perspective. The time she devoted herself to, also gave her the chance to do work that makes sense and is thorough. In times of struggle, getting emotional and intellectual support from her thesis supervisor helped immensely. Her cluttered mind was mostly cleared together with her supervisor during useful exchange of emails and fruitful online meetings, by going through the content, asking the right questions, and discussing the problem at hand. During the whole three months, the author tried to celebrate her milestones and keep going, despite feelings of doubt. Her belief in herself and the support system she was grateful to have, made her writing process remarkably enjoyable, rewarding and fulfilling.

## **4.2 Learning outcomes**

Many lessons were learnt by the author during the whole thesis process, from project execution to actual writing. The most important learning outcome from the kekrihunt project was the importance of appropriate and early preparation. Due to limitations, the team did not have much time to sit down and create a proper schedule with milestones. They got into real work very early on. However, it is only now that the author realizes how crucial it is to make a more detailed plan in order to avoid overwhelm and confusion or other issues. Also, the concept idea of kekrihunt2021 could have already been communicated to the kekrihunt actors much earlier. This would have avoided confusion on the actors' part and helped the weeks leading up to the event to be smoother.



As already touched on in previous chapters, greater empathy with the target and prototyping and testing the checkpoints and puzzles should have been done more thoroughly, and sooner. For a while, the team became overly focused on details. Instead of attempting to control the outcome, the author learned to be okay with failures, to welcome more open communication and input from the target and to embrace the fuzziness. She is now a lot more accepting of going with the flow.

When it comes to the active writing, the author discovered how important it is to take breaks to process the material that was studied. She realized that it is not necessary to write all the time; in fact, it may only be counterproductive. Rather it is crucial to take a step back and look at the big picture every now and again. It takes time to make sense of all theories, their dimensions and how they fit in the larger scheme of things. She learned that taking the time to read, write and process is okay, and that there is a lot of power gained by fully embracing the long process of writing. Not rushing the process gives one the ability to produce well-done work. Moreover, the author learned a lot about herself in the last two years. She discovered how a team of like-minded people and an exciting project inspire and drive her to persevere and keep going, even in times of struggle. She noticed how much she is capable of, when she works on projects that are meaningful to her. One of those was the outcome of kekrihunt2021 and its thesis.

## References

- Adaval, R. and Wyer, R.S. (1998) 'The role of narratives in consumer information processing', *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 7(3), pp. 207–245.
- Agapito, D., Valle, P. and Mendes, J. (2014) 'The sensory dimension of tourist experiences: Capturing meaningful sensory-informed themes in Southwest Portugal', *Tourism Management*, 42, pp. 224–237.
- Andy Sontag (2020) *Designing for Impact: Transformational Experience Design Model | Medium*. Available at: <https://andysontag.medium.com/designing-for-impact-transformational-experience-design-model-82e785faf4e2> (Accessed: 20 February 2023).
- Bitner, M.J. (1992) 'Servicescapes: The Impact of Physical Surroundings on Customers and Employees', *Journal of Marketing*, 56(2), pp. 57–71.
- Boswijk, A. *et al.* (2012) *Economy of Experiences*. 3rd edn. Amsterdam: European Centre for the Experience and Transformation Economy.
- Brown, T. (2008) 'Design Thinking', *Harvard Business Review*, pp. 84–92.
- Bulencea, P. and Egger, R. (2015) *Gamification in Tourism: Designing Memorable Experiences*. Norderstedt: Books on Demand.
- Cambridge Dictionary (2023a) *EXPERIENCE | English meaning*. Available at: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/experience> (Accessed: 8 February 2023).
- Cambridge Dictionary (2023b) *PERCEPTION | English meaning*. Available at: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/perception> (Accessed: 9 February 2023).
- Cambridge Dictionary (2023c) *QUEST | English meaning*. Available at: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/quest> (Accessed: 4 February 2023).
- Cambridge Dictionary (2023d) *STORYTELLING | English meaning*. Available at: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/storytelling> (Accessed: 8 February 2023).

Deterding, S. *et al.* (2011) 'From game design elements to gamefulness: Defining "gamification"', in *Proceedings of the 15th International Academic MindTrek Conference: Envisioning Future Media Environments, MindTrek 2011*. Tampere, Finland, pp. 9–15.

d.school at Stanford (2018) *Design Thinking Bootlog*. Stanford.

d.school at Stanford (no date) 'An Introduction to Design Thinking - PROCESS GUIDE', *Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford* [Preprint]. Stanford.

DWDS (2023) *Erlebnis – Schreibung, Definition, Bedeutung, Etymologie, Synonyme, Beispiele*. Available at: <https://www.dwds.de/wb/Erlebnis> (Accessed: 10 February 2023).

Gelter, H. (2006) 'Towards an Understanding of Experience Production', in M. Kylänen (ed.) *Articles on Experiences 4: Digital Media & Games*. Rovaniemi: Lapland Centre of Expertise for the Experience Industry, pp. 28–50.

Gentile, C., Spiller, N. and Noci, G. (2007) 'How to Sustain the Customer Experience: An Overview of Experience Components that Co-create Value With the Customer', *European Management Journal*, 25(5), pp. 395–410.

Haaga-Helia (2022) 'Experience Designer 2022 - Define Workshop on 25.1.22'. Helsinki: Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences.

Hsu, C.L. and Chen, M.C. (2018) 'How does gamification improve user experience? An empirical investigation on the antecedences and consequences of user experience and its mediating role', *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 132, pp. 118–129.

Hunnicutt, B.K. (2020) *The age of experiences: Harnessing Happiness to Build a New Economy*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Jantzen, C. (2013) 'Experiencing and experiences: a psychological framework', in J. Sundbo and F. Sørensen (eds) *Handbook on the experience economy*. Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, pp. 146–170.

Kylänen, M. (2006) 'Introduction', in M. Kylänen (ed.) *Articles on Experiences 4: Digital Media & Games*. Rovaniemi: Lapland Centre of Expertise for the Experience Industry, pp. 6–27.

Liu, S. and Zaffwan Idris, M. (2018) 'Constructing a framework of user experience for museum based on gamification and service design', in *MATEC Web of Conferences*. EDP Sciences.

Lugmayr, A. *et al.* (2017) 'Serious storytelling – a first definition and review', *Multimedia Tools and Applications*, 76(14).

Maio, A. (2019) *Three Act Structure in Film: Definition and Examples* | *studiobinder*. Available at: <https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/three-act-structure/> (Accessed: 22 February 2023).

Mathisen, L. (2014) 'Storytelling in Co-creation Perspective', in N.K. Prebensen, J.S. Chen, and M. Uysal (eds) *Creating Experience Value in Tourism*. Oxfordshire, UK: CABI, pp. 157–168.

Merriam-Webster (2023) *Multisensory Definition & Meaning*. Available at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/multisensory> (Accessed: 9 February 2023).

Mossberg, L. (2007) 'A Marketing Approach to the Tourist Experience', *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 7(1), pp. 59–74.

Mossberg, L. (2008) 'Extraordinary experiences through storytelling', *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 8(3), pp. 195–210.

National Storytelling Network (2023) *What Is Storytelling?* Available at: <https://storynet.org/what-is-storytelling/> (Accessed: 8 February 2023).

Oxford Reference (2023) *Servicescape*. Available at: <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/acref/9780198736424.001.0001/acref-9780198736424-e-2086;jsessionid=EA168C64268565092CE2771EF10A6FBC> (Accessed: 22 February 2023).

Parapanos, D. and Michopoulou, E. (2021) 'Gamification, Game Mechanics, Game Thinking and Players' Profile and Life Cycle', in X. Feifei and B. Dimitrois (eds) *Gamification for Tourism*. Bristol, UK: Channel View Publications, pp. 13–34.

Pine II, B.J. and Gilmore, J.H. (1998) 'Welcome to the Experience Economy', *Harvard Business Review*, pp. 97–105.

Pine II, B.J. and Gilmore, J.H. (2019) *The experience economy: competing for customer time, attention, and money*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press.

Roinioti, E. *et al.* (2022) 'Gamification in Tourism: A Design Framework for the TRIP-MENTOR Project', *Digital*, 2(2), pp. 191–205.

Salonen, V. (2021) 'Viaporin Kekri Supervisory Project - Assignment Instructions'. Helsinki: Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences.

Sanders, E.B.-N. and Stappers, P.J. (2008) 'Co-creation and the new landscapes of design', *CoDesign*, 4(1), pp. 5–18.

