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**USING HUMOUR IN ESTONIAN
ACCOMMODATION ESTABLISHMENTS'
MARKETING COMMUNICATION AND
SERVICE PROCESSES**

Master Thesis

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This Master thesis has been compiled independently. All works by other authors used while compiling the thesis as well as principles and data from literary and other sources have been referred to.

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a serious business. According to UNWTO (World Tourism Organization UNWTO, *n.d.*) tourism has become one of the major players in international commerce, equalling or even surpassing oil export, food production and automobiles. This growth goes hand in hand with increasing diversification and competition among destinations and companies. Humour is also serious business, since appreciation of it depends on many aspects. In today's fast-changing environment successful are the companies that are innovative and use new approaches to entice customers to their product. Combining different academic fields and creating synergy is important for growth and development in many disciplines, including the tourism sector.

There are fast and uncontrollable changes happening in the world. Humour is often a solution that helps people to cope with uncertainty. People with a great sense of humour are always a good company, humour lightens up situations, relieves stress, relaxes, and has many other benefits. With a rapid development of technology, demographic changes, and also changes in work-/ and private life, have raised a problem for entrepreneurs on how to differentiate. Several humour studies have been published every year in different academic fields bringing out benefits of humour usage. Tourism is well researched discipline and aspects of humour have been studied in several different academic fields, yet humour in tourism has been looked into only briefly in last decade. In past ten years few academics have researched humour in tourism sector. Ball and Johnson wrote about humour in hospitality at the beginning of 2000 and in 2015 the first book about humour-tourism relationships was published by Pearce and Pabel.

According to Future Brand study (2014) Estonia is not well known in the world. The slogan "Positively surprising" has been used since 2008 to introduce the country to the

world, but it is unclear how a positive surprise will be guaranteed for each visitor. Tourism is an important sector for Estonian economy and exporting services necessary aspect of economy. Jafari (2000, pp. 585–587) notes that tourism is a challenging multisectorial industry and multidisciplinary field of study. While talking about the need to coordinate those different sectors he specially lists: accommodation, transport and attractions. Accommodation is an important part of tourism experience, yet accommodation establishments are often seen just as a place to sleep. According to Pabel and Pearce (2015) using humour in tourism attraction services is beneficial, therefore current master thesis will search the topic through accommodation establishments.

Economical situation is challenging for accommodation establishments in Estonia. The government is planning to raise accommodation establishments' turnover tax from 9% to 14% by year 2017. This will raise prices and will make Estonia as whole less attractive for a tourist to visit. (Turismifirmade liit: majutusasutuste ..., 2016). There are more than 1600 organizations officially providing accommodation but great amount of people is also using sharing economy platforms like Airbnb, so competition is intense. Accommodation establishments often look similar to customers and after spending a night, clients will not remember anything specific about the establishment. In order to distinguish itself from those thousands of competitors, it is important to offer something different so the client will remember their particular place and recommend it to others as well.

Current master thesis will concentrate on theoretical approaches of humour and on using humour as a tool in Estonian accommodation establishments with a purpose of offering attractive tourism products and services and communicating them to customers with a purpose to distinguish from competitors and to create competitive advantage. Present research will base on Estonian accommodation establishments but results of the thesis could be interesting to read for accommodation establishment employees and owners everywhere in the world. Humour-tourism relationships have never been studied in Estonia, even though the slogan "Positively surprising" has been used, and positive emotions are often related to humour. Therefore the topic of current thesis, humour

usage in accommodation establishments' marketing communication and service processes, is new and interesting for tourism sector in general but also in context of Estonia.

The intent of this thesis is to suggest ways to integrate humour into Estonian accommodation establishments' services with the purpose to create competitive advantage and promote more attractive services. Suggestions, on how accommodation establishments could use humour in their marketing communication and in developing their services to make them more attractive for customers, will be provided based on theoretical approaches of humour, marketing and service design with a support of empirical research.

The main research questions are:

- How has humour been used in Estonian accommodation establishments?
- What kind of humour have end-users experienced, noticed, seen, felt etc. in Estonian accommodation establishments?
- How could humour be used more efficiently in accommodation establishments' marketing communication and service processes with a purpose of making services more attractive for the end user?

In order to accomplish objectives of these master thesis, and to find answers to research question, several research tasks will be set:

- to study and give an overview of theoretical approaches on humour, service design and processes, marketing communication, organisational culture, and humour usage in tourism, including accommodation establishments;
- to prepare and conduct studies;
- to analyse research results, and
- by utilizing these results and theoretical material, to make propositions, how humour could be more efficiently used in accommodation establishments.

Since there is very little academic literature about humour in the tourism sector and in particular accommodation establishments, materials will be collected from several fields of study, among them communication, marketing, psychology, service design, and

strategic management. The leading authors in the field of tourism humour are Philip L. Pearce (2009, 2015) and Anja Pabel (2015). Beyond academic articles several books and documents from different consultation organisations' and statistical offices' will be used.

The first part of the master thesis will give an overview of humour theories, styles and types combined with strategic management, marketing communication and service design, bringing out connection points. Tourism–humour relationships will also be analyzed. During the second part of the thesis concentration will shift to empirical studies among Estonian accommodation establishment, their end-users. The results will be combined with results from interviews with humour- and tourism experts. Case study about hotel Estoria will also be introduced. Bases on theoretical approaches and empirical studies, suggestions for Estonian accommodation establishments will be made. Author's biggest concern is that accommodation establishments will not take the subject seriously and there will not be enough data to analyse. Another obstacle could be lack of academic literature on the field of using humour in enterprises.

