

# REDESIGNING THE BRAND IDENTITY OF A SÁMI HOSPITALITY COMPANY

Engaging the brand's key stakeholders  
in the redesigning process

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Kilpailu matkailualalla on kovaa, ja tarjolla on runsaasti erilaisia vaihtoehtoja. Tästä syystä matkailualalla toimivalle yritykselle on tärkeää erottautua kilpailijoistaan, tuntea juurensa sekä tunnistaa ne elementit, jotka muodostavat yrityksen brändin identiteetin.

Tämä opinnäytetyö on toimintatutkimus, jossa tarkastellaan saamelaisen matkailualan yrityksen, Holiday Village Vallan, brändi-identiteettiä. Työn tarkoituksena on luoda yritykselle uusi, autenttinen ja yhtenäinen brändi-identiteetti, jossa saamelaiskulttuuri, yrittäjäperheen tietotaito sekä alueen historia tulevat näkyvämmäksi. Kehitystyö tehdään yhdessä brändin tärkeimpien sidosryhmien kanssa. Työllä on yrityksen hyödyn lisäksi myös alueellista ja yhteiskunnallista merkitystä, sillä se osaltaan vaikuttaa kestävämmän saamelaismatkailun kehittämiseen, lisää saamelaiskulttuuriin liittyvää tietämystä sekä kaventaa kulttuurien välistä kuilua.

Tutkimusdataa kerättiin sekä yksilö- että ryhmähaastatteluiden avulla. Kerätty data analysoitiin sisällönanalyysin keinoin. Tutkimustuloksista esiin nousseita keskeisiä teemoja olivat aitous, luotettavuus, kestävä matkailu sekä perhekeskeisyys. Muita tärkeitä löydöksiä olivat yrittäjäperheen historiaan liittyvät tarinat, poronhoidon merkitys saamelaiskulttuurissa sekä alueen luontoon liittyvät värit ja muodot.

Tutkimuksen päätuloksena syntyi visuaalinen brändi-identiteettikirja, joka sisältää brändin vision, mission, arvot, persoonallisuuden, äänensävyn, bränditarinan ja visuaalisen identiteetin. Yritys voi hyödyntää brändi-identiteettikirjaa markkinoinnissaan, uusien työntekijöiden perehdytyksessä sekä viestinnässä sidosryhmien kanssa.

<b>Avainsanat</b>	brändi-identiteetti, brändin sidosryhmät, matkailu, saamelaiskulttuuri
<b>Muita tietoja</b>	Työhön liittyy brändi-identiteettikirja.

International Business Management  
Tradenomi (Ylempi AMK)

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Competition in the hospitality industry is fierce, with plenty of travel options and destinations available. Therefore, it is important for a hospitality company to know how to distinguish itself from its competitors, and a foundational method to do so is to return to the roots of the company and its brand, and identify the elements that form the brand's identity.

This thesis is conducted as an action research that examines the brand identity of a Sámi hospitality company, Holiday Village Valle. The purpose of this thesis is to redesign a new, authentic and coherent brand identity in which the Sámi roots of the brand become more visible. The redesigning process is carried out in collaboration with the brand's key stakeholders. In addition to benefiting the brand, this thesis has regional and societal significance, as it contributes to the development of a more sustainable Sámi tourism and raises awareness about the Sámi culture while narrowing the cultural gap.

The research data was gathered through semi-structured individual and group interviews, and the gathered data was analyzed through the content analysis method. The key themes that emerged from the research findings included authenticity, reliability, sustainability, and family centrality. The other important findings made included the stories related to the company owner family's history, the significance of reindeer herding in the Sámi culture, and the colors and shapes associated with the region's nature.

The main outcome of the research is a visual brand identity book, which includes the brand's vision, mission, values, personality, tone-of-voice, brand story, and visual identity. The company can use the brand identity book to guide its marketing activities, as well as for onboarding new employees and communicating with its stakeholders.

<b>Keywords</b>	brand identity, brand stakeholders, hospitality industry, Sámi culture
<b>Other information</b>	The thesis includes a brand identity book.

## CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	7
1 INTRODUCTION .....	8
1.1 Motivation and background .....	9
1.2 Purpose, objectives and research questions .....	10
1.3 Knowledge base .....	12
1.3.1 Key concepts in this thesis .....	12
1.3.2 Introduction to the Sámi culture .....	14
1.3.3 The operational environment in Utsjoki .....	15
1.3.4 The competitors of Holiday Village Valle .....	18
1.4 Methodological implementation .....	19
1.5 Ethical foundations and reliability .....	20
1.6 Schedule and required resources .....	22
1.7 General structure of the thesis .....	23
2 BRAND IDENTITY .....	26
2.1 Key definitions on brand identity .....	26
2.1.1 Brand identity prism by Kapferer .....	27
2.1.2 Brand, brand image, and brand identity .....	29
2.2 Brand identity foundations .....	30
2.2.1 Vision .....	31
2.2.2 Mission .....	31
2.2.3 Values .....	32
2.3 Brand personality .....	34
2.3.1 Brand personality scale by Aaker .....	35
2.3.2 Tone-of-voice .....	36
2.4 Brand story .....	37
2.5 Brand's visual identity .....	40
2.5.1 Brand name .....	41
2.5.2 Brand logo .....	43
2.5.3 Typography .....	44
2.5.4 Color palette .....	45
2.5.5 Brand slogan .....	47
2.6 Brand stakeholders .....	48
2.6.1 Stakeholders of a destination brand .....	50

2.6.2	Brand co-creation .....	52
2.7	Customer journey touchpoints .....	53
3	RESEARCH DESIGN .....	56
3.1	Research approach .....	56
3.2	Research methods.....	59
3.3	Research process .....	63
3.4	Case selection and description .....	65
3.5	Data analysis .....	67
3.6	Reliability and validity of the research.....	68
4	RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION .....	71
4.1	Findings for the brand identity foundations .....	71
4.1.1	Emotional viewpoints.....	72
4.1.2	Ethical viewpoints.....	74
4.1.3	Brand vision and mission .....	75
4.1.4	Brand values .....	77
4.1.5	Content analysis of the data gathered.....	80
4.2	Findings for the brand's character .....	81
4.2.1	Brand personality .....	81
4.2.2	Tone-of-voice .....	82
4.2.3	Brand story .....	83
4.2.4	Content analysis of the data gathered.....	84
4.3	Findings for the brand's visual identity .....	87
4.3.1	Name, logo, and typography .....	87
4.3.2	Colors and shapes .....	88
4.3.3	Slogan .....	90
4.3.4	Content analysis of the data gathered.....	91
4.4	Conclusion of the research findings.....	93
5	THE REDESIGNED BRAND IDENTITY OF HOLIDAY VILLAGE VALLE ...	95
5.1	Brand vision, mission and values.....	95
5.2	Brand personality and tone-of-voice .....	97
5.3	Brand story .....	98
5.4	Visual identity.....	100
5.4.1	Brand name.....	101
5.4.2	Brand logo.....	101

5.4.3	Brand slogan .....	105
5.4.4	Typography .....	106
5.4.5	Colour palette .....	107
5.4.6	Shapes .....	109
6	CONCLUSIONS .....	111
6.1	Summary and conclusions.....	111
6.2	Evaluation of the results: reliability, validity and limitations .....	112
6.3	Practical contributions.....	113
6.4	Future recommendations for Holiday Village Valle .....	114
	BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	117
	APPENDICES.....	124

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

In order for a brand to become successful, it must truly be aware of the unique elements it is able to offer to its customers, and have a deep understanding on the ways in which those elements differ from the other options available (Halloran (2014, 22). As stated by Kotler, Armstrong, Wong and Saunders (2008, 525), the true meaning of a brand is far more than just a name or a logo; other elements such as the brand's key values and the unique personality that interacts with customers are much more important, when pursuing to create a meaningful and sustainable brand. Those elements together create *a brand identity*. According to Chunawalla (2008, 173, 175), a brand identity also consists of a graphic identity, which is the visual expression of the brand. Baisya (2013, 47-48) points out that formulating a coherent identity for a brand is specifically important, as customers are surrounded by a massive amount of communication from different media and marketing channels every day, and a brand must be able to differentiate from its competitors.

Competition is particularly tough in the hospitality industry, and customers have almost an unlimited amount of travel destinations and brands to choose from. According to Dietzel (2020, 81), creating unique experiences is extremely difficult, as many travel options and destinations are highly commercialized and similar to each other in many ways. This challenge is also faced by Holiday Village Valle, which is a family-owned, indigenous Sámi hospitality company that has its roots in the Sámi culture and traditions. The owner family of Holiday Village Valle has lived and worked in the Utsjoki area for hundreds of years, and practiced traditional livelihoods such as reindeer herding and fishing before establishing the holiday village. As stated by Timothy (2011, 424), the culture, traditions, and traditional livelihoods of indigenous people are significantly appealing to travelers, and offer a possibility to gain authentic experiences outside the ordinary life. Holiday Village Valle acknowledges the unique characteristics of its Sámi roots, but those roots have not been utilized clearly in the brand's identity or operations. This thesis returns back to the foundations of Holiday Village Valle, engages the key stakeholders of the brand and redesigns a more authentic brand identity, which is coherent in all customer journey



touchpoints and also accepted by the local Sámi community. The new brand identity is redesigned by focusing specifically on the existing and potential international target customers of Holiday Village Valle.

The introduction chapter is divided into seven subchapters, which together thoroughly introduce the topic of this thesis and the background and foundations for the research conducted. The first subchapter describes the motivation and background for this thesis, while in the second subchapter the purpose, objectives and research questions are introduced. The third subchapter consists of the knowledge base, which first defines the foundational concepts to be familiarized before diving deeper into the topic of brand identity, and shortly describes the concepts which are discussed further on the literature review of this thesis. The third subchapter also provides a short introduction to the Sámi culture, and describes the operational environment in Utsjoki and the main competitors of Holiday Village Valle. In the fourth subchapter the methodological implementation used in this thesis is defined and argued, while the fifth subchapter concentrates on the ethical foundations and reliability factors. The sixth subchapter present the schedule of this thesis and the resources required, and in the seventh subchapter the general structure of this thesis is shortly introduced.

## 1.1 Motivation and background

The topic of redesigning the brand identity of Holiday Village Valle is selected for this thesis due to its significance to the case company, and also for the researcher herself, who at the time of writing this thesis works in the case company as a hotel manager in charge of marketing and international sales. As stated by Gronlund (2013, 12), anything with a name can technically be considered as a brand, but customers are more likely to choose brands that they can relate to and build trustful relationships with. Holiday Village Valle has a recognizable name and logo, but other branding efforts lack strategy and clarity. Holiday Village Valle is aware of the great potential that lies in the Sámi roots of the brand, but according to the feedback received from the customers and other stakeholders, Holiday Village Valle is viewed as a regular holiday

village that does not significantly differ from the other holiday villages in Lapland.

The topic of this thesis is tightly connected to working life, as redesigning a more authentic and coherent brand identity for Holiday Village Valle includes several long-term benefits to the brand's key stakeholders, such as suppliers and travel agents. With a redesigned brand identity, Holiday Village Valle could attract more customers, leading to the increased demand for the products and services of the suppliers and travel agents. Moreover, benefits could extend to the entire Utsjoki region. With more customers booking their holidays in Holiday Village Valle, the need to hire new staff would rise, providing job opportunities for local residents. Simultaneously, the attractiveness and recognizability of the Utsjoki area would improve, drawing more tourists to the region and generating revenue for local businesses. Through its redesigned brand identity, Holiday Village Valle would also contribute to the development of a more sustainable and authentic Sámi tourism, as cultural awareness would improve, and the gap between different cultures could possibly narrow.

## 1.2 Purpose, objectives and research questions

The purpose of this thesis is to redesign the brand identity of an indigenous Sámi hospitality company together with its key stakeholders. This purpose is divided into three objectives, followed by one main research question divided into three supporting subquestions. The purpose, objectives and research questions are presented in Figure 1.

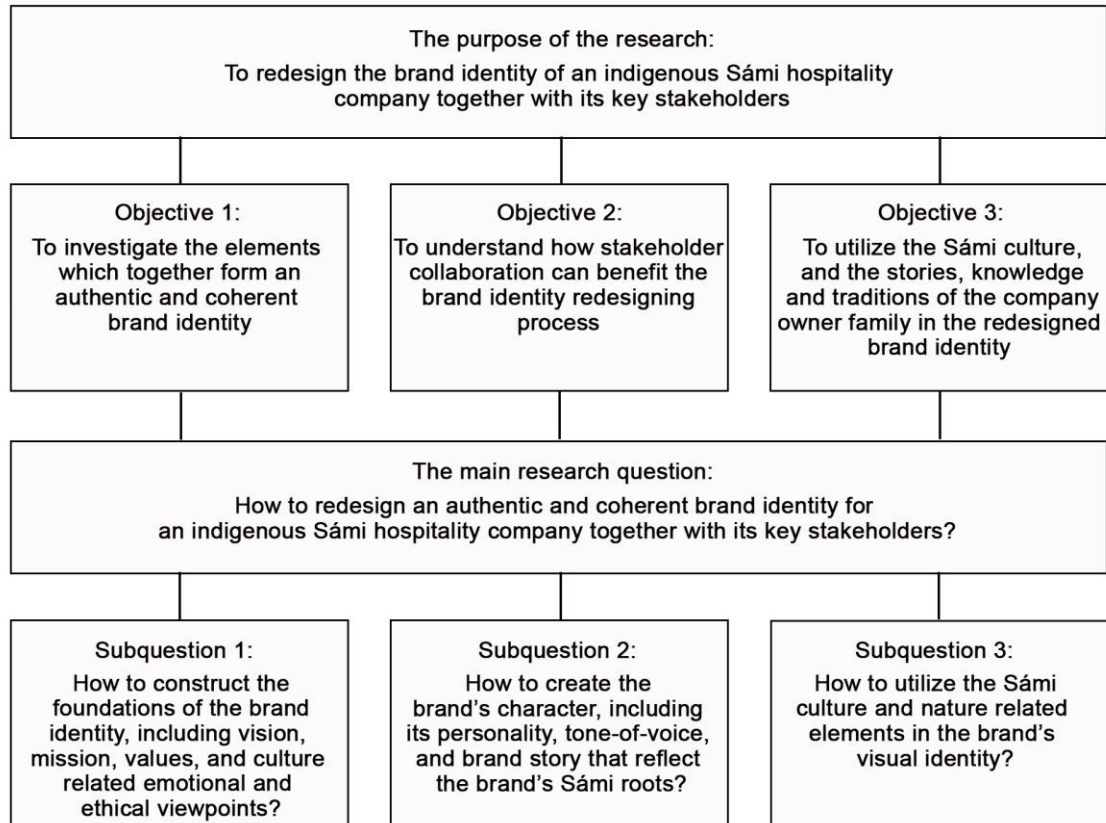


Figure 1. The purpose, objectives, and research questions

As Figure 1 presents, the purpose of this research is to redesign an authentic and coherent brand identity for an indigenous Sámi hospitality company Holiday Village Valle, in collaboration with the brand's key stakeholders. The purpose is divided into three, more specific objectives. The first objective is to investigate the elements that together form an authentic and coherent brand identity. The second objective is to understand how stakeholder collaboration can benefit the brand identity redesigning process. The third objective is to utilize the Sámi culture and the stories, knowledge and traditions of the owner family into the redesigned brand identity. The literature review of this thesis offers information to the first and second objectives, while the research phase covers the third objective.

The research in this thesis is based on one main research question, as presented in Figure 1: How to redesign an authentic and coherent brand identity for an indigenous Sámi hospitality company together with its key stakeholders?

The main research question is divided into three subquestions:

1. How to construct the foundations of the brand identity, including vision, mission, values, and culture related emotional and ethical viewpoints?
2. How to develop the brand's character, including its personality, tone-of-voice, and brand story that reflect the brand's Sámi roots?
3. How to utilize the Sámi culture and nature related elements in the brand's visual identity?

### 1.3 Knowledge base

The knowledge base provides relevant background information to support this thesis. The first part of the knowledge base consists of the key concepts that are either presented in the literature review of this thesis, such as brand identity, stakeholder collaboration and customer journey touchpoints, or concepts that must be identified with before familiarizing with the topic of brand identity, such as the definition of a brand and a destination brand. The knowledge base then continues to shortly introduce the Sámi culture, which has a significant impact on the brand identity redesigning process of Holiday Village Valle. The operational environment in Utsjoki is also presented, as it offers a deeper insight into the area and its challenges and weaknesses. Finally, the competitors of Holiday Village Valle are introduced to better understand who the competitors are, and how Holiday Village Valle can differentiate from them through a redesigned brand identity.

#### 1.3.1 Key concepts in this thesis

Before diving deeper into the concept of brand identity, it is first necessary to clarify the definition of a brand. According to Aggarwal (2021, 2-3), a brand is the face of a company, and consists of a name, logo, slogan or other symbols that distinguish the brand from competitors, making the brand easily recognizable. However, Gronlund (2013, 2) reminds that the true value and strength of a brand is determined by the meaning which the visual identifications of a brand create for the customers. As this thesis is conducted

for a hospitality company, it is also essential to define the concept of a destination brand. Morrison (2013, 4) states that a destination brand can be considered as a geographic area, but it can also refer to a location that offers accommodation and other services. According to Kozak and Baloglu (2011, 156), a destination typically consists of multiple elements, including different types of attractions, facilities, activities, transportation services, and various non-tourism-related services. Morrison (2013, 91) refers to Ritchie et al. (1998) and states that just as any other brand, a destination brand also consists of a personalized name, logo, and other symbols or graphics that are used to differentiate the destination from its competitors. A destination brand is developed to express the unforgettable experiences which the brand promises to offer to the customers.

In the literature review of this thesis, the concept of brand identity and the elements that collectively create a coherent brand identity are defined. According to Gronlund (2013, 143), a brand's design, encompassing the name, slogan, colors, logo, and other graphics, plays a significant role in communicating the brand's identity. However, during the literature review phase of this thesis, a contradiction in the elements comprising a brand identity became evident. Several authors tend to focus mainly on the visual characteristics of a brand when discussing brand identity. This observation is also acknowledged by Mootee (2013, 198), who criticizes existing definitions of brand identity for centralizing mainly on the visual aspects. Therefore, this thesis aligns with authors such as Baisya (2013, 48), who states that in addition to the visual elements, a true brand identity also consists of the values the brand stands for, its vision and mission, and the permanent character it possesses. The literature review of this thesis presents and discusses those brand identity elements from the point of view of several authors, such as Chunawalla (2008), Mootee (2013), Martínez Onaindía and Resnick (2013), Riezebos and van der Grinten (2012), Gronlund (2013), and Slade-Brooking (2016).

According to Hodgson (2010, 13), a brand is built upon the interactions between the brand and all of its stakeholders, along with their shared experiences and

associations related to the brand. Therefore, the literature review of this thesis builds upon previous research conducted by various authors, including Hatch and Schultz (2008), Page (2007), Horner and Swarbrooke (2005), and Pike (2016). The literature review provides a definition for brand stakeholders, identifies the stakeholders of a destination brand, and discusses stakeholder collaboration. As emphasized by Gronlund (2013, 143), all brand communication must be coherent and harmonized at each touchpoint along the customer journey, encompassing every contact the customer has with the brand. For this reason, the concept of customer journey touchpoints is also defined in detail by authors such as Buttle and Maklan (2019), Ford (2005), and Gronlund (2013).

### 1.3.2 Introduction to the Sámi culture

According to the Sámi Parliament, the indigenous status of the Sámi, which are the only indigenous people in the European Union, was confirmed in the Finnish Constitution in 1995. Therefore, according to the law, the Sámi people have the right to practice their traditional livelihoods and maintain their language and culture, which includes the right to receive education and deal with authorities in their own language in Finland. The legally defined Sámi area in Finland comprises the Utsjoki, Inari, and Enontekiö municipalities and also covers the reindeer herding district in Sodankylä. The total Sámi population size is over 75,000, with the majority living in Norway, and the rest in Finland, Sweden and Russia. Approximately 10,000 Sámi people live in Finland, however as more than 60 percent of them live outside the Sámi area, it becomes more challenging to arrange education and services in the Sámi language. (Sámi Parliament 2023.)

The Sámi culture encompasses various traditional livelihoods and the modernized methods to practice them, such as reindeer herding, fishing, hunting, gathering, and handicrafts. The significance of these livelihoods is still strong to the Sámi community, playing a crucial role in preserving the Sámi language and culture. Moreover, they reflect the Sámi way of living and being connected with nature. Some Sámi people still earn their income from these

traditional livelihoods. The Sámi language, belonging to the indigenous languages of Europe, is spoken in Finland, Norway, Sweden, and Russia. In Finland, the Sámi people speak three different Sámi languages: North Sámi, Inari Sámi, and Skolt Sámi. The most commonly spoken of these three is North Sámi, with approximately 20,000-25,000 speakers in the entire Sámi area, and around 2,000 in Finland. The Sámi dress, *gákti*, holds significant importance as a symbol of the Sámi national identity. The dress, its decorations, and the way it is worn convey various characteristics of the person, including their place of origin and marital status. While in the past, the Sámi people wore the dress on daily basis, at the time of writing this thesis the dress is primarily reserved for celebrations and special occasions. A typical element of the Sámi culture is also the Sámi music, which is called *yoik*. (Sámi Parliament 2023.)

The Sámi culture and its symbols have already been utilized in tourism for decades. However, the Sámi Parliament states that the representation of the Sámi culture in tourism has not been authentic, but rather misleading and even insulting towards the community, and has affected the vitality of the Sámi culture in a negative way. According to the Sámi Parliament, it is necessary that the Sámi culture is utilized in an authentic, ethical and sustainable way in tourism, and in collaboration with the Sámi community. Protecting the vitality of the Sámi culture is seen to benefit the tourism development in the whole Lapland. This requires mutual understanding, as well as respect between all parties. The Sámi Parliament pursues to find a common understanding about the ethical Sámi tourism between all stakeholders of the tourism industry, raise awareness and knowledge about the Sámi culture and language, and avoid the distribution of incorrect information about the Sámi. (Sámi Parliament 2023.)

### 1.3.3 The operational environment in Utsjoki

Lapland is a wide area which consists of various unique and significantly different areas and destinations. The Utsjoki area has its own characteristics as well, due to the lively Sámi culture, the large wilderness areas surrounding the three villages of Utsjoki, and the lack of ski centers, which to some extent limits the target customers of Utsjoki. Before starting the brand identity redesigning

process, an analysis of the Utsjoki operational environment must be conducted in order to gain a full insight of the area and the possibilities and limitations it offers for destination brands to develop and succeed. As described by Slade-Brooking (2016, 106), a SWOT analysis can be used to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of a product or service, or reaching a specific objective. The following SWOT analysis in Figure 2 defines the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the operational environment in Utsjoki, from the point of view of a hospitality company and its brand that pursues to operate, succeed, and grow in the Utsjoki area.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The impressive landscapes (wilderness areas, Teno river)</li> <li>-The clear seasonal changes</li> <li>-The relatively cool summers</li> <li>-The peace and quietness</li> <li>-The tourism activities are still small</li> <li>-The lively Sámi culture, the rich cultural heritage</li> <li>-The possibility to offer genuinely authentic experiences</li> <li>-The good changes to view northern lights: not much light pollution</li> <li>-The short distance to Norway</li> <li>-The relatively good network of local suppliers</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Plenty of projects with few concrete results or actions</li> <li>-The negative attitudes, resistance to change</li> <li>-Reindeer herding partly prevents the development of tourism, outdoor routes and infrastructure</li> <li>-The lack of coordinated sales &amp; marketing / local DMO</li> <li>-The dependence upon travel agents with international travel</li> <li>-Weak strategy for tourism development</li> <li>-Weak digital strategy / online presence</li> <li>-Few flights to Ivalo</li> <li>-The strategic location (far from airports, cities etc.)</li> <li>-The lack of public transportation (from the airport or cities)</li> <li>-The lack of services</li> <li>-The lack of apartments</li> <li>-No possibilities for higher education</li> <li>-The difficulties to get experienced and educated workforce</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The short distance to Norway</li> <li>-The collaboration opportunities with Norway and Inari</li> <li>-The opportunities to develop sustainable tourism</li> <li>-The limitless opportunities to create authentic experiences related to the Sámi culture and the surrounding nature</li> <li>-The possibility to strengthen the collaboration between local businesses to create a stronger tourism ecosystem in Utsjoki</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The competition from Norway and Inari</li> <li>-The local competition in Utsjoki is also getting harder</li> <li>-The other areas in Lapland are developing faster than Utsjoki</li> <li>-The tough financial situation of the Utsjoki municipality</li> <li>-The negative attitudes towards the development of tourism</li> <li>-The slightly negative image of the Sámi culture in the media</li> <li>-The flights to Ivalo possibly getting even fewer</li> <li>-The length of the salmon fishing ban continuing for an unknown number of years</li> </ul>

Figure 2. SWOT analysis of the operational environment in Utsjoki

As illustrated in Figure 2, the operational environment in the Utsjoki area is challenging. The village is small, and a significant contrast exists between reindeer herding and other livelihoods, such as tourism. This contrast leads to contradictions and difficulties in developing the hospitality industry. Additionally, the strategic location of the village poses challenges, given the long distances to airports and larger cities. The lack of services is evident in everyday life; there is almost no public transportation available, the food and gas prices are



high, there are no opportunities for higher education, and the availability of apartments is limited. Utsjoki, as a destination, also faces challenges in its digital strategy and online presence. The overall strategy for tourism development requires strengthening as well. The destination management organization (DMO), known as Lapland North Destinations, is coordinating the destinations in Northern Lapland, including Saariselkä, Inari, and Utsjoki. However, Utsjoki's presence in their marketing activities is often minor compared to the other destinations mentioned above. Therefore, it would be beneficial for Utsjoki to establish a local DMO and a centralized sales and marketing channel dedicated solely to the Utsjoki area. Competition is getting harder locally, and also in Inari and on the Norwegian side of the border. The continuing salmon fishing ban also poses its own challenges for the hospitality industry, as neither locals nor tourists are allowed to fish salmon. The financial situation of the Utsjoki municipality is weak, and even though several different projects are conducted, few concrete results have been received.

However, while the weaknesses and threats without a doubt exist, there are also plenty of strengths and opportunities, which Figure 2 illustrates. First of all, the landscapes surrounding the Utsjoki area are impressive and consist of large wilderness areas, open fells and the mighty Teno river that is winding between the fells and the villages. Ritchie and Crouch (2003, 115-116) refer to the study by Ritchie and Zins (1978) and identify 12 cultural elements that have an impact on the attractiveness of a destination. These include for example the language spoken by the locals, the local handicrafts and other typical art of the region, the traditional food prepared in the region, and the history, local traditions, and traditional livelihoods of the region. As the Sámi culture and traditional livelihoods are still lively in the Utsjoki village, together with the magnificent landscapes they create limitless possibilities to offer authentic experiences for tourists. The short distance to Norway also provides opportunities to enhance collaboration and thus expand the services offered. In today's world where artificial light surrounds us everywhere we go, the dark winters of Utsjoki offer a possibility to view northern lights better than in almost any other location in Finland, as there is almost no light pollution in Utsjoki. On the contrary, the long period of nightless night during the summer is also an enchanting experience.