Schacht, S. and Schacht, M. (2012) 'Start the Game: Increasing User Experience of Enterprise Systems Following a Gamification Mechanism', in A. Maedche, A. Botzenhardt, and L. Neer (eds) *Software for People: Fundamentals, Trends and Best Practices*. Heidelberg: Springer (Management for Professionals), pp. 181–199.

Smit, B. and Melissen, F. (2018) *Sustainable Customer Experience: Co-creating experiences in events, tourism and hospitality*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Tarssanen, S. and Kylänen, M. (2005) 'A Theoretical Model for Producing Experiences - A Touristic Perspective'. Rovaniemi: Lapland Centre of Expertise for the Experience Industry.

Tuominen, P. and Heikkinen, V.A. (2017) 'Managing Multisensory Hospitality, Tourism and Experience Space of the Future', in K. Havas (ed.) *Changes in the Hospitality Industry: Viewpoints of the Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Field*. Helsinki: Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, pp. 69–76.

Tussyadiah, I.P. (2014) 'Toward a Theoretical Foundation for Experience Design in Tourism', *Journal of Travel Research*, 53(5), pp. 543–564.

Velasco, C. and Obrist, M. (2021) 'Multisensory Experiences: A Primer', *Frontiers in Computer Science*, 3.

Viaporin Kekri (2022a) *Kekri's History – Viaporin Kekri*. Available at: <http://www.viaporinkekri.fi/en/kekris-history/> (Accessed: 22 February 2023).

Viaporin Kekri (2022b) *Kekri's Revival – Viaporin Kekri*. Available at: <http://www.viaporinkekri.fi/en/kekris-revival/> (Accessed: 22 February 2023).

Viaporin Kekri (2022c) *Viaporin Kekri – Darkest feast of the year*. Available at: <https://www.viaporinkekri.fi/en/viaporin-kekri-main/> (Accessed: 14 February 2023).

Vogler, C. (1998) *The Writer's Journey*. 2nd edn. Studio City, CA: Michael Wiese Productions.

Voytilla, S. (1999) *Myth and the Movies: Discovering the Myth Structure of 50 Unforgettable Films*. Studio City, CA: Michael Wiese Productions.

writers.com (2020) *The 5 Stages of Freytag's Pyramid: Introduction to Dramatic Structure* | *writers.com*. Available at: <https://writers.com/freytags-pyramid> (Accessed: 22 February 2023).

Xu, F. and Buhalis, D. (2021) *Gamification for Tourism, Gamification for Tourism*. Bristol, UK: Channel View Publications.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Product kekrihunt2021



# KEKRIHUNT2021

✦  
PRODUCT

# What is kekrihunt2021?

Kekrihunt2021 is an experience designed for the annual one-day event called **Viaporin Kekri** on the island of Suomenlinna at the coast of Helsinki. The 2021 edition took place on Saturday, 6th November 2021. The experience was thoughtfully crafted using **experience design, storytelling and gamification** techniques, that are both physical and digital, to bring a memorable and engaging experience into the unique premise of what is **Kekri**: A **mystical celebration** when the darkness is awaited with elegance, and the sea fortress of Suomenlinna transforms into a captivating place where people meet to enjoy food, music, art, and games, within the chill inducing atmosphere set by the **spirits of Kekri**.

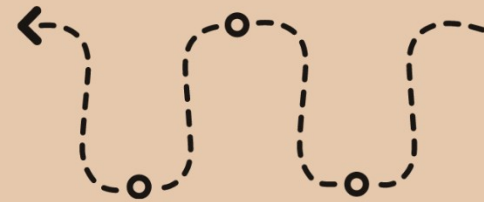


Kekrihunt2021 draws its core from its **fictional story about Aaron**, his friends, and the eerie happenings of the evil side of Kekri. The story told already weeks before the event via Aaron's Instagram account, establishes the purpose of the **quest** for the participants. As Aaron, and then his friends, go missing on Suomenlinna, the participants are called to help save the kids. They need to gather ingredients around the island and complete challenges on the way to finally perform a **ritual**, that ultimately saves the kids from the **In-between** – a world on the border of the living and the dead – and the evil Kekri spirits, that come from there.

The experience was an integral part of the event, as it was created considering the **core themes and story of Kekri**.



# Content & structure of the document



The upcoming pages will explore the **content of kekrihunt2021** by chronologically going through the experience **journey of the participant** from pre, during and post experience (timeline), including the participant's **touch points**.

To start the journey, the **storytelling** aspect of kekrihunt2021 will be outlined, followed by the **gamification** part, so the actual **quest** with all its **checkpoints**, concluding the journey with the story's epilogue.

**Positive cues of experience design** are scattered throughout the whole product of which some are more obvious than others. So pay attention to details, such as design, symbols and context! 😊

The final pages of this document showcase the quest's **checkpoint puzzles and instructions**.



# THE STORYTELLING



📷 aarons\_peculiar\_blog



What's popping fellow ghost hunters 🤪  
This blog will make you believe THE unbelievable 👻👹  
-Aaron

## EXPOSITION

Thu, 7.10.21



Hi guys my name is Aaron welcome to my pEcuLiaR blog! 😊 I'm so excited to have followers with the same passions and interests. Together we will go on adventures, solve mysteries, reveal terrifying secrets and prove disbelievers wrong. Some exciting things are coming up such as my trip to Suomenlinna. Stay tuned!! 🤖



Sat, 9.10.21



Aaron here the weirdo behind the screen. 😊 Thank you all for following me and welcome. I got into mysteries and ghost theories when I was a kid. My grandma used to tell me stories about ghosts and ever since then I've been obsessed with finding and proving the existence of them.

Comment down below if you have any questions and tell me your favorite unsolved mystery! 🙌

In order to set the stage for Aaron's story and ultimately the reasoning for the guest's participation in the quest, an Instagram account was opened four weeks before the event.

The Instagram account called **Aaron's Peculiar Blog**, also known as **APB**, is led by **Aaron**, the story's main character and hero.

Aaron is a typical 15-year-old teenager living in Helsinki, with a quirky personality. He is not the best in school but always shows curiosity and motivation in things he enjoys.

He is shy but determined to follow his passions and interests in anything mystical and spooky; and fearless when it comes to it. Aaron also likes to do what every teenager usually does: hang out with his friends and play video games. Later the audience can recognize Aaron by his black beanie with a fox on it.

Aaron publishes the blog in the first place, to share content that is "peculiar", in hopes to **solve mysteries** together with followers who have the same ghostly passions and interests. His plan is to **post every Wednesday and Saturday**.

Wed, 13.10.21



Let's talk about the time people thought fairies were real!

In England in the early 1900s, two cousins named Elsie Wright (16yo) and Frances Griffiths (9yo) allegedly took photos with fairies, and – surprise, surprise – some people actually believed them 🤪

If you look at the pictures tho... (..)



Sat, 16.10.21



Lmao I guess my friends think they're funny 🤪

anyways, let's get on to my thoughts:

Lately the topic of spirits and magic has intrigued me a lot (why else would I run the blog lol). So I was doing some research and came across the topic of seances, a practice of communicating with dead souls... (..)

Wed, 20.10.21



Well, I think it's time to talk a bit more about the stuff I like and give you guys some recommendations!

**BUZZFEED UNSOLVED** 🤪 is a youtube channel... (..)

Then there is the X-Files series 🤪, I mean do I really need to introduce that? (..)

then also, the book: 'Inferno' 🔥 which is the fourth book about a guy named Robert Langdon..(..)

Feel free to share something you also find interesting and mysterious! Where do you get your spooky stories from?? 🤪



After his introductory posts, Aaron makes his **first three official posts** that represent his interests. He shares a lighthearted story about fairies, posts a video about magic and communicating with dead souls, and makes a post about his favourite things.

The first posts are created to introduce Aaron, as the main character and hero of the story, with his unique personality and interests. **The audience should be able to identify with him.**

The posts are told from Aaron's perspective. That is why his words and the way he writes the posts are chosen intentionally, so they fit the tone of a teenager from the modern world in 2021. **Emojis and abbreviations** are part of that. 🤪

It is also the stage, where the audience gets to know the **Ordinary World** of Aaron, in which everything seems to be as usual – just a typical teenager sharing what he enjoys.

kekrihunt2021 is posted on **eventbrite**

Mon, 18.10.21-



This year we've prepared something very exciting for all of you **ADVENTURERS** out there. Are you ready to join #kekrihunt2021?

**What happens when you combine Aaron, The Ghosthunter, and The Spirits of Kekri on the verge of Viaporin Kekri?** 🧛‍♂️

Join our Instagram [@aarons\\_peculiar\\_blog](#) to find out what happens next and be ready to help when things go wrong..



Hello there adventurer!