Author wishes to thank people from Estonian accommodation establishments for participating in the survey and to the Estonian people who sent photos and answered questions about their funny and humorous experiences in Estonia and abroad. She is also very grateful to her supervisor Heli Tooman, who suggested the topic and inspired author throughout the process, co-supervisor Gerda Mihhailova, and experts, who gave feedback and valuable guidance – Melanie Smith, Tom Baum, Isabelle Frochot, Heli Müristaja, Kandela Õun, Andres Kuusik. Thank you also to Heiki Raudla, Teet Lindmaa and Valter Parve for explaining humour, Peep Ehasalu from Estoria for providing information about remarkable hotel concept, Anu Villmann from Pärnu Postimees for writing an article about my project with a purpose of getting more respondents, and to authors mom and sister for lifting her up when she “started to sink”. Author is also thankful for the Fiedler family for proof-reading the thesis. Big thank you goes to the people who supported and believed that the subject of master thesis was not a joke. ;)

1. HUMOUR AS A DIFFERENTIATION TOOL FOR PROVIDING MORE ATTRACTIVE SERVICES AND CREATING COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

1.1. Humour's role and relation to organisations' service design strategic management and marketing communication

According to McMillan dictionary "Humour is the quality that makes a situation or entertainment funny, something said or done that is funny. Sense of humour is the ability to know when something is funny, and to laugh at funny situations." (Humour, *n.d.*) Humour facilitates friendly interaction and helps participants negotiate identity (Norrick, 2010, p. 396). According to Palmer (1994, p.1) humour is a serious matter in every aspect of life, since it is an element of most human communication. Humour is an important part of popular culture and in today's world comedians have a significant role in politics, policy making and government, so comedy should be taken seriously (Hellstrom & Lapsley, 2015). Even though humour is a universal human phenomenon, bearing upon all aspects of human life, relationships, and interaction, it is hard to define the term.

For some, humour is its physical manifestation – laughter. It can also be the comic, the funny, the ludicrous; it can be synonymous with wit or comedy. In spite its lack of a precise definition, humour research has become serious business, attracting a diverse and growing group of researchers and scholars who think topic is worth studying for (Carrell, 2008, p. 3). Humour has been studied in many different academic fields, several humour studies have been conducted in the field of psychology and communication, but also in marketing. International Journal of Humor Research (*n.d.*) has published over 500 humour-related articles and book reviews since 1988. Several

scholars (Laroche *et al*,2011; Neuendorf, 2010; Neuendorf 2015; Speck,1991; Pearce & Pabel, 2015) have classified types and styles of humour into different models (see table 1). As there are many types of humour the purposes of using it may also vary.

Table 1. Types of humour

Laroche <i>et al</i> (2011, 2014)	Speck (1991)	Neuendorf (2010, 2015)
satire / irony – use of words to say the opposite of what one means	satire	superiority – humour is created at someone’s expense, potentially humorous stimuli includes “putdown” humor, satire, sarcasm, self-deprecation, and the display of stupid behaviours
pun – the use of words in a way that suggests two interpretations or creates two meanings	comic wit	incongruity – humour is experienced when two disparate perspectives are simultaneously experienced; the joy of humour derives from the “solving” of the incongruous puzzle, e.g. wordplay, absurdity, sight gags
surprise – humour rises from unexpected situations	sentimental humour	arousal – provoking humour passes an optimal level, and a punch-line or other resolution successfully reduces arousal to a pleasurable level once again, such as slapstick humour, dark humour, sick humour, and sexual or naughty humour
personification – attribution of human characteristics to animals plants or objects	sentimental comedy	social currency – particular behaviours meant to invoke this mechanism include joking to fit in, joking around socially, and parody (relying on a shared view of a known form, such as a film genre)
comparison – humour originates from the comparison of two elements	full comedy	
ludicrous / silliness – laughable or ridiculous humour		
understatement /exaggeration – overstating and magnifying out of proportion		
joke – speaking or acting without seriousness		

Source: Laroche *et al* (2011, 2014); Neuendorf (2010, 2015); Speck (1991 as cited in Laroche *et al* 2014)

Freud (1905) and Martin (2007, as cited in Pearce & Pabel, 2015, pp. 11–12) added relief theory to the list, saying that laughter helps to release tension. Samson and Gross (2012) describe different ways humour can be an emotion regulator. Humour can

distract, humour-related positive emotions undo negative emotions and humour changes the way a person copes with potentially stressful situation or event. La Fave (1972 as cited in Palmer, 1994, p. 68) states that people prefer jokes about others who do not belong to same group as they do. Context also has to be kept in mind in any communication form where humour is used. Carrell's (2008, p 2) theory says that joke text is not inherently funny until an audience finds it amusing. Martin *et al* (2003) developed a model of different humour styles (see first model from appendix 1), that should be considered, because humour can be positive or negative, at your own or somebody else's expense. Palmer (1994, p 161–164) notes that jokes and humour depend heavily from performance skills, occasion, and relations between the one providing humour and the audience.