#### 1.3.4 The competitors of Holiday Village Valle

The competitive environment of Holiday Village Valle consists of several different hotels and holiday villages located in the municipalities of Utsjoki and Inari. Some of them are not considered to be direct competitors, as their brands and offerings differ majorly from Holiday Village Valle. As an example, the brand-new, luxurious Utsjoki Arctic Resort is not considered as a direct competitor, due to the major differences in the target customers and the significantly higher price range of the accommodation. The Utsjoki Arctic Resort has faced plenty of resistance from the locals, however Holiday Village Valle considers the new resort, its substantial marketing activities, and the widely recognized reputation of the parent company Kakslauttanen Arctic Resort to improve the visibility of the whole Utsjoki area and benefit all other companies operating there.

The most potential competitors for Holiday Village Valle are identified to be Aurora Holidays in Utsjoki, Nuorgam Holiday Village in Nuorgam, and Visit Inari in Inari. Those competitors offer similar experiences to the ones offered by Holiday Village Valle, and have invested in international sales and brand development during the past years. Various similar competitors can also be identified from Northern Norway, and due to the magnificent landscapes, beautiful summer season and the wide activity selection offered, Norway is becoming more and more attractive in the eyes of both international and Finnish tourists. Some of the above-mentioned competitors have also grounded their brands in the Sámi culture, which makes it even more challenging to compete with them and offer unique experiences for tourists.

Kotler et. al (2008, 436) state that a brand must go through the whole customer experience carefully in order to identify the specific points where it can differentiate itself from the competitors. Those points can exist for example in the products and services offered, in the existing channels used, or in people working for the brand. Slade-Brooking (2016, 43) highlights that a competitive advantage defines the factors that differentiate the brand from other competing brands, and describes the benefits that the customer receives from and

associates with the brand. The Sámi culture related stories, history, traditions and knowledge of the company's owner family can be identified as the competitive advantage of Holiday Village Valle, and the company believes that an authentic and coherent brand identity will further become an even a stronger edge for the company's competitive advantage and a means to differentiate also from the other similar competitors in the area.

#### 1.4 Methodological implementation

The research conducted for this thesis is based on qualitative research methodology, as the research pursues to gather unstructured data, generate new viewpoints and make in-depth observations of the topic. According to Hammersley (2013, 13), qualitative research chooses a more flexible approach to the research design rather than building a detailed and structured plan to be implemented, and the emphasis in qualitative research is on generating descriptions and explanations. This flexibility of qualitative research also applies to data gathering and analysis; unstructured data can be used, and in the data analysis phase open-ended and flexible categories are developed rather than using strict, predetermined categories.

The action research approach is chosen for this thesis due to its practicality. As stated by McNiff and Whitehead (2001, 203), carrying out a successful action research involves a few key elements. First, the researcher must be central to the process, the process must be educational for the researcher, and the researcher must be able to influence the situation of the company. Therefore, action research is a suitable option for this research, as at the time of writing this thesis the researcher works in the case company in a role that allows the researcher to comprehensively influence the research process and the situation in the company. As the researcher actively participates in the brand identity redesigning process as the main designer of the new brand identity, the action research approach allows the research process to concurrently enhance the professional skills and knowledge of the researcher, as well as the employees and other stakeholders.

Quantitative data is used to support the research, as familiarizing with Holiday Village Valle's existing sales numbers and feedback received from the customers and international travel agents is essential in the beginning of the research. The main data gathering for this research, however, is based on qualitative methods, such as individual interviews and focus group discussions. According to McNiff (2013, 109), interviews and different types of discussions can be considered as efficient and valuable sources of information when it comes to gathering qualitative data. Through interviews and discussions, an open-ended approach can be taken without limiting the conversations with questionnaires or surveys. All interviews of this research are semi-structured to allow the participants the opportunity to openly share their ideas and viewpoints. Galletta and Cross (2013, 24) state that semi-structured interviews consist of questions that are structured and defined based on related theory around the topic, but the questions still allow participants to introduce new meanings, ideas, and engage in critical reflection on the topic.

The individual interviews are held for the key stakeholders of Holiday Village Valle, excluding the employees. The transcribed data obtained from these interviews is analyzed by using the content analysis method, which according to Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2018, 93, 98-99) is suitable for analyzing unstructured data. Following the analysis of the data gathered from the individual interviews, a focus group discussion, further referred to as a workshop, is organized with the employees of Holiday Village Valle to engage in an in-depth discussion of the individual interview findings. According to Hennink (2014, 1), focus group discussions center around specific issues and consist of a predetermined group of people who actively interact with each other in the situation, creating a wide range of viewpoints on the matters discussed. The focus group discussion provides the opportunity to discuss the interview findings with the employees, and utilize their ideas and viewpoints in the brand identity redesigning process.

### 1.5 Ethical foundations and reliability

As explained by Timothy (2011, 429), it is highly important for the local people to have control over their own cultural resources and the way in which they are

utilized in tourism. Therefore, in order to develop tourism in a sustainable way, the natives should have a foundational role in the idea generation and planning process. As the topic of this thesis is tightly connected to the Sámi culture, including the Sámi community in the brand identity development process as an important stakeholder of the brand is ethical, and improves the reliability of the thesis. It is also highly important to handle the cultural issues with care and respect. The researcher's responsibility is to stay honest and professional in every part of the process, even though the process involves challenging and delicate issues related to Holiday Village Valle and to the Sámi culture. The researcher must also encourage the stakeholders an open and honest discussion regardless of the researcher's position as the manager of the company. The confidentiality factors must be carefully considered, as this thesis introduces the case company by its real name, and includes plenty of confidential data.

Rose and Johnson (2020, 436) state that in order for a research to be reliable, the research design has to be systematic, the research methods have to be applicable, and the findings believable. The authors also state that appropriate literature must be used as the basis of the research, multiple data collection and analyzing techniques must be selected, and theoretical and empirical materials must be connected together in a convincing way. The reliability of the research conducted for this thesis is improved in several different ways. Plenty of academic sources are used to support the research process and to offer diverse viewpoints on the relevant topics. The researcher's three-year working history in the company enhances the reliability of this research, as the researcher has familiarized herself well with the past and existing status of the company, and the strengths and weaknesses of its brand. The researcher has personal interest in the success of this research as well, as it has real implications on her own daily work. As the researcher has lived in the Sámi community for three years, she has developed a foundational understanding of the Sámi culture and its characteristics. Finally, the research focuses on including all key stakeholders in the research process, and not only settling for the management perspective. Over the years the researcher has formed reliable relationships with the key stakeholders, which is a benefit in the interviews when the

discussions are based on mutual trust and openness. The interviewed key stakeholders represent various positions and backgrounds, further enhancing the reliability of the research.

## 1.6 Schedule and required resources

Appendix 1 presents the schedule for implementing the thesis process. The process started in April 2022 by selecting the case, formulating the research purpose and objectives, and choosing the research approach and methods. This phase continued until the end of June 2022, as the original topic of the thesis changed during the process, and therefore it was necessary to return back to the research purpose, objectives and questions. The case company, however, remained the same despite the slight changes in the topic. The literature review took place between September 2022 and May 2023, and the researcher was also simultaneously working on the research phase by sketching the interview questions. The stakeholder interviews were arranged between May and June 2023, and the workshop with the employees of the company was arranged in July 2023. The data gathered was transcribed, coded and analyzed between July and September 2023, and during this phase, the research questions were once more revised in August 2023. The brand identity redesigning process was conducted partly simultaneously with the data analysis phase, and the redesigning work was finalized during October 2023, as well as the conclusions and future recommendations for the case company. The thesis was proofread and returned for assessment in November 2023.

The most important resources needed for this thesis were the time and effort of the stakeholders. The interviews required approximately 30-45 minutes of each stakeholders' time; however, some were willing to discuss even for one and half hours. The interview questions were delivered to the stakeholders beforehand, allowing them to consider their responses before the interview. The workshop arranged with the employees of the company required approximately two hours of their time. In the brand's visual identity redesigning phase, a graphic designer was consulted and employed in finalizing the brand logo based on a logo idea sketched by the researcher. The graphic designer also finalized the typography

and color palette of the brand. The work of the graphic designer was compensated by Holiday Village Valle.

As the researcher worked in the case company at the time of writing this thesis, it was possible to conduct some of the research work during the workdays. Travelling for the interviews caused some expenses, which were compensated by Holiday Village Valle. No monetary benefit was gained from the thesis process. When establishing the foundations and acquiring the necessary background knowledge for the research, the researcher also reviewed feedback received from customers and international travel agents over the past three years. This played a crucial role in understanding how customers have experienced the brand so far. Statistical data from the company's own reservations system was explored, providing insight into the company's past and existing international sales. Ethical guidelines for Sámi tourism established by the Sámi Parliament were also an important source of information. These guidelines, alongside the interview with the Sámi community representative, provided guidance for the brand identity redesigning process. At the end of the thesis process, certain sections of the finalized thesis document were reviewed using ChatGPT 3.5 to ensure grammatical correctness of the text.

### 1.7 General structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of six main chapters, and references and appendices. The structure of the thesis is presented in Figure 3.

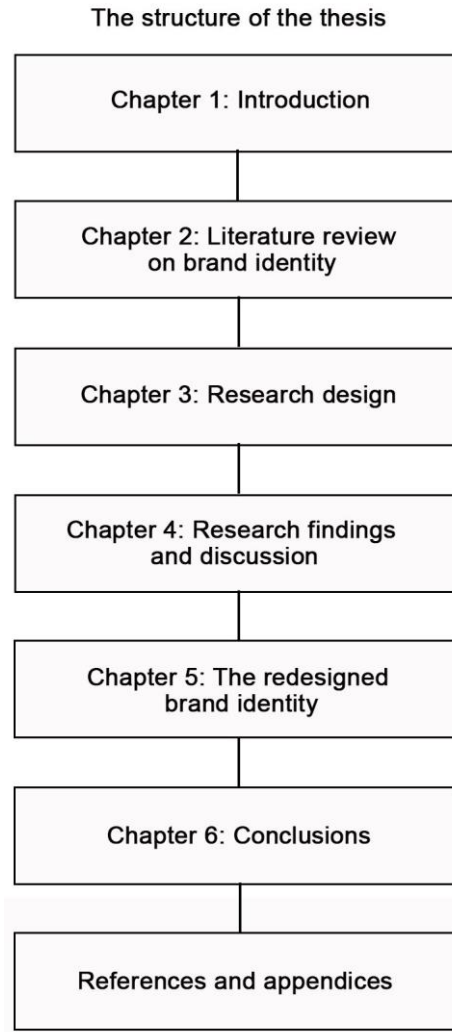


Figure 3. The structure of the thesis

The first chapter introduces the topic of this thesis and the background for the research conducted, and describes the development needs and actions to be made. The second chapter introduces the literature review for this thesis and describes the elements that together form an authentic and coherent brand identity. As the definitions of the brand identity vary based on reference, the brand identity elements described in this thesis have been chosen based on the needs of Holiday Village Valle. The second chapter also describes the importance of involving the brand's key stakeholders in the brand identity redesigning process, defines the key stakeholders of a destination brand, and clarifies the touchpoints where the brand identity is visible along the customer journey. The third chapter introduces the research design, outlines what will be implemented during the research process, and introduces the methods for



implementation. The fourth chapter analyses, discusses and argues the findings made from the research, and defines the direction the brand identity redesigning process will take. The fifth chapter describes the actual brand identity redesigning process conducted, and introduces the new, redesigned brand identity of Holiday Village Valle. The sixth chapter summarizes and concludes the result of the research, and suggests future actions for the case company. The visual brand identity book designed for the case company is presented in the appendices.

## 2 BRAND IDENTITY

This chapter is divided into seven subchapters, which define the elements that together form an authentic and coherent brand identity. The first subchapter focuses on providing the key definitions on brand identity, and introducing the definitions which this thesis will follow. The brand identity prism developed by Kapferer is also introduced, and the difference between a brand, brand identity, and brand image are defined. In the second subchapter the foundational elements of a brand identity, such as values, vision, and mission, are discussed. The chapter then moves on to the third subchapter, which presents the elements encompassing the brand's character, including personality and tone-of-voice. The brand personality scale developed by Aaker is also introduced. The fourth subchapter provides information about brand storytelling, while the fifth subchapter focuses on the visual identity of the brand. The sixth subchapter defines brand stakeholders and the stakeholders of a destination brand, and introduces different ways in which a brand can engage its stakeholders in collaboration or co-creation. The seventh subchapter describes customer journey touchpoints, as the brand identity must be visible in a coherent way throughout all touchpoints along the customer journey.

### 2.1 Key definitions on brand identity

To be able to succeed in the markets, a brand must know how to communicate with its audience in an effective way (Baisya 2013, 47-48). Chunawalla (2008, 175) states that developing a properly designed identity for a brand is specifically important, as with a clear identity a brand can better differentiate itself from its competitors, and become more easily recognized by customers. There exist plenty of definitions on brand identity by several authors, and the viewpoints differ from each other to some extent. According to Mootee (2013, 198), most definitions often focus mainly on the graphic elements and the visual appearance of a brand and fail to describe the brand's full essence and identity. When imagining an identity of a person, it is easy to agree that it consists of much more than only about the style of clothing of the person. Therefore, the same idea can be applied to the identity of a brand. Chunawalla (2008, 173,

175), states that the graphic identity clearly is an important part of a brand's identity, but the brand's identity also consists of other relevant elements, such as the brand's products or services, and intangible attributes, such as personality, symbolism, and organizational associations, which together create the overall brand identity.

According to Mindrut, Manolica and Roman (2015, 395), a coherent brand identity is first founded on for example the brand's culture, personality, vision, positioning, and relationships, and this identity is then converted into the visual components of the brand. This definition is supported by Baisya (2013, 48), who suggests that in order to create a thorough brand identity, a brand must have a clear vision, mission, objectives, and core values that the brand believes in and stands for. It is also necessary for a brand to differentiate itself from its competitors and determine which customer needs the brand will fulfill. Additionally, a brand must possess a permanent character that remains the same over time, and visual characteristics and design that helps the customers to easily recognize it. Chunawalla (2008, 175) summarizes that a properly designed brand identity can be seen, heard, and touched.

#### 2.1.1 Brand identity prism by Kapferer

There exist several different theories on brand identity, but it was first introduced in Europe by Kapferer in 1986 (Janonis, Dovalienė & Virvilaitė, 2007, 70). According to Chunawalla (2008, 178-179), Kapferer's theory on brand identity is called a brand identity prism that consists of six different elements, which are physique, personality, culture, relationship, reflection, and self-image, as presented in Figure 4. The picture of the sender can be found from the top of the prism, and the picture of the recipient is presented in the bottom of the prism. The elements on the left side are considered external, while the elements on the right side are internal. Janonis et al. (2007, 73) point out that all those six elements are important building blocks of a brand identity. To be able to exist, a brand must communicate. The sender is determined by the physical appearance and the personality of the brand. The recipient, on the other hand,

is determined by consumer reflection and self-image. The sender and the recipient are linked by culture and relationship.

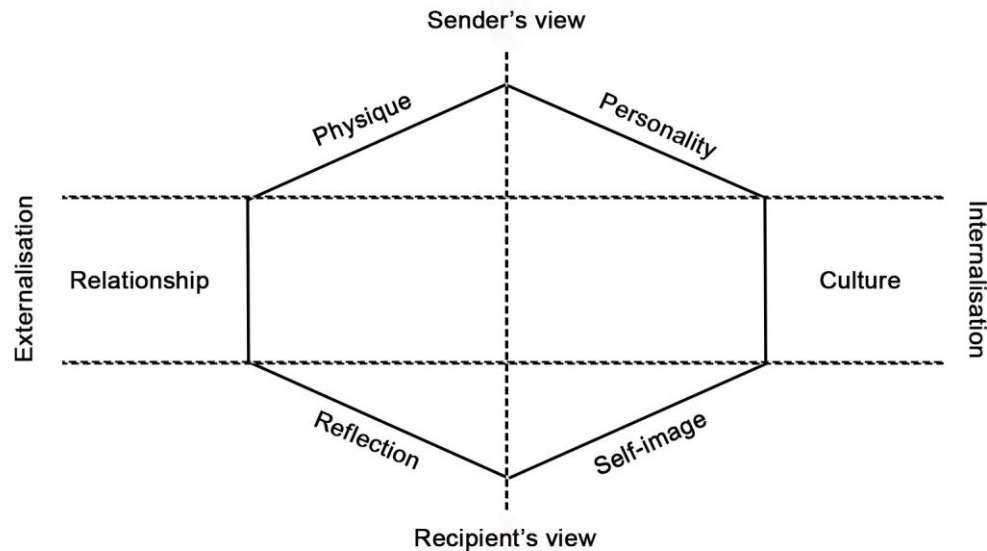


Figure 4. Brand identity prism by Kapferer, adapted from Chunawalla (2008, 179)

The first element, *physique*, consists of the physical appearance of the brand; what the brand is, and how its visual appearance looks like (Janonis et al. 2007, 72). Baisya (2013, 51) explains that the physique element encompasses the main attributes of the brand and its products and services.

Janonis et al. (2007, 72) state that the second element, *personality*, consists of the brand's character and its way of communicating with customers. As pointed out by Baisya (2013, 51), every brand has its own personality that reflects human characteristics, and this personality can be seen in the way the brand speaks about its products and services.

The third element, *culture*, consists for example of the values, objectives, and communication of the brand. Every brand represents its own culture, and this culture can be an important means of differentiation from competitors. (Janonis et al. 2007, 72-73.)

Brands establish and gradually build a *relationship* with customers through service, which optimally transforms them into loyal and long-term customers. This relationship, which is the fourth element in the brand identity prism, must be constantly supported and strengthened as the competition in the markets is hard. (Baisya 2013, 52.)

The fifth element, *reflection*, focuses on the customer's image that reflects the brand. This means that the brand's products, services, and communication reflect those types of customers that the brand desires to pursue. (Janonis et al. 2007, 73.) According to Baisya (2013, 52), some brands are targeted to different types of customers than others; each brand and its products and services have a specific customer type that buys and uses that brand.

The sixth and final element, *self-image*, has an important impact on customer purchasing behaviour, because customers tend to purchase brands reflecting similar features that the customers identify themselves with. Therefore, the products and services that mirror the customers' self-image are valued by those customers. (Janonis et al. 2007, 73.)

### 2.1.2 Brand, brand image, and brand identity

Familiarizing with the concepts of a brand and brand image is necessary, as they differ from the concept of brand identity. Rothacher (2004, 2) defines brand as the soul of a product or service, and states that a brand should represent reliable qualities, image and pricing, and evoke powerful emotional qualities for a customer, assist the customer to make the purchase decision, and possibly ultimately create loyalty to the brand. Riezebos and van der Grinten (2012, 8) suggest that the physical appearance of a brand describes the visible qualities, such as the brand name and logo, but a brand also consists of the mental representation and interpretation in the mind of the customer. Brand identity is also often mixed with brand image, even though the two concepts have a different meaning. According to Mootee (2013, 199), brand identity defines who the brand really is, while brand image consists of the way the brand is perceived in the markets. However, Baisya (2013, 49) states that customers do not always

perceive the brand's identity in the way the brand itself intended it to be perceived.

## 2.2 Brand identity foundations

Chunawalla (2008, 175) describes vision, mission, and values as some of the most foundational building blocks of brand identity. Similarly, Riezebos and van der Grinten (2012, 20) point out that vision, mission, and values are a fundamental part of a company's identity as well, which also consists of other elements, such as the company's history and core competencies. According to Aggarwal (2021, 2-3) a brand itself can be called as one of the most precious and valuable assets of a company, and often in many contexts a company and a brand are referred to being the same thing. Hatch and Schultz (2008, 9) claim that this is specifically true when talking about corporate brands that consist of the entire company and its stakeholders, and has its roots on the company's heritage, values, and beliefs.

Mohsin (2009, 11-12) highlights that in order for a brand to become successful and at the same time add strategical value for the company, the brand should be tightly connected to the company's overall vision and mission, and every promise the brand makes should be in line with the company's objectives. In addition to that, the brand's values must reflect the company's core values. As proposed by Mootee (2013, 186), for example a brand's vision statement must walk hand-in-hand with the company's mission statement, and those statements can also sometimes be combined with each other. Creating a brand vision forces to determine the long-term future state of the brand, and to consider the ways in which that vision supports the company and its overall business strategy. Tracy (2015, 26) points out that the company itself, however, must first have consensus about its own values, vision, and mission. Therefore, this subchapter concentrates on defining the vision, mission and values from the company's point of view, which allows those elements to later be transformed into brand vision, mission and values.

### 2.2.1 Vision

According to Mosley (2014, 26), there exist several different definitions for a vision, but most commonly it is described as a measurable future objective of a company. Sheehan (2011, 44) suggests that a company's vision describes the direction where the company is going in the future, but Kirkpatrick (2016, 41) underlines that instead of focusing on short-term objectives, a vision in fact describes the company's desired long-term future. According to Mootee (2013, 186), a clear and relevant vision helps the management to commonly agree on those long-term objectives, and Taylor and Nichols (2010, 79) point out that a well-designed vision also guides and motivates the whole team to achieve results and success together.

Kirkpatrick (2016, 2) claims that if the vision exists only in the heads of the management, the team is not aware of the future objectives of the company, and therefore the vision will not have a desired impact on the team and their actions. Therefore, the vision should be communicated effectively to the whole team in the form of a vision statement that describes the vision in an easily understandable manner, and is communicated and shared with the stakeholders, such as employees, cofounders, suppliers, and customers. Mohsin (2009, 22, 24) states that once the vision is clearly communicated and understood, it can transform into an accepted and commonly shared vision among the company, its employees and other stakeholders. According to Mootee (2013, 186), there exists no fixed length for the vision statement, however it must be simple and clear in a way that everyone involved can understand it, and specific and relevant to the field of business in which the company and its brand operate in. Sekhri (2010, 81) reminds that as companies live, grow, and change through time, a vision statement is not static either, but rather a dynamic statement that also continues to grow and evolve.

### 2.2.2 Mission

While vision defines the future direction of the company, mission focuses on the methods to get there (Sheehan 2011, 44). According to Tai (2014, 41), mission

describes the present actions of a company which will then later lead into the company reaching its future vision. Gronlund (2013, 72) suggests that a mission reflects the ideas and beliefs of the company's owners, and together with the vision it forms the foundations and describes the reason for the company to exist. This definition is similar to the viewpoint of Tracy (2015, 26), who points out that a mission describes the purpose of the company's existence, and adds that a mission also includes the factors which the company pursues to improve in the lives of its customers.

Similar to the vision statement, also mission statement evolves and grows in time together with the company (Sekhri 2010, 81). Kirkpatrick (2016, 4) states that when formulating the mission statement, it is enough to focus on one or two main strengths the company delivers to the customers. Building on this, Park, MacInnis and Eisingerich (2016, 65-66) define that a mission statement should at the same time answer three important questions: what, to whom, and how. "What" describes the customer needs and the benefits the brand delivers to its customers, "to whom" defines who the target customers are, and "how" explains the ways in which the benefits are delivered to those target customers. Considering each of these questions carefully will offer employees inspiration, guidance and a sense of clarity in their daily work, and assist them in using their efforts and resources effectively. According to Tracy (2015, 26-27), a well written mission statement also includes a measure for the success, consisting of specific results that are achieved when the mission is completed. Park et al. (2016, 67) highly recommend involving the team in the mission development process. At its best, a catchy mission inspires the team and creates a sense of belonging and the feeling of pride for working in the company, and when the employees are invited to be part of the mission development, they are more likely to trust the mission and support it in their daily work.

### 2.2.3 Values

According to Tracy (2015, 22), values are the foundations of a company's all operations. Scott, Jaffe and Tobe (1993, 4) define values as the principles which a company and the people involved in it represent and consider as



important and valuable. This definition includes for example the ways in which business is operated, and the way people are treated. However, Vahtola (2020, 161) points out that values are only meaningful if they are visible in the actions of everyone working in the company, from the management to the employees. The values must also be clearly communicated and visible to the customers.

Kirkpatrick (2016, 7) suggests that a company can at the same time support moral values, such as integrity, and also business values, such as quality or customer service. As stated by Vahtola (2020, 161), some examples of commonly shared values by companies are also reliability, responsibility, honesty, and customer centricity. Fisher-Buttinger and Vallaster (2008, 34) underline that no matter what the values are, they must be meaningful and relevant to the most important stakeholders of the company. Meaningful values can influence the behavior of the stakeholders, and offer a possibility to strengthen and deepen the relationships with them. Tracy (2015, 22) points out that values are also an important guiding tool in the decision-making process, as they set the direction to all actions. Vahtola (2020, 161) reminds that when each member of the company is aware of the commonly agreed values and follows them in their everyday work, the whole organizational culture improves, which enables the company to succeed. According to Tracy (2015, 23), the values a company shares are particularly measured in high-pressure situations.

Riezebos and van der Grinten (2012, 46) suggest that values can be divided into corporate values, customer values, and brand values, which are all related to each other. Corporate values include the values that are important to the whole company, such as sustainability and corporate social responsibility. Those values touch all stakeholders of the company and are also visible to the general public. Customer values are derived from the corporate values; they reflect the company's way of working with its customers and specify those values that are the most important ones in customer relationships, for example simplicity and sustainability. Brand values are a collection of corporate and customer values, and they summarize the values that the company uses to represent its brand. Mosley (2014, 27) reminds that from the perspective of a brand, the core values reflect the relationships the brand has with its

stakeholders, such as employees, customers, suppliers, business partners, and local communities, and the way the brand behaves towards them.

### 2.3 Brand personality

Individuals possess unique personalities and distinct characteristics that differentiate them from others. The same applies to brands; they too have a personality that characterizes the brand and separates it from the other brands. (Chunawalla, 2008, 187.) Rather than being described only as a thing, a brand should have a soul that speaks to the customers on an emotional level and makes the brand believable and attractive in the eyes of the customers. This is the DNA of the brand, which is developed from a set of different personality traits that the brand represents. (Gronlund, 2013, 33.) According to Mootee (2013, 202), an effectively designed brand personality consists of human personality characteristics which the brand's interactions and expressions reflect. These human personality traits create the brand's character which customers associate the brand with. Chunawalla (2008, 193) highlights the importance for a brand to have a positive and distinctive personality that becomes familiar to the customers in time. When customers feel a sense of familiarity with a certain brand and its personality, they are more likely to buy it instead of a new and unknown brand.

There often exist several very similar and competitive brands in the markets, and it can be difficult to differentiate a brand only based on its product or service features. For this reason, the concept of a brand personality becomes valuable, as it is a significant way to differentiate a brand from the competitor brands. Many brands can be similar to each other in their features, but if they have differences in their personalities and in the ways in which they are viewed by customers, it is possible to distinguish from the competitors and gain market share. (Chunawalla, 2008, 190, 198.) Creating a unified brand personality has also other significant benefits for a brand. First of all, Chunawalla (2008, 198) states that a well-designed brand personality simplifies the process of developing the customer profile of the brand users. An individual brand personality cannot be easily copied either. Kelley and Jugenheimer (2006, 64)

point out that a brand personality is also an important tool in marketing, because it determines how the brand communicates with its audience. Therefore, the entire marketing team needs to understand the brand's personality and consistently consider it when creating advertising for the brand. According to De Chernatony, McDonald and Wallace (2011, 140), when the personality of a brand is well defined and clearly communicated, customers can interact and build a proper relationship with the brand, just like they would with other people. Gronlund (2013, 33) adds that through a clear brand personality, customers can relate to the brand more easily and develop positive feelings and memories of it.

### 2.3.1 Brand personality scale by Aaker

According to Slade-Brooking (2016, 14), Aaker has developed a framework called a brand personality scale which categorizes human personality characteristics that can be used in identifying a brand personality. Those characteristics are grouped into five main categories, which are sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness, as presented in Figure 5.