Thanks again for accepting the challenge of #kekrihunt2021! For now keep your ticket handy and notify your teammates about the day.

Just before the event, **Louis** (you'll get to know him) will probably send you and your team an email about all the details. As a **heads up**, he can be a little bit odd, and sometimes crazy. But he is nice! Anyways, we are REALLY psyched to have you on board, it is gonna be so much fun.. and bit ghostly.

This the **first official touch point** for the customer to come in contact with the experience. Anyone interested (above the age of 10) can sign up to join the hunt in teams of min. two people. The teams can choose their own team members and are also encouraged to give themselves a team name, to personalize the experience.

Because the story has not yet progressed that far, it is only **hinted that something big is coming**. People are called to follow APB to find out what happens next and help if things go wrong, but not much else is revealed. What the experience is exactly shall stay hidden to build excitement, but enough information is given to evoke interest.

Once the teams have signed up, they receive a **confirmation email** with additional information to know what to expect. Most importantly, they get a quick mention about **Louis** who will pop up in the story later in the week, and who is the one communicating with each team at a later stage.

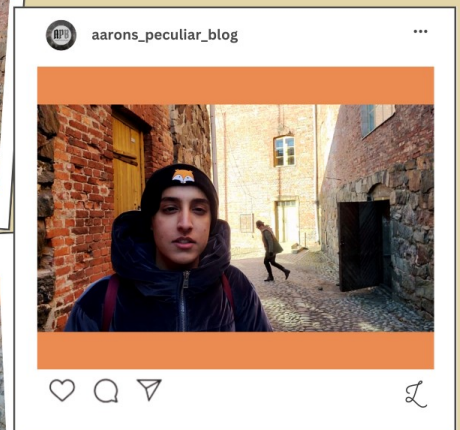
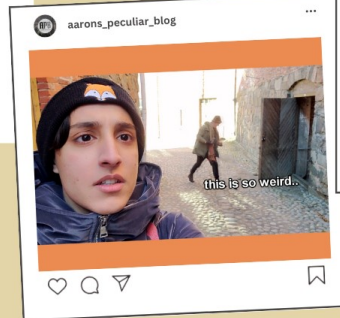
The experience has been designed in such a way that there is no conflict between what happens on Instagram and the external information received by the teams. It is precisely these **little details** that have been thoughtfully considered that make the experience, including its inherent storyline, so **smooth and coherent**.

## INCITING INCIDENT

Sat, 23.10.21



Ahh you guys.. I was on Suomenlinna the other day and I am telling you, weird stuff happens these days. This is just a sneak peak....stay tuned! more is coming 🤪👾



This post made by Aaron represents the “inciting incident” that **initiates the conflict of the story**.

In his video on Suomenlinna, Aaron explains a bit about the history of the old sea fortress; only to be **interrupted by a weird fellow (Louis)**, who mumbles some-

thing about Kekri and spirits, and assembles rocks in front of the door of his estate on Suomenlinna. No doubt, this is not normal. Aaron, the curious kid he is, gets extremely interested in what is happening. This video also gives a **foreshadow** of the Special World.

## RISING ACTION

Wed, 27.10.21



You guys... so remember that weird dude from my last post??

It is all a bit obscure but he might be on to something! Apparently people disappear sometimes around the time of Viaporin Kekri 🙄 but no one really talks about it. There is this buck burning going on and celebrating and all. But then also that guy Louis told me, that not everybody leaves the island after the night of Kekri. 🤪 LIKE WHAT ?? That's a bit too much to handle I suppose..

Now it sparked my curiosity tho. So tomorrow I will go and find out for myself. 😎 See you in Suomenlinna! ✨

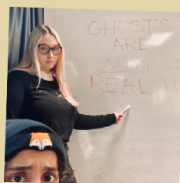
The rising action starts out with Aaron meeting and talking to Louis, the odd fellow in the previous video, who tells him about a **conspiracy** going around during the **festivities of Viaporin Kekri**. Again, Aaron gets too curious for his own good and makes another investigation on Suomenlinna by himself, to find what this is all about.

Also, the two previous posts **introduce Louis**, who will stay relevant during the whole story, as he acts like a **storyteller**: He provides background information, drives the story forward and partly guides the quest later.

Louis can be recognized by his brown hat, green jacket and red scarf. But also by the way he moves and talks: Big gestures and a bit incomprehensible speech make up this **unique and eccentric character**. Louis is weird and sometimes **awkward**; he is curious, lives in his own world and has extreme interest in conspiracy theories. That is why he has been living on Suomenlinna for a while, in order to get closer to the conspiracy of the evil of Kekri.

Louis is not only there to push the plot forward but also to give it some fun character and reflect the **weirdness** of what is happening.

Thu, 28.10.21



So this is what we do when we're bored in school 😂

btw this not Aaron, its Erik helloo! Aaron kinda left his phone at my place, don't know how that happened but whatever 😏 We're gonna use his account for a bit now. He kinda owes me anyways. 🙌



ordinary world

It is also during the rising action, where the audience gets to know **Aaron's friends** and his **regular world**. The audience can further **identify** with Aaron, and also his friends in the Ordinary World, where they just hang out in school.

It is also the point where the audience gets to experience the story from the perspective of Aaron's friends, as opposed to only Aaron's.

All characters have a **unique personality**. Each teenager is wearing a distinct item and specific colours to represent parts of their personality and make them distinguishable.

**Becky** can be recognized by black glasses and black/brown clothes. She is a bit arrogant as she is very smart, but she is always fun to be around. Becky tutors Aaron sometimes.

**Caroline** can be recognized by pink coloured clothing, a handbag, sunglasses and platform shoes. She is the local Instagram model and popular in school too. Caroline knows Aaron since childhood. Even though they are very different, they will always have that innate connection from childhood.

**Daisy** can be recognized by a flower headband and white clothing. She is mostly quiet and sometimes worries too much, but always supports Aaron and his mission. Everyone loves her though as she always remains kind, no matter what.

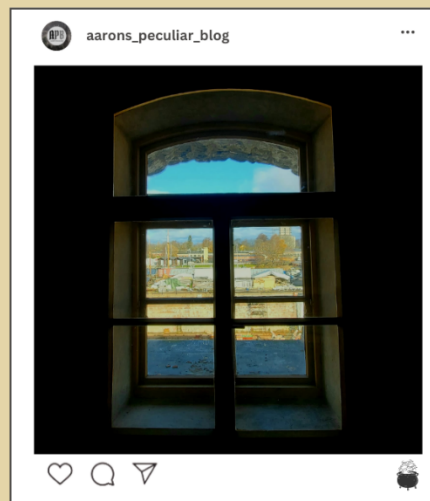
**Erik** can be recognized by his headphones and red/green colours. He is a bit of the class clown, with an easy going and mostly friendly character, despite being annoying sometimes. Erik never really worries and is always up for jokes and pranks. He intentionally challenges Aaron sometimes.

Even though this post seems like only teenagers goofing around, it has a purpose of firstly, introducing the rest of the the characters, and secondly, **set the premise of what follows.**

Sat, 30.10.21



Usually, Aaron would make another post, as it is Saturday: Posting day. However, this weekend, nothing comes... why not? We don't know yet, but will soon. And we can already speculate what happened after Aaron went to Suomenlinna (only one week before Kekri). Instead of Aaron's normal posts, the audience gets this >>>



#viaporinkekri  
#kekrihunt2021

glimpse into  
the special  
world

No caption, just the hashtags #viaporinkekri and #kekrihunt2021.

It is a **post out of the ordinary**. And it is not Aaron's usual style. Where is this taken? Who posted it? Is it important?

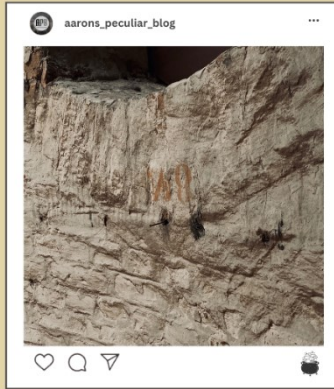
At the time, the audience might not know where this is and might not have a clue what is happening exactly, but that does not matter. The post is there to intrigue them to speculate about it. It adds **mysteriousness** to the story and aligns with the ghostly theme.

In reality, it is the first picture of foreshadowing the place where Aaron was taken to by the evil Kekri spirits.

For 7 days, up until one day before the event, the audience gets to witness one **"creepy post"** a day showing glimpses of the path of Aaron as he got taken into the **In-between**, only backwards. The posts basically stem from the evil spirits of Kekri, warning the audience, while also **foreshadowing the final checkpoint** where Aaron was taken to.