Humour researchers in general categorize it into three major theories: superiority theory, relief theory, and incongruity theory (Lynch, 2002, p. 423). In the early 1980s McGhee and Morreall explained the superiority theory as a sort of triumph over other people's weaknesses, stupidity or misfortunes because it makes them feel superior in some way. (Pearce & Pabel, 2015, pp. 10–12) Wilson (1979 as cited in Willis 1992) names the superiority theory a conflict theory. Next, the incongruity theory presumes that people laugh at what surprises them, and at unexpected or odd events that present themselves in a non-threatening way. Solomon suggests that according to relief theory people laugh at things that make them uncomfortable or guilty. However some researchers declare that all humour theories are actually mixed theories (Pearce & Pabel, 2015, pp. 10–12). There are many aspects that need to be considered while making a joke or using humour in a wider sense.

In the year 2000 Johnson and Ball (2000) took the first steps towards shifting the understanding of humour beyond the level of anecdote and experience. They suggested that licensed trade organisations and managers, that carefully and intentionally use a touch of humour, may have the last laugh. They also noted that making money and making jokes are compatible activities in licensed retailing. Humour could be a tool to win an audience, unite, be as catalyst of communication and break barriers between the

superior and subordinate (Halim & Razak, 2014, p. 26). Humour is not just pass time activity, but used in several enterprises to accomplish important objectives.

In marketing and advertising humour has worked well. Birch (2011) states that advertising is all about getting attention and one of the best ways of getting attention is to add humour. When employed correctly, the power of humour is undeniable. Šliburyte and Kilmavičius (2012) suggest that effectiveness of humour appeal in advertising depends on the nature of product, target audience factors, content of the message and cross cultural differences. In order to offer something for customer by using humour, there has to be a product or a service that fulfils peoples' needs and expectations in the first place. Humour will help to get attention but the product or service has to be high-quality.

Hart (1988, p. 61) wrote almost 30 years ago about service guarantee and its ability to change the rules of industry by changing service-delivery processes. While integrating humour into service processes, service design cannot be overlooked. Several authors have written that traditional marketing is not working for the majority of customers anymore (Klaar, 2014; Lee, 2012). Using a design-based approach is taking over and this method has potential for a wide range of possibilities to reach the customer. It probably does not matter whether service design is part of marketing, or vice versa. Marketing on its own is just one element of any organisation's effort to innovate services. Service design is a multidisciplinary approach combining marketing with other specialism that serves to create value as services are designed and enacted in the interactions between individuals and organisations. (This is ... 2010, pp. 50–51) Additionally service design uses several uncommon tools and methods, to trigger creativity and be meaningful for the customer. Lego serious play, role play, group sketching, issue cards, personas, tomorrow headlines etc are few to be mentioned (Service design tools, *n.d.*). Weinlick, (2010, pp. 55–60) found that play and humour help to design services for disabled since play and humour foster strong bonds and trust, foster intrinsic reward, and lead to creative ideas. Humour could and should be integrated into service design processes even though it could be harder to forecast the

results of it. The purpose of design is to solve a problem and service design helps to solve the problem from customer's point of view.

The original definition of service design originates in 2007 and it states: "Design for experiences that reach people through many different touch-points, and that happen over time." (Koskinen, 2007, p. 22) According to Service Design Network (*n.d.*) "Service design is crucial for all private and public organisations that want to innovate and improve their service strategies, offerings and the user experiences." Osterwalder *et al* (2014, pp. 14–17) ask service providers to evaluate customer's pains and gains. Customer gains can be categorized into 4 groups: required, expected, desired and unexpected gains. Offering services with an essence of humour will qualify under unexpected gains. While developing services, there are different aspects that can influence customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction. The Kano model helps to understand and categorize five types of customer requirements / needs on different levels (Kano as cited in Tama *et al*, 2015; Kano model, *n.d.*). According to the model, basic expectations have to be met in order to satisfy a customer, so based on this logic, humour should qualify under the satisfier, that is not expected, but adding extra value to overall experience. During travel there are often situations that do not meet customers' expectations. Humour, used effectively can distract and the resulting positive emotions will help to neutralize negative experiences and emotions (Samson & Gross, 2012). Humour should qualify as a satisfier that is not expected, but adds extra value to overall experience of the customer.

Design gives enterprise a competitive advantage. There is also a hierarchic system created with a purpose of explaining how organisations use design. The design ladder has four steps (Sharing Experience ..., *n.d.*):

- No design – unaware of possibilities of design,
- Design as styling – artistic expression of creating stylish things,
- Design as a process – design is used with a purpose to achieve desired goal,
- Design as a strategy – design is an important part in business strategy. A company has hired a designer.

In Denmark the design ladder has been used for decades, in Estonia for several years. Studies show that design knowledge among companies is growing but a comparison shows that Denmark is ahead of Estonia by 10 years (see figure 1). Humour facilitates a more positive orientation towards life (Kuiper *et al*, 1992) and design-mature companies can earn four Euros net profit from each invested euro (Estonian Design Centre, 2013). However, it has not been studied, how will humour influence turnover and profit. Yet, there are assumption that there is a correlation between the numbers of companies who use humour and those who have integrated design into a companies' strategy, this correlation likely exists because humour and design are both innovative approaches in service sector.