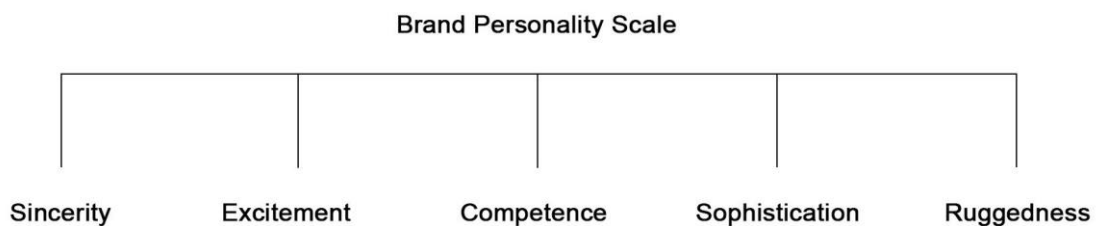


Figure 5. Brand personality scale by Aaker, adapted from Slade-Brooking (2016, 14)

Chunawalla (2008, 189) states that each of these main categories presented in Figure 5 on the personality scale includes several different sets of personality traits. A few examples are provided; the category of sincerity can include characteristics such as honesty and down-to-earth quality, while characteristics such as imaginative and daring fall under the excitement category. Additionally, reliability and intelligence can be grouped under the competence category,

while the sophisticated category contains characteristics such as charming and up-scale. Athletic and macho characteristics are considered to be included in the ruggedness category. However, it is important to bear in mind that even if in theory a brand is placed on one main category, in reality its personality can consist of characteristics from several different categories. Kelley and Jugenheimer (2006, 68) underline that as with people, brands do not completely fit into just one category either; they have different personality traits and some of the traits are more dominant than others. With the help of the personality scale, brands can be compared with each other, and differences can be observed.

### 2.3.2 Tone-of-voice

After defining the desired personality for a brand, it is time to choose an appropriate tone-of-voice that matches the personality and helps the brand in interacting with its audience in a positive and human way (Mootee 2013, 202). According to Delin (2005, 10), a brand's tone-of-voice specifies the style of language the brand uses to differentiate itself from its competitors and to express its personality and values. Vincent (2012, 155) states that as persons we communicate with other people in several different ways every day. Among other matters, communication helps us to maintain our relationships and influence the behavior of other people. Communication is a vital aspect of branding, and there can be significant variations in the communication styles of different brands. For the brand's communication to sound and feel sincere, it has to be authentic yet still scripted and coherent.

However, Martínez Onaindía and Resnick (2013, 53-55) remind that a brand's tone of voice is more than just a communication style, and when the tone-of-voice is designed and implemented in an effective and coherent way, it can have positive effects in the minds of the customers and awaken a sense of familiarity and trustworthiness. To ensure that the brand can gain those desired outcomes, the tone-of-voice must reflect the brand's true personality. Wheeler (2017, 30) emphasizes that the brand's communication must be cohesive, and to achieve that, both content and design must be harmonized with each other.

Delin (2005, 10) argues that tone-of-voice is often referred to mainly written language, when it can actually consider spoken language as well. While the most important contact points for a brand's tone-of-voice are often considered to include for example the different types of marketing materials, websites, or service through face-to-face encounters or phone calls, it is wise to bear in mind that the tone-of-voice can touch the internal communications as well. Internal communications occur among staff members and other stakeholders, influencing external perceptions.

Barcelos, Dantas and Sénécal (2018, 61) state that the tone-of-voice of a brand plays a significant role especially in today's social media platforms where people constantly encounter new brands and form first impressions and opinions of them. According to Budelmann, Kim and Wozniak (2010, 116), social media has had a major impact on the direction where the interaction between brands and customers has developed. Barcelos et al. (2019, 173) point out that in the hospitality industry, where social media serves as a significant marketing tool and the interactions with customers are more direct and conversational, there is a lack of consensus among hospitality brands regarding the most appropriate tone-of-voice - whether to adopt a more personal or a more distant communication style. Aggarwal (2021, 55) suggests that, before defining the right tone-of-voice, it is essential to understand the brand's audience. This involves identifying the audience, understanding the type of message communicated to them, and determining the emotions the brand aims to evoke through its messaging. The audience may also have specific tastes, preferences, and sensitivities that should be taken into account when communicating with them. This is supported by Martínez Onaindía and Resnick (2013, 55), who also suggest that in any communication, a brand should consider the location where the audience is receiving the message and the desired outcome the brand wishes to achieve with that message."

## 2.4 Brand story

When describing a past experience, we usually arrange the sequence of events to a logical order and explain it in a narrative, which has a beginning, a middle,

and an end. With the help of a story, we are able to understand cause-and-effect relationships and effectively describe what has happened. (Vincent, 2012, 150.) Hong, Yang and Wooldridge (2022, 265) refer to previous research by several authors and summarize that a story is a powerful tool also used by brands; brand storytelling involves creating a charming story that emotionally connects the audience with the brand, and at the same time entertains the audience and ensures that they will remember the brand more easily. Rodriguez (2020, 8) suggests that stories also assist in maintaining the attention of the listener, because neurochemicals such as oxytocin and cortisol are released by storytelling.

Lundqvist, Liljander, Gummerus and van Riel (2013, 286) refer to authors such as Kaufman (2003), Kelley and Littman (2006), and Mossberg and Nissen Johansen (2006), and claim that with the help of an enchanting story, a brand can distinguish itself in the eyes of the customers and build brand awareness and trust. According to Vincent (2012, 150), brands use storytelling to express their brand promise and to make it more familiar and easily understood by customers. Ryu, Lehto, Gordon and Fu (2018, 22) refer to Mossberg (2008), and Fog et al. (2010), pointing out that stories are also used in building internal and external brand culture, expressing what the brand stands for. A compelling brand story appeals to the customers' emotions, convinces them of the brand's benefits and positive qualities, and generates positive thoughts and impressions more effectively than facts or regular advertisements. According to Rodriguez (2020, 8), appealing to emotions is particularly important, as customers often make buying decisions based on emotions rather than rational considerations.

Hestad (2016, 11-12) states that a complete and successful brand story consists of three general factors. First, there must be a story that is either designed by the brand itself, or shaped by the audience of the story. The story must also have a mediator, such as a product, its name, or a logo, that represents the narrative. Finally, the story must have an interpreter that notices, recognizes, and understands the story. However, the relationship between the brand story, the mediator, and the interpreter is not fixed and can change and evolve in time, since the relationship is constantly affected by every activity and

people involved in different brand touchpoints throughout the customer journey. Ryu et al. (2018, 23) suggest that based on several research studies, two different approaches on brand storytelling can be identified: a contextual perspective and a structural perspective. The contextual perspective consists of specific contextual components such as connections to the history and primary brand values that the brand is founded on, while the structural perspective typically concentrates on structural elements, such as a plot that proceeds in a chronological sequence and is told in a once upon a time form. Lundqvist et al. (2013, 285) refer to Stern (1994) and point out that a structured and chronologically proceeding plot that includes a beginning, middle, and end keeps the audience engaged. Rodriguez (2020, 17) claims that the most important reason for storytelling is to evoke emotions in the audience, and therefore, a successful brand story must focus on the feelings created by the narrative.

Lundqvist et al. (2013, 285) address previous research conducted by several authors such as Mossberg and Nissen Johansen (2006), Peracchio and Escalas (2008), Fog et al. (2005), and Guber (2007), and state that in an ideal situation, the audience is able to relate to the characters in the story, and the main message of the story shows the brand in a positive way. The story must be credible and provide one, clearly focused message that can be summarized in just a few sentences. The beginning of the story should raise interest, the middle of the story often includes an unexpected event or twist, and the end should satisfy on an emotional level and be remembered by the audience. Budelmann et al. (2010, 60) propose that a brand must always keep its promises, and brand stories are built upon those promises. Rodriguez (2020, 9, 14-15) states that since every story should be based on the reason for why it is being told, the brand mission can be seen as the most important theme and foundation for a brand story. Therefore, the starting point for creating a brand story is taking a look at the brand mission statement, which explains the brand values, objectives, and the overall purpose for the brand's existence. These points should be highlighted in the narrative. However, the actual brand story must have its own mission as well. This includes defining the audience that the

story should reach, in order to create a narrative that speaks particularly to that specific audience.

According to Herskovitz and Crystal (2010, 21, 23), a well-structured brand narrative also requires a recognizable brand persona, or else the brand story might become vague, illogical or have no meaning that the audience of the story can relate to. Even if the story around the persona might vary, the persona must remain the same. Due to that, brands with similar narratives can still be unique when the persona is individual, making the story one-of-a-kind. A coherent and memorable brand persona creates an emotional connection between the brand story and its audience. Bauer, Freundt, Gordon, Perrey and Spillecke (2016, 52) remind that one story usually cannot emotionally touch all people. However, a brand can tell multiple different stories and tailored messages to various target groups to match their needs, and still maintain its one core identity. Based on previous research by Firat and Venkatesh (1995), Holt (2002), and Mossberg and Nissen Johansen (2006), Lundqvist et al. (2013, 286) suggest that the brand story does not have to be based on real-life events. However, for authenticity and relatability, the story and its characters should feel genuine to prevent customers from perceiving it as deceptive or manipulative marketing. Despite the careful design process, Hestad (2016, 12) claims that there are instances where the brand story may not align with the brand's intended narrative. It is crucial to recognize that if there is a significant disparity between the original brand story and the way customers interpret it, a brand gap emerges. Identifying these brand gaps is essential to prevent inaccurate brand associations.

## 2.5 Brand's visual identity

When a brand communicates about itself, its personality and identity, one important element is the design: the brand's name, logo, slogan, colors, and graphics (Gronlund 2013, 143). Salinas (2009, 11) defines the brand's visual identity as any distinguishing element that a brand uses to express, identify, and characterize itself, and states that in addition to the previously mentioned elements, a brand's visual identity can also include for example packaging.



According to Slade-Brooking (2016, 55), employing various design elements such as style, colors, and images can establish strong emotional associations in the minds of customers. Bresciani and Del Ponte (2017, 375) additionally note that brand logos, for instance, can effectively engage customers and communicate with them even before the brand has implemented any other advertising.

Lieven, Grohmann, Herrmann, Landwehr and van Tilburg (2015, 147) refer to Walsh et al. (2010, 2011), and Batra et al. (1993), and point out that visual elements and graphics play a crucial role in brand differentiation and significantly influence the way customers perceive the brand's personality. As noted by Ward, Yang, Romaniuk and Beal (2020, 393-394), the design elements are one of the foundational building blocks of the brand identity, as those elements can be used creatively in all sales and advertising purposes and environments, and hence they can improve brand awareness. However, Gronlund (2013, 144) highlights that the design and its use must be coherent, or else the familiarity of the brand and eventually the emotional relationship with the customers can suffer. Ward et al. (2020, 395) propose that a brand should communicate with one clear voice and a coherent brand identity element palette in all platforms.

### 2.5.1 Brand name

The brand name and logo are one of the most important building blocks and assets of a brand - they differentiate the brand from others and are protectable by law (Bailey & Milligan, 2019, 46). However, Slade-Brooking (2016, 52) states that despite the brand name being one of the most important elements of the brand identity, the naming process is usually not easy, since the name must at the same time look and sound good, reflect the brand's values, and communicate the brand's unique offer to the chosen target audience. According to Vaid (2003, 26), an effectively designed brand name is suitable for the brand, connects with customers, and creates brand awareness and recognition together with the other elements of the brand's visual identity.

Slade-Brooking (2016, 52) suggests several different approaches on the naming strategy of a brand. The most simple one of them is to choose a descriptive name that highlights the main characteristics of the brand and its products or services. Another approach is to create a one-of-a-kind word that does not have any traditional meaning, but which describes the uniqueness of the brand or communicates the brand's values. A brand name can also consist of different types of abbreviations, or it can be a combination of the initial letters of a series of words. Kotler et al. (2008, 525) recommend choosing short names, and point out that the brand name should be easily recognized and remembered by customers.

Meyerson (2021, 8-10) suggests that strong brand names possess qualities that can be categorized as strategic, creative, and technical. A good brand name must have its roots in the brand strategy and business strategy. The strategic qualities of a successful brand name include being different from the names of the competitor brands, and the ability to communicate a certain message and evoke desired emotions in the target audience. The creative qualities must also be considered in the naming process; a successful brand name must draw attention, look visually attractive in its written form, and sound pleasing when spoken out loud. The technical qualities are equally as important as the previous ones. First of all, to avoid legal problems, a good brand name should not be similar to other brand names. The name must also be easy to spell and avoid associations and meanings that might be inappropriate when working with other cultures and languages. Kotler et al. (2008, 525) remind that after the careful naming process, the name must always be protected.

According to Meyerson (2021, 7), brands make plenty of different decisions, campaigns, logo redesigns, and other branding related activities along the way, but usually the brand name is the one object that remains the same. However, Vaid (2003, 24) states that sometimes brands also change their existing names, even though it is less common than making other changes, such as redesigning the logo or color palette of a brand. If a brand decides to rename itself, it can happen, for example, because of a merger and acquisition or because of dramatic market changes that require redesigning the brand identity. Despite

the possible benefits, the renaming process of a brand is still risky, as customer reactions to the change can vary.

### 2.5.2 Brand logo

One should never underestimate the power of first impressions, and therefore, it is essential for the brand's success to develop a memorable logo that reflects the brand personality (Gronlund 2013, 13). Machado, Vacas-de-Carvalho, Costa and Lencastre (2012, 418) refer to Schechter (1993), and Henderson and Cote (1998), by stating that the logo is the most visual element in the overall brand communications. Erjansola, Lipponen, Vehkalahti, Aula and Pirttilä-Backman (2021, 242) state that the logo indeed has a significant role in the visual identity of a brand, and refer to Henderson and Cote (1998) by summarizing that a logo awakens recognition and reflects the company and the brand it represents. According to Riezebos, Kist and Kootstra (2003, 139), a logo should also communicate brand values.

Slade-Brooking (2016, 24) defines the logo as a graphic element that most companies use in presenting their brand, and which often includes the company's name or abbreviation. Typically, the design of the logo combines different types of symbols, shapes, colors, and letters or words. Machado et al. (2012, 419) refer to Bloch (1995), and Goldman (2005), by stating that brands that have focused their efforts on the aesthetic appeal of their logos are more likely to offer consumers visual pleasure and establish an emotional connection between the brand and its customers. According to Slade-Brooking (2016, 27), simplicity and functionality are both important features in a strong logo, since the logo is used in several different marketing purposes, including magazines, online advertisements, packaging, and other printed materials. A strong logo is also universal and works well across the world in different cultures. Additionally, Riezebos et al. (2003, 139) point out that a well-designed logo is easily recognized and identified by customers, and it is also individual in order to avoid confusion with other logos. Slade-Brooking (2016, 27) adds that a brand's logo must never insult the trademarks of other brands.

As the logo is an essential element of the brand identity, sometimes an existing logo also requires redesigning. The redesigning efforts, however, are not always welcomed by customers, especially by the most loyal ones that have established a bond with the brand. (Walsh, Cui & MacInnis 2019, 365.) Budelmann et al. (2010, 170) emphasize that while many brands may see logo redesign as a quick way to enhance their brand identity, it is not a sustainable option in the long run, as "a new face does not make a new person." If a brand updates its logo and offers an improved value proposition, but is not able to meet the expectations of the customers, the redesigning efforts end up fruitless and lead to disappointment.

### 2.5.3 Typography

Letters are an important building block of a brand's visual appearance, and they are one way to express the brand's personality. Market recognition is the greatest value delivered by the efficient use of typography, and a well-designed and unique typography can be strongly associated with a certain brand, in the same way as logos, colors or images. (Martínez Onaindía & Resnick (2013, 64.) Jun and Lee (2022, 2) refer to Klink (2000) and state that, for example, a brand name is not encountered only acoustically; customers also experience it visually through text in many different contexts along the way. According to Slade-Brooking (2016, 55), in order to create a strong brand identity, it is important for a brand to acknowledge that all typefaces have their own unique characteristics, and therefore, the chosen typeface can express different types of meanings and create a wide set of emotions in the customers' minds. Therefore, Amar, Droulers and Legohérel (2017, 78) remind that the choice of typeface is an important decision for a brand, since textual communication is something that we face every day in numerous different contexts.

According to Martínez Onaindía and Resnick (2013, 64), there exist thousands of different typeface options to choose from when designing a signature font. Craig (1990, 14-15) points out that difference between typefaces might often be subtle, but even a minor difference can still have an impact on the appearance of the text and the print. After choosing a preferred typeface, typestyles can also

be altered. The most commonly used typestyle is roman, in which the letters are in upright position. In italic typestyle the letterforms head to the right. However, the options to modify typeface and typestyle are not limited to this, as according to Crisp (2012, 25), the weight of the typestyle can also be altered between thin, light, bold, and extra bold, among other options. Craig (1990, 26, 46) also points out that the type size can be altered, as well as the space between letters.

Lieven et al. (2015, 150) have conducted research on the feminine and masculine features of different typefaces, and refer to Peacock (2005), and Shaikh et al. (2006), by proposing that for example round, slender, scripted, and elegant shaped typefaces are seen as feminine, while more modern, bold and heavy typefaces show masculinity. Overall, Budelmann et al. (2010, 46) summarize that personality, flexibility, and legibility of the typeface are the main factors to consider in the typeface design. Amar et al. (2017, 78) refer to Arditi and Cho (2005), Slattery and Rayner (2010), and Novemsky, Dhar, Schwarz and Simonson (2007), by pointing out that the choice of typeface affects the information processing and reading activity of customers. When a text is easily readable, people are more interested in continuing to read. At the same time, if the text is difficult to read, it can have an impact on the customers' purchasing behavior. The readability of a typeface is affected by the size, style, and color of the typeface. Martínez Onaindía and Resnick (2013, 64) add that it is equally important to determine whether regional, cultural, or historical connections influence the choice of typeface.

#### 2.5.4 Color palette

The choice of color plays an important role in graphic design, as it reflects character and mood (Opara & Cantwell 2014, 8). A creative use of color can also ensure a successful brand (Vaid 2003, 52). According to Martínez Onaindía and Resnick (2013, 60), with the right choice of color a brand can easily identify itself, immediately catch the eye of the customer, and evoke emotions in them. Jin, Yoon and Lee (2019, 51) state that colors are recognized faster than for example a brand's name or slogan. This is due to the stimulating effect of color. Wheeler (2017, 154) adds that human brain is able to register

color before content, and Ghaderi, Ruiz and Agell (2015, 11) refer to previous research by several authors and point out that color has a significant effect on the customers' purchasing behavior, because by using specific colors a brand can draw attention and communicate desired messages, differentiate from competitors, build brand personality, and improve brand recognition. The choice of color can also affect the customers' perception of quality.

Slade-Brooking (2016, 55) states that the choice of color must be suitable for the brand and its products and services, but also for the customers that the brand is targeting. Jin et al. (2019, 52) refer to Landa (2006), and Will (2006), and suggest that individual characteristics, such as gender, personality, and intellectual skills shape the way a color is experienced and associated. According to Vaid (2003, 52), it is also vital for a brand to consider the possible connotations some specific colors may have internationally or culturally. As claimed by Opara and Cantwell (2014, 164), the way a certain color is perceived depends on the situation and context, and several colors contain symbolic and ritualistic meanings. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate those meanings in order to avoid insulting other cultures, religions or people from different backgrounds.

Wheeler (2017, 156) presents several different aspects to consider when testing the effectiveness of a color, or a complete color strategy. Some examples of those aspects include whether the color is sustainable over time and differentiated from the colors that the competitors use, and whether the color has positive meanings in the brand's target market. It is also essential to focus on the message that the brand wishes to communicate with the color, and consider if the color is coherent with the overall brand strategy. Martínez Onaindía and Resnick (2013, 60-61) recommend the chosen color palette to be functional, flexible, and foundational at the same time. The functionality aspect includes ensuring that the colors work well together and with the specific content. When the color palette is also flexible, the chosen colors can be used everywhere in both printed and electronic purposes. The foundational aspect ensures that the color palette reflects the brand's personality and essence. The chosen color should, however, always be tested in different applications and

materials before using it, because the environmental conditions, such as lighting and printer settings can cause undesired shifts in color.

### 2.5.5 Brand slogan

One of the most memorable elements of a brand is its slogan, often also referred to as a tagline or a strapline. A well-designed and memorable slogan plays an important role in distinguishing the brand from its competitors and forming an emotional bond between the brand and customers. (Slade-Brooking 2016, 28.) Wheeler (2017, 28) describes a slogan as a short phrase that is meaningful and frequently used, and proposes that an effective slogan is built on strategy and creativity, serving as an expression of a brand's essence and personality. According to Wilson (2021, 164), a well-designed slogan must be coherent and harmonized with the brand name, logo, and other brand identity elements.

Slade-Brooking (2016, 28) defines a slogan as a few words or a short sentence that highlights the unique characteristics of the brand. It informs customers about the brand's promise, values, and experiences that it delivers to them. Wilson (2021, 164) highlights that a memorable slogan contains rhyme or rhythm and is easy to repeat, which Musté, Stuart and Botella (2015, 351) agree by pointing out that the slogan must be easily pronounced and remembered after seeing it just one time. Gronlund (2013, 140) lists a few guidelines for designing a slogan. An effective slogan should be kept short, with a maximum of eight to nine words. The slogan should also be authentic and avoid clichés. It should convince the customer and describe the benefits the customer will gain from choosing the brand instead of competitor brands. According to Musté et al. (2015, 351-352), slogans often include plenty of metaphorical language that has power to create an emotional bond with customers. The techniques used in building slogans can be divided into two basic concepts: repetition, and variation of meaning. Choosing the technique wisely can capture the attention of customers and foster a growing desire to purchase the brand. Repetition ensures that the customer will remember the

slogan more effectively, while variation of meaning can be used to add more abstract meanings and concepts to the slogan.

Wheeler (2017, 28) suggests that slogans have a long lifespan despite changes in the marketplace. However, Budelmann et al. (2010, 50) mention that a slogan is often one of the first elements to be changed when an existing brand identity is redesigned, especially when it is not possible to change the brand's name. Gronlund (2013, 141) points out that opinions on whether the slogan should be changed or not vary widely among different brands. Some believe that the slogan should be maintained as it is, while others are more open to changes, especially in situations where the brand is entering new markets.

## 2.6 Brand stakeholders

Freeman, Harrison and Wicks (2007, 3) state that in order to understand how a business works, it is necessary to first know how different stakeholders, including managers and employees, suppliers, customers, financiers, and communities interact and create value together. Hatch and Schultz (2008, 151) suggest that there exist several different stakeholders both inside and outside the company, further referred to as brand stakeholders. The inside stakeholders include for example the employees and managers, while outside stakeholders consist for example of suppliers and customers. There exist also other stakeholders that have a less direct relationship with the brand, for example politicians, regulators, labor unions, and the media.



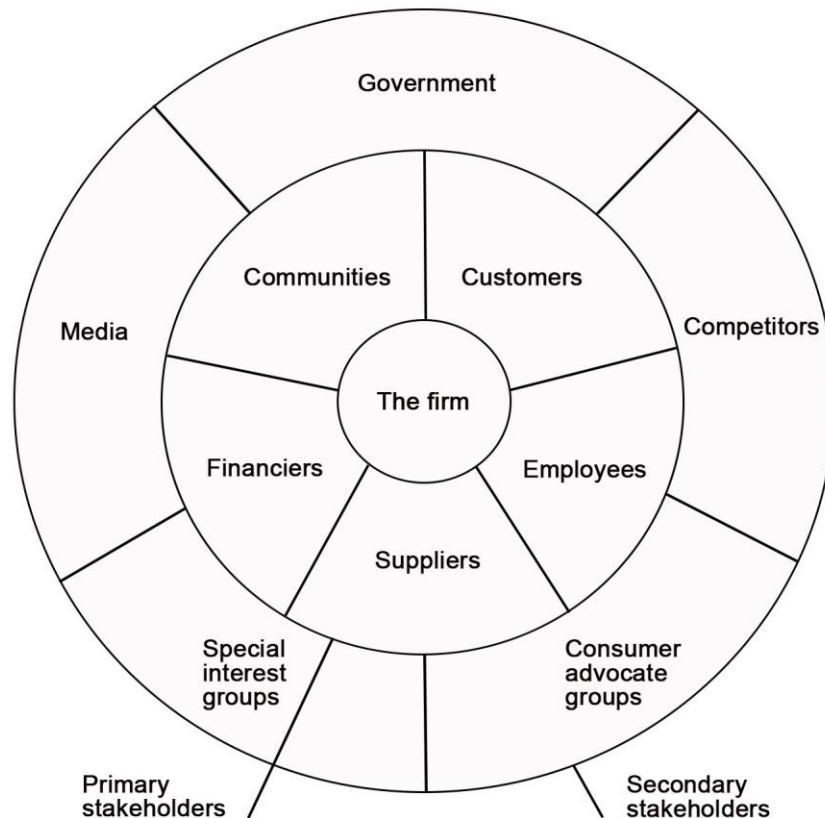


Figure 6. Basic two-tier stakeholder map, adapted from Freeman et al. (2007, 7)

Freeman et al. (2007, 7-8) have created a basic two-tier stakeholder map, which is presented in Figure 6. The groups in the inner circle are considered as the primary stakeholders that must be concentrated on the most, since those groups and their interests define the future and the possible success or failure of the brand. The groups in the outer ring can also affect the brand, or be affected by it, and they can also have an impact on the relationship between the brand and its primary stakeholders. The brand's overall purpose and field of business, however, defines how the stakeholder groups are placed on the map as primary or secondary.

Brands these days understand the benefits that can be received from working together with their key stakeholders and listening and utilizing their ideas (Hatch & Schultz 2008, 150). According to Fisher-Buttinger and Vallaster (2008, 203-204), engaging employees, customers and other key stakeholders in brand development can lead to creative results, but in order to reach those results and

build strong brands, the stakeholder engagement must be based on genuine and respectful interaction. The stakeholders involved can be chosen and prioritized based on the situation and the needs of the brand; however, engaging employees and customers, in particular, is important for building a connected brand. Saraniemi and Komppula (2019, 1117) suggest that engaging stakeholders is essential also when designing an identity for a brand. Since the brand identity development process is highly influenced by various elements, it should be based on interactive collaboration among the brand's stakeholders.

### 2.6.1 Stakeholders of a destination brand

When exploring a more detailed definition of destination brand stakeholders, Morrison (2013, 23) describes them as individuals or groups directly or indirectly involved or interested in the management of a tourism destination. Fisher-Buttinger and Vallaster (2008, 203-204) state that the process of engaging key stakeholders such as employees and customers to brand development can lead to highly creative results, provided that the interaction is sincere and based on the brand's main principles. The brand can consider adding also other stakeholder groups to the process, depending on the specific needs of the brand.

Chung and Byrom (2021, 77) refer to Xiong and King (2019), Buhalis and Leung (2018), and Pappasolomou and Vrontis (2006), and state that employees play a crucial role as stakeholders because they are responsible for the human interaction with customers and delivering on the brand promise. The interaction can take place either face-to-face or through social media and other channels, but it can significantly influence customer satisfaction and brand perceptions. This is especially true for hospitality brands, where the experience is strongly influenced by the expertise of the employees and the service they provide. Ind and Schmidt (2019, 42, 46) propose that the process of delivering a product or service involves a wide network of stakeholders, each having some type of stake in the brand, including various business partners and suppliers, for example. Customers are also important stakeholders as they can contribute

valuable knowledge and ideas to the brand development process, often more effectively than any market research data can.