Sun, 31.10.21



#viaporinkekri  
#kekrihunt2021



Mon, 1.11.21



🐱 Aaron? Where are you?

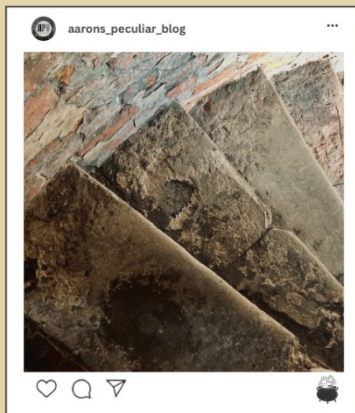
Guys... he didn't show up at school this morning which is so out of character! And we still have his phone so we cannot reach him. Becky thinks he just wants to be left alone, but idk. Its weird. And we (at least some of us 🤔) are kinda worried.

Has anyone seen or talked to him? If so pls shoot us a message!!

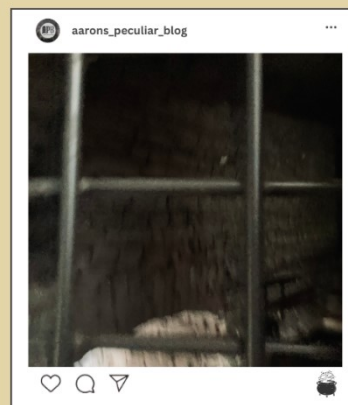
A few days later, after Erik took Aaron's phone, the friends return to school as usual on a Monday. **Aaron, however, is not present;** and they haven't heard from him in quite some time. They become concerned.

As they still have his phone, they cannot contact him, but they do make a **post on APB**, asking his followers if he has been spotted. His friends are now starting to make an active attempt to locate Aaron and determine what happened to him..

Tue, 2.11.21



#viaporinkekri  
#kekrihunt2021



#viaporinkekri  
#kekrihunt2021

Tue, 2.11.21



Have you seen this person?

His name is Aaron. He is 165 cm tall, has brown hair and brown eyes. He is 15 years old.

Aaron was wearing a blue jacket and a black beanie with a fox on it when he was last seen on Suomenlinna (Wed, 27.10.2021).

As no one has contacted Aaron's friends, and it has already been almost a week that Aaron has been missing, the friends post an **official missing person poster** on APB.

The story is still in the midst of the rising action...

The purpose of this post is to create **tension and bring the story forward**.

Also, this type of post indicates that the story is developing, and something significant is going to happen that will change the entire course of the story.



Henry,

Thanks for signing up to help me help you help them save him... I guess.  
Ik knew I could count on you en your 5 friends.

Just zo you don't forget:

Sat, 6<sup>th</sup> of November at 14:30 - Please come 5min earlier! Or at least on time! thnx  
~~melk,~~  
a 3 kg pickle,  
~~7 bread.~~

Then head to **Tenalji Von Fersen** and look for a sign. Would you kindly **knock 11 times without any pauses**. My associates will let you in 😊

As a side note, most people tend to get cold outside, so maybe take at least someclothing with you. And a phone, preferably wireless. Also take Internet, preferably wireless too.

-L.

PS: If you cannot make it, ole kiltti and let me know.

PPS: Please make it though. I REEEEEALLY need your help!!!

Verzonden van mijn Android telefoon.

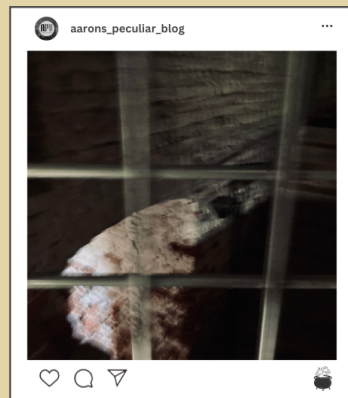
Now that the plot has developed significantly, **the teams**, who signed up for the experience, **receive an email** from Louis reminding them of the kekrihunt2021 experience and **providing details** regarding the team's arrival time, location, how to get in, and what to bring.

However, this is not a typical formal email. It is written from the **perspective of Louis**, the story's wild maniac character. His English isn't great, and he occasionally speaks Dutch and even Finnish, so you have to wonder if this email is authentic..

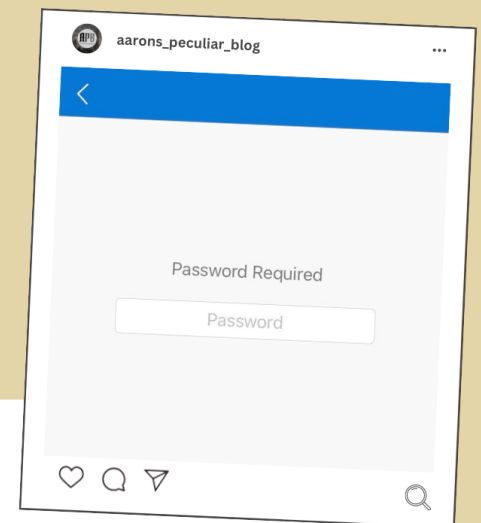
It does not appear to make sense, yet it does. Louis is the sender of the email. It is there to engage the participants in the story even before the event takes place. Even something "regular", such as this reminder email, is designed to **reflect**

the **strangeness of the story** and the type of character they will meet at the start of the adventure. Yet, it still includes all relevant information for the participants to know **what to expect** and what to do, to make them feel comfortable.

Wed, 3.11.21



#viaporinkekri  
#kekrihunt2021



📖 We were going thru his documents and folders, since we thought it could be useful to know if he had discovered something he should not have. Seems like he found out something about Kekri and Suomenlinna but can that really be the reason for his disappearance? 😬 But all of his docs require a password. We read through previous posts but we have no idea yet... do you have a clue?

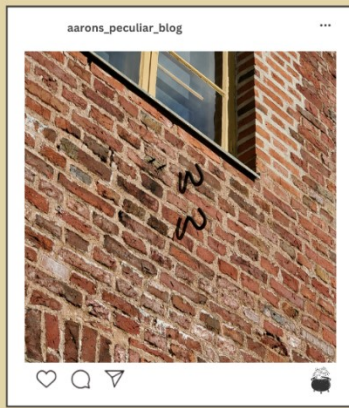
As the friends are getting extremely **worried**, they start to investigate themselves, what happened to Aaron and where he could be. For that they scroll through his phone including his documents about his recent **investigations**, in hopes to find out what Aaron knew. They stumble across Kekri and Suomenlinna, but for more information **they need a password** to get to additional documents.

This is a **pre gamified participatory task** for the audience to crack the code. If they go through all recent posts from

Aaron, and take note of the first letter of the first word in each post, they are able to make up the password: **HALLWAYS**.

The task is there for the audience to feel like they are already participating in the quest and are shaping the story themselves. It is also a **sneak peak** of where things will happen in the story and later in the quest. We are encouraged to wonder, **is this where Aaron was taken?** In fact: Hallways is a venue on Suomenlinna located right next to the meeting point with Louis, as well as the final room where the participants are going to meet Aaron.

Thu, 4.11.21



#viaporinkekri  
#kekrihunt2021

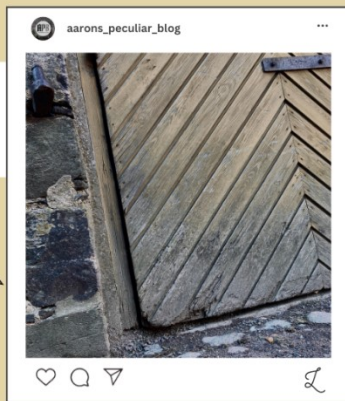


Thank you to everyone who helped us! 🙏  
We finally cracked the code and accessed the docs. There was actually some weird stuff we found and we are going to Suomenlinna and try to follow the clues. 🤞 Wish us luck! 🙌

Fr, 5.11.21



#viaporinkekri  
#kekrihunt2021



Pump room door (Louis meeting point)



Daisy, Becky & Caroline on the ferry to the island of Suomenlinna

Once the **code is cracked** the friends can finally access everything - they now have enough information to start their own Kekri investigation. The **search for Aaron on Suomenlinna begins** and the story is moving closer its climax.

One day before Kekri, Daisy, Becky and Caroline, are taking a ferry to Suomenlinna while **capturing their journey** to find Aaron. They post a **live video on APB**, telling the audience about their search for Aaron:

Even though Becky is more interested in her eye makeup and Caroline thinks Aaron is not missing at all but just wants to be left alone, Daisy is worried and distressed.