	Design as strategy 15%	Design as strategy 7%	
Design as process 35%		Design as process 20%	
	Design as styling 13%	Design as styling 18%	
No design 36%		No design 55%	

Design usage in Danish companies 2003

Design usage in Estonian companies 2013

Figure 1. Design usage in Danish and Estonian companies (Sharing Experience ..., *n.d.*; Estonian Design Centre, 2013; combined by the author)

Zehrer (2009) found that service design must be undertaken in a holistic manner, embedded in the organisational culture and service experience, it must be appropriately managed by SME operators. Rather than relying on the consumption of traditionally legitimate objects, the culturally aware businesses advantaged are diversifying into new fields of popular cultural consumption such as comedy (Friedman, 2011, pp. 39). For an organisation to be innovative there has to be a culture that supports innovation and divergent thinking. Humour empowers innovation due to its ability to provoke and improve those processes, because it is provocative and improves divergent thinking. Humour happens during interaction which is different than a design approach. Normally during design approach designer is listening instead of interacting; and it is culturally

dependent and not easily adaptable. Therefore due to humour's approach it allows the possibility to find new and radical ways for innovation. Despite the differences design and humour can live in perfect harmony. Where a design driven approach is more an incremental process towards innovation, humour can be utilized for future research, divergence and radical innovation. (Roos, 2014) Tseng and Chiang (2016) studied links between co-creation, organisational culture, communication quality, perceived value and new product performance. They found that organisational culture plays an important role in new product performance. If true, organisational culture certainly has an effect on humour usage and its appreciation in an organisational environment.

When implementing humour in organisation, different strategic management aspects have to be considered. According to Thompson and Martin (2010, p. 11) strategic management is a process(es) that needs to be understood beyond what can simply be taught. During the process(es) organisation determines its' purpose, objectives and desired level of attainment; decides on actions and time-scale for achieving these objectives in a frequently changing environment; implements actions and assesses progress and results. Reed *et al* (2016) combined marketing, management and communication theories and found that listening employees can be important organisational culture characteristic paralleled with listening customers. Walt Disney has said that everything in company has been accomplished together (Naarits, 2003, p. 39). Managers can directly positively influence employees' perception of an organisation and in turn influence higher organisational commitment. Organisational culture and climate gives power to a company and influences productivity. It can be measured and sectorial comparisons prove it. (Mayo, 2004, pp. 144–146) Barsoux (1996) notes that humour plays very important role in helping to close the communication gap between a leader and followers, providing an alternative channel of communication for sending messages which might not otherwise be properly appreciated.

It seems that the best way to describe deliberate humour usage in organisation would be through Porter's Generic Competitive Strategies. Porter (1985 as cited in Institute of Manufacturing) says there are two basic types of competitive advantages a firm can

possess: low cost or differentiation. Ball and Johnson (2011, p. 202) state that companies involved in the hospitality industry are always looking for possibilities to differentiate. Often competitive advantage is created from “niche” positioning, serving a particular market segment in a distinctive manner. Differentiation by humour could be one solution. But adding the aspect of humour to this model brings in the necessary factors of the appreciation and understanding of humour, cultural differences etc.

According to Lynch (2009, p. 447) humour is often used in response to incongruity and stress at work. Humour is the basis for bonding and boundary setting of a cohesive ingroup of workers. Ingroups rely on their humour to make sense, (re)produce and resolve the tensions at work. An example of this kind of situation could be the prevailing tension in kitchens and the cooking profession due to encroaching industrial management practices. Many of these situations are relieved by using humour at workplace. Humour among workers is only one aspect of the utilization of humour, another could be providing service based on humour. Thompson and Martin (2010, pp. 6–7) describe a case of Southwest Air where Herb Kelleher, the owner of the airline, encourages flight attendants to crack jokes during the in-flight emergency briefing but at the same time to keep extremely high safety standards. Sense of humour is an important element in the recruitment process. Southwest Airlines is known for its pleasant human-centred culture and as a result its personnel are serving almost twice as many customers than USA airlines on average (Mayo, 2004, p. 145).

Managing a successful company requires certain type of leader. Leavitt (as cited in Koch 2007, p. 237–238) invented a system for compartmentalizing leaders into three types: visionary / charismatic, rational / analytical, and pragmatist. One of the twenty dimensions Levinson (as cited in Hambrick, 1987, p. 94) identified while evaluating leaders, next to perseverance and tolerance, was a sense of humour. People with more power and control use different humour than those in a lower position (Norrick, 2010, pp. 396). This brings out a question if employees are allowed to use humour in interaction with customers. Hambrick (1987) already concluded thirty years ago that the strategic success of business depends not only on one person but on the entire top management. The study revealed that qualities like “work is fun” and “good humour”

were evaluated highest for general manager. Furthermore, those qualities were important also for directors of marketing, research and development, manufacturing, human resources, and even for controllers and top executives in a company. Disney Corporation has been often shown as an example of well designed machinery for creating happiness to the world. Walt Disney was a leader of fairly select group of individuals, who inculcate enthusiasm in themselves and among those who work for them (Bryman, 2005, p. 11). Today many companies view all their employees as being responsible for the success of their business.

According to Van den Broeck *et al* (2012) self-enhancing and affiliative humour may play a role in enhancing employees' well-being and also decrease burnout while increasing work engagement over and above the influence of various job characteristics. Bast & Berry (2014) conclude that humour has been shown to have numerous positive physiological effects, one of the strongest is helping people cope with stress. Lehari *et al.* (2012, pp. 117) notes that instead of promises, flattering, storytelling, co-creation and participation, customers expect service providers' brands to exhibit certain values and to stand for those values. Being fun-loving, positive and optimistic, is an attractive quality for both customers and workers. Humour could also be used also in training sessions due to its ability to break down barriers and help trainees to absorb messages (Ball & Johnson, 2011, p. 209). Therefore it could be concluded, that humour has an important place in organisational culture and working environment.