According to Page (2007, 261), traditional holiday packages are frequently sold primarily through travel agents. Horner and Swarbrooke (2005, 121-122) define travel agents as intermediaries that sell a brand's products or services in their own markets on behalf of the brand to individual travelers, business travelers, and groups. Travel agents receive a commission for their work. Tour operators, on the other hand, are defined by Page (2007, 233) as intermediaries that organize and collect a set of different travel experience elements, including accommodation, transportation, and other tourist services. Tour operators build a package out of these elements and advertise it through various mediums or channels. As explained by Morrison (2013, 5), destination areas are usually wide and consist of a large number of different tourist attractions, hospitality businesses, and transportation services. Therefore, more coordinated planning and developing is required. Due to this, destination management organizations (DMO's) have been established, and they are in charge of coordinated destination management. To ensure effective destination management, a long-term tourism strategy for the destination is required. The task of the DMO is to coordinate the activities of the stakeholders in the destination area, and to ensure that the common vision of the destination is achieved.

In addition to the previously mentioned stakeholders, Pike (2016, 190-191) underlines the importance of consulting the host community in the brand development process. This ensures that the brand's message is authentic and appropriate, and that it represents the local residents' perceptions and experiences of the place. Morrison (2013, 18) also emphasizes that gaining the support of local residents for tourism is vital, and this requires continuous interaction with local communities, particularly by the DMO. Pike (2016, 191), however, argues that a destination brand community should be viewed as an even broader entity. This includes non-tourism businesses that may be indirect but still significant stakeholders for a brand. These stakeholders include, for example, the host population of the destination, local producers, suppliers, and other relevant businesses, employment agencies, and architects.

### 2.6.2 Brand co-creation

A concept widely discussed today is brand co-creation, which, according to Ind and Schmidt (2019, 44), gained more recognition within brand management in the early 2000s. According to Kompella (2014, 299, 311), effective co-creation is based on engaging various stakeholders, including management, employees, customers, and other relevant parties, to express their ideas and collaborate in creating a shared perspective and, simultaneously, enhanced engagement with the brand. Ramaswamy and Ozcan (2014, 50) state that in the past, stakeholders had a more passive role in the value creation process, despite having an interest in the actions and choices of the brand. The co-creation view, on the other hand, sees stakeholders as active participants who contribute to the value creation process.

According to Ind and Schmidt (2019, 44-45), co-creation is a process where a brand and its stakeholders interact actively in order to create new innovations related to the brand's identity, offerings, and other brand related elements. No matter which brand element is being co-created, at least one stakeholder must be involved in the process for it to be referred to as co-creation. Kompella (2014, 300, 304) states that brands can co-create either by gathering together live, or within different types of online communities where stakeholders are invited to collaborate for a period of time. Co-creation in those online communities can happen in various different ways, for example by brainstorming, or using polls, explore questions or live online focus groups. Technology has made it easier to co-create, when online interaction is possible, and it is no longer necessary to get together face-to-face.

As claimed by Ind and Schmidt (2019, 46-47), co-creation benefits the brand in several ways. By engaging with multiple stakeholders, brands can produce more productive and successful ideas, achieve cost efficiency, minimize risks, and clarify competitive advantage. Kompella (2014, 297, 310) suggests that through co-creation, a brand can achieve various benefits. This includes increasing revenue through new product and service innovations, differentiating the brand and standing out from the competition, gaining insights into how

different people inside and outside the company perceive the brand, and inspiring individuals involved in delivering the brand experience to continually develop their work. When a brand engages in co-creation, particularly with its customers, it allows them to contribute valuable development ideas. This not only adds depth to the creative process but also makes customers feel appreciated and valued by the brand. Their perspectives are taken into consideration, fostering a sense of involvement in shaping the brand's future. However, for co-creation to be successful, the brand must be transparent about the areas that need solutions.

## 2.7 Customer journey touchpoints

According to Buttle and Maklan (2019, 2), customer journey consists of three main stages, which are customer acquisition, customer retention and customer development. Herhausen, Kleinlercher, Verhoef, Emrich and Rudolph (2019, 11) refer to Homburg, Jozic and Kuehnl (2017), and state that customer journey management pursues to design customer journeys carefully and effectively to eventually ensure customer loyalty. Buttle and Maklan (2019, 66) propose that the customer journey encompasses all stages and touchpoints that customers encounter in their relationship with a brand, along with the experiences they have at those touchpoints. The journey begins with the initial brand awareness and ideally progresses to making a purchase, fostering loyalty, and influencing others to become customers.

Budelmann et al. (2010, 194) define touchpoints as all the contexts where the brand engages with customers and is noticed by them. Joseph (2010, 100) adds that touchpoints can be viewed as any channel or opportunity available to reach a potential customer and build a brand experience. According to Ford (2005, 85), touchpoints can be broadly categorized into two groups: brand communications and first-hand experiences acquired through using the brand. This implies that the marketing department is accountable for the communication aspect of touchpoints, while product management or service delivery departments handle touchpoints related to first-hand experiences.

Buttle and Maklan (2019, 66) suggest that the wide selection of touchpoints can encompass a brand's website and social media channels, various events and seminars, service centers, sales calls, and all advertising activities. Gronlund (2013, 143) proposes that product and packaging, retail spaces, and trade fairs are also crucial touchpoints for a brand, while Brinker (2016, 140) adds that a touchpoint can even include an email, a blog post, or a landing page on a website. However, according to Rossman and Duerden (2019, 98), touchpoints are also associated with the actual on-site experiences, including the quality of service received. Therefore, the brand must be aware of the customer needs and expectations to be able to meet them during the experience. Buttle and Maklan (2019, 66) summarize that all interactions between customers and the brand's products or services, communications, people, places, and technologies have an impact on the purchasing behavior of customers and the impressions they gain of the brand.

Budermann et al. (2010, 198) emphasize that a brand identity is not solely developed by the brand itself; customers' perceptions of a brand, formed through various touchpoints and interactions, also play a crucial role in shaping the brand identity. Through careful planning, a brand can modify, eliminate, or add new touchpoints to ensure a positive perception of the brand by customers. Cundari (2015, 15) underlines the importance of creating a unified and coherent experience throughout all touchpoints. According to Ford (2005, 85), a brand must leverage all possible touchpoints effectively. However, due to differences in how customers interact with a brand and respond to various brand communications, the brand may not always have complete control over each touchpoint.

Budermann et al. (2010, 194, 196) state that the significance of various touchpoints varies, and they can occur in different sequences and frequencies, with some happening almost simultaneously and regularly, while others occur separately or unexpectedly. Some touchpoints also have a more direct impact on customers' purchasing decisions, while others may go unnoticed by customers. Nevertheless, to develop a coherent and comprehensive brand experience, it is essential to consider all possible touchpoints, with particular

attention to ensuring that the visual identity of the brand functions effectively across different touchpoints. According to Evans (2012, 109), this can be achieved by conducting a touchpoint analysis, where each point of contact between the brand and the customers is identified and evaluated, ensuring that the brand's message is unified across all touchpoints.

### 3 RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter is divided into six subchapters, which together present the research design of this thesis. The first and second subchapter focus on describing the research approach and research methods chosen for this research. The arguments for choosing the specific approach and methods are presented, and their suitability for this research is justified. The third subchapter explains the research process in detail, while the fourth subchapter thoroughly introduces the case selected for the research. In the fifth subchapter the methods for analyzing data are presented, and in the sixth subchapter the reliability and validity of the research are discussed.

#### 3.1 Research approach

Action research was chosen as the research approach for this thesis. As defined by McNiff and Whitehead (2001, 203-205), action research begins with reviewing the existing practices and operations, followed by identifying the challenges that need improvement. Subsequently, a plan is formulated on how to solve those challenges. The plan is then tested in practice, and the results of the actions taken are monitored and evaluated. Based on the results, the plan is modified. Figure 7 illustrates the phases of the action research conducted for this thesis.



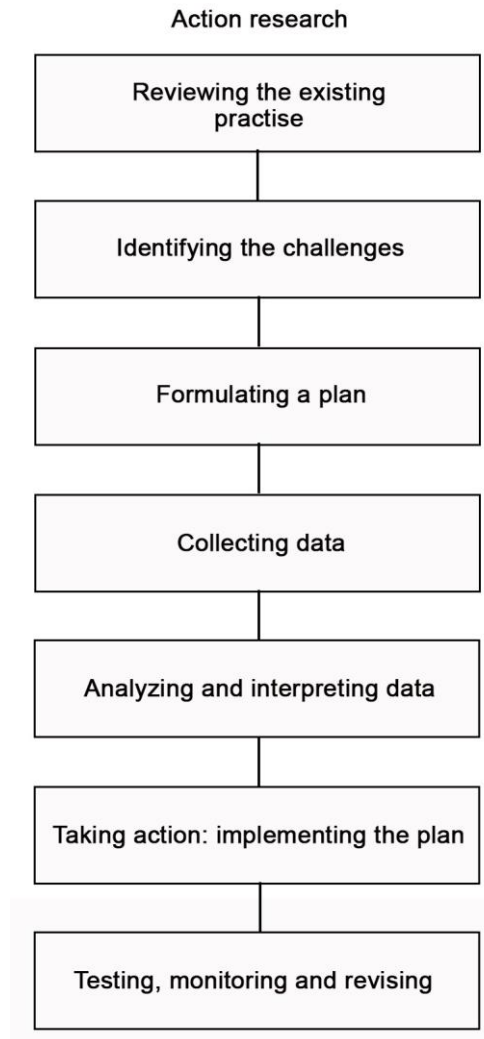


Figure 7. The phases of action research conducted for this thesis

As Figure 7 indicates, the research process of this thesis started by evaluating the existing situation and operations of Holiday Village Valle. It was acknowledged that the lack of an authentic and coherent brand identity posed several challenges; Holiday Village Valle was not able to differentiate from its competitors, which made it more difficult to attract new customers and travel agent partners. The employees of Holiday Village Valle did not know the brand inside out, including the story behind the brand, or its vision, mission, and values. Due to the employees' lack of familiarity with the brand, it was challenging for the employees to communicate convincingly with customers and other stakeholders. After identifying those challenges, a plan to address them was formulated. Data was then collected, analyzed, and interpreted. Finally, the

action part of the process was implemented by redesigning the brand identity of Holiday Village Valle.

As stated by McNiff and Whitehead (2001, 2003), an important characteristic of action research is that the researcher must be central to the process, and the process must be educational for the researcher. In this research, the researcher played a central role as the main designer of the new brand identity, with the assistance of a professional graphic designer who finalized the look of the new logo, typography, and color palette of Holiday Village Valle. The researcher also designed the vision, mission, and values of the brand, as well as the brand personality, tone-of-voice, slogan, and brand story. The research process was at the same time educational for the researcher, as during the research process she was able to strengthen her professional skills related to branding.

McNiff and Whitehead (2001, 2003) claim that in order to gain the best possible results, the action research process must be participative by collaborating and involving others in the process, and the process must also be educational to the other participants. Zuber-Skerritt (2002, 125) states that action research usually involves several participants that all have a shared concern and motivation to develop something that requires improvement. Not having an authentic and coherent brand identity was a genuine challenge that Holiday Village Valle and its employees wanted to solve. Additionally, other stakeholders of the brand had a significant interest in the matter, as it had an impact on their businesses as well. McNiff and Whitehead (2001, 2003) also highlight the importance of the researcher being able to influence the situation in the company. During the research process, the entrepreneur of Holiday Village Valle and several other stakeholders pointed out that they did not have previous knowledge about the concept of a brand identity. Due to this research, they also started to consider the topic further. Therefore, in addition to the notable improvements made for the brand, the research also influenced the work of other stakeholders, and the process was educational for all parties involved.

However, McNiff and Whitehead (2001, 2003) point out that action research does not offer a closure or final solutions; it is rather aiming for continuous

development. The research conducted for this thesis did not offer a closure either, and as Figure 7 suggests, the action research process must further continue with testing, monitoring, and revising the implemented plan. This research aimed to redesign the brand identity of Holiday Village Valle to support its existing operations and plans for the near future, while acknowledging that the brand and the world around it will continue to evolve. Over time, it is possible that the redesigned brand identity elements may become dated again, or the future plans of the brand may change, and the brand identity requires refreshment. Therefore, the brand identity and its success must be continually monitored based on the brand's plans, sales numbers, and feedback received from the stakeholders.

### 3.2 Research methods

As this research utilized qualitative methods, data was gathered through individual and group interviews. The stakeholders selected for the individual interviews were chosen based on various aspects, with a consideration that the redesigned brand identity must appeal to the international customers of the brand. Therefore, the key stakeholders identified for the individual interviews included the management, a travel agent, a supplier, the DMO, and a Sámi culture representative, as presented in Figure 8. The entrepreneur of Holiday Village Valle represented the management perspective in the interviews. The employees of the company were also identified as key stakeholders; however, their participation was included later in the employee workshop arranged.



Figure 8. The key stakeholders of Holiday Village Valle

The first stakeholder to be interviewed was the entrepreneur of Holiday Village Valle, as his viewpoints, knowledge, and stories offered a wide source of information for the research. The second stakeholder to be interviewed was one of the key suppliers of the brand, with whom the brand has a loyal partnership. This particular supplier operates in the field of program services. As Holiday Village Valle is highly focusing on selling holiday packages through international travel intermediaries, the third key stakeholder to be interviewed was one of the key international travel agents that the brand collaborates with. Holiday Village Valle is also part of a larger destination area, and therefore, the DMO was chosen as the fourth key stakeholder to be interviewed. Finally, the fifth key stakeholder to be interviewed was a Sámi culture representative, as the opinions and viewpoints of the local community needed be considered in the process. With the engagement from these stakeholders, it was possible to gain reliable results that considered all necessary viewpoints and redesign an authentic and coherent brand identity that is also accepted by the local community. Those stakeholders also represent some of the most important touchpoints along the customer journey, where the customer experiences the brand's identity.

The interviews for this research originally consisted of fifteen brand identity related questions, but before arranging the interviews it was discovered that some of those questions were irrelevant. As a result, the number of questions was reduced to ten, and these ten questions were presented in the stakeholder interviews. However, as the research proceeded to the analysis phase, it was still noticed that one of those questions did not offer any relevant information to support the research. Therefore, that particular question was left out from the analysis, and the responses of nine questions were used as the data of this research.

The nine questions were the following:

1. What types of emotions does the Sámi culture and a Sámi hospitality brand evoke in yourself, or in your customers?

2. What ethical issues and viewpoints would you consider in the brand identity redesigning process, in order to avoid insulting the Sámi culture?
3. Which values would you wish Holiday Village Valle to follow in its everyday operations and with its stakeholders?
4. If Holiday Village Valle was a person with a Sámi identity, what would you imagine its personality to be like (for example friendly, adventurous, kind, etc)?
5. Please imagine a suitable tone-of-voice for Holiday Village Valle. How would the personality you described in the previous question communicate with others?
6. Please evaluate the existing brand name and logo of Holiday Village Valle. Which elements would you maintain, and which to your opinion would require redesigning?
7. What types of nature or culture related elements would you highlight in the visual identity of Holiday Village Valle, including the logo, typography, color palette, and shapes?
8. What types of elements would you include in the slogan of Holiday Village Valle, and what emotions should a good slogan evoke in the receiver?
9. Holiday Village Valle possesses plenty of stories related to the Sámi culture, the holiday village area, and the owner family's history and traditions, but those stories have not been utilized effectively. What types of elements would you include in Holiday Village Valle's brand story, and what emotions should a good brand story evoke in the receiver?

In addition to this, the entrepreneur had two personalized questions which focused on the information that could only be received specifically from him.

Those questions were the following:

1. What is the vision of Holiday Village Valle? What does the company pursue to achieve in the future?
2. What is the mission of Holiday Village Valle? Why does the company exist, and how will it achieve its vision?

Two individual stakeholder interviews were arranged through Teams meetings, and three were arranged face-to-face. The stakeholder interviews took each about 45 minutes, however as the topic was interesting and each stakeholder felt a genuine desire to have an impact on the results, some stakeholders spent more time discussing their ideas, viewpoints, and experiences. A maximum of 1,5 hours was spent for one interview. As expected, the entrepreneur interview was the longest, as he had additional questions related to the vision and mission of the brand, and he also generated plenty of fruitful ideas related to the brand story. Some of the interview questions were seen as more difficult by the stakeholders, and thorough explanations on the topics were needed. However, the stakeholders were informed that professional knowledge of branding was not required from them; instead, they were requested to brainstorm and generate spontaneous ideas to support the brand identity redesigning process. As McNiff (2013, 109) points out, even though interviewing people face-to-face offers a possibility to make notes and analysis at the same time, it is beneficial to record the discussions in order to avoid errors. The interviews were recorded with the recorder app of a Samsung mobile phone, and afterwards transcribed by writing out the interviews from the audio files on a Microsoft Word document.

After the individual stakeholder interviews, also group interviews - more precisely focus groups - were used as a research method. Hennink (2014, 2-3) states that a focus group discussion typically consists of 5-10 participants depending on the situation and the purpose of the research, and the goal of a

focus group discussion is to gather several perspectives related to the research topic, and form common understanding on those topics. According to Litosseliti (2003, 5), a focus group discussion must have a moderator to guide the discussion by asking predetermined open-ended questions focused on the topic of the discussion. The focus group discussion method was used by arranging a workshop for the employees of Holiday Village Valle. In the workshop, the interview results were discussed by presenting the main themes identified from the research, and the employees had the opportunity to further process the ideas.

The team had faced some changes during the research process, and some of the employees that were originally planned to be included in the workshop were unfortunately unable to participate. This, however, did not cause more than a minor challenge, since new and motivated employees were able to attend the workshop. Four employees were chosen to be present in the workshop, in addition to the researcher's and the entrepreneur's presence. The workshop was kept relatively short, lasting for two hours. The purpose of the workshop was to achieve consensus on the main themes identified from the interview data, and to add possible new ideas on top of them. Some of the brand identity elements, such as the brand personality, tone-of-voice and brand story required the most attention and ideas, and therefore they were chosen as the main focus of the workshop.

### 3.3 Research process

The research process consisted of several different phases, and some of the phases were also conducted simultaneously. The process did not proceed as systematically as planned in the beginning, as some illogicalities were identified during the process, resulting in the need to return to some of the previous phases and revise them. This, however, led to the improved quality and reliability of the research, and also to better learning experience for the researcher. Figure 9 illustrates the research process in detail.

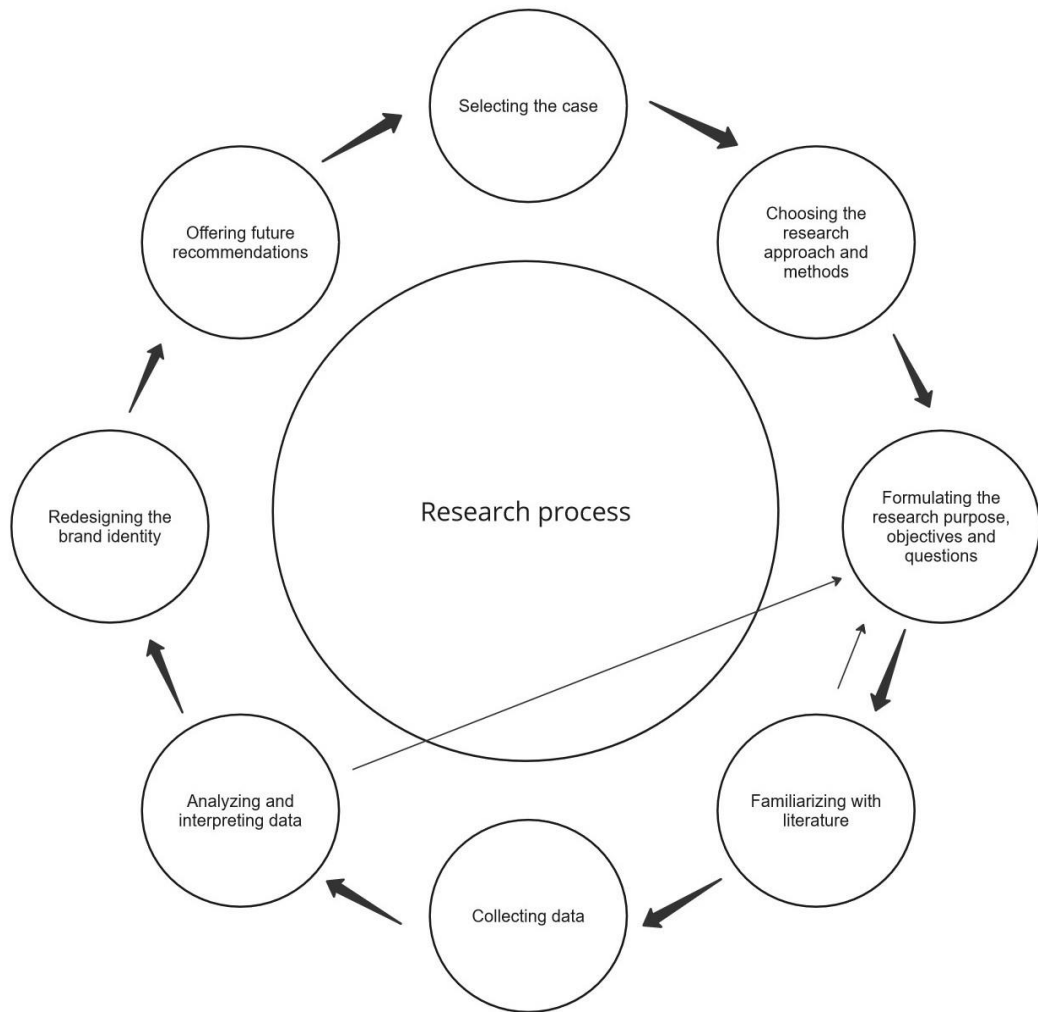


Figure 9. Research process

As Figure 9 illustrates, in the beginning of the process the case was selected, the research approach and methods were chosen, and the research purpose, objectives and questions were formulated. The research process then continued to the literature review to form an understanding on the elements that together form a brand identity. However, as Figure 9 suggests, the research question formulation ended up being an iterative process, and the need to return back to the research question formulation was first acknowledged during the literature review phase. The main research question was divided into subquestions only after first investigating the elements that form the brand identity, as obtaining this knowledge was necessary before formulating more detailed subquestions or defining the data that needed to be gathered from the interviews.



After finalizing the literature review and being content with all previous phases, the research process continued to the data collection phase, where the stakeholders were identified and interviewed. This in turn led to the data analysis phase where the gathered data was thoroughly analyzed and interpreted. At this point the research objectives were revised, as it was noticed that the research objectives and the data analysis did not fully support each other. The research then proceeded to the final phase where the actual brand identity redesigning work was conducted, a visual brand identity book was designed, and future recommendations for the company were provided. Appendix 1 presents the schedule in which each of these phases were implemented.

#### 3.4 Case selection and description

The case company for this research is an indigenous Sámi owned Guolbba Oy / Holiday Village Valle which is operating in Utsjoki, in the northernmost Lapland, with approximately 10-15 employees depending on the season. The company offers accommodation in cabins and hotel rooms, which are located in a serene area by the Teno river, surrounded by mighty fells and large wilderness areas. A cozy restaurant Deatnu is also located in the holiday village area. The restaurant serves local delicacies and traditional Sámi dishes with a modern touch. In addition to the accommodation and restaurant services, Holiday Village Valle offers multiple different activities round the year. Some of the activities offered are reindeer and husky safaris, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, skiing, canoeing, hiking, and mountain biking.

Holiday Village Valle has created separate holiday packages for winter and summer, including everything from accommodation to full board meals, airport transfers, and enchanting activities. These packages are primarily distributed through international travel agents, which sell them in their own markets. The international target customers of the company are middle-income couples or families from Germany, Switzerland, or UK, searching for authentic experiences, delicious food, tranquility, and pure nature. Holiday Village Valle is also constantly seeking to find new travel agent partners in potential markets,

such as the United States, Australia, and Southern Europe. The age range of the adult international target customers is 40-65+. The domestic target customers fall into two different categories; those who seek enjoyment and relaxation, and those who seek excitement and unique possibilities for different types of sports activities, such as ultra running, mountain biking or hiking. The enjoyment seekers are middle-aged or older couples and families that come to enjoy the restaurant's cuisine and the coziness of the accommodation, and enjoy activities such as sauna and swim and admiring the views. The excitement and sports seekers are couples or groups of friends from the age range of 30-45+.

As stated by Berkovi (2014, 135), in order to differentiate itself from the competitors, a brand must develop a brand promise that clearly indicates what the customers can expect from the brand. According to Ritchie and Crouch (2003, 115), culture has a strong role in building the attractiveness of any destination brand, and Holiday Village Valle has plenty of potential for success, but the management and employees have drowned in their everyday work and forgotten to consider the foundations of the brand's identity, which is the Sámi culture. The brand constantly pursues to broaden its operations and expand to new international markets, but due to the lack of a clear brand identity, standing out from the competition, convincing potential customers, and establishing new travel agent partnerships is challenging. Despite the promises made on the website and marketing materials of Holiday Village Valle, with a more in-depth view into the brand's activity selection, menu of the restaurant, or any daily brand communication, it was easy to notice that the promise of the Sámi culture being visible in all of the brand's operations was not fulfilled in reality. This could be verified also from the customer feedback received, which indicated that the customers had not gained authentic experiences during their stay at Holiday Village Valle. Therefore, it was necessary to return to the brand's roots and to redesign its identity.

The case was challenging, as the research involved redesigning the identity for a brand that originated in a culture other than the one represented by the researcher. Delicate issues were handled, which required respect and

sensitivity towards the culture related elements and the stakeholders representing the Sámi community. The definition of authenticity was also addressed, as the purpose of the research was to redesign an authentic brand identity. As claimed by Fisher-Buttinger and Vallaster (2008, 50-51), authenticity is seen as an important way to differentiate from others; however, the definition of authenticity can vary depending on the situation and the person defining it. The authors state that while to some, authenticity means being original, in their viewpoint, the definition of authenticity includes being true to one's own personality despite all outside pressure. In this thesis authenticity is defined by being true to the Sámi identity of the brand, with its ups and downs.

### 3.5 Data analysis

The transcribed data was analyzed through the content analysis method. The content analysis method was chosen for this research, as the data gathered from the stakeholder interviews was unstructured and required reducing and grouping in order to identify the main themes from the data. Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2018, 127-129) state that the content analysis process starts from carefully listening to and transcribing the recorded interviews. The data is then carefully read and reduced to include only the essential. The reduction can be done, for example, by going through the transcribed data and looking for words and expressions that are relevant to the research, identifying similarities or differences, and underlining them with different colors. The reduced data is then grouped and listed to another location without losing anything from the original data. In this research, the content analysis was conducted by first listing the original expressions of the stakeholders, then reducing the expressions, and finally creating groups from the reduced data.

Three separate Excel charts were created for each of the three subquestions. The original expressions and their reduced versions were listed on the first Excel chart. The reduced expressions were then copied to the second Excel chart and grouped under group 1, the widest category containing similarities identified from the reduced expressions along with interesting themes that occurred only once during the interviews. Finally, the data from group 1 was

copied to a third Excel chart, continuing to narrow down the findings to group 2 and then arriving at the main group where the main themes from the findings were identified. In order to clarify the process, different color codes were used. The color codes, groups and themes identified are discussed further in chapter 4.

An employee workshop was arranged to discuss the interview findings, and the third Excel chart with the main themes identified was presented to the employees attending the workshop. However, as the time was limited, the workshop was coordinated to focus mainly on the findings made for the subquestion 2, which consisted of the brand personality, tone-of-voice, and brand story. The viewpoints of the employees supported the interview findings well, and some new ideas were generated on top of them, which were also added to the third Excel chart.