Despite conflicting opinions of the teens, they continue their search, discussing options and **wandering through the island**. After a while, they walk towards the area where Aaron filmed his last video about Suomenlinna, and where he met Louis. Again, this is also where the **Hallways** are located...

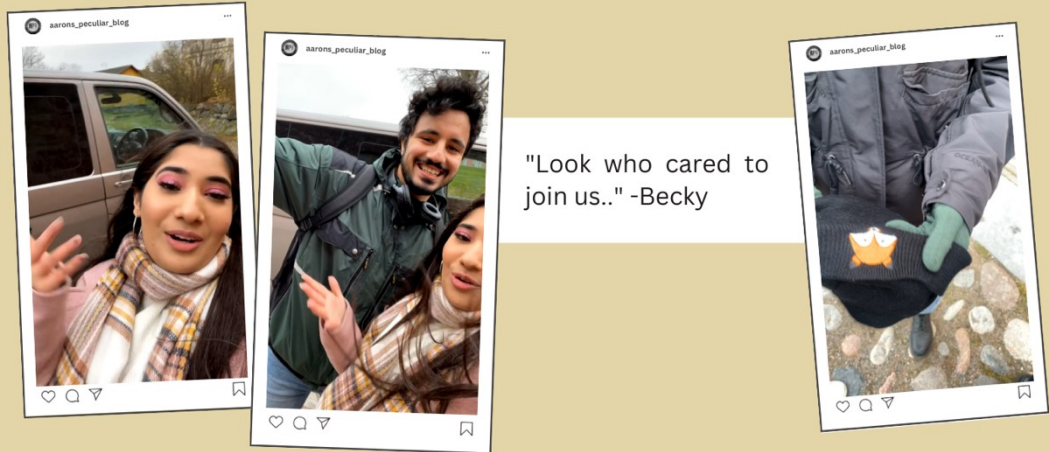


Becky & Caroline at Suomenlinna Library



CLIMAX

Fr, 5.11.21



"Look who cared to join us.." -Becky

As the girls are discussing next to the Hallways, Erik shows up too to help them. Becky then films a **quick lighthearted live video for Instagram**, greeting Erik. It was supposed to be just another moment among the friends on the island, but it is that exact moment representing the **turning point of the story**: As Daisy finds Aaron's black beanie with the fox, the camera is only pointed towards the beanie. At that point the audience has no idea what happens around the kids...

Suspension is built..  
the kids scream,  
the screen turns black..

**and the kids are gone.**

We have **officially transitioned from the Ordinary World** of regular teenage kids going to school and having fun, to the **Special World** of the **In-between**, ruled by malicious Kekri spirits. The evil of Kekri has now taken both Aaron and his friends to their ruthless world.

One day before the Kekri day, the story and the setting with all relevant bits and pieces of information, as well as conflicts, for the participants of the quest is set, landing on the highest point of the plot, which is the **climax**.

EVENT DAY

Sat, 6.11.21



the kids in the in-between & clues to quest checkpoint locations:



The kids are gone, but not yet dead. The In-between is the world just on the verge of death. The Instagram posts displayed above are there to highlight this. **The evil has conquered, but it is not yet over.** There is still light. **The kids are existing as spirits**, their bodies are wandering through the Island, like ghosts. The same goes to Aaron.

These images are also **foreshadowing all checkpoint locations** of the quest. They all have meaning.

The gamification section starting from the next page will reveal those checkpoints while giving context to these images.

## EVENT DAY

Sat, 6.11.21



Being still in the **climax** of the story, the event of **Viaporin Kekri begins**. Kekri in the mystical setting of Suomenlinna depicts the **Special World**. Already when entering the island, the guest gets the feeling of being in a **different world**, something out of the ordinary. The unique world of Kekri implies that the experience the participants have signed up for will be unusual. Kekrihunt2021 is made to be experienced in this **particular setting**. It would not make sense in any other location or circumstance.

The first team is making their way to the meeting point with Louis and arrive upon instructions. The cards have turned now. **The participants become the hero of the story** as it is now the team who writes the rest of Aaron's story. **The quest begins...**



Viaporin Kekri 2021, Suomenlinna (Saara Höyden, 2021)

A faded, light-colored map of a region with various geographical features like rivers and coastlines. A solid yellow horizontal band is overlaid across the middle of the map. The text is centered within this band.

# GAMIFICATION

— ❖ —  
THE QUEST





## START AT PUMP ROOM

meeting  
Louis



physical

The quest starts out at the **meeting point with Louis** which was mentioned in the reminder email by Louis himself. The location is the **Pump room** of Suomenlinna, located right next to the Hallways.

Once the team arrives upon instruction, they will realize that Louis has been supposedly “living” in the Pump room. And they will see an **all-connected wall with abundance of information** about Kekri, the evil spirits, the In-between, Aaron, and his friends. Of course, by that point the team has no clue about anything, and they do not even have time to read it all; but that is exactly the point. They will be greeted with **excitement and distress**. Louis grabs their attention by being his eccentric character: He remains in his crazy role at all times, talking about his investigations and pointing to the all-connected wall with big gestures and fast movements. The teams are supposed to feel some tension here.

The local maniac reveals that he has already discovered a **ritual** that could potentially save the kids from being stuck in the In-between forever. But he cannot do it alone. This is where the team comes into play. It is now their job to make the final save by gathering **“something red, something wooden, and something prickly”**, to create a potion and complete

the saving ritual before the buck is burned at the end of the event.

His gestures and mimics build stress in a good way, to make sure the teams know what is at stake here. Louis explains the backstory, gives them **instructions** including a few rules (see page 15), and a **map** (see page 16) that will guide them throughout the quest.

An **amulet** is given to each participant of the team that has the power to protect them from the evil for 1,5 hours – they get the feeling that they are in the **Special World**. It is also a reminder that the quest has a **time limit**. In addition, the team receives a kekrihunt2021 bag which they can use to store all gathered ingredients needed for the potion.

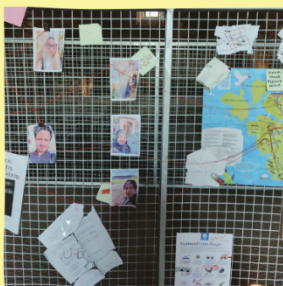
**This checkpoint is captivating, exciting, and engaging**, but **quick** and to the point. It takes roughly 10min. This is the time in which Louis engages the team, brings them into the experience and Special World, as well as gives enough instructions and context. Not more time is needed here.

By the end of the meeting with Louis, he points the team to the first checkpoint, which is also indicated on the map.

This leads them to their first real checkpoint and first few challenges: **The Empty Tunnels...**



the all-  
connected  
wall





Aaron and his friends were too curious for their own good...  
Now they are stuck in The Inbetween World, and if the ritual is not complete  
by the time the buck burns, they will be lost - truly lost.

Forever.

The Ritual is not simple, but I believe you have what it takes to complete  
it before it is too late. Here are some things you must remember at all  
times:

1. The protection spell on your amulets can only keep you safe for 1.5  
hours. Take longer - and the Evil Spirits will trap you in The Inbetween  
too!
2. On the back of this paper, you will find a map - I have already marked  
the starting point for you.
3. The Ritual requires a <sup>cup</sup> potion to be prepared but you must gather all  
ingredients first. You must collect:

- Something red
- Something wooden
- Something prickly

*Also: don't eat or  
drink anything  
you find!*

The rest you will find in the final location together with further  
instructions.