Lynch (2002, p. 442) describes an event in an American hotel chain where kitchen workers showed resistance to management decisions by using humour. He brings out the control and resistance paradox of humour. In some successful companies effective strategic decision makers often relieve tension by making business fun and have articulated "fun" as a management goal. Humour strengthens the collaborative outlook and puts people into a positive mood. Research has shown that people whose frame of mind is positive: have more accurate perceptions of each other's arguments, are more optimistic, become more creative in their problem solving and are more easily able to forgive and collaborate. Humour can be a balance between familiarity and novelty (Ball & Johnson, 2011, p. 202). It allows managers to convey negative information in a less

threatening way. Managers can say something as a joke that might otherwise be offensive (Eisenhardt, 1999, pp. 8–9). Combining the aspect of control and order with humour, messages that explain how to behave, could be used in a non authoritative tone. There is grain of truth in every joke, so humour makes delivering difficult messages easier.

Another important factor while talking about service design or / and humour is co-creation. As customers are increasingly gaining power and control, organisations have to enter into dialogue with them. The co-creation experience results from the interaction of an individual at a specific place and time, and within the context of specific act. A real co-creation experience is neither company nor product centred. The better a company's focus on the consumer context and their match with the individual's living environment, the more co-creation experience value increases. (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2010, pp. 214–217). Stronger organisational culture and communication quality make relationships between co-creation and new development stronger (Tseng & Chiang, 2016). While co-creation in tourism can be organized and planned, using humour in interaction is often accidental. Including customers to service creation has become more and more important and several successful companies allow customers to “play” with services and products, engaging them to service creation (Williams & Anderson, 2005). The best way to engage customers is through stories that “speak” to them. Corporate storytelling also plays an important role in internal communication and purposeful narration, which leads to deeper engagement and heighten loyalty. Corporate stories may include members of an organisation as co-narrators of the corporate message. (Gill, 2015) Johnston and Everett (2012) found that organisational culture influences employee's more than external indicators. Storytelling is also an effective tool for creating successful brand. In order to do this, marketers should consider four elements of a story: authenticity, conciseness, reversal, and humour. (Chiu *et al*, 2012)

Heijbel (2010, pp. 35) suggests companies to gather stories from their workers and use them to illustrate organisational values but he also brings out a threat that in the collection process workers may submit weird or incorrect stories as jokes. Since tourism is one of world industries most dedicated to serving and building people's happiness

(Pearce & Pabel, 2015, p. 24), the author argues with Heijbel, that in tourism enterprises humorous stories could and should be used. Heijbel (2010, p. 229) also suggests being open about negative events to customers, because it helps to show that a company is honest. Humour can also be classified as positive or negative and it may have different consequences. Positive humour uplifts participants' mood more effectively than negative humour, however it is unlikely that positive humour would distract a person from a negative event more effectively than negative humour (Samson & Gross, 2012). Damasio (2000, as cited in Fisk 2012, p 30) found that positive smells could improve a person's mood by 75%, positive sounds 65% and positive images by 46%. These aspects could be added into communication and process design. Disney Institute recommends to tell the story of an organisation through decorations, and utilizing a design-theme. Design elements should support the story an organisation wants to communicate. (Naarits, 2003, p. 122) After searching how McDonald's uses fiction and humour to engage its dialogic imagination Boje (2005) suggests that big tourism-related companies, like Southwest Airlines, who invest millions of dollars into official corporate humour, should be further researched. According to him, expanding the narrative perspective of strategy to include dialogic imagining and strategic transformation through grotesque humour and fiction opens up many new avenues for research.

Combining service design with a purpose of making service user-friendlier with communication and promotion models making service attractive, and adding humour, will give organisation something special to offer that differentiates from others. Ball and Johnson (2011, p. 200) said that humour is like hospitality, highly culturally influenced depending on shared values, beliefs, behaviour and meanings.

As said earlier, in recent years, possibilities of using humorous communication, has been studied in several different academic fields. Teachers' humour is an important strategy to manage the concerns between safety and risk, pleasure and danger in outdoor classroom (Sullivan, 2014). Because of widespread popularity of offensive humour in contemporary stand-up comedy (Revi, 2014, p. 111) discusses various possibilities in which obscenity delivers offence. He notes that "being offended" is a psychological

state claimed to come into being when a personal, sacrosanct mental territory is threatened by an unsolicited experience and concludes that there is strong correlation between obscenity and offence. Humour used in TED talks (speeches aiming at knowledge dissemination) evokes joy, surprise, but also calmness and friendship, it can also be used as a strategy to increase the audience's attention because it gives positive feelings, and because of that boosts emotions and also speaker's credibility (Scotto di Carlo, 2013, p.85).

When the economic situation in Great Britain worsened in 2009, comedy clubs started booming. According to Dr Mike Lowis from University of Northampton, using humour is the brain's greatest defence mechanisms against matters a person does not have much control over. (Salter, 2009) Today's world in general, is fast-moving, hectic and uncertain in many aspects, humour can help cope with that. Shaw (2000, p. 185) draws a parallel, saying that there is a lot in common between a story and a strategic plan.