### 3.6 Reliability and validity of the research

When the researcher is thoroughly familiarized with the research topic and considers all relevant viewpoints during the research, the reliability of the research is improved. In qualitative research, the researcher commits to the research process tightly and is typically very close to the topic of the research. For this reason, the impact of the researcher's personal experience is accepted in the qualitative research. However, the researcher must be critical about the personal experience and previous knowledge, and be able to combine it with new observations. (Puusa & Juuti 2020, 257-258.) In this research, the researcher had thoroughly familiarized herself with the operations of Holiday Village Valle, and working in the company also during the research process allowed for close involvement with the topic. However, based on her previous knowledge and working history in the company, the researcher had also formed personal opinions and viewpoints about Holiday Village Valle and the direction the brand should take in the future. This required critical evaluation, especially when some of those viewpoints differed from the viewpoints of the stakeholders.

Puusa and Juuti (2020, 257-258) state that when evaluating the reliability of the research, it is necessary to consider if the chosen research methods were suitable for the research objectives. The quality of the research is also affected by the researcher's ability to target the research to a group of persons that is suitable from the point of view of the research topic and questions. Conducting qualitative research was the best option for this thesis, and the action research approach offered the possibility for the researcher to be actively involved in the process, and the lead designer of the brand identity. The stakeholder interviews and the workshop arranged for the employees fulfilled the research needs effectively, and offered a significant amount of valuable data. The research was also targeted at the key stakeholders with a genuine interest in participating in the research and developing the topic in question. However, it was noticed that the research would have benefited from interviewing one more stakeholder operating in the Sámi area, such as another supplier. Unfortunately, interviewing another Sámi-originated supplier was not possible due to time limitations. Two of the stakeholders interviewed were Sámi, which was sufficient, considering that those two stakeholders included the entrepreneur of Holiday Village Valle and the Sámi culture representative. Still, the perspective of another Sámi company would have been fruitful as well.

Supporting the above mentioned observation, Ritchie and Crouch (2003, 117) point out that culture related elements may be perceived differently depending on whether those elements are viewed by the locals living in the community, or by non-residents. As expected, the stakeholders involved in this research also viewed the discussed the topics from various perspectives. This, however, was seen as a benefit, as for example the international travel agents know their own markets and can identify the elements that are particularly attractive to their customers. According to Puusa and Juuti (2020, 260), it is important to acknowledge that an interview is often not experienced as a completely natural situation and may therefore impact the way people speak. For this reason, the reliability of the research is improved if the researcher can ensure a consensus on what the interview participants meant with their responses and how the researcher has interpreted those responses. As some stakeholders in this research did not speak their native language during the interviews or did not

have any previous experience in branding, it was necessary to offer them a thorough definition for each topic in question. Some stakeholder responses also required more clarification before it was agreed that the true meaning of the responses were commonly understood.

Puusa and Juuti (2020, 255-256) add that the reliability and validity of the research is improved when a same result is received from two measurements. In qualitative research it is also necessary to consider whether the results could be transferred to some other research environment as well. While there were some variations in the responses to certain topics, it was decided that the brand identity redesigning process would follow the common viewpoints gathered. The results can also be transferred and utilized to some extent in other research environments, allowing another brand to use the same research process for redesigning its identity. However, it is necessary to remember that the final results of this research focus on a specific brand operating in the Sámi area, and the unique characteristics identified for Holiday Village Valle may not be similar for another brand.

Finally, it is stated by Puusa and Juuti (2020, 256) that the research process must be documented as precisely as possible, and the phases have to be described in detail. The thesis openly shares also the challenges faced during the research process, and presents the moments when it was necessary to return back to previous phases and correct them in order to continue the research process in a reliable way. Each phase was documented and discussed thoroughly, to ensure that all details are provided, and the reader will be able to familiarize with the entire research process.

## 4 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter the findings from the stakeholder interviews and employee workshop are presented, analyzed and discussed. The findings are also reflected on the conceptual framework and theoretical background of this thesis. The chapter is divided into four subchapters, of which the three first subchapters present and discuss the findings from the point of view of the three research subquestions. The first subchapter groups the data gathered for the brand identity foundations, including emotional and ethical viewpoints, and the brand's vision, mission, and values. The second subchapter concentrates on the data gathered for the brand's character, which in this research is grouped to include the brand's personality, tone-of-voice, and brand story. The third subchapter introduces the findings made for the visual identity of the brand. In all three subchapters, direct quotes from the stakeholder interviews are presented, as well as the content analysis conducted. The fourth subchapter summarizes the findings, presents the direction which the brand identity redesign process will follow, and evaluates if the gathered data answered the research questions.

### 4.1 Findings for the brand identity foundations

The research subquestion 1 aimed to determine how to construct the foundations for the brand identity. To address this subquestion, the stakeholders were asked to discuss the emotions evoked by the Sámi culture and a Sámi brand, as well as the ethical viewpoints that must be considered at the outset of the brand redesigning process. Additionally, the entrepreneur was asked to provide insights into the vision and mission of Holiday Village Valle. In this subchapter, the data gathered is presented and discussed under each theme, followed by the content analysis conducted and the Excel charts, which can be found from the appendices.

#### 4.1.1 Emotional viewpoints

The stakeholders were asked to describe the emotions that the Sámi culture and a Sámi brand operating in the hospitality industry evoke in them, or in their customers. This question aimed to understand the general perception of the Sámi culture and a Sámi hospitality brand, gather insights into people's feelings about it, and obtain information about the emotions Holiday Village Valle should emphasize when redesigning its brand identity.

The responses differed to some extent depending on whether the stakeholders were Sámi/Finnish, or from another country. It was acknowledged especially by the domestic stakeholders that inside Finland the Sámi culture evokes slightly negative emotions, mostly due to the history and the contradictions between the Finnish and the Sámi people, and false assumptions that rise from the lack of knowledge. The domestic stakeholders mentioned that the Sámi culture, some of its representatives and their viewpoints have often been introduced in the Finnish media in a negative tone, and this has even led to situations where Finnish tourists have been afraid to get to know the culture or buy local handcraft in order to avoid insulting the culture. However, the international stakeholders, or stakeholders involved with international customers, stated that the Sámi culture evokes “a wow-feeling” and curiosity, and a desire to travel and experience the culture by themselves. According to those stakeholders, the Sámi culture is viewed by themselves or by their customers as something “mysterious” and “exciting”, with people expressing a keen interest in learning more and gaining authentic experiences. When asked about the reasons for the mysteriousness, factors such as the old traditions, mythology, and the general atmosphere were brought up.

The words “unknown” and “unfamiliar” were mentioned in almost all interviews, which indicated that the Sámi culture is still quite strange to many people both abroad and in Finland. Most stakeholders, regardless of their origin, pointed out that there is not enough reliable information available about the Sámi culture. Even though most stakeholders agreed on the unfamiliarity and the slight mysteriousness of the Sámi culture, contradiction could be identified in whether



this was seen in a positive or negative light. Some stakeholders emphasized that the Sámi culture “should never be marketed with mysteriousness”, and that sharing correct information is the most important objective of all brand communication. However, one stakeholder suggested not to share all of the culture-related information beforehand in brand communication, but rather “to leave room for surprises and unexpected” which, according to the stakeholder, could strengthen the fascinating image of the Sámi brand. This particular stakeholder pointed out that this type of communication could even create a stronger sense of curiosity and a desire to find out more.

Based on the responses received, the Sámi culture is still very unknown both internationally and in Finland, and there would be a lot to develop in order to raise cultural awareness and the interest in tourists to get to know the culture better. The slightly negative image of the Sámi culture in Finland is undeniable, however with positive communication and by sharing correct information it is possible to improve this image. Despite the slight contradiction, the stakeholder responses proved that through its brand identity and communication, a Sámi brand such as Holiday Village Valle can have a major impact on the way the Sámi culture is viewed. Even though the responses varied from one extreme to another especially with the topic of mysteriousness, a possibility for a compromise exists; the brand can maintain part of its mysteriousness and attract the curiosity of people by sharing enchanting stories, keeping some secrets and leaving room for interpretation. However, it is essential to balance this with truthfulness and raising awareness.

Some similarities could also be identified in the stakeholder responses, as all stakeholders highlighted the importance of avoiding anything that makes customers feel that the brand is too commercial or based on a story that is made up. The stakeholders also agreed that Holiday Village Valle as a Sámi brand should focus on evoking positive and warm emotions with its brand identity. One stakeholder also specified that Holiday Village Valle should focus on creating a sense of belonging to the customers that experience the brand in different phases along the customer journey, and avoid maintaining the distant image associated with the Sámi culture.

#### 4.1.2 Ethical viewpoints

The stakeholders were asked to discuss the ethical issues and viewpoints that, in their opinion, needed consideration in the brand identity redesigning process to prevent insulting the Sámi culture and local people. As expected, the topic of ethics raised extensive discussion with various viewpoints expressed.

“Do not disneyfy the Sámi culture” was a sentence expressed by one stakeholder who pointed out that the Sámi culture should not be glorified or marketed as being something mysterious and exotic. This was in line with some of the previously mentioned responses concerning the emotions awakened by the Sámi culture. Most stakeholders stated that the brand should be authentic and truthful, and genuinely consider the local people, their viewpoints, and lifestyle in all of the brand’s operations. One stakeholder mentioned that even though the traditional Sámi dress, *gákti*, is very personal and it should not be worn by people other than Sámi, for example the use of jewelry in the outfits of the staff members is accepted. Another stakeholder pointed out that it is not acceptable to photograph the Sámi people and their outfits. Therefore, tourists should be directed to places where it is ethically approved to photograph outfits and other Sámi culture related elements.

Collaboration between the local people was seen as the most important factor to consider when a brand wants to operate as ethically as possible. One stakeholder also pointed out the importance of “respecting the traditional livelihoods”, such as reindeer herding, and “pursuing to build bridges rather than contradictions between the hospitality industry and reindeer herding”, as this relationship has always been sensitive. Respecting other peoples’ land and fishing waters and not attending those places without permission was also highlighted in the responses. One stakeholder mentioned that the nature in Utsjoki is very unique and fragile, with several sacred places for the Sámi people. These places should be respected or even avoided when arranging guided activities, and tourists exploring nature on their own should be guided to the correct routes. Several stakeholders emphasized that it is not sufficient if only the entrepreneur, as a Sámi, knows the Sámi culture and the stories

related to the owner family's history. The employees and everyone associated with the brand must know and understand the fundamental aspects of the culture that shape the foundations of the Sámi brand. They are expected to share only accurate information when discussing the brand with customers and other stakeholders. This requires thorough familiarization, and also genuine motivation from the employees to learn.

Based on the stakeholder responses, it is obvious that the ethical issues are considered important by all stakeholders, and each of them, despite their origin, acknowledged that the Sámi culture and the discussion around it involve various sensitive issues that must be taken into consideration when redesigning the brand identity. However, the responses were not strict, and even stakeholders representing the Sámi culture saw the positive aspects of utilizing culture related elements in tourism, as long as there is respect for the culture and the local people.

#### 4.1.3 Brand vision and mission

The entrepreneur was inquired about his thoughts on the vision and mission of Holiday Village Valle. The entrepreneur started with the mission and described that the original reason to establish the company was to "sustain his family's traditional lifestyle already from childhood, in which fishing played an important role". In the beginning the company brought only some extra earnings, but little by little, the company's offering grew to larger proportions and eventually became the main livelihood for the entrepreneur and his family. According to the entrepreneur, the operations of Holiday Village Valle have a financial purpose, as the entrepreneur wishes the company to continue to grow and provide livelihood for his family also in the future, and at the same time enable the company to employ local people. The entrepreneur also wishes the company and brand to be "an ambassador of the Sámi culture". This, according to him, happens by sharing correct information through Holiday Village Valle's operations, and maintaining the culture alive, as he strongly believes that "there is not enough information available about the Sámi culture, and children do not receive sufficient Sámi culture related teaching at school".

The entrepreneur described the vision of Holiday Village Valle to be “the leading Sámi hospitality company in the northern areas of Finland and Norway”. The entrepreneur was asked to explain this sentence further and describe whether he believed this vision to be realistic in terms of turnover and size of the company, or if being the leading Sámi hospitality company could consist of other aspects as well. The entrepreneur then continued by stating that the possibility to become the leading company in terms of turnover and size exists if the company succeeds in growing and investing in everything that has been planned for the future. In five years’ time the entrepreneur plans to have the accommodation capacity doubled with unique culture related accommodation, and the size of the restaurant should also be doubled. In ten years’ time he plans to build a Sámi village with a separate Sámi style restaurant, exhibition spaces and activity areas, and their construction should be at least “proceeding with full speed, if not yet ready”.

Other plans also exist; however, some of the plans, especially those related to new investments and the construction of new units, are not quite clear yet. According to the entrepreneur, this uncertainty is due to the events the world has faced during the past few years; first the Covid-19 pandemic and then the war in Ukraine, which “have had a major impact on the travel behavior of people”. However, the entrepreneur still admitted that for him the word “leading” mostly means other aspects, and continued that he “pursues to reach the growth targets in a sustainable way”, as he “does not support mass tourism”. According to him, the company should rather focus on being the most authentic Sámi family business that offers unique and unforgettable experiences to its customers, and to maintain the customer groups relatively small, which ensures that each customer receives personal service.

The entrepreneur also added that “becoming one of the best workplaces in Finnish Lapland is a large part of his company’s vision”, and that he pursues to create an excellent environment where employees enjoy working. This, according to him, is done by for example improving the general atmosphere and trust inside the team and offering better opportunities for personal growth and development at the workplace. Plans exist to also improve the fringe benefits of

the team members, and starting a bonus system that rewards the team members regularly when some specific target is met. The entrepreneur admitted that there is still a lot to develop to reach this part of the vision, but he is committed to this process, as he believes that a happy and motivated team is the key to the success of the company.

In the literature review of this thesis, Kirkpatrick (2016, 2) stated that no vision will have a desired impact on the team, if it only exists in the minds of the management, and is not clearly communicated. The same applies to mission, as Park et al. (2016, 67) recommended involving the whole team in the mission development process. The entrepreneur of Holiday Village Valle admitted that despite his ideas for the vision and mission, those elements have never been written down or communicated to the team. He acknowledged this as a significant deficiency, but the time to focus on these issues has been limited. Based on the personal experience of the researcher, the lack of a clear vision and mission has indeed been a visible challenge in the everyday work of the employees. Achieving some parts of the vision pointed out by the entrepreneur would require substantial changes in the company, especially if Holiday Village Valle wishes to achieve the status of the leading Sámi hospitality company in the northern areas of Finland and Norway in terms of turnover and size. Therefore, it would be beneficial for Holiday Village Valle to focus on sustainability and the authentic elements of its brand, rather than on rapid growth.

#### 4.1.4 Brand values

The stakeholders were asked to determine the most important values that Holiday Village Valle should follow in its everyday operations and with its stakeholders. The responses between different stakeholders were similar to each other and revolved around five general themes, which were respecting the Sámi culture, being authentic and truthful, protecting the nature, supporting sustainable travel, and appreciating family values.

The most important value described by each stakeholder was respecting the indigenous Sámi culture and traditions, making the culture visible to tourists, and raising awareness about it. As the brand is Sámi owned, each stakeholder stressed that the culture, history, and traditions combined with the knowledge of the owner family should be the basis of the brand's identity, and therefore also one of the key values of Holiday Village Valle. One stakeholder also mentioned that the Sámi lifestyle is highly affected by the seasons of the year, for example in relation to traditional livelihoods or food, and this should be visible in how the culture is presented.

"Authenticity", "honesty", and "truthfulness" were also highlighted as key values in the interviews, and those words were in fact mentioned by almost each stakeholder. One stakeholder mentioned the word "transparency" as well. When discussing these words further, one stakeholder pointed out the importance of offering authentic experiences that differentiate the brand from the others, and added that "the brand should pursue to be honestly itself in all areas of business". Another stakeholder described that the Sámi culture should not be marketed as being something "exotic and mystical", but rather as the everyday Sámi lifestyle that shows the good but also the challenging moments truthfully. According to the same stakeholder, showing the everyday life in an honest way would most likely increase the acceptance of the brand among local people. Based on these responses, it can be interpreted that the stakeholders do not want to experience a brand that has no true story behind it; they prefer something real, enchanting, and unique. It can be suggested that authenticity describes the brand being true to its identity as a Sámi brand, and expressing its identity in everything that it does. Honesty, truthfulness and transparency on the other hand can reflect the way in which the brand expresses its Sámi identity, but also being truthful about, for example, the ingredients the brand uses in its restaurant and the narrative it tells in the activities offered, as well as in all communication with its customers and other stakeholders.

Sustainability was a value mentioned by each stakeholder, and especially two stakeholders emphasized the importance of respecting the nature, and moving in the nature in a responsible way that leaves as few traces as possible and

does not disturb the animals. Related to sustainability, one stakeholder mentioned that "becoming a part of an authentic cultural experience is a rising trend in the hospitality industry, but since tourists are more and more conscious these days, it is important for them to not offend the culture during the experience". The value of locality also came up in most of the interviews, with several stakeholders highlighting the importance of using local ingredients in the restaurant and telling stories about how and where those ingredients were gathered or hunted. Collaborating with local businesses and hiring local staff as much as possible were also seen as important values and actions.

Several stakeholders highlighted that since the brand is family-owned, the family values should be visible in the brand identity as much as possible. It was highlighted by one stakeholder that "a good family takes care of one another", which is a value that the brand should follow also with its employees, customers, and all other stakeholders. As pointed out by one stakeholder, Lapland is full of chain hotels, and therefore, customers these days value family businesses and want to support them. The customers also want to feel like part of the family when they arrive at the destination. As the entrepreneur of Holiday Village Valle also supports family values, and wants the warm family culture to be visible at the workplace and in the brand identity, it is evident that family centricity should be visible in the brand's key values as well.

As stated by Kirkpatrick (2016, 7) in the literature review of this thesis, it is possible to simultaneously support both moral values such as integrity, and business values such as the quality of customer service. Interestingly, none of the stakeholders mentioned purely business related values as the key values they would wish Holiday Village Valle to support in its everyday operations and in collaboration with its stakeholders. Only moral values were brought up, which suggests that the wellbeing of people and the honesty and trustworthiness in all collaboration are placed higher than the values related to the ways of doing business or earning profit. It can imply that softer values are becoming more and more appreciated in business.

#### 4.1.5 Content analysis of the data gathered

Analyzing the data gathered for the research subquestion 1 involved conducting content analysis, and three separate Excel charts were created during the analysis phase. Those Excel charts are presented in Appendix 2, Appendix 3, and Appendix 4. The original expressions from the stakeholder interviews were listed on the first Excel chart and reduced to include only the essential, which Appendix 2 illustrates. The reduced expressions were then copied to the second Excel chart, followed by forming the group 1, as presented in Appendix 3. The group 1 was the widest group containing similarities identified from the reduced expressions, and some spontaneous and potential ideas were also added on top of the most commonly mentioned themes. At this point several similarities could be identified, and the most commonly mentioned themes included respecting the Sámi culture and traditions, being authentic and true to oneself, and operating in a sustainable way, as can be noticed from the Appendix 3. Color codes were used to group the data under different themes in order to simplify and clarify the process. As an example, the findings related to the Sámi culture were coded with light orange, as the findings related to sustainability were coded with light green, and the findings related to family values were coded with light red.

Appendix 4 shows that the themes from the group 1 were copied to a third Excel chart, and then grouped again under the group 2, which narrowed down the findings once more. Finally, the main group with their own color codes was formed from the themes in group 2, as can be noticed from the Appendix 4. The main group comprised the main themes identified for the research subquestion 1, including authenticity, reliability, sustainability, and family centricity. Those themes operate as the guidelines when redesigning Holiday Village Valle's brand vision, mission, and values.



## 4.2 Findings for the brand's character

The research subquestion 2 aimed to find out how to develop a brand personality, tone-of-voice and brand story that reflect the brand's Sámi roots. To support this research subquestion, the stakeholders were asked to describe the personality and tone-of-voice they would imagine a Sámi person to have, and offer ideas for a brand story that would reflect Holiday Village Valle's history and the existing operations as a Sámi brand. In this subchapter, the data gathered is presented and discussed under each theme, followed by the content analysis conducted and the Excel charts, which can be found from the appendices.

### 4.2.1 Brand personality

The stakeholders were asked to consider a Sámi brand as a person, and specify the type of a personality they would imagine a typical Sámi person to have. There were slight differences in the responses, as some stakeholders imagined a typical Sámi person to have a calm, quiet and even shy personality, while some described the personality to be friendly and easily approachable, and have a good sense of humor. One stakeholder stated that a typical Sámi person is eager to tell stories and is a warm person, "almost like a mother that takes care of her children". Another stakeholder imagined a Sámi person to be a mysterious character that is easy to talk to but more difficult to get to know properly. It was also pointed out by one stakeholder that a calm personality is beneficial for a Sámi person who must be able to survive in the nature and through different tough situations in life. The same stakeholder also highlighted "safety, reliability, and trustworthiness" as characteristics of a person they connect with a Sámi. A viewpoint mentioned by several stakeholders was that the Sámi people are "at the same time humble but also proud to be themselves as who they are", and that they also let everyone else be just the way they are. However, it was noticed during the interviews that there exist plenty of stereotypes related to the personality of a Sámi person, and a Finnish person as well. The personality is viewed to be a quiet and shy especially by foreign

people, which is often not the case; it is just necessary to get to know the person properly.

As the brand itself values authenticity, honesty and truthfulness, and those characteristics and values were also highly appreciated by all stakeholders, it can be identified that Holiday Village Valle lands mainly under the category of sincerity in Aaker's personality scale, which was presented by Slade-Brooking (2016, 14). However, as claimed by Kelley and Jugenheimer (2006, 68), brands often possess personality characteristics from more than one category, which is true also with Holiday Village Valle. The brand personality of Holiday Village Valle has also characteristics that fall under the category of excitement, since the personality tells plenty of attractive stories that leave room for surprises, because the culture itself is still viewed as unknown, and because the experiences the brand offers to its customers are exciting and unlike anything else they have every experienced before.

#### 4.2.2 Tone-of-voice

The stakeholders were also asked to imagine how the Sámi personality they previously described would communicate with others. As expected, the stakeholders that imagined the Sámi person to be quiet and shy also defined the tone-of-voice of the Sámi person to be quiet. Those stakeholders also added that the person does not speak much unless there is something important or interesting to say. However, the friendly and warm tone-of-voice spiced up with a little bit of humor was a more popular response among the stakeholders. Several stakeholders connected the Sámi person with a warm and gentle tone-of-voice that speaks with a unique style and uses colorful language combined with plenty of stories. It was also highlighted by one stakeholder that the tone-of-voice should reflect the values of the brand.

"The tone-of-voice could be direct and slightly rough around the edges", suggested one stakeholder. Despite this, it was agreed by several stakeholders that the brand should not take sides or express too many opinions related sensitive topics, such as politics or religion. Positive commenting, such as

taking part in Earth Hour or other events that seek to protect the nature were seen as beneficial for the brand. Several stakeholders suggested that the tone-of-voice of the brand should not be too formal, in order to maintain the warm and easily approachable image of a small, family-owned brand. As the brand is Sámi, it was highlighted by most stakeholders that words and sentences from the Sámi language should be included in the everyday communication of the brand, and the communication should also include nuances of the everyday life of the Sámi. This, according to the stakeholders, would at the same time be interesting and educating for the receiver of the communication.

#### 4.2.3 Brand story

The stakeholders were asked to express ideas about the Sámi culture and nature related elements that they would include in the brand story of Holiday Village Valle. To support their responses, the stakeholders were first shortly introduced to the history of Holiday Village Valle and its owner family. When discussing about a brand story on a general level, all stakeholders defined that a good brand story should evoke emotions, and a desire to experience the events described in the story by themselves. One stakeholder suggested that an effective and impressive brand story consists of different elements from which everyone can find something that resonates particularly with them. According to the same stakeholder, a brand story should “take the receiver of the story to the starting point of the brand, and describe where the brand is now, how did it get there, and what does it want to become in the future”. This stakeholder had previously been involved in brand story development, and encouraged to start the process with a short hike to the nature where it is possible to close eyes and calm down for a while. In that peaceful moment the stakeholder recommended to consider two main topics; to define the magnificent elements that the brand and the location can offer which the receiver of the brand story does not have in their own location, and to imagine the specific emotions the receiver would want to feel when travelling there.

According to Herskovitz and Crystal (2010, 21, 23), a well-structured brand narrative requires a recognizable brand persona that the audience of the brand

can relate to and form an emotional connection with. This persona must remain the same even if the story around the persona would change. The research findings supported this statement, as several stakeholders pointed out that an engaging brand story includes real people with their real names. When discussing about the ideas and themes for the brand story of Holiday Village Valle, a theme that was described as the most interesting was reindeer herding, as the brand's founder was a reindeer herder, as well as his son, the entrepreneur of Holiday Village Valle. The word reindeer was the most popular word mentioned by the stakeholders, and reindeer herding, and the life of the reindeer were the topics that the stakeholders wished to be included in Holiday Village Valle's brand story. One stakeholder mentioned that the connection between the lives of the Sámi people and the lives of the reindeer was particularly interesting. She expressed a desire to learn more about how life with the reindeer was in the old days, how it is now, and how "people and reindeer, in fact, belong to each other".

Other key elements mentioned in the interviews were the general history of the holiday village area, local food and stories behind the ingredients used in the restaurant, and the important status of a woman in the Sámi culture as a "matriarch that takes care of the family and home". The researcher brought up the idea of paths, which provoked an engaging discussion about the paths in the nature walked by the Sámi people, the Teno river as an important fairway now and in the past, the paths of the salmon that swim upstream to the river for spawning, and the paths of the reindeer, elk, and other animals. Those path descriptions could also be utilized when describing the paths of the local ingredients offered in the restaurant.

#### 4.2.4 Content analysis of the data gathered

Analyzing the data gathered for the research subquestion 2 involved conducting content analysis, and three separate Excel charts were created to support the analysis phase. Those Excel charts are presented in Appendix 5, Appendix 6, and Appendix 7. The original expressions from the stakeholder interviews were listed on the first Excel chart and then reduced to include only the essential,

which Appendix 5 illustrates. The reduced expressions were then copied to the second Excel chart, followed by forming the group 1, as presented in Appendix 6. The group 1 contained similarities identified from the reduced expressions, and some new ideas were also added on top of the most commonly mentioned themes. Several similarities could be identified already at this point; a typical Sámi person was described to have a friendly and warm personality, and to use a friendly and colorful communication style. Once again, color codes were used to divide the data under different themes. The findings related to the brand personality were coded with light orange, the findings related to the tone-of-voice were coded with light blue, as the findings related to the brand story were coded with light pink.

The themes in group 1 were copied to the third Excel chart, which Appendix 7 presents. Group 2 was then formed, which narrowed down the findings once more. Finally, the main group with their own color codes was formed from the themes in group 2, as can be noticed from the Appendix 7. According to the findings, having a friendly, warm and reliable personality, and communicating with a friendly, warm and respectful tone-of-voice were identified as the main themes for the brand's character, while reindeer herding, and the connection between the Sámi people and reindeer were identified as the main themes for the brand story.