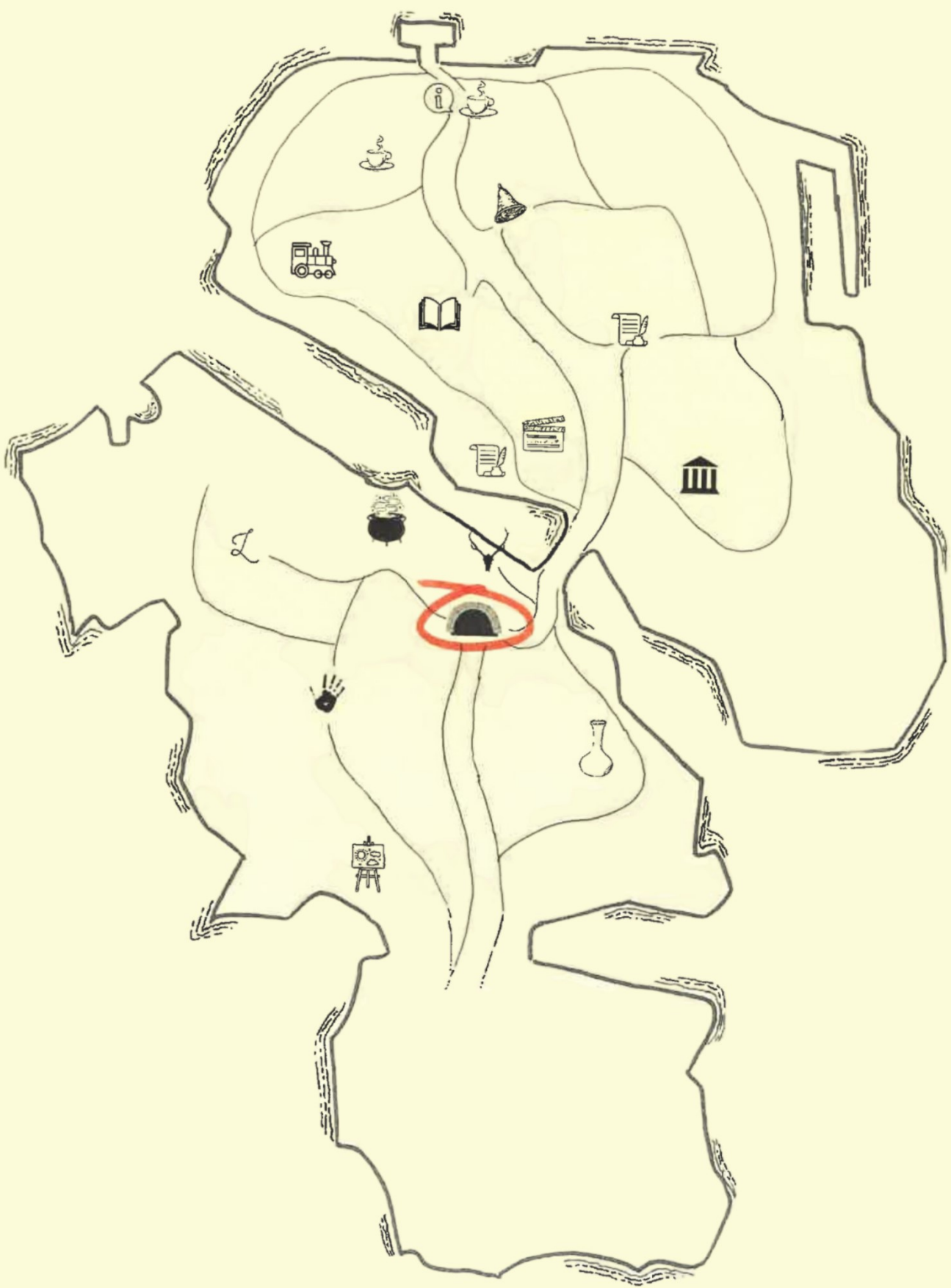
Be careful. Stay alert.

The power of Evil Spirits is at its highest today. You never <sup>know</sup> who  
you run into...

-L.

P.S. The spirits can help you but you only get three chances.

THE MAP





## #1 EMPTY TUNNELS

magic square



physical -digital

A physical cardboard of the **4x4 Magic Square** on one side and a QR code on the other. Once the magic square puzzle is rightfully completed, the scanned **QR code** on the other side of the cardboard, leads the team to the **sound clue** of church bells.

This leads the team to the **Suomenlinna Church Bell.**



scent box



physical



Boxes with **scented vials** are given. In one box, there is one extra vial, which cannot be paired up with any of the smells from the second box. It is **the odd one out**. The odd one out needs to be told to one of the spirits.

If it is correct, the team receives **something prickly** – pine needles in a sachet with a slip of paper attached to it, which indicates the **library as their next checkpoint**.



The teams are on high alert while solving their first puzzle - **the magic square** - which is **challenging**. This is designed on purpose. The puzzle has a **clear goal** while making the participants **stressed**, and encouraging them to work together to achieve the goal.

Once the puzzle is solved, they have the next **clue** and know what to do. A **positive feeling of accomplishment and relaxation** follows.

The **scent box** on the other hand, is a bit of an easier puzzle with a slower pace. This way the team feels **positively engaged**, while not feeling too overwhelmed after the previous harder challenge.

Once they have identified the right vial, they receive their **first ingredient** and the next **clue**, which shall make them **motivated to continue** further, while also establishing the feeling of ease.



## #2 CHURCH BELL

berry  
collection  
point



physical



**Red berries** need to be found near the church bell and taken. The berries are the **something red** that the team will need for the potion to complete the final ritual.



Photo by Saara Höyden, 2021



## #3 LIBRARY

book  
code



physical



Fitting the library checkpoint, the team will find a few books assembled in the brick window shown on the left picture. In one of the books (**Inferno by Dan Brown** which was already brought up by Aaron earlier on APB), they will find a **book mark**.

The book mark entails a **code**: a series of strings of three numbers each, first one being the page number, second the page line, and third the word on the line. Altogether it gives **instructions to the next checkpoint location** as well as the name of one ingredient for the potion.

The solution of the book code leads them to the **Handprint Tunnel**, as it gives instructions on how many steps to take towards the tunnels.



The church bell checkpoint is made to feel rewarding, and more **relaxing**, as what **follows** is more complicated, time consuming and **demanding**: solving the book code. The library checkpoint requires the team to stick together to solve the puzzle. Only then they can get the final clue and ingredient for the potion. The checkpoints overall **vary in their level of difficulty and time**, which is made on purpose.

Once the book code is solved, it is to be expected that the team feels a little drained. That is why their next checkpoint - the Handprint Tunnel - does not involve a puzzle anymore, but is only a collection point of the last ingredient: something wooden. Overall, after each checkpoint, the team can see **visible progress** of getting closer to fulfilling the objective at hand: getting all ingredients for the final ritual.



#### #4 HANDPRINT TUNNEL

wood collection point



A **sachet filled with wooden pieces** needs to be found near the Handprint tunnel and taken. The wooden pieces are the final ingredient for the potion indicated by Louis as something wooden.

physical



The team has now gathered all ingredients for the potion, which means they have conquered all challenges and almost achieved the whole quest. **What is left is the completion of the ritual.**

At this stage, the team should feel fairly

relaxed and comfortable with their achievements throughout the journey, meaning they might **not expect what comes next...**

The map and instructions from Louis offer a clue for the location of the **final checkpoint: The small room.**





## #5 SMALL ROOM

potion  
preparation  
(ritual)



physical

The last checkpoint is a small room located at the top floor of the **Hallways**. Once the team makes it to the outside of the Hallways, they are **awaited by the spirit** of either Becky, Caroline or Daisy, who are still wandering in the In-between. They can't talk as the evil of Keri got to them, but they can show the way.

The spirit takes the team through the stair case (the same way that Aaron went which was indicated on ABP seven days before Kekri) **a few floors up to the small room**.

The door opens making a squeaky noise.

And the team is peaking in with suspense..

To their surprise, **Aaron's spirit** is waiting for them. His face is dark, as if he hasn't seen light in a while. And he looks **distressed**.

You can see this is not the quirky Aaron anymore that we knew from his blog. He has been in the In-between far too long, and the **evil of Kekri** made him bitter. Aaron holds up his phone indicating the **countdown of 8min**.

The team also sees **a table set up for the potion**. They realize there is not much time anymore..

table set  
to make  
the potion  
for the  
ritual



Photo by Saara Höyden, 2021


The countdown shown by Aaron, as well as the intentionally **terrifying atmosphere** in the room, heighten the **tension and engagement**.

Within that pressure, the team needs to complete the ritual as instructed. They must first create the **potion in a black cauldron**: The requirements are to select the **appropriate ingredients** from the table and those gathered, as well as to arrange them in the **correct sequence** by solving a puzzle.

After successfully making the potion and turning the cauldron four times clockwise,

Aaron's spirit will offer the team a blank piece of paper to dip into the blue liquid. The piece of paper reveals the following: **BURN WITH THE BUCK.**

Aaron shouts **RUN, RUN, RUN!!!**

The team runs out of the building. And follows the clue to the last point to complete the ritual: **The Buck burning point.** 

**Excitement** as well as good **stress** is stimulated with intention here, making the final checkpoint the **peak** of the whole quest to be highly remembered.



END AT BUCK BURNING POINT

FALLING ACTION

ritual completion



physical

Once the teams have achieved their quest, **falling action** takes place, and they are rewarded. A spirit is waiting for the team at the settled Kekri buck burning point. They get a few **rewards** for the completion of the ritual, such as a few sweets, handmade Kekri themed pins and bracelets and key chains. Also Louis has prepared a **Thank You-note** for the team.

Some of the rewards also serve as **memorabilia** items that they can take home to keep a memory of this **personal experience**; especially the kekrihunt2021 bag as it states the name of the experience.