Based on theoretical approaches of humour, strategic management, service design and communication, author created a model (see figure 2) explaining the levels humour should to be applied in organization in order to benefit from it most.



Figure 2. Levels of humour in organisation

People working in organisation should respect same values, and if humour is part of the organisation culture, the topic can be discussed further. Leaders of organisation also need to appreciate humour. It is not enough if humour is used only for amusement in workplace. Humour can be used to communicate difficult messages or ease tension. The situation and overall atmosphere in organization is better if employees feel that they are part of something and they help to co-create the company. Design, in general, helps to solve problems in a best possible way, adding humour to co-creation and service design processes, will help to create ideas and think “out of the box”. Only, after humour has been accepted in all abovementioned levels, humorous communication using storytelling and funny advertisements, should be considered. In next section humour is looked at closely from a service marketing, communication and promotional perspective.

1.2. Humour in service marketing communication

During the second half of 20th century new approaches in marketing started appearing from North-Europe and Scandinavia. The Nordic School of Services and IMP Group looked at marketing as relationship creator and leading business practice. Marketing was no longer just one of the functions in an organisation but a question of leadership. Marketing should be oriented to a market-oriented relationship creator not simply for obtaining one sale from a customer. (Grönroos, 1995, p. 11) Grönroos & Gummerus (2014) noted that already during the 1970s service marketing related research demonstrated that service context enables firms to approach customers in fundamentally different ways compared with conventional marketing models used in manufacturing goods. Today’s customers are different. Fisk (2012, pp. 10–11) says that they expect, and want, products and services that are not average and standardized, surprisingly 73% still find that smile is the simplest pleasure. More than 10% of people would give permission to a company to use personal data so it could provide funny or amusing content (Future Foundation, 2015, p. 16). Therefore companies who wish to be successful should consider adding something, that makes people smile, into their marketing strategy.

In order to have a frame and to analyze, how to use humour in services is important to understand what components form services in general. While talking about marketing strategies 7Ps of service industry cannot be overlooked. Jerome McCarthy's traditional 4P marketing model consisted of product, price, place and promotion. Booms and Bitner added three more important P's – people, physical evidence and process to the model. (Van Vliet, 2011 as cited in Booms & Bitner 1981) In service marketing intangibility is also a crucial factor. Since many products are now transformed now into services Athanasenas (2015) defines service system as a dynamic value co-creation scheme that combines resources that create and deliver value.

How people laugh, and when they laugh at, depends largely on their culture. Occasions in which particular types of joking is appropriate may vary considerably between different societies. (Palmer, 1994, pp 2–3) Even people with the same cultural background have a wide variety of humour. Additionally, women and men deploy humour differently, just as those with more power or control in a particular interaction use humour differently than those who are not in power. For example researchers have noted significant differences in the characteristics of men's and women's self-targeted humour, and have shown that women and men tell different kinds of stories illustrating different types of humour. (Norrick, 2010, p. 396) Palmer (1994, p. 68) agrees that women and men correspond differently to jokes about sex and aggression, he recommends looking beyond context before making generalizations. Lynch (2002) states that jokes and humour play an important role on defining how people think of themselves and how they interact with others. All of these broadly defined approaches can be found in a variety of ways utilized by the mass media. Warren and McGraw (2013) recommend that marketers should create humorous communication in order to attract attention and entertain consumers, but they need to be careful not to inadvertently hurt someone's feelings. Using humour is risky when content features highly threatening attempts at humour rather than mildly threatening attempts, threatens specific people rather than people in general, and motivates avoidance rather than approach.

Receiving humorous message is highly dependent on the general communication process, where each message senders' coding process has to be similar to receivers' decoding process. Other factors could interrupt movement of the message so it might not reach a receiver the way the sender intended for it to be understood (see figure 3). When using humour the most important aspect occurs during decoding stage. In context of humour "noise" can be cultural background, language, organisation's culture. Understanding the message depends on sender's and on receiver's experience, education, values etc.