The findings made for the subquestion 2 were presented in the employee workshop, and the discussion supported the findings. The new ideas gathered from the workshop were also added on the third Excel chart. A full consensus existed on choosing a friendly and warm brand personality for Holiday Village Valle, which was also the most popular viewpoint discovered from the interview findings. The employees pointed out that a shy and a quiet personality would neither reflect a typical Sámi person, nor be commercially attractive. The employees also suggested that the brand personality should be open and positive, and have a good sense of humor and slightly playful personality traits. It was also agreed by the employees that storytelling should play an important role in Holiday Village Valle's brand personality. The employee viewpoints regarding the tone-of-voice of Holiday Village Valle followed the same line with

the suggested brand personality, and the employees wished the tone-of-voice to be colorful, cheerful, full of stories, and also include funny incidents from the everyday life at Holiday Village Valle. As expected, all employees highlighted the importance of including the Sámi language in the communication.

One employee suggested the tone-of-voice to be relaxed and informal, which was mostly supported by the others. The same employee highlighted that customers prefer to communicate with “real and easily approachable persons rather than cold organizations”. However, as described by Aggarwal (2021, 55), it is vital to know the audience before designing the tone-of-voice for a brand, and according to Martínez Onaindía and Resnick (2013, 55), a brand should also consider the location where a certain message is communicated and the outcome the brand wishes to achieve with the message. Building on this, another employee reminded that the tone-of-voice should be suitable for Holiday Village Valle’s target customers. Therefore, it was commonly agreed that the tone-of-voice can be relaxed, warm, and even slightly amusing at the right moments. However, it must still maintain professionalism and avoid being too youthful or rough around the edges.

The themes related to the brand story were workshopped as well, and the employees commonly agreed that reindeer herding, and the connection between the Sámi people and reindeer should be the main themes of Holiday Village Valle’s brand story. As the entrepreneur participated in the workshop, he shared several exciting stories about his father Niillaš, the founder of the Holiday Village Valle brand. One of these stories was unanimously agreed upon to form the foundations for the new brand story. In this particular story, Niillaš walked all the way through the fells to Utsjoki with a reindeer carrying his belongings. The narrative vividly described everything he saw and experienced along his journey. The employees added that, in order to create a brand story that resonates with all target customers and describes the experience a customer would receive by traveling to Holiday Village Valle, some nature-related elements should be included as well. These might encompass elements such as open landscapes, vast wilderness areas, clear waters, wild animals, and the enchanting display of the northern lights. However, since the story of

Niillaš arriving to Utsjoki through the fell areas is so versatile and includes plenty of experiences in the nature, the brand story can encompass all themes from reindeer herding to the unique nature of Utsjoki, and the life of Niillaš.

As pointed out by Rodriguez (2020, 9, 14-15) every brand story should be based on the brand's mission. The entrepreneur described some parts of the brand's mission to revolve around sustaining his family's traditional lifestyle, and being a Sámi culture ambassador that shares information and maintains the culture alive. The story of Niillaš would support the brand's mission, as Niillaš was a Sámi reindeer herder and the founder of the Holiday Village Valle brand. His work has led the company to this moment, where the company is able to provide livelihood for the younger generations of the family as well.

### 4.3 Findings for the brand's visual identity

The research subquestion 3 aimed to find out how the different elements related to the Sámi culture and the local nature can be utilized in the brand's visual identity. To support this research subquestion, the stakeholders were asked to generate ideas on the colors and shapes that Holiday Village Valle should utilize in the brand's visual identity, including its name, logo, typography, and color palette, and provide possible themes for the brand's slogan. In this subchapter, the data gathered is presented and discussed under each theme, followed by the content analysis conducted and the Excel charts, which can be found from the appendices.

#### 4.3.1 Name, logo, and typography

The stakeholders were first asked to evaluate the existing brand logo and name of Holiday Village Valle. Most stakeholders stated that the existing logo theme of a reindeer at the fells is good, and the logo strongly reflects the Sámi culture, and the operations of Holiday Village Valle. The stakeholders also pointed out that the most important nature related elements, such as the sun, the fells, and the curves of the Teno river, were visible in the existing logo. Therefore, all stakeholders agreed that the brand should maintain the existing logo theme or

make only minor changes at most. With this decision, the logo and the brand story would also complement each other, especially if reindeer herding is chosen as the main theme of the brand story, as suggested by the stakeholders.

However, according to the stakeholders, the implementation of the logo required redesigning. In the literature review of this thesis, Slade-Brooking (2016, 27) defined simplicity and functionality as some of the most important features in a strong logo, as the logo is used in multiple different purposes and contexts. Several stakeholders claimed that the implementation of the existing logo theme is not functional, as there are too many small details that confuse the viewer especially if the logo is scaled on a small size. A few stakeholders pointed out that the capital letters in the brand name are “too aggressive”, and that the typography should be more peaceful, and possibly have a more round shape. None of the stakeholders requested to maintain the existing logo precisely as it is, which indicated that the stakeholders’ opinions towards redesigning the logo were positive, as long as the theme of the logo remained the same.

The stakeholders were also asked to discuss the name of the brand, Holiday Village Valle. Surprisingly, none of the stakeholders offered any suggestions for a new brand name. As claimed by Vaid (2003, 24), renaming a brand can be risky, as it is difficult to estimate how customers react to a new brand name. Most of the stakeholders pointed out that since the brand has been known as Holiday Village Valle for a long time and the name clearly describes the operations of the brand, it should not be changed.

#### 4.3.2 Colors and shapes

The stakeholders were asked to generate ideas about nature and Sámi culture related elements and themes which they would highlight in the visual identity of Holiday Village Valle. Almost all stakeholders focused mainly on the color palette that is used for example in the brand’s logo, website and marketing material, since it appeared to be the easiest topic to start with. There were



some differences in the viewpoints of the stakeholders. Some wished the brand to use only the Sámi culture related colors, such as red, blue, and orange, while others pointed out that the choice of colors should not be that narrow and the brand could choose colors from nature, as the seasons in Utsjoki vary significantly. The color palette changes from the bright autumn foliage colors to the pastel shades of the polar night and the fresh green color of the birches during the summer. The colors mentioned the most were the autumn foliage orange which also reflects the sun, pure white that reflects the snow, green that reflects the fresh and verdant summertime in Utsjoki, and different shades of grey that reflect the surrounding fells and the rocks of the Teno river. According to one stakeholder, grey also reflects “reindeer harnesses, or old and patinated sleighs and boats”. Blue was also mentioned as one important color, as it reflects the sky and the clear water in the rivers and lakes of Utsjoki, and one stakeholder mentioned a specific brown color that reminded him of reindeer leather.

In the literature review of this thesis, Slade-Brooking (2016, 55) stated that the choice of color must be suitable for the brand itself and its products and services, but also for the customers the brand is targeting. As Holiday Village Valle aims to offer authentic experiences that are strongly related to the Sámi culture and local nature, all stakeholders agreed that the color palette chosen for Holiday Village Valle’s visual identity should include mainly broken, nature related colors that together form a cozy and peaceful atmosphere. Several stakeholders pointed out that the brand’s photographs should also be compatible with the other parts of the brand’s visual identity, and highlighted that the color palette of the photographs used by Holiday Village Valle should be harmonious, as the nature and the Sámi culture are typically the main themes of the photos. According to one stakeholder, if the brand’s visual identity includes mainly broken colors that reflect elements from the nature, the photos should not be too bright either. Another stakeholder suggested using a specific filter to maintain a similar atmosphere in the photos, and recommended “using black and white photos when sharing stories about the history of Holiday Village Valle”. By using black and white, the historical photos would become more dramatic, allowing the viewer to experience the atmosphere of the past.

Shapes were discussed as well, and this brand identity element was interesting from a research perspective, as there was limited information available in the literature about the use of shapes in the brand's visual identity. Therefore, shapes were not covered in the literature review of this thesis, but new ideas were nevertheless generated during the interviews, and it was decided to include shapes in this research despite the lack of academic sources related to the topic. Most stakeholders found it difficult to identify shapes related to the Sámi culture, and as with colors, also shapes were mainly chosen from the nature. The shape mentioned the most was the round shape that reflects several nature related elements, such as the curves of the Teno river, the round peaks of the surrounding fells, or the round patterns formed by northern lights dancing in the sky. One stakeholder mentioned that the round shape also “reminds of reindeer antlers, and reindeer sleigh runners”, while another stakeholder pointed out that the sun and the moon are round, and the rocks of the Teno river also have a beautiful round shape. Therefore, the round shape was identified to be a versatile shape that can be used in many purposes, and it can have several different meanings to different people.

#### 4.3.3 Slogan

The stakeholders were asked to share their ideas about the Sámi culture and nature related elements they would incorporate into the slogan of Holiday Village Valle. It was agreed by all stakeholders that an effective slogan for a hospitality brand should be interesting and surprising, and awaken a desire to travel to the particular destination. One stakeholder pointed out that “an effective slogan creates a sense of belonging”, which according to the stakeholder indicates that the receiver of the slogan can relate to the slogan, or at least to some parts of it. Another stakeholder emphasized the importance of leaving room for interpretation, and creating a slogan with multiple meanings that can resonate differently with various individuals.

The slogan elements frequently mentioned in the interviews included the mysterious atmosphere, the northern lifestyle, the open skies and landscapes, and the peace and quietness at the fells. Being the northernmost municipality in

Finland, and having almost no light pollution, with good visibility of the northern lights, were also mentioned as elements that the stakeholders would highlight in the slogan of Holiday Village Valle. As expected, the international stakeholders were more interested in including northern lights in the brand slogan, as viewing the northern lights is an exciting experience for them, while the domestic stakeholders did not value that element very highly. One stakeholder pointed out that the nature in Utsjoki is different than in any other location in Finnish Lapland, and it would be beneficial to highlight it in the slogan.

Surprisingly, it was acknowledged that nature related elements were seen as more attractive for the brand slogan when compared to the culture related elements. None of the stakeholders specifically emphasized the need to incorporate the Sámi culture into the slogan; instead, each stakeholder primarily focused on highlighting the beauty and uniqueness of the surrounding nature and the connection that a person can feel with the nature when travelling to Utsjoki. One stakeholder even mentioned that it would be beneficial for the brand to discuss more about a northern lifestyle rather than about a Sámi lifestyle, which would prevent the brand's target audience from becoming too narrow. Another stakeholder emphasized that while the Sámi culture should be present in the brand's narrative, the slogan could be more general, and nature related. This approach would recognize that there are many people seeking unique nature experiences who may not be as interested in the cultural aspect. However, as pointed out by Wilson (2021, 164), a well-designed slogan must be harmonized with all other brand identity elements. If the slogan of Holiday Village Valle ended up not including elements from the Sámi culture, it would differ from the other brand identity elements, and result in a lack of coherence. Therefore, it was seen beneficial to stay in line with the other brand identity elements, and maintain the Sámi culture as the foundation of the brand slogan as well.

#### 4.3.4 Content analysis of the data gathered

Analyzing the data gathered for the research subquestion 3 involved conducting content analysis, and three separate Excel charts were created to support the

analysis phase. Those Excel charts are presented in Appendix 8, Appendix 9, and Appendix 10. As with the previous subquestions, the original expressions from the stakeholder interviews were listed on the first Excel chart and reduced to include only the essential, which Appendix 8 illustrates.

The reduced expressions were copied to the second Excel chart, followed by forming the group 1, as presented in Appendix 9. The group 1 contained similarities identified from the reduced expressions, and some spontaneous but potential ideas that occurred only once in the interviews were also added on top of the most commonly mentioned themes. At this point, several popular themes could be identified for the brand's visual identity; the stakeholders suggested to choose broken colors from the local nature, and to use round shapes that reflect various different nature related elements. The northern lifestyle, the unique nature, and the mysteriousness of the Utsjoki area were identified as the most popular themes for the brand slogan. Color codes were used to divide the data under different themes. The findings related to the color palette were coded with light orange, the findings for the shapes were coded with light blue, and the findings for the brand logo were coded with light pink. The light grey color coding included the findings made for the brand name, while the findings for the brand slogan were coded with light yellow.

The themes in group 1 were copied to the third Excel chart, which is presented in Appendix 10. The group 2 was then formed, which narrowed down the findings a bit more. Finally, the main group with their own color codes was formed from the themes in group 2, as Appendix 10 illustrates. According to the findings, nature related colors and shapes, and the Sámi culture related themes were identified as the main themes for the brand's visual identity, including the logo, typography, and color palette. The findings also indicated that the brand name should be maintained as it is, and the main themes for the brand slogan were identified to be the unique nature and the northern lifestyle.

#### 4.4 Conclusion of the research findings

The stakeholders were chosen to the interviews from various different positions and statuses. The stakeholder interviews and workshop succeeded in offering plenty of valuable data to be utilized in the brand identity redesigning process, and it was interesting to acknowledge that even though the stakeholders viewed the Sámi culture from completely different perspectives, and the culture was more familiar to some stakeholders than to others, the stakeholders still shared quite similar viewpoints to the key topics. The data gathered was reduced and grouped, and based on the findings made, the foundations for the new brand identity were sketched with the following structure.

The main themes identified for the brand's vision, mission, values, and emotional and ethical viewpoints were authenticity, reliability, sustainability, and family centrality. These main themes included several different subgroups, such as maintaining the culture alive and sharing correct information, offering authentic experiences, telling stories, supporting ethical and responsible tourism, and promoting family values. Holiday Village Valle was identified to have a friendly, warm and reliable personality that tells plenty of enchanting stories, communicates with a friendly and colorful tone-of-voice, and has a good sense of humor. The main theme identified for the brand story of Holiday Village Valle was reindeer herding and the life of the brand's founder, Niillaš, reflecting the owner family's long history in this traditional livelihood. Several other elements were identified as well, such as the open landscapes, large wilderness areas, clear waters, wild animals, and northern lights. It was acknowledged, however, that all these themes, from reindeer herding to the unique nature of Utsjoki and the life of Niillaš, can be utilized in the brand story in an interesting and functional way.

The main themes discovered for the visual identity of Holiday Village Valle included round shapes that reflect several different landscapes and elements from the nature, such as the surrounding fells, the curves of the Teno river, and the round patterns formed by northern lights. The color palette was described to contain calm and broken colors that are also chosen from the nature; orange

from the autumn foliage, blue from the sky and water, green from the fresh green birches, grey from the rocks of the Teno river or the surrounding fells, white from the snow, and brown from the reindeer leather. The round shapes and nature related color palette were suggested to be used in the brand's visual identity, website, and all marketing material. The existing theme of the Holiday Village Valle logo was suggested to be maintained; however the stakeholders recommended to revise the appearance of the logo and update it to a more fresh and functional version. The stakeholders also advised to maintain the brand name Holiday Village Valle. The most important theme identified for the brand slogan was related to the unique nature in Utsjoki, including elements such as open landscapes and the good visibility of northern lights. The stakeholders did not propose any Sámi culture related elements to be included in the brand slogan. However, it was decided that, in order for the brand slogan to be coherent with the rest of the brand identity elements, the Sámi culture should be visible in the slogan.

The discussion on certain brand identity elements was somewhat superficial, given that some stakeholders had limited prior experience with brand identity development. Therefore, they were cautious in generating new ideas. The research would have benefited from more thorough responses particularly to the subquestion 3, which consisted of the brand's visual identity. However, the gathered data still offered valuable ideas and viewpoints, and no significant shortages were identified in the data during the analysis phase. The data gathered for subquestions 1 and 2 was much more extensive, and it was observed that the topics of these subquestions were more engaging for the stakeholders. Overall, the gathered data effectively addressed the research questions and provided substantial support for the research.

## 5 THE REDESIGNED BRAND IDENTITY OF HOLIDAY VILLAGE VALLE

Based on the research findings, the brand identity of Holiday Village Valle was redesigned. This chapter introduces the new, redesigned brand identity, and explains the redesign process in detail with all its multiple phases. The chapter is divided into four subchapters, each dedicated to the different brand identity elements that were redesigned during the process. The first subchapter presents the redesigned vision, mission, and values of Holiday Village Valle, as they operate as the foundations of the new brand identity. In the second subchapter the redesigned brand personality and tone-of-voice are introduced. The third subchapter showcases the new brand story of Holiday Village Valle, while in the fourth subchapter the redesigned visual identity of the brand, encompassing the brand name, logo, slogan, typography, color palette, and shapes, are presented.

### 5.1 Brand vision, mission and values

The vision, mission and values of Holiday Village Valle were redesigned as the foundations of the new brand identity. They operate as the guiding principles for everything the brand represents, communicates, and undertakes. Holiday Village Valle did not previously have its vision, mission and values documented, which made it even more important to design them, as the lack of those statements had a negative impact on the team's everyday work. The main themes identified from the research findings were authenticity, reliability, sustainability, and family centricity. These themes were clearly identified, which ensured an efficient redesigning process for the vision, mission, and values of Holiday Village Valle. As the entrepreneur of Holiday Village Valle also aimed to create an excellent working environment for the team, it was highlighted in the brand's vision as well.

The vision of Holiday Village Valle:

Our vision is to emerge as the leading Sámi hospitality brand that operates as the ambassador of the Sámi culture, and enriches the lives of our guests, stakeholders, and the local community.

We are committed to our team, and we pursue to develop an excellent workplace where innovation thrives, and every individual's potential is unleashed, as we believe that the wellbeing and professional growth of our team ensures extraordinary guest experiences. Together we will lead the way in Sámi tourism, setting a standard of authenticity and sustainability.

The mission of Holiday Village Valle:

Our brand's mission is to foster the development of sustainable tourism and to offer our guests the itinerary to a living, breathing Sámi story. Through our operations, we are creating memories, and igniting a deep love for the Sámi culture and for our cozy holiday village.

Guided by the values that have bound our family for generations, we are committed to creating a brand that is not merely a destination, but a feeling. We are extending the warmth of our Sámi home to our dedicated team, our valued stakeholders, and our cherished guests, so that in Holiday Village Valle they too can feel like they have arrived to their second home.

The values of Holiday Village Valle:

*We are authentic*

We deeply value our indigenous Sámi heritage, making sure that the Sámi culture is an integral part of our everyday operations.

*We are reliable*

We uphold unwavering honesty, truthfulness, and reliability in all of our actions.



*We are sustainable*

We are dedicated to preserving the environment and promoting sustainable tourism.

*We are family*

We embrace family values within our workplace and with all our customers and stakeholders.

## 5.2 Brand personality and tone-of-voice

Creating the brand personality was one of the most interesting phases of the brand identity redesigning process, as Holiday Village Valle had not previously considered this topic, and therefore, the brand did not have a designed personality. It was also fascinating to find out how different stakeholders viewed a typical Sámi person and the way in which this person communicates with others. As the research results indicated that most stakeholders imagined a typical Sámi person as a warm and a happy storyteller, it was easy to decide that the brand personality of Holiday Village Valle follows this direction. The following brand personality was designed for Holiday Village Valle.

The brand personality of Holiday Village Valle reflects a warm, happy and charismatic Sámi person that is true to oneself, and also lets others be who they are. The person highly respects family, friends, and other close ones, and is generally known as a safe and trustworthy person. The person has a great sense of humor, and is eager to tell stories and share knowledge, while at the same time maintaining slight mysteriousness. When necessary, the person can also be calm and rational, which ensures that the person can survive in the nature and live the everyday life with its happy and sad moments. Nature and animals are close to this person's heart, and the person pursues to protect and take care of them as well as possible, and live in balance with the nature. This is visible in the person's everyday life, in the food that the person eats, in the way the person moves in the nature, and in the way the person works.

The person speaks with a warm and friendly tone, combined with occasional humor. The person uses colorful language combined with words from the Sámi language, and tells plenty of enchanting stories that attract the interest of other people. The person has a positive attitude, and this is visible in the way the person speaks. In case the person must express opinions or take a stand, it is always done in a positive and encouraging way. The person speaks respectfully towards everyone at all times, despite their origin, beliefs, or the way of life.

### 5.3 Brand story

This phase of the brand identity redesigning process without a doubt required the most work. Holiday Village Valle did not previously have a brand story, and the topic had not even been considered. As the research findings indicated, reindeer herding and the story of the brand's founder Niillaš were identified as the most interesting elements for the brand story. It was also discovered that incorporating real people in the narrative enhances the brand story's appeal. Additionally, as recommended in the employee workshop, the brand story should feature the unique nature experience as well. Therefore, it was decided that the brand story of Holiday Village Valle would include some elements from the life story of the entrepreneur and his father, combined with reindeer herding, and the unique nature experience in Utsjoki.

After writing down the story of Niillaš arriving to Utsjoki with his reindeer, something still appeared to be missing. The story was appealing and interesting, and included elements from the old times combined with nature related elements, but the story lacked emotion. The researcher decided to follow the advice of the stakeholder who suggested making on a brief hiking trip to the nearby fells. The trip was made in late August when it was still summer and relatively warm, but the leaves of the fresh green birches were slowly but surely turning into shades of yellow and orange. The wind was blowing, just like it often is at the open fells, and several different plants, animals, and landscapes were observed along the way. Combining the story of Niillaš with the unique nature experience, the following brand story was designed.

Back in the old days, the life of the Sámi was often a struggle with the forces of the nature. Niillaš, a Sámi reindeer herder born and raised in Inari, Anár, had spent his entire life working with reindeer, following the traditions of his family. Hunting and fishing were also an essential part of his life. On a late summer day in 1950, Niillaš decided to begin an extraordinary journey together with his loyal dog Ruvge, and his reindeer Cemmo. On his back the reindeer carried a lávvu, a traditional Sámi tent, to provide shelter at night, and Niillaš had packed some salt, coffee, dry meat, bread, and butter in his backpack to keep the hunger away along the journey. After collecting the essentials, the trio headed towards Utsjoki, known as Ohcejohka among the Sámi, a place described by its mighty river and large salmon that swim in the clear water that sparkles in the sun. Those were the stories Niillaš had only heard about, and with dreams of a new life, the trio began their adventure to the unknown.

Cemmo was not used to walking along and carrying a load, but Niillaš, an experienced reindeer herder, guided Cemmo with the help of Ruvge, whose barking served as commands. Willow grouses were calling with their distinctive sounds and lemmings were curiously following from their dens, as the trio passed them. The journey to Utsjoki was long, and during some nights, Niillaš found shelter in turf huts, goahtis, which provided better protection from the rain and wind than the lávvu did. Upon reaching the Geavvu river and the powerful Fiellogorži waterfall, the force of the rushing water amazed Niillaš with its mightiness. After crossing the river, Niillaš decided to spend the night in this beautiful spot, surrounded by magnificent fells and fresh green birches. While admiring the crystal-clear water of the river, he observed plenty of fish swimming beneath the surface. With hunger gnawing at him, Niillaš caught a large salmon and a trout from the river. One fresh fish was enough to feed him and Ruvge, while the rest was preserved in salt for later. Cemmo enjoyed some lichen and water, and with full stomachs, the trio fell asleep by listening to the whispers of the surrounding nature.

After replenishing their strength, the journey continued. As they reached the fell peaks, a breathtaking landscape unfolded in front of them. Only a lonely fox accompanied them as they walked in the silence of the fells. However, the

slippery terrain under their feet posed challenges, as Niillaš wore his leather-made sisna shoes, which became wet from the river crossings and from the moist of the ground. Eventually, Niillaš discovered a reindeer path that led into the correct direction and made the journey easier. Niillaš picked fresh cloudberry to eat along the way, and as the trio rested for a while by the fire, the dried reindeer meat packed in Niillaš' backpack tasted delicious together with fresh coffee.

Suddenly, Ruvge grew restless, and soon a distant howling of a wolf broke the silence around them. More wolves joined in the chorus. Fearing an encounter with a wolf pack, Niillaš remembered the stories he had heard about wolves, and began to yoik to scare them off. Ruvge joined in by growling and barking, and slowly, the wolves disappeared, and the journey continued safely. At last, the Deatnu river valley unveiled itself with its magnificent landscapes covered in vibrant green color with a touch of the upcoming autumn's yellow and orange. A cool breeze caressed Niillaš' face, surrounding him with peace and quietness. Niillaš felt like he had arrived in paradise. He unpacked his belongings, set Cemmo free, and said, "I will meet you next winter." Little did Niillaš know the adventures that lay ahead.

And so, the story of Holiday Village Valle had begun.

#### 5.4 Visual identity

The following subchapter present the redesigned visual identity of Holiday Village Valle, including the brand name, logo, slogan, typography, color palette, and shapes. The redesigning process of the visual identity was supported by the graphic designer Marjaana Peura from Buorre. Her valuable assistance was utilized in redesigning the logo, typography, color palette, and the shapes to be used in Holiday Village Valle's visual brand identity.

#### 5.4.1 Brand name

In the beginning of the process, the researcher wished the Holiday Village Valle brand name to be redesigned, as there exist multiple other brands with their brand names ending to the words “holiday village”. Several different options were brainstormed, such as Valle Arctic Hideout, or Valle Sámi Village. The Valle name would have been maintained, as it is the name of the owner family. However, the research results indicated that the stakeholders saw the brand renaming process as too risky, as the brand had been known with its existing name for a long time. The entrepreneur was also concerned that a new name would result in the familiarity of the brand decreasing. The academic sources also supported this, as several authors pointed out the risks of renaming a well-known brand. Therefore, the name Holiday Village Valle was decided to be maintained as it is. It is, however recommended for the brand to reconsider this topic in the future in case the brand majorly expands its operations or enters new markets.

#### 5.4.2 Brand logo

As discovered from the research findings, the theme of the existing brand logo of Holiday Village Valle clearly reflects the brand’s Sámi identity. However, it was also discovered that the design of the logo is dated and lacks functionality, and therefore, slight redesigning is necessary. Figure 10 presents the original logo of Holiday Village Valle, followed Figure 11, which showcases the researcher’s sketch with suggestions for improvement, and Figure 12, which introduces the graphic version of the brand’s redesigned logo by Marjaana Peura / Buorre.



Figure 10. The existing logo of Holiday Village Valle

As the research results indicated, the theme of the existing logo in Figure 10 was advised to be maintained, several improvements and refreshments were needed to make the logo more functional and attractive. The researcher wanted to remove the small text of "Utsjoki Lapland Finland", which appeared unclear when the logo was printed on a small scale and seemed irrelevant to the logo's overall design. Another aspect in need of improvement was the typography choice, as the original logo's use of capital letters conveyed a bold and aggressive appearance. The picture in the logo required slight changes as well. The original purpose of the picture was to reflect a reindeer at the open fells, with the sun shining and the river winding between the fells. However, the face of the reindeer appeared more like the face of an elk. The sun behind the reindeer was also placed too close to the reindeer's antlers, which resulted in an unclear look when the logo was printed on small size. Therefore, the researcher decided to draw a new version of the logo, with small updates.

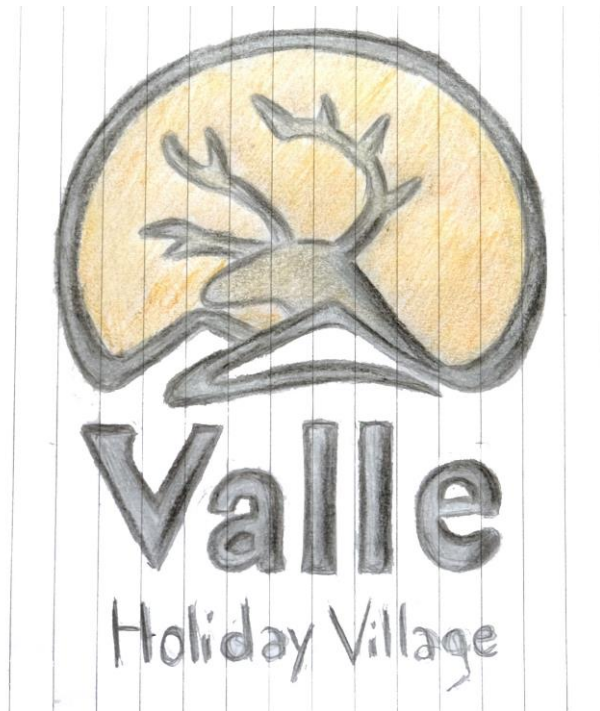


Figure 11. The sketch of the redesigned logo of Holiday Village Valle

The researcher took a pen and paper and started to sketch the new logo, which is presented in Figure 11. Only minor updates were made, as it was clear that the brand wanted to express its Sámi identity in the brand's logo, and the research findings also indicated that reindeer herding was seen as a significant part of that identity. The circle of the sun was increased to allow the antlers of the reindeer to fit inside it. The sun itself was colored with a gradient orange to create the appearance of either a rising or setting sun. The reindeer's face was reshaped to appear more like a reindeer instead of an elk. Additionally, a more calm and neutral typeface was sketched. The capital letters and the small "Utsjoki Lapland Finland" text were completely removed. The chosen typeface is presented in more detail in the later parts of this subchapter.