The complete experience, however, is not over yet, as it is the Kekri buck burning that actually saves the kids.

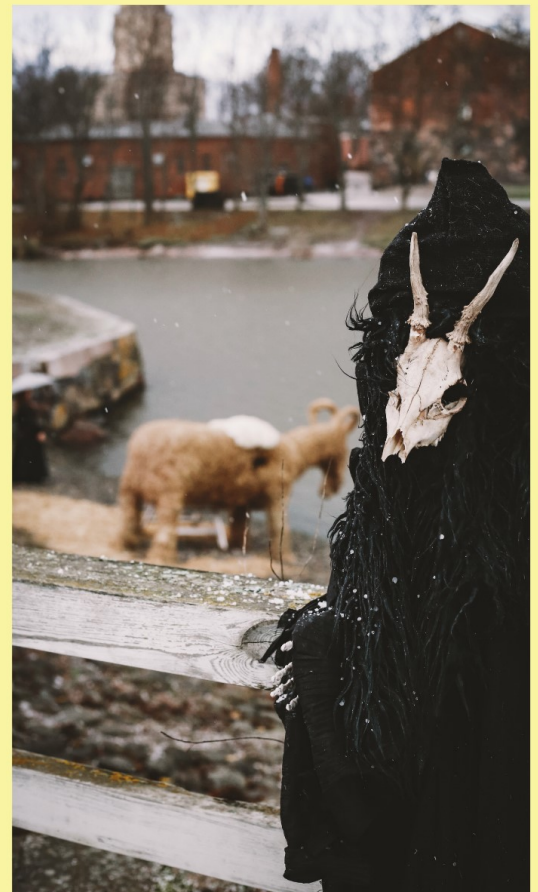


Photo by Saara Höyden, 2021

## DENOUEMENT

## EVENT DAY

Sat, 6.11.21



Thank you everyone for helping us out! We're finally free! ❤️❤️

A **live video** from the buck burning is posted on **APB** that indicates that the story came to a **conclusion** and the team has saved Aaron and his friends from the In-between. The **Kekri buck burning ceremony** is basically the **closing action** of the quest and at the same time of the whole plot.

After the burning of the buck, the kids post a picture of themselves on APB **thanking everyone** for releasing them into freedom.

The hero, so the participant of each team, has **successfully completed the quest**, meaning the world turns to its regular rhythm. The participants find themselves **back in the Ordinary World**, once they make their way back to Helsinki.

Kekrihunt2021 ends at the same time as the event; as it is the event's highlight that completes the kekrihunt2021 experience. Undeniably was **the quest part of a larger narrative**.



Tue, 9.11.21



Hello once again, fellow **KekriHunters**!

**Thank you so much** for completing the ritual and helping us save the kids before it was too late. We hope you had a great time and that you created some unforgettable memories - we surely had fun preparing this experience for you! 😊

If you're interested in contributing to the experience creation of kekrihunt2022, **please leave some feedback** here by following the link:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1DZAOC6nfR4prwqgh172WGwjNH6MD3bZ5qe7cTt4P6Uc/edit>

Any feedback is very much appreciated.

Kind regards,

Zlata, Helina, Jos, Marianne, Oona and Katrina -your **KekriHunt** creators

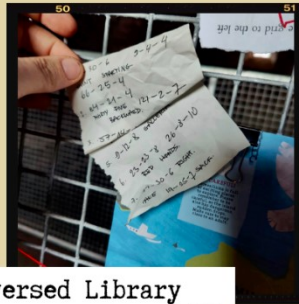
Also: **Have you noticed that the solutions were there all along?**



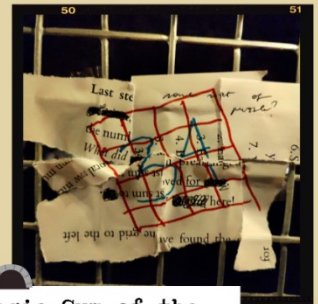
We've referenced many checkpoints in the very beginning of your adventure. How many have you noticed?



The Berries at The Bell 🛎️

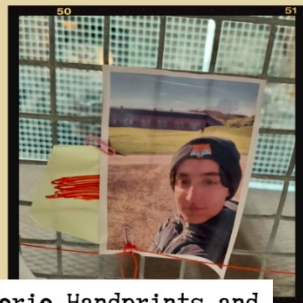


Reversed Library Book Code 📖

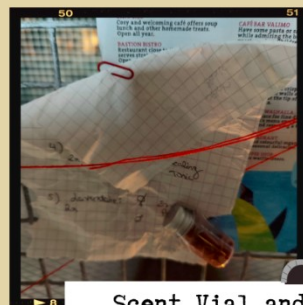


Magic Sum of the Magic Square

PS: The checkpoints were also posted on @aarons\_peculiar\_blog



Eerie Handprints and Red Wood 🖐️



Scent Vial and Smell Labels



A few days after the Kekri event and the quest, the teams receive an **email from the creators**. It is not only there to **thank** the participants for joining and ask for **feedback**, but also **reveal the last easter eggs** of the quest. The teams are made to be surprised that all checkpoints were referenced at the beginning of the quest:

on the **all-connected wall** from Louis. It seems like Louis was surely on the right track with his investigation.

The final email and easter egg reveal brings a **finish** to the whole kekrihunt2021 **experience**, as it serves as the **final touch point** for the participant.

# Summary: Multi-sensory stimulants

Throughout the experience the participant is encountering a wide range of means that intentionally **stimulate their five senses to enhance the experience**. Sensory stimulants are used within each checkpoint as well as generally throughout the whole journey. This page summarizes how the use of senses was considered.



## SEE

- All content on Instagram (**APB**)
- **Island and the event's occurrences** such as the Kekri buck burning
- **Kekri spirit's** acting, inducing costumes and makeup
- All different **props** used
- The **design** of the small room, maps, instructions, and puzzles
- All eerie **checkpoints locations**
- Play of light and darkness
- **Louis'** character



## TOUCH

- Different **shapes**, sizes and **textures** of ingredients, **paper** used in different ways for the puzzles and map, and the kekrihunt2021 cotton bag
- **Feel of all props** such as table, wood, cauldron, books, rewards etc.



## HEAR

- **Church bell** sound clue
- **General soundscape** of Viaporin Kekri as an event, specifically the Kekri buck burning ceremony
- Scream of **Aaron**
- Distressing voice of **Louis**



## SMELL

- **Scent box** puzzle at empty tunnels (cinnamon, lavender, peppermint, pine, lemongrass, coffee..)
- **Smell of props** such as wood, red berries, old books, dried flowers
- The smell of **fire** during the Kekri buck burning ceremony



The sense of **TASTE** could not be used for the sake of caution. However, the **sweets** the team get as a **reward** could be identified as a taste stimulant.