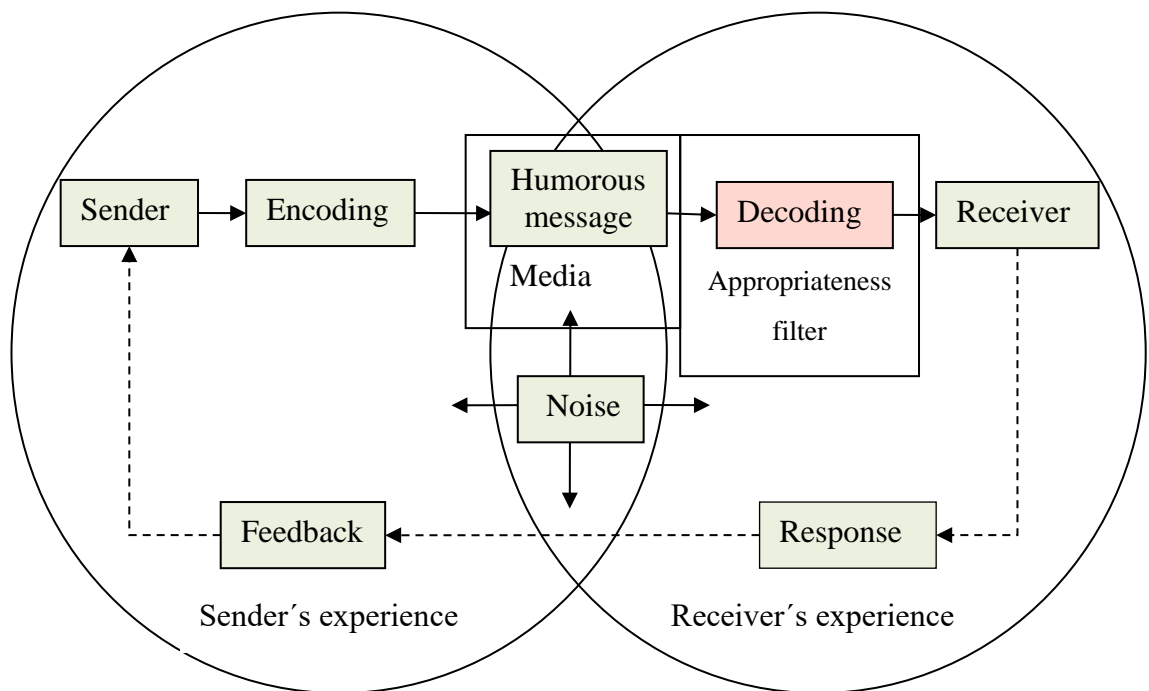


Figure 3. Communication process of a humorous message (Kotler *et al.*, 2005, p. 729; Palmer, 1994; Norrick, 2010; Pearce 2009) combined by the author

In order for receiver to understand message as sender wished, message should be simple, when adding humour factor, in many cases a message should cannot be too simple. According to the incongruity theory, there has to be an aspect of "solving" the incongruous puzzle. Even though a sender should know what kind of reaction to expect, with humour it could be hard to predict. Suls' humour appreciation model (see second figure in appendix 1) also adds surprise factor into the process. Pearce and Pabel (2015, pp. 16–17) shows that there is considerable variability in the tourism humour system in

terms of who is producing the humour. This means that the sender and the receiver both need to have compatible sense of humour in order for communication process to work properly. In the context of a company, communication often cannot be simply explained. Kotler *et al.* (2005, p.741–744) mentions five forms of promotion that enterprises utilize to accomplish their advertising and marketing objectives: advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations, and direct marketing. Berger and Iyengar (2013) suggest that if the goal is to get more online discussion, framing the product in an interesting or surprising way might help. They note that ads or online content that surprises people, exceeds expectations or evokes interest should be more likely to be shared. In order for information about the product to spread by word of mouth the product must be on the consumer’s mind or publicly visible. Marketing campaigns should focus on different aspects dependent on which channel they want to create discussion in. Kotler *et al* (2003) noted over a decade ago, that to make customers re-visit website, aside from constantly renewing the content, interesting and useful content, jokes, competitions, and games could be useful. Table 2 combines promotion forms with mediums and channels most suitable for delivering a humorous message.

Table 2. Mediums to deliver humour in different promotion forms

Forms of promotion	Delivery mediums	Delivery channels
advertising	text, mime, visual, cartoon, film	television, radio, print, billboards
personal selling	talk, text	one on one, presentations, telephone, video-call, stimulation programs, “free” lunches
sales promotion	text, mime, visual, cartoon, film, talk	campaign or an event for short period of time in television, radio, webpage, social media, one on one, prizes, sales, coupons
public relations	talk, text, film	webpage, television, radio, print
direct marketing	talk, text	one on one, telephone, catalogues, webpage, (often social media)

Source: Kotler *et al.*, 2005; Pearce & Pabel, 2015 (combined by the author)

Several authors have researched humour from a textual perspective by analysing narratives: metaphor and humour relationship for the purpose of making fun of stereotyped points of view and characters (Dore, 2015). Creative messaging increases the effectiveness of advertising to businesses (Baack *et al*, 2016). Whenever a message

is communicated to buyers, it has to suggest that the products are desirable, exclusive and believable. Messages are mostly emotional appeals to the consumer. Negative messages use guilt or shame to influence person's behaviour. They are not as effective as campaigns that are positive using humour, pride or affection to achieve the goal. (Doyle, 2008, pp. 311–312) Yet promotion strategy needs to take into account that 92 % of consumers want brands to make ads that feel like a story (Lasquite, 2015).

Storytelling is one of the tools that utilizes the service design process, but it is also possible to communicate with customers on different levels. Storytelling is natural and inherent to the brain. Damasio (2000, pp. 188–189) explains wordless storytelling as the brain's ability to sequence events into whole picture. That may have been the reason why people started creating drama, books and movies in the first place. Therefore it is important to consider the storytelling aspect of marketing when developing promotion strategy. Umberto Eco (1998, p. 207) has said "To survive, you must tell stories" and Shaw (2000, p. 194) adds that storytelling is one of the most powerful forms of human communication: making it easier for people to feel, see and understand information. Storytelling helps listeners to become mentally and physically involved in the story. Stories have a very important role of shaping social life. Many professions from journalists, talk show hosts and priests to doctors, therapists, shamans use stories in their daily activities. (Narayan & George, 2012, p.512) As noted before, successful companies have managed to create holistic concept of themselves. These companies are communicating with consumers at different level with same narrative. Similar rules can be applied to a deliberate use of humour.