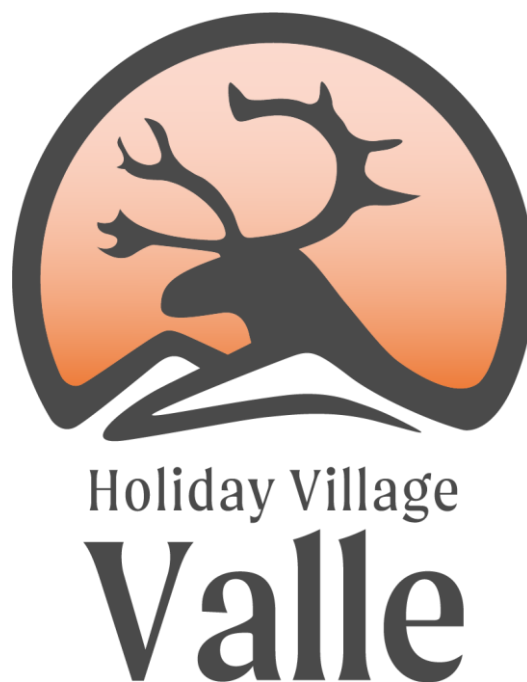


Figure 12. The graphic version of the redesigned logo of Holiday Village Valle by Marjaana Peura / Buorre

The sketch was sent to Buorre, a creative digital agency based in Finland that Holiday Village Valle was collaborating with for their new website. Since the agency had a graphic designer on their team, it was decided that she would create the graphic version of the logo based on the sketch. Figure 12 presents the outcome of the logo redesigning process by Marjaana Peura from Buorre. In the logo sketch, the Valle family name was placed above the holiday village text, but after some consideration the order of the words was nonetheless maintained the way it was before. The initial version presented by the graphic designer featured a light brown color. However, considering the researcher's preference for a darker version, the logo was adjusted to a dark grey color. The gradient orange color in the sun added a charming touch, and the new typography complemented the logo effectively. With these enhancements, the logo transformed into a more timely version of itself, but still maintained its familiar look and the Sámi identity, which includes the story of Niillaš.



### 5.4.3 Brand slogan

Holiday Village Valle's existing slogan was "experience the true northern Lapland in Sámiland", which was descriptive, but slightly too long. Therefore, it was necessary to redesign a more engaging slogan that is meaningful and easy to remember. The research results indicated that the stakeholders preferred mainly nature related elements to be included in Holiday Village Valle's slogan. The most popular slogan themes identified from the research were the mysterious atmosphere, the northern lifestyle, the open skies and landscapes, and the peace and quietness at the fells. However, as all other elements of the Holiday Village Valle's redesigned brand identity strongly reflect the Sámi roots of the brand, it was decided that the slogan would also include associations to the Sámi culture.

The process of redesigning the brand's new slogan was challenging, as the researcher aimed to create a short phrase that would resonate with various types of travelers seeking different experiences from their trips. Initially appearing as an impossible task to incorporate both nature and culture related elements into a concise slogan, the researcher returned back to the idea of paths, which had been discussed during the interviews. It was acknowledged that the words "path" and "story" both include plenty of associations to the nature and culture, and they in fact include all the large themes identified from the research. Therefore, these two words became central in the redesigning process of the new slogan. Although the word "path" was explored from various perspectives, finding a word combination that sounded smooth, catchy, and meaningful proved challenging. Therefore, it was decided that the theme of the slogan would revolve around stories.

The redesigned slogan of Holiday Village Valle is "Stories from the North", written with the Nobel Book typeface, which will be discussed further in this subchapter.

## Stories from the North

This slogan is simple, but contains plenty of associations that each person can interpret in their own, unique way. As the brand is Sámi, there exist multiple stories to be told about the Sámi culture, traditions and lifestyle, as well as about the history of the holiday village area and the owner family. Each rock, each fell, and each curve of the Teno river has their own story, as well as the animals, the trees and the plants. Additionally, there are plenty of stories related to the sky, such as the stories about the northern lights. These stories should be incorporated into everything the brand says and does, including the experiences it offers, the food it serves, and the social media posts it creates. The redesigned slogan is descriptive, and everyone reading the slogan can use their imagination to decide what the stories are about, and which stories are particularly interesting to them. The word "north" is used in the slogan as it encompasses elements that can be discovered only from the northern nature, such as the northern lights, open fells, polar night, and midnight sun.

#### 5.4.4 Typography

As discussed earlier in this subchapter, the typeface of the brand's logo was updated to a new look. It was agreed with the graphic designer Marjaana Peura that this particular typeface would also be used in all of the brand's marketing materials, as well as on the brand's website. Holiday Village Valle did not previously have a specific typeface in use, other than the capital letters in the logo. The graphic designer suggested that two typefaces would be selected: the one used in the logo, followed by another typeface that could be used with regular text in the marketing materials of the brand. Figure 13 presents the typefaces selected by Marjaana Peura.

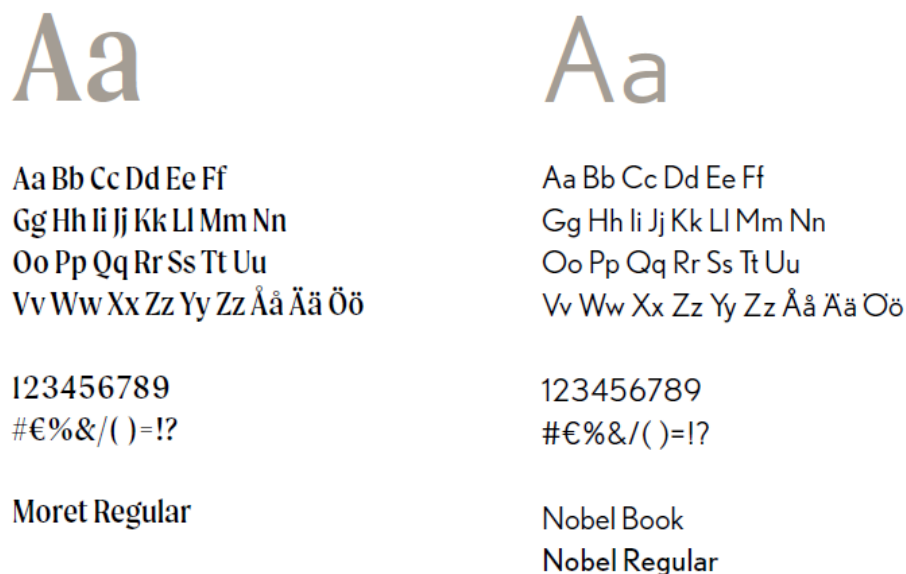


Figure 13. The typefaces selected by Marjaana Peura / Buorre

Based on the research findings, the researcher requested a calm, slightly round but modern typeface that fits into several different purposes, from telling stories on the website about the past and history of Holiday Village Valle, to preparing advertising materials about its products and services or menu prints for the restaurant. Based on those preferences, the graphic designer suggested using Moret Regular, the typeface of the logo, for headings or when highlighting specific parts of the text, and Nobel Book for the body text, as presented in Figure 13. Both typefaces can be found from Adobe Fonts. The first suggestion by the graphic designer was immediately accepted by the researcher, as it was apparent that the idea in the researcher's mind had been conveyed perfectly to the graphic designer. The selected typefaces fit well with the Sámi identity of the brand, and they are versatile in the ways they can be used for all necessary purposes. They also have a slightly round figure without appearing too script or feminine, which aligns with the stakeholder preferences identified during the research.

#### 5.4.5 Colour palette

The research results indicated that the brand should choose its color palette from the nature, and use mainly broken colors. Specific colors were identified

from the research results; orange from the autumn foliage and sun, green from the fresh green birches during the summer, blue from the sky and clear waters of the rivers and lakes, and grey from the rocks, reindeer antlers, reindeer harnesses, and old and patinated sleighs and boats. Figure 14 visualizes the redesigned color palette of Holiday Village Valle.

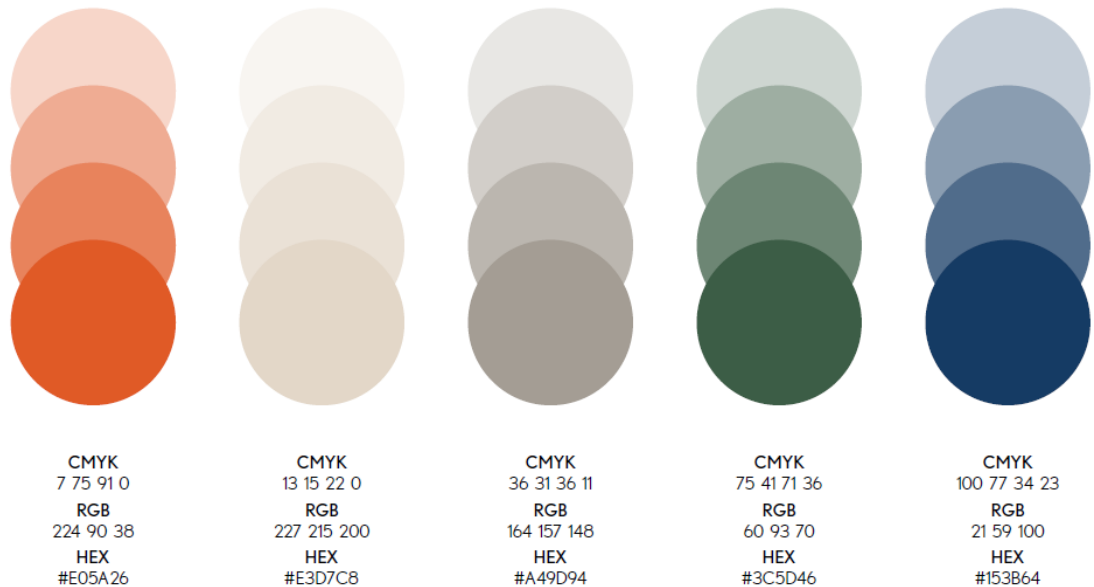


Figure 14. The redesigned color palette of Holiday Village Valle by Marjaana Peura / Buorre

Holiday Village Valle did not previously have an official color palette; only bright orange was used in some contexts, such as in the brand's advertisements and the interior design of the restaurant. However, the bright orange color was considered too aggressive. Based on the research findings, the color palette presented in Figure 14 was designed by Marjaana Peura. The chosen colors include broken colors that reflect the colors of nature. Two colors identified from the research findings were slightly modified, as they did not fit the otherwise broken colors of the palette. The first one of them was snow white, which was softened to a bit more beige version. The grey color identified in the research findings was used in the logo of Holiday Village Valle, however in the official

color palette it was replaced with a brown color, which has a natural tone that reflects for example the ground, or the color of the reindeer.

The color palette can be used in all marketing materials of the brand, as well as on the brand's website. The color palette can also be applied to many other purposes, such as the outfits of the team or the interior design of the accommodation and restaurant. The lighter shades of the colors will mainly serve as a background color, while the darker ones can be used to highlight different elements.

#### 5.4.6 Shapes

Even though the use of shapes was not thoroughly introduced in previous research on brand identity development, the research findings of this thesis suggested that shapes can be used in a versatile way to support the brand's identity. Therefore, they were included in the brand identity redesigning process of Holiday Village Valle. The research findings indicated that the round shape should be used in the visual identity of Holiday Village Valle, as they reflect several elements from the local nature. According to the research findings, the graphic designer designed round shapes that are presented in Figure 15.



Figure 15. The shapes designed for Holiday Village Valle by Marjaana Peura / Buorre

The round shapes designed by Marjaana Peura, presented in Figure 15, reflect multiple different elements from the local nature, such as the round rocks and the curves of the Teno river, the round peaks of the surrounding fells, and the round patterns formed by northern lights dancing in the sky, as discovered from the research findings. At the same time these shapes are also compatible with the Sámi culture, as in addition to the above mentioned nature related elements they can also be associated with reindeer antlers and reindeer sleigh runners. The shapes can be used in multiple different ways, such as in spicing up the marketing materials or social media photos of Holiday Village Valle. The shapes can also be used on the brand's website, as well as in the interior design of the accommodation spaces and restaurant, or in the outfits of the team. The colors of the shapes align with the colors of the redesigned color palette, and each shape also incorporates lighter color shades as per the color palette. The shapes were accepted by the researcher after the first view, and no changes were needed to the design.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter discusses the main results obtained through this thesis and offers further recommendations for Holiday Village Valle. The chapter is divided into four subchapters, from which the first subchapter provides the summary and conclusions of the research. The second subchapter evaluates the project and discusses its reliability, validity, and limitations, while the third subchapter defines the benefits gained for the company and the learning experiences of the researcher, and analyses how the objectives of the research were reached. The chapter then moves on to assessing the reliability and validity of the research. In the fourth subchapter, the future recommendations are offered for Holiday Village Valle on how it could further develop its operations through its new, redesigned brand identity.

### 6.1 Summary and conclusions

This thesis was an interesting and educating project, which significantly increased the professional skills of the researcher, and offered the case company Holiday Village Valle new and valuable tools to strengthen its brand. In the research conducted for this thesis, the brand identity of Holiday Village Valle was redesigned, however as the brand had not previously considered the topic from any other point of view than possessing a visible logo and slogan, most of the brand identity elements were designed from the scratch. The elements the brand previously lacked included for example a unique brand personality and tone-of-voice, brand personality, and vision, mission and values.

Despite the researcher operating as the main designer of the new brand identity, valuable assistance was received from a graphic designer as well. The graphic designer prepared graphic versions of the logo design, typography, color palette, and shapes, as graphic design was not within the researcher's skill set. The research would not have been as rich without the collaboration of the key stakeholders, who contributed essential ideas for redesigning an authentic and coherent brand identity that considered all necessary viewpoints.

Although the research process, with all its multiple phases, turned out to be longer than expected, the results obtained were worth the time invested.

As it was acknowledged during the research process, the concept of brand identity development particularly from the destination brand perspective has room for more research to be conducted. This research finishes with the conclusion that it is necessary for a destination brand, or any brand, to consider its roots, its story, and its unique characteristics in order to succeed and differentiate from the competitors. The competition in the hospitality industry is tough, and new brands constantly enter the markets. As Holiday Village Valle is a Sámi brand and possesses rich stories and history, it is evident that incorporating these elements into the brand's identity is necessary and beneficial. All building blocks to develop a unique brand identity already existed; they only needed to be identified and exploited effectively. The redesigned brand identity of Holiday Village is authentic and coherent, and it clearly reflects the Sámi roots of the brand.

## 6.2 Evaluation of the results: reliability, validity and limitations

The reliability and validity of the research was increased by several factors, starting from the researcher's long working history in the company. Due to her work, combined with previous studies the researcher had plenty of background knowledge to support the research, and during the years the researcher had also established close relationships with the brand's key stakeholders. As the research was conducted as action research, and since the researcher worked in Holiday Village Valle at the time of the research process, it was possible to stay close to the research topic on a daily basis. The stakeholders involved in the research were chosen carefully, and they represented the key touchpoints where especially the international customers of Holiday Village Valle encounter the brand. The genuine interest of the stakeholders to engage in the research process was a valuable asset which significantly increased the reliability of the results.



The chosen research methods were suitable for the research, the data gathered supported the research questions thoroughly, and all key topics related to the brand identity redesigning process were covered. The findings from the interviews showed similarities consistently. An in-depth analysis was conducted for the data with the content analysis method, and the data was systematically grouped in order to identify the main themes. As previously mentioned on this thesis, the results of this research can be utilized in another research environment where a brand is redesigned or developed from scratch, as long as the limitations of the research are considered. As the brand identity elements in this thesis are redesigned particularly for Holiday Village Valle, which is a Sámi brand, it must be remembered that the results cannot be generalized with another brand that has different characteristics and operations. However, the research process conducted for Holiday Village Valle with all its research methods can be applied to the brand identity development of any other brand.

Other limitations to this research exist as well. The research would have been more comprehensive by including 2-3 more stakeholders in the interviews, such as a Sámi originated supplier, which due to time limitations was unfortunately not possible during the research. In addition to this, it would also have been interesting to include more travel agents in the research. The travel agent interviewed for this research was one of the most loyal partners of Holiday Village Valle and therefore a valuable stakeholder to be included in the research. However, it would have been fruitful to also include a travel agent especially from the new and potential markets, including the United States and Australia.

### 6.3 Practical contributions

This thesis included several steps that did not proceed in perfect order; the research process involved back-and-forth movements as new knowledge and observations emerged, and new ideas were generated. The objectives set for the research were achieved, and the results were satisfying for the brand and its stakeholders, and for the researcher as well. The thesis process was extremely valuable for the brand, and an educational learning process for the

researcher. The researcher had not previously worked with brand identity development, and the possibility to operate as the lead designer of the new brand identity of Holiday Village Valle significantly strengthened the professional skills of the researcher. Combining theory with practice was effortless, and plenty of information related to brand identity could be easily found to support the research. However, it was noticed that finding previous research related to the brand identity development and stakeholder collaboration particularly from the perspective of a destination brand was challenging. This, however, led to the increased interest to possibly conduct future research on those topics in some other research environment. The thesis process also sparked an interest in conducting further research on how different senses could be utilized in a destination brand's identity, as this topic was briefly mentioned in some academic sources.

The most concrete outcome of this thesis was the visual brand identity book, which contains all of the brand identity elements redesigned during this research. The brand identity book was designed by using Adobe Photoshop. With the help of the brand identity book the Holiday Village Valle team can find a clear direction and strategy for their everyday work. The brand identity book also operates as a guideline in designing the brand's communication on all marketing channels.

#### 6.4 Future recommendations for Holiday Village Valle

Holiday Village Valle now has a redesigned brand identity built upon its Sámi roots, differentiating the brand from its competitors. However, the development work should not stop there; the redesigned brand identity is only the starting point of the new journey toward a successful brand. There are various purposes for which the company can utilize its redesigned brand identity and numerous ways in which the brand can further continue the development work. First of all, the new brand identity should be fully integrated into all operations of Holiday Village Valle. The team working in the company must be thoroughly familiarized with the new brand identity elements to ensure that everyone is well-acquainted with the brand. Holiday Village Valle must adhere to the new brand identity guidelines in all communication and actions, and also the redesigned visual

identity of the brand must be consistently applied in every context. It is also recommended for Holiday Village Valle to assess its activities, restaurant, and accommodation spaces, and consider how the redesigned brand identity could be incorporated in them as well. As an example, the new brand identity could be employed in product and service development in various ways, such as enhancing the narrative of the experiences offered to the customers or incorporating it into the menu prints which the customers see when ordering dinner in the restaurant.

The most crucial future action recommended for the management of Holiday Village Valle is to invest in a proper marketing strategy that fully exploits the new brand identity. Holiday Village Valle has previously focused mainly on its existing travel agent partnerships, but in case the brand desires to grow and expand to new markets, more research must be carried out. Holiday Village Valle should thoroughly consider the brand's positioning in the existing and potential markets, and define its target customers more precisely. Specific buyer personas should also be identified as part of the process. Holiday Village Valle should also build a marketing plan to guide its everyday marketing actions in a more consistent way. This includes constructing a plan for the channels used in marketing, and determining the marketing budget to coordinate the brand's marketing activities in a more effective and consistent way.

The management of Holiday Village Valle is also advised to go through its entire customer journey, and map the touchpoints along the journey more effectively in order to find out where and how customers encounter the brand. Some of the stakeholders interviewed for this thesis, such as the travel agent, supplier and DMO, form important touchpoints for Holiday Village Valle. However, there are multiple other touchpoints as well to consider, such as the brand's website, social media channels, magazine advertisements, booking channels, customer service, and so forth. After identifying the most important touchpoints, Holiday Village Valle is recommended to utilize its new brand identity elements on those touchpoints in a coherent way. Finally, it is also recommended for the management of Holiday Village Valle to continue strengthening the collaboration with the brand's stakeholders even further, and benefit the

expertise of the key stakeholders in several purposes, such as product and service development. As noticed in the interviews, stakeholders generate interesting ideas that should be listened to more carefully. As the relationship with the key stakeholders is reliable and open, Holiday Village Valle is recommended to request for regular feedback from them, and to consider exploiting stakeholder co-creation, which was described in the literature review of this thesis. Greater benefits could be gained for all parties involved by engaging stakeholders more often and consistently in developing the brand and its operations.

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## APPENDICES

Appendix 1.	The schedule of the thesis process
Appendix 2.	Reducing conducted for the subquestion 1
Appendix 3.	Grouping conducted for the subquestion 1
Appendix 4.	The main groups identified for the subquestion 1
Appendix 5.	Reducing conducted for the subquestion 2
Appendix 6.	Grouping conducted for the subquestion 2
Appendix 7.	The main groups identified for the subquestion 2
Appendix 8.	Reducing conducted for the subquestion 3
Appendix 9.	Grouping conducted for the subquestion 3
Appendix 10.	The main groups identified for the subquestion 3
Appendix 11.	Brand identity book

Appendix 1. The schedule of the thesis process

Schedule							
Phase	Quarter 2, 2022 (April, May, June)	Quarter 3, 2022 (July, August, September)	Quarter 4, 2022 (October, November, December)	Quarter 1, 2023 (January, February, March)	Quarter 2, 2023 (April, May, June)	Quarter 3, 2023 (July, August, September)	Quarter 4, 2023 (October, November, December)
Selecting the case							
Formulating the research purpose, objectives and questions							
Choosing the research approach and methods							
Familiarizing with literature							
Collecting data							
Analyzing and interpreting data							
Redesigning the brand identity							
Writing conclusions and future recommendations							
Finalizing the research							

## Appendix 2. Reducing conducted for the subquestion 1

Subquestion 1: How to construct the foundations for the brand identity, including vision, mission, values, and culture related emotional and ethical viewpoints?	
Original expressions	Reduced expressions
The company was established to sustain the family's traditional lifestyle from childhood	Sustaining the traditional lifestyle
In the beginning the company brought only some extra earnings for the founder	Providing extra earnings for the founder
The company eventually became the main livelihood for the family	Providing livelihood for the family
The company hopefully continues to grow and provide livelihood also in the future	Growth plans, family's future livelihood
The company can employ local people	Employing local people
The brand is an ambassador of the Sámi culture, and it shares culture related information	Being the ambassador of the Sámi culture
The brand shares correct information and maintains the culture alive	Maintaining the culture alive
There is not enough information available about the Sámi culture	Lack of the Sámi culture related information
Children do not receive sufficient Sámi culture related teaching at school	Lack of the Sámi culture related teaching at schools
Being the leading Sámi hospitality company in the northern areas of Finland and Norway	Becoming the leading Sámi hospitality company
Growth targets are reached in a sustainable way, mass tourism is not supported	Growing the brand in a sustainable way
The brand pursues to offer unique and unforgettable experiences to its customers	Offering authentic experiences
The customer groups are maintained relatively small, to ensure personal service	Offering personal service for small groups
Becoming one of the best workplaces in Finnish Lapland is part of the company's vision	Supporting a good and healthy working environment
It is important to be warm and open	Being warm and open
Do not disneyfy the Sámi culture	Being truthful, not gloryfying the Sámi culture
The local community must be genuinely considered in everything	Considering the local community
The customers must be guided to the right routes and places to visit	Offering ethical guidelines for the customers, responsibility
The whole employee team must know the brand completely	The employees know the brand by heart
The Sámi culture should not be marketed as something exotic	Not marketing the Sámi culture with exoticness
It is important to be truthful in everything	Being truthful
Contradictions should not be built between industries; bridges should be built instead	Building bridges, not contradictions
Collaboration with other industries, companies and people is important	Supporting collaboration
The nature must be respected in everything we do	Respecting the nature
There are sacred Sámi places that must be respected	Respecting the sacred Sámi places
Some Sámi jewellery can be used in the team's outfits	Using Sámi jewellery in the team's outfits is allowed
Honesty should be one of the key values	Being honest in everything
The Sámi culture should not appear as polished and perfect	Being truthful, not gloryfying the Sámi culture
The life should be presented with its positive and negative sides	Being truthful, showing the ups and downs of life
All aspects of sustainability are important	Supporting sustainability
Becoming part of the culture without offending it is a new trend in hospitality	Becoming part of the culture in a sustainable way
Authentic experiences are searched by travelers	Customers seek for authentic experiences
With honest communication, the local community will more likely approve the brand	Supporting honest communication
Marketing with exoticness is not acceptable; it should be more about reality	Marketing with reality, not exoticness
The Sámi lifestyle is based on seasons and this is visible in everything, such as food	Presenting the Sámi lifestyle
The Sámi culture and the long history must be respected	Respecting the Sámi culture and history
We want to make the Sámi culture visible to everyone	Bringing the Sámi culture visible
The nature and the relationship with it must be respected in everything	Respecting the nature
We must walk in the nature without disturbing it	Not disturbing the nature
Locality is important; using local ingredients, suppliers and staff	Collaborating with local businesses, hiring local people
It is necessary to be ecological	Being ecological
Authenticity is the key thing, being true to oneself is a must	Being authentic and true to oneself
Making the Sámi culture visible is important, as it is the way to differentiate the brand	Making the Sámi culture visible
People these days want to support family businesses, as there are so many chain hotels	Being a family business
Customers are more aware of the sustainability issues these days	The responsibility and awareness of customers
It would be interesting to tell more stories about the local food and ingredients	Telling stories about the local food
The Sámi culture is attractive and dignified in the eyes of the customers	The attractive and dignified Sámi culture
The customers want to find out more	Attracting customers to find out more
Th Sámi culture is easily approachable	Being easily approachable
The real Sámi atmosphere is mysterious in a good way	Maintaining some mysteriousness
There is something unexpected in the culture	Maintaining the unexpected
Everything is not exposed immediately	Maintaining some secrecy
Traditions are strongly visible in the Sámi culture	Valuing the Sámi culture related traditions
Family is valued very highly in the Sámi culture	Valuing the family
Customers get a wow-feeling when experiencing the Sámi culture	The attractiveness of the culture
The Sámi culture is very unknown to many people	The unknown status of the Sámi culture
There is not much information available about the Sámi culture	Lack of the Sámi culture related information
It is important to tell stories, but not only about the culture	Telling stories about the culture, history and nature
It is good to have some mysteriousness involved	Having some mysteriousness
The brand must be real and authentic, not a made-up thing	Being real and authentic
Family centricity must be the key thing	Being family centric