# CHECKPOINT



PUZZLES,  
INSTRUCTIONS

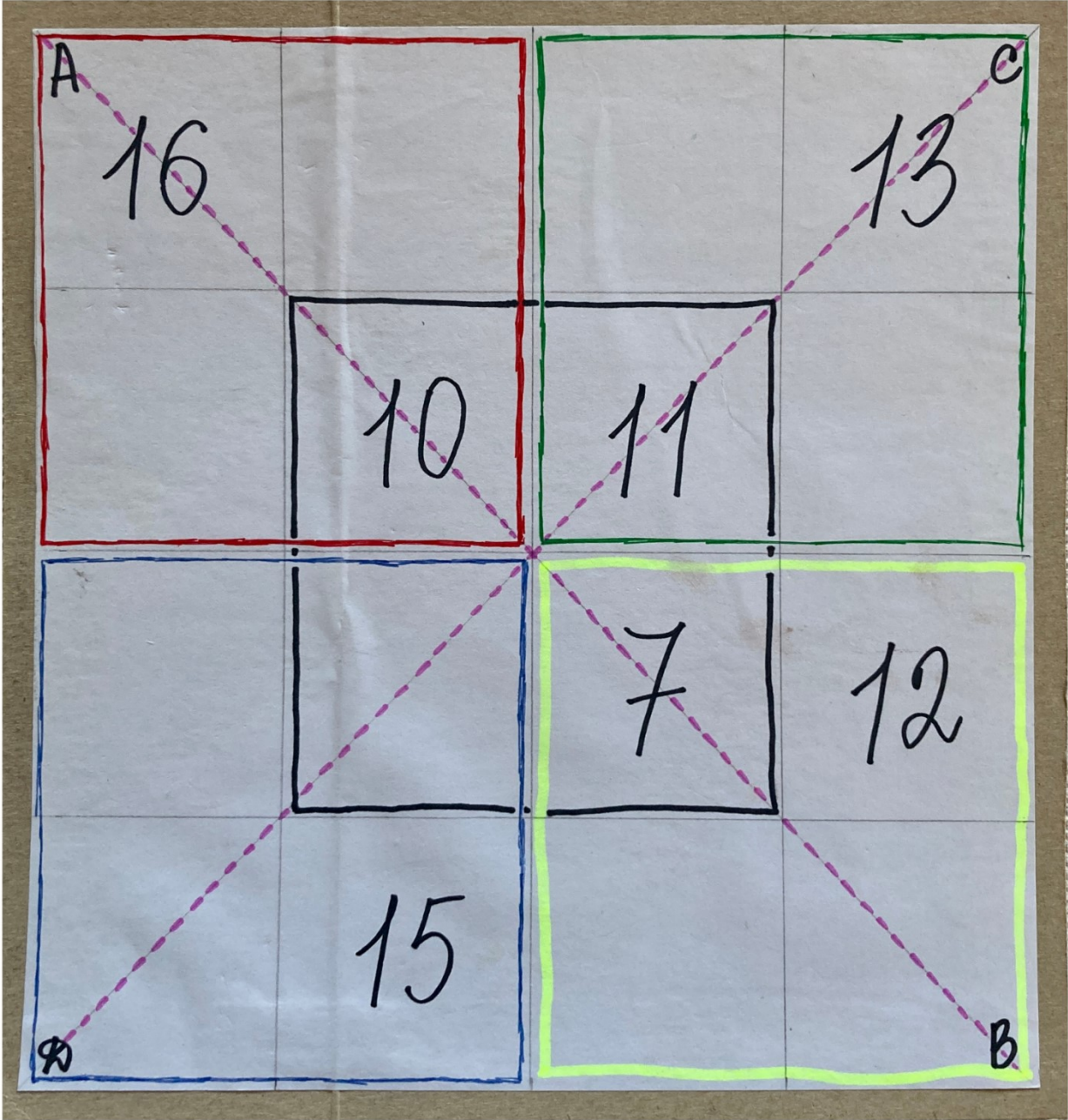


## INSTRUCTIONS

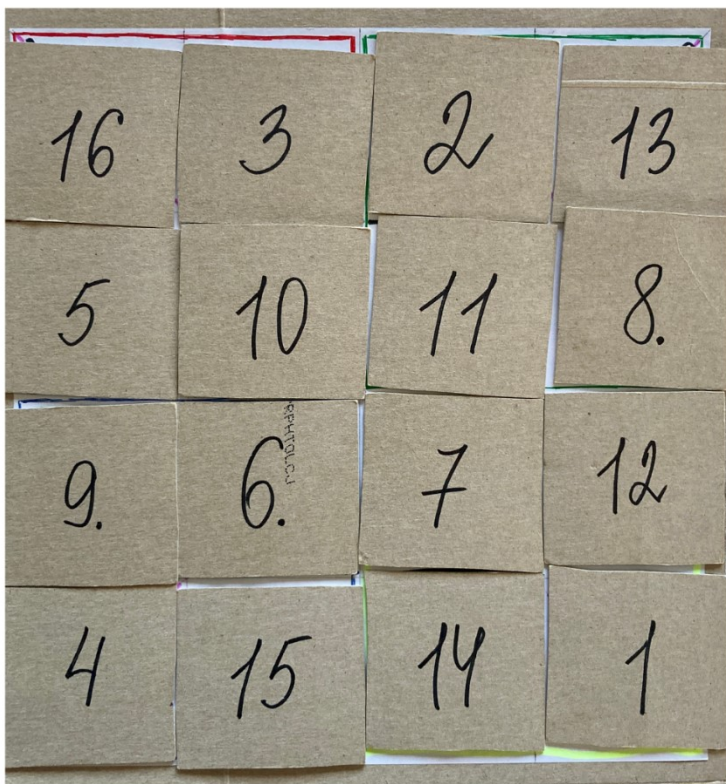
1. Arrange the numbers on the grid to the left of the instructions.
2. Each horizontal row must sum to 34. —
3. Each vertical column must sum to 34. |
4. Both marked diagonals must sum to 34. X
5. Each of the 5 coloured boxes must sum to 34. 
6. Some numbers have been prearranged for you and should not be moved for now.
7. Your phone can be VERY helpful here!

**Last step:** When you have found the correct solution, turn each of the pieces around, so that the numbers on them are still the right way up.  
*What did you find?*

#1 EMPTY TUNNELS (MAGIC SQUARE)



#1 EMPTY TUNNELS (MAGIC SQUARE - SOLUTION)





There are two almost identical boxes in front of you.

There is just one difference between them – find it  
and take it with you.

Show the spirit what you've found, and you'll know  
where to go next.

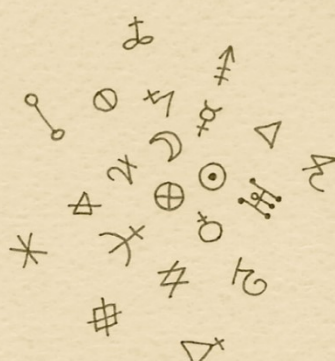


USE THIS BOOK

P.43-L.5-W.8 IS "HUNT". CRACK THE CODE FOR NEXT LOCATION.

TO DECIIPHER THE MESSAGE. HERE IS A CLUE TO

HELP YOU OUT:



1. LOOK AT  
43-5-8  
102-28-6  
SIGN.
2. WALK  
163-10-9  
450-5-10  
STEPS  
18-14-9.
3. TURN  
41-4-3.
4. WALK  
138-39-4  
STEPS  
23-6-2.
5. FIND  
302-13-1.
6. PASS BY  
378-34-2  
49-7-10.
7. LOOK  
14-8-8.
8. 228-27-3  
ONE  
281-23-10.










## THE EVIL SPIRITS ARE ONTO YOU!

Finish the ritual before your  
protection amulet loses  
its power!

1. Use the clues to find the  
**correct order of the ingredients.**
2. Add the components into the cauldron  
in the right order.  
Then stir clockwise 4 times.
3. If the potion has been prepared correctly,  
Aaron will give you a piece of paper.

Dip the paper into the potion,  
read the instructions  
and **RUN!!!**

# INGREDIENT ORDER

Ingredient Name	Order #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<u>Pine needles</u> 					X			
<u>Blueberry essence</u> 								X
<u>Red wood</u> 			X					
<u>Sunflower seeds</u> 						X		
<u>Water</u> 		X						
<u>Red berries</u> 				X				
<u>Pine cones</u> 							X	

## CLUES

- Every ingredient from the list above is used once and once only.
- Liquids (≍) are on either end of the ingredient order.
- Sunflower seeds are added before pine (★) items.
- Red wood comes before another red item.
- Water should be added first.
- Pine needles are in the middle of the process.
- Red berries must be used before the green component.

## RECIPE

- #1 x1
- #2 x3
- #3 x5
- #4 x10
- #5 x8
- #6 x1
- #7 x1



# KEKRI HUNT 2021

A **huge thanks** goes out to all kekrihunt creators and volunteers. This product would have not been possible without you!

Helina Lohoff  
2023

## Appendix 2. Feedback for kekrihunt2021 by participants



### Further comments:

One team pointed out that the 8min to make the potion in the end was not enough. However, this might have also been due to lower English level. Overall they liked it though and would do it again.

For another team the instructions were a bit unclear. They got treated as if they had finished the checkpoints when in reality they did not. They would have liked more guidance throughout the kekrihunt, so they could actually finish it properly. For them accuracy within the process was missing a bit. They did enjoy the vibe and enthusiasm though and thought it was amazing: "it was indeed a well planned and great event, one of the best events that I participated in my 22 years of life in Finland. Thanks a million to the organizers! Looking forward to more of such :)"

Lastly, one team would have also appreciated more guidance and instructions. Nevertheless they liked the kekrihunt.

### Takeaways:

When creating this sort of experience next time, clearer instructions need to be made so confusion can be avoided. The participant needs to be further guided and supported (if needed) to make the experience smoother. E.g. the characters in the story may be dressed more distinguishable from regular spirits, so they can help the teams straight away.

Timing needs to be considered as well. Some of our checkpoints (such as the smell one) were designed well when it comes to the difficulty and time. Others were a bit too long.

Overall all of the teams liked the experience and would do it again. When it comes to the story, ideas and the kekrihunt itself, it was surely a success. Next time, details and implementation elements need to be taken into account more - to clear out confusion and make the experience memorable for everyone!