Humour makes any story more tellable, even a familiar story. Humorous stories have characteristic patterns of participation: in particular, co-narration is acceptable whenever it creates humour. Familiar humorous stories regularly appear, and co-narration of such stories occurs quite commonly as well. (Norrick, 2010, p. 397) Kuosa and Westerlund (2013, p. 181) stress that one side of development is increasing role of the real-time communication, the other side of development is becoming more visual by using visual storytelling in communication. Appealing stories and videos that showcase the issue are not only good entertainment but are also powerful tools of communication. Messages

from a company become more easily accepted if a person receiving them establishes emotional ties. The performance of a joke generally follows the pattern of storytelling; the major difference persists in the expectation of laughter as a conclusion of a joke. Jokes are told as ‘understanding tests’, since not everyone necessarily gets every joke, and getting jokes involves background knowledge and rational processing. (Norrick, 2010, p. 396)

Studies about emotional appeals in pro-social advertising found that positive emotions in social marketing campaigns had greater potential to not only “get people talking” about the advertising, but also motivating people to voluntarily comply with an advertising. For example, humour was often used as a marketing communication method which motivated people to act. (Brennan & Binney, 2010, pp. 144–145) Humour draws attention to advertisement as a whole, at the expense of attention for the advertised brand. On the other hand positive emotions generated by humour, increase positive brand associations. (Strick *et al*, 2013) Because messages travel very fast in today’s social media-driven world, sometimes appropriate humour can help a company recover from an unpleasant situation. Blunt and Hill-Wilson (2013, p.191) talk about Telecoms brand O2 that suffered an embarrassing and lengthy network outage that clients widely complained about on Twitter, but managed to turn “anger” into “love” by using humility chirpy conversational tone and humour .

In order to evaluate the success of humorous communication, results should be somehow measured or evaluated. There are many theories explaining why some companies are successful and others are not. Normally success is measured in money, meaning that the success of marketing communication will be measured by the profit, or the amount of new clients. For marketers the most important aspect is to ensure that message is noticed, remembered, and actioned (McCabe, 2009, p. 218). Acronym AIDA, that stands for Attention or Attract, Interest, Desire and Action, is an effective tool to ensure communication gets an audience’s attention (Mind Tools, *n.d.*) Hassan *et al* (2015) found that AIDA model has benefits when strategically used in small business social media marketing. Clients’ willingness to purchase tourism service that uses humour depends on three stages (see figure 4).

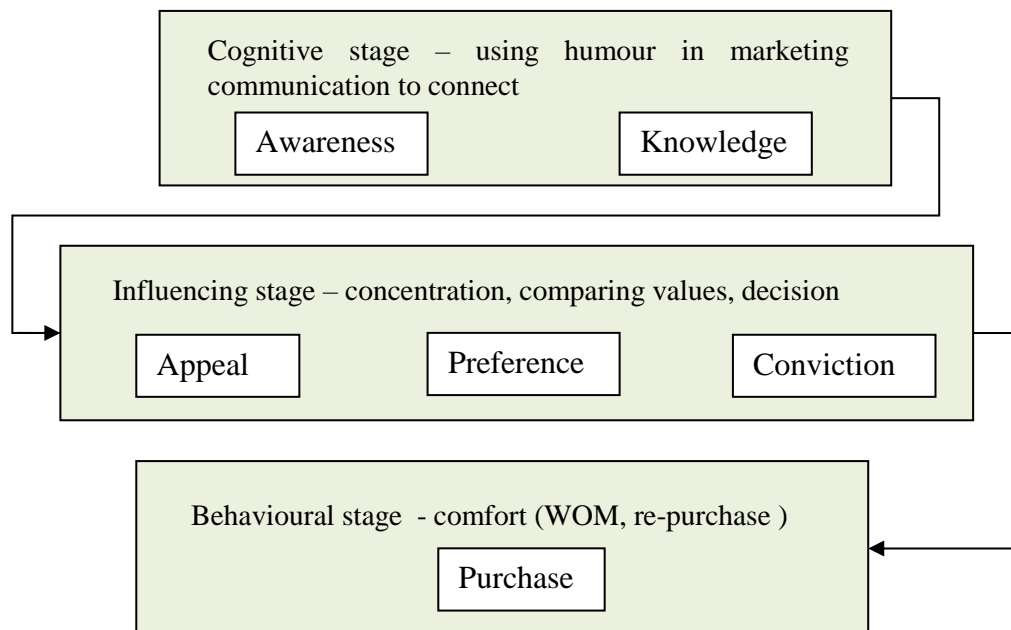


Figure 4. Levels of willingness to purchase (Kotler *et al.*, 2005, p. 730; Kuusik *et al.*, 2010, p. 245; Pearce & Pabel, 2015, p. 143)

In the context of humour, the first three steps from Doyle’s (2008, p. 310) “Developing the Communication Strategy” model should be considered: understand the market → set communication objectives → design the message. According to McCabe (2009, p. 220) the hardest part of a marketing communication campaign is getting the content of the message right. In addition to the wording of the message, the creator has to pay attention to the look, feel, colours, images etc. The advertisement will be noticed if the content is innovative, directed and creative. He presents an example where booking site Lastminute.com advertises variety of last minute offers to different destinations with names that are hard to pronounce, like Tallinn, Kuala Lumpur, Reykjavik: “go somewhere you can’t spell this weekend”.

Doyle (2008, pp. 339–340) introduces the “richness and reach” model, and explains that the Internet era allows to reach new levels. TV advertising gives