## Appendix 3. Grouping conducted for the subquestion 1

Subquestion 1: How to construct the foundations for the brand identity, including vision, mission, values, and culture related emotional and ethical viewpoints?		
Reduced expressions	Group 1	
Sustaining the traditional lifestyle	Sustaining the traditional lifestyle Maintaining the culture alive Respecting and expressing the Sámi culture Valuing the Sámi culture related traditions	
Being the ambassador of the Sámi culture		
Maintaining the culture alive		
Presenting the Sámi lifestyle		
Respecting the Sámi culture and history		
Bringing the Sámi culture visible		
Becoming the leading Sámi hospitality company		
Making the Sámi culture visible		
Valuing the Sámi culture related traditions		
The attractiveness of the culture		
The attractive and dignified Sámi culture	Offering authentic experiences Being true to oneself Being warm and open Being authentic and real	
Customers seek for authentic experiences		
Offering authentic experiences		
Being authentic and true to oneself		
Being real and authentic		
Being easily approachable		
Being warm and open		
Not gloryfying the Sámi culture		
Attracting customers to find out more		
Telling stories about the local food		Telling stories about the Sámi culture, history, traditions and lifestyle Leaving room for the unexpected
Telling stories about the culture, history and nature		
Maintaining some mysteriousness		
Maintaining some unexpected		
Maintaining some secrecy	Sharing culture related information Sharing only correct information	
The employees know the brand by heart		
Lack of the Sámi culture related information		
Lack of the Sámi culture related teaching at schools		
The unknown status of the Sámi culture		
Lack of the Sámi culture related information		
Being honest in everything		Being truthful Being honest
Not marketing the Sámi culture with exoticness		
Being truthful		
Supporting honest communication		
Not marketing the culture with exoticness		
Being truthful, not gloryfying the Sámi culture		
Being truthful, showing the ups and downs of life	Supporting sustainable growth Building a healthy and happy workplace Respecting the local community Supporting ethical and responsible tourism Supporting collaboration Respecting the nature Supporting locality	
Employing local people		
Growing the brand in a sustainable way		
Offering personal service for small groups		
Supporting a good and healthy working environment		
Considering the local community		
Offering ethical guidelines for the customers, responsibility		
Building bridges, not contradictions		
Supporting collaboration		
Respecting the nature		
Respecting the sacred Sámi places		
Using Sámi jewellery in the team's outfits is allowed		
Supporting sustainability		
Becoming part of the culture in a sustainable way		
The responsibility and awareness of customers		
Respecting the nature		
Not disturbing the nature		
Collaborating with local businesses, hiring local people		
Being ecological	Providing livelihood for the owner family Being a family business Supporting family values	
Providing extra earnings for the family		
Providing livelihood for the family		
Growth plans, the family's future livelihood		
Being a family business		
Valuing the family		
Being family centric		

## Appendix 4. The main groups identified for the subquestion 1

Subquestion 1: How to construct the foundations for the brand identity, including vision, mission, values, and culture related emotional and ethical viewpoints?		
Group 1	Group 2	Main group
Sustaining the traditional lifestyle Maintaining the culture alive Respecting and expressing the Sámi culture Valuing traditions	Maintaining the Sámi culture alive by respecting traditions in all of the brand's actions	Authenticity
Offering authentic experiences Being true to oneself Being warm and open Being authentic and real	Being authentic Sámi and offering authentic experiences related to the Sámi culture	
Telling stories about the Sámi culture, history, traditions and lifestyle Leaving room for the unexpected	Attracting interest by telling stories about the Sámi culture, history and nature	
Sharing culture related information Sharing correct information	Increasing cultural awareness by sharing information	
Bring truthful Being honest	Being truthful and honest in everything the brand does	Reliability
Supporting sustainable growth Building a healthy and happy workplace Respecting the local community Supporting ethical and responsible tourism Supporting collaboration Respecting the nature Supporting locality	Building a healthy workplace  Supporting ethical and responsible tourism Respecting the nature	Sustainability
Providing livelihood for the owner family Being a family business Supporting family values	Supporting family values	Family centricity



## Appendix 5. Reducing conducted for the subquestion 2

Subquestion 2: How to develop the brand's character, including its personality, tone-of-voice and story that reflect the brand's Sámi roots?	
Original expressions	Reduced expressions
The Sámi people have a very calm and charismatic personality	The Sámi people are calm and charismatic
The Sámi people are often slightly rough around the edges and speak directly	The Sámi people are slightly rough around the edges
The Sámi people are humble but also proud to be themselves as who they are	The Sámi people are humble but proud of themselves
The Sámi people let everyone else be themselves as who they are	The Sámi people let everyone be themselves
A typical Sámi enjoys to tell plenty of interesting stories	A Sámi person tells plenty of stories
A Sámi person has a slightly mysterious personality	A Sámi person has a slightly mysterious personality
It is easy to talk to a Sámi person but more difficult to get to know properly	A Sámi person is easy to talk to, but hard to know
A typical Sámi is a happy and warm person, almost like a mother that takes care of you	A Sámi person is warm and caretaking
A Sámi person must be calm in order to survive in the nature, and have a reliable personality	A Sámi person has a calm and reliable personality
Safety, reliability, and trustworthiness are typical characteristics of a Sámi person	A Sámi person is safe, reliable and trustworthy
It is easy to approach and talk to a Sámi person as they are so warm and friendly	A Sámi person is warm and easily approachable
A Sámi person is a funny personality and has a good sense of humor	A Sámi person has a good sense of humor
A typical Sámi is a very friendly person	A Sámi person is friendly
A typical Sámi person is very funny and humoristic	A Sámi person is funny
A Sámi person does not take things too seriously	A Sámi person is not too serious
A typical Sámi person is shy, and does not talk much unless there is something important	A Sámi person is shy
The tone-of-voice of a typical Sámi person is direct and slightly rough	A Sámi person is direct
The communication of a Sámi person is not too formal	A Sámi person is not too formal
Words and sentences from the Sámi language are used in all communication	A Sámi person uses Sámi words and expressions
The communication includes nuances of the everyday life of the Sámi	A Sámi person tells about the everyday Sámi life
A typical Sámi person is joyful and friendly with other people	A Sámi person is joyful and friendly
A Sámi person uses plenty of humor in communication	A Sámi person uses humor
A Sámi person speaks with a friendly and warm tone	A Sámi person is friendly and warm
Colorful language is used by a typical Sámi person	A Sámi person uses colorful language
A Sámi person communicates with a friendly and colorful style	A Sámi person is friendly and colorful
A Sámi person tells plenty of stories related to life, culture and history	A Sámi person tells plenty of stories
A Sámi person is quiet and does not speak much	A Sámi person is quiet and does not speak much
A Sámi brand should not choose sides or take a stand when it comes to delicate topics	A Sámi brand should not take a stand too strongly
Positive and encouraging commenting can be made by a Sámi brand	A Sámi brand should be positive and encouraging
A Sámi brand should not express too strong opinions on delicate issues	A Sámi brand should not express too strong opinions
The tone-of-voice should reflect the values of the brand	A Sámi brand should communicate about its values
Reindeer herding is the most interesting element in the story of the Sámi people	Telling stories about reindeer herding
The life story of the owner's father is interesting	Telling the story of the brand's founder
Reindeer herding should be included in the storytelling	Including reindeer herding in the storytelling
The connection between the Sámi people and reindeer is attractive	The connection between the Sámi people and reindeer
Reindeer and people in fact belong to each other	The relationship between the Sámi people and reindeer
The story of the company owner's father should be told	The story of the brand's founder
There should be real people included in the stories	Including real people in the stories
A woman has a strong status in the Sámi culture as a matriarch who takes care of the family	The woman's strong status in the Sámi culture
It would be interesting to know how life was in the past	Life in the past
The history of the holiday village and its area is interesting	The history of the holiday village
It would be fascinating to know the story of the ingredients used in the restaurant	The story of the dishes and the ingredients used

## Appendix 6. Grouping conducted for the subquestion 2

Subquestion 2: How to develop the brand's character, including its personality, tone-of-voice and story that reflect the brand's Sámi roots?	
Reduced expressions	Group 1
The Sámi people are calm and charismatic	Tells plenty of stories A slightly mysterious personality A safe and reliable personality A warm personality A friendly and talkative personality
The Sámi people are slightly rough around the edges	
The Sámi people are humble but proud of themselves	
A Sámi people let everyone be themselves	
A Sámi person tells plenty of stories	
A Sámi person has a slightly mysterious personality	
A Sámi person is easy to talk to, but hard to know	
A Sámi person is warm and caretaking	
A Sámi person has a calm and reliable personality	
A Sámi person is safe, reliable and trustworthy	
A Sámi person is warm and easily approachable	
A Sámi person has a good sense of humor	
A Sámi person is friendly	
A Sámi person is funny	
A Sámi person is not too serious	
A Sámi person is shy	Tells about the everyday Sámi life A friendly and warm communication style Uses colorful language Tells plenty of stories Does not take a stand or express strong opinions Positive communication style Communicates about values
A Sámi person is direct	
A Sámi person is not too formal	
A Sámi person uses Sámi words and expressions	
A Sámi person tells about the everyday Sámi life	
A Sámi person is joyful and friendly	
A Sámi person uses humor	
A Sámi person is friendly and warm	
A Sámi person uses colorful language	
A Sámi person is friendly and colorful	
A Sámi person tells plenty of stories	
A Sámi person is quiet and does not speak much	
A Sámi brand should not take a stand too strongly	Stories about reindeer herding Stories about the brand's founder Stories about other real people Stories about the brand's history
A Sámi brand should be positive and encouraging	
A Sámi brand should not express too strong opinions	
A Sámi brand should communicate about its values	
Telling stories about reindeer herding	
Telling the story of the brand's founder	
Including reindeer herding in the storytelling	
The connection between the Sámi people and reindeer	
The relationship between the Sámi people and reindeer	
The story of the brand's founder	
Including real people in the stories	
The woman's strong status in the Sámi culture	Stories about the brand's history
Life in the past	
The history of the holiday village	
The story of the dishes and the ingredients used	

## Appendix 7. The main groups identified for the subquestion 2

Subquestion 2: How to develop the brand's character, including its personality, tone-of-voice and story that reflect the brand's Sámi roots?		
Group 1	Group 2	Main group
Tells plenty of stories A slighty mysterious personality A safe and reliable personality A warm personality A friendly and talkative personality	Storytelling Mysteriousness Reliability Warmth Friendliness	Friendly, warm and reliable personality
Tells about the everyday Sámi life A friendly communication style Uses colorful language Tells plenty of stories Does not take a stand or express too strong opinions Positive communication style Communicates about values	Everyday life Friendliness Colorfulness Storytelling Respect Positivity Values	Friendly, colorful and respectful tone-of-voice
Stories about reindeer herding Stories about the brand's founder Niillaš Stories about other real people Stories about the brand's history Stories about the unique nature	Reindeer herding The story of Niillaš The unique nature	Reindeer herding, the unique nature and the story of Niillaš as the themes for the brand story

## Appendix 8. Reducing conducted for the subquestion 3

Subquestion 3: How to utilize the Sámi culture and nature related elements in the brand's visual identity?	
Original expressions	Reduced expressions
Broken colors should be used in the visual identity of the brand	Choosing broken colors
Colors should be chosen straight from the nature	Choosing colors from the nature
The color palette should reflect the seasons in Utsjoki	Choosing colors from the seasons in Utsjoki
Orange reminds of the sun and the beautiful autumn foliage	Orange from the sun and the autumn foliage
Grey reflects the surrounding fells and the rocks of the Teno river	Grey from the fells and the rocks of the Teno river
Grey reminds of reindeer harnesses and old and patinated sleighs and boats	Grey from the reindeer harnesses, sleighs and boats
Snow white is one typical color taken from the nature	Snow white from the wintertime
It would be a good idea to select broken colors from the nature	Broken colors from the nature
Pure white from the snow, and blue from the sky and the clear waters could be used	White from the snow, blue from the water
Autumn foliage orange is a beautiful color	Orange from the autumn foliage
Blue is a good color as it reminds of the clear waters in Utsjoki	Blue from the clear waters
Brown reminds of the reindeer leather	Brown from the reindeer leather
Green is a color that reminds of the fresh green birches during the summertime	Green from the fresh birches during summertime
Seasonal colors could be used, like orange, green, blue and white	Choosing seasonal colors
Pastel colors of the polar night could be used	Pastel colors from the polar night
Green as a seasonable color should be used	Green from the summer season
The Sámi culture related bright colors such as orange, blue and red could be used	Choosing the Sámi culture related bright colors
The photographs of the brand should also have a calm color palette with broken colors	Using the calm color palette also in the photographs
The photos should not be too bright, they must be compatible with everything else	Not too bright photos, colors compatible
The whole color palette and the atmosphere should be cozy and peaceful	A cozy and peaceful atmosphere in the color palette
Black and white could be used when telling about the history of the brand	Using black and white when describing the history
Shapes should also be chosen from the nature	Choosing shapes from the nature
The round shape reminds of the fells, and of the curves of the Teno river	Round shape from the fells and the curves of the Teno river
Round patterns are sometimes formed by the northern lights	Round patterns from the northern lights
Reindeer antlers often have a round shape	Round shape from the reindeer antlers
The sun and moon are round, and so are the rocks of the Teno river	Round shape from the sun, moon, and the rocks of the river
The round shape reminds of reindeer antlers, and reindeer sleigh runners	Round shape from the reindeer antlers and sleigh runners
Several elements in the nature are round, such as the peaks of the fells, and the river curves	Round shape from the peaks of the fells, and the river curves
Shapes from the nature should be selected, such as the shape of the fells	Choosing shapes from the nature
The existing logo strongly reflects the Sámi culture with the reindeer and the fells	Maintaining the reindeer and fell theme in the logo
The curves below the fells in the logo remind a little bit of the curves of the Teno river	Maintaining the river curves in the logo
The round shapes from the nature are visible in the logo, which is good	Maintaining the round shapes in the logo
The current logo theme works well with the Sámi culture, as there is a reindeer	Maintaining the reindeer theme in the logo
The implementation of the logo is not functional and the letters are aggressive	Improving the implementation and typography of the logo
There are too many small details, the logo cannot be scaled on a small size	Reducing the small details in the logo
The capital letters in the logo look like they are going to attack	Using a more peaceful typography
The letters in the logo should be more peaceful and maybe more round, like the nature	Using a more round shape in the typography
It is not wise to change the brand name, as the brand is well known with that name	Maintaining the existing brand name
Maybe it is not a clever idea to change the brand name	Maintaining the existing brand name
The current name describes the brand very well, so it should be maintained	Maintaining the existing brand name
The mysterious atmosphere of Utsjoki should be highlighted in the brand slogan	Highlighting the mysterious atmosphere in Utsjoki
The slogan should reflect the northern lifestyle in all possible ways	Highlighting the northern lifestyle
Open skies and landscapes, peace and quietness are good themes for the slogan	Highlighting the open landscapes and peacefulness
The nature in Utsjoki is so different than in any other location in Finland	Highlighting the unique nature in Utsjoki
The visibility of northern lights is good, there is almost no light pollution	Highlighting the visibility of northern lights
The atmosphere in Utsjoki is somehow mysterious	Highlighting the mysterious atmosphere in Utsjoki
Utsjoki is the northernmost municipality of Finland, and it should be highlighted	Highlighting the northernmost location of Utsjoki
The visibility of northern lights in Utsjoki is one of the best in Finland	Highlighting the visibility of the northern lights
Highlighting the northern lifestyle in the slogan would be beneficial	Highlighting the northern lifestyle
It would be wise to speak about the northern lifestyle rather than about the Sámi lifestyle	Highlighting the northern lifestyle rather than the Sámi lifestyle
The slogan could be more general and nature related, as some people are not into culture	Choosing a nature related slogan

## Appendix 9. Grouping conducted for the subquestion 3

Subquestion 3: How to utilize the Sámi culture and nature related elements in the brand's visual identity?	
Reduced expressions	Group 1
Choosing broken colors	Using broken colors
Choosing colors from the nature	Choosing colors from the nature
Choosing colors from the seasons in Utsjoki	
Orange from the sun and the autumn foliage	Orange from the sun and the autumn foliage
Grey from the fells and rocks of the Teno river	Grey from the fells and the rocks of the Teno river
Grey from the reindeer harnesses, sleighs and boats	
Snow white from the wintertime	
Choosing broken colors from the nature	
White from the snow, blue from the water	White from the snow
Orange from the autumn foliage	
Blue from the clear waters	Blue from the clear waters
Brown from the reindeer leather	
Green from the fresh birches during summertime	Green from the fresh summers
Choosing seasonal colors	
Pastel colors from the polar night	
Green from the summer season	
Choosing the Sami culture related bright colors	
Using the calm color palette also in the photographs	
Not too bright photos, colors compatible with each other	A peaceful and coherent color palette in the whole visual identity
A cozy and peaceful atmosphere in the color palette	
Using black and white when describing the history	
Choosing shapes from the nature	Choosing shapes from the nature
Round shape from the fells and the curves of the Teno river	Round shape from the fells and curves of the Teno river
Round pattern from the northern lights	Round shape from the northern lights
Round shape from the reindeer antlers	Round shape from the reindeer antlers
Round shape from the sun, moon, and the rocks of the river	Round shape from the rocks of the Teno river
Round shape from the reindeer antlers and sleigh runners	
Round shape from the peaks of the fells, and the river curves	
Choosing shapes from the nature	
Maintaining the reindeer and fell theme in the logo	Maintaining the reindeer and fell theme in the logo
Maintaining the river curves in the logo	
Maintaining the round shapes in the logo	Using round shapes in the logo
Maintaining the reindeer theme in the logo	Reflecting the Sámi culture in the logo
Improving the implementation and typography of the logo	
Reducing the small details in the logo	Improving the implementation of the logo
Using a more peaceful typography	
Using a more round shape in the typography	Choosing a round shape for the typography
Maintaining the existing brand name	Maintaining the existing brand name
Maintaining the existing brand name	
Maintaining the existing brand name	
Highlighting the mysterious atmosphere in Utsjoki	The mysterious atmosphere in Utsjoki
Highlighting the northern lifestyle	The northern lifestyle
Highlighting the open landscapes and peacefulness	
Highlighting the unique nature in Utsjoki	The unique nature in Utsjoki
Highlighting the visibility of the northern lights	The good visibility of the northern lights
Highlighting the mysterious atmosphere in Utsjoki	
Highlighting the northernmost location of Utsjoki	
Highlighting the visibility of the northern lights	
Highlighting the northern lifestyle	
Highlighting the northern lifestyle rather than the Sámi lifestyle	
Choosing a nature related slogan	

## Appendix 10. The main groups identified for the subquestion 3

Subquestion 3: How to utilize the Sámi culture and nature related elements in the brand's visual identity?		
Group 1	Group 2	Main group
Using broken colors Choosing colors from the nature Orange from the sun and autumn foliage Grey from the fells and rocks of the Teno river White from the snow Blue from the clear waters Green from the fresh summers A peaceful and coherent color palette in the whole visual identity	Broken colors Colors from the nature  A peaceful and coherent color palette	Nature related colors and shapes, and Sámi culture related themes for the visual identity
Choosing shapes from the nature Round shape from the fells and the curves of the Teno river Round shape from the northern lights Round shape from the reindeer antlers Round shape from the rocks of the Teno river	Shapes from the nature	
Maintaining the reindeer and fell theme in the logo Using round shapes in the logo Reflecting the Sámi culture in the logo Improving the implementation of the logo Choosing a round shape for the typography	The reindeer and fell theme Round shapes  Improved implementation Round typography	
Maintaining the existing brand name	No changes to the brand name	The current brand name
The mysterious atmosphere in Utsjoki The northern lifestyle The unique nature in Utsjoki The good visibility of the northern lights	Mysteriousness The northern lifestyle The unique nature	The unique nature and the northern lifestyle as the themes for the slogan

## Appendix 11. Brand identity book



Holiday Village

**Valle**

Brand Identity Book

2023

# Brand vision and mission

## Vision

Our vision is to emerge as the leading Sámi hospitality brand that operates as the ambassador of the Sámi culture, and enriches the lives of our guests, stakeholders, and local community. We are committed to our team, and we pursue to create an excellent workplace where innovation thrives, and every individual's potential is unleashed, as we believe that the wellbeing and professional growth of our team ensures extraordinary experiences for our guests. Together we will lead the way in Sámi tourism, setting the standard for authenticity and sustainability.

## Mission

Our mission is to foster the development of sustainable Sámi tourism and to offer our guests the itinerary to a living, breathing Sámi story. Through our operations, we are creating memories, and igniting a deep love for the Sámi culture and for our cozy holiday village. Guided by the values that have bound our family for generations, we are committed to building a brand that is not merely a destination, but a feeling. We are extending the warmth of our Sámi home to our cherished guests, our dedicated team, and our valued stakeholders, so that in Holiday Village Valle they too can feel like they have arrived to their second home.



## **Brand values**



### **We are authentic**

We deeply value our indigenous Sámi heritage, making sure that the Sámi culture is an integral part of our everyday operations.

### **We are reliable**


We uphold unwavering honesty, truthfulness, and reliability in all of our actions.

### **We are sustainable**

We are dedicated to preserving the environment and promoting sustainable tourism.

### **We are family**

We embrace family values within our workplace and with all our customers and stakeholders.



# Brand personality & tone-of-voice

## Brand personality

Holiday Village Valle´s brand personality reflects a warm, friendly and charismatic Sámi person that is true to oneself, and also lets others be who they are. The person highly respects family, friends, and other close ones, and is generally known as a safe and trustworthy person. The person is eager to tell stories and share knowledge, and has a great sense of humor, but at the same time the person maintains a hint of mysteriousness and leaves room for imagination. When necessary, the person can also be calm and rational, which ensures that the person can survive in the nature and live the everyday life with its happy and sad moments. Nature and animals are close to the person´s heart, and the person pursues to protect and take care of them as well as possible, and live in balance with the nature. This is visible in the person´s everyday life, in the food that the person eats, in the way the person moves in the nature, and in the way the person works and spends free time.

## Tone-of-voice

Holiday Village Valle speaks with a warm and friendly tone, combined with occasional humor. The brand uses colorful language combined with words from the Sámi language, and tells plenty of enchanting stories that attract the interest of other people. The brand has a positive attitude, which is visible in the way the brand speaks. In case the brand must express opinions or take a stand, it is always done in a positive and encouraging way. The brand speaks respectfully towards everyone at all times, despite their origin, choices, beliefs, or lifestyle.

## Brand story

Back in the old days, the life of the Sámi was often a struggle with the forces of the nature. Niillaš, a Sámi reindeer herder born and raised in Inari, Anár, had spent his entire life working with reindeer, following the traditions of his family. Hunting and fishing were also an essential part of his life. On a late summer day in 1950, Niillaš decided to begin an extraordinary journey together with his loyal dog Ruvge, and his reindeer Cemmo. On his back the reindeer carried a lávvu, a traditional Sámi tent, to provide shelter at night, and Niillaš had packed some salt, coffee, dry meat, bread, and butter in his backpack to keep the hunger away along the journey. After collecting the essentials, the trio headed towards Utsjoki, known as Ohcejohka among the Sámi, a place described by its mighty river and large salmon that swim in the clear water that sparkles in the sun. Those were the stories Niillaš had only heard about, and with dreams of a new life, the trio began their adventure to the unknown.

Cemmo was not used to walking along and carrying a load, but Niillaš, an experienced reindeer herder, guided Cemmo with the help of Ruvge, whose barking served as commands. Willow grouses were calling with their distinctive sounds, and lemmings were curiously following from their dens, as the trio passed them. The journey was long, and during some nights, Niillaš found shelter in goahtis, turf huts, which provided better protection from the rain and wind than the lávvu did. Upon reaching the Geavvu river and the powerful Fiellogorži waterfall, the force of the rushing water amazed Niillaš with its mightiness. After crossing the river, Niillaš decided to spend the night in this beautiful spot, surrounded by magnificent fells and fresh green birches. While admiring the crystal-clear water of the river, he observed plenty of fish swimming beneath the surface.

## Brand story

With hunger gnawing at him, Niillaš caught a large salmon and a trout from the river. One fresh fish was enough to feed him and Ruvge, while the rest was preserved in salt for later. Cemmo enjoyed some lichen and water, and with full stomachs, the trio fell asleep by listening to the whispers of the surrounding nature. After replenishing their strength, the journey continued. As they reached the fell peaks, a breathtaking landscape unfolded in front of them. Only a lonely fox accompanied them as they walked in the silence of the fells. However, the slippery terrain under their feet posed challenges, as Niillaš wore his leather-made sisna shoes, which became wet from the river crossings and from the moist of the ground. Eventually, Niillaš discovered a reindeer path that led into the correct direction, and made the journey easier. Niillaš picked fresh cloudberry to eat along the way, and as the trio rested for a while by the fire, the dried reindeer meat packed in Niillaš' backpack tasted delicious together with fresh coffee.

Suddenly Ruvge grew restless, and soon a distant howling of a wolf broke the silence around them. More wolves joined in the chorus. Fearing for an encounter with a wolf pack, Niillaš remembered the stories he had heard about wolves, and began to yoik to scare the wolves off. Ruvge joined in by growling and barking, and slowly, the wolves disappeared, and the journey continued safely. At last, the Deatnu river valley unveiled itself with its magnificent landscapes covered in vibrant green color with a touch of the upcoming autumn's yellow and orange. A cool breeze caressed Niillaš' face, surrounding him with peace and quietness. Niillaš felt like he had arrived in paradise. He unpacked his belongings, set Cemmo free, and said, "I will meet you next winter." Little did Niillaš know the adventures that lay ahead.

And so, the story of  
Holiday Village Valle had begun.

## Logo & slogan



Holiday Village  
**Valle**

## Stories from the North

The logo of Holiday Village Valle reflects the brand's Sami roots and the unique nature of Utsjoki by presenting a reindeer at the open fells, with the sun shining behind him, and the Teno river winding between the fells.

The slogan of Holiday Village Valle contains plenty of associations that each person can experience in their own unique way. As the brand is Sámi, there exist multiple stories to be told about the Sámi culture, traditions and lifestyle, as well as about the history of the holiday village area and the owner family. Each rock, each fell, and each curve of the Teno river has its own story, as well as the animals, the trees and the plants. The northern sky has its own stories as well.

With Holiday Village Valle,  
everyone can write their own story.

# Typography

The typography of Holiday Village Valle is versatile, and has a peaceful and unique look with a slightly round shape that reflects the elements from the local nature. Moret Regular is used in headings, while Nobel Book is used in the body text.

Aa

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff  
Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn  
Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu  
Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz Åå Ää Öö

123456789  
#€%&/()=!?

Moret Regular

Aa

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff  
Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn  
Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu  
Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz Åå Ää Öö

123456789  
#€%&/()=!?

Nobel Book  
Nobel Regular

# Color palette

The color palette of Holiday Village Valle consists of broken colors, which are chosen from the local nature. Orange reflects the sun and the autumn foliage, while green reflects the birches during the summertime, and blue reflects the sky and the clear waters of the rivers and lakes. White reflects the snow, and brown reflects the ground, the fells, and the color of the reindeer.



CMYK  
7 75 91 0  
RGB  
224 90 38  
HEX  
#E05A26



CMYK  
13 15 22 0  
RGB  
227 215 200  
HEX  
#E3D7C8



CMYK  
36 31 36 11  
RGB  
164 157 148  
HEX  
#A49D94



CMYK  
75 41 71 36  
RGB  
60 93 70  
HEX  
#3C5D46



CMYK  
100 77 34 23  
RGB  
21 59 100  
HEX  
#153B64

# Shapes

The round shapes designed for Holiday Village Valle reflect the shapes of the local nature, such as the peaks of the fells, the round rocks and the curves of the Teno river, the antlers of the reindeer, and the patterns formed by northern lights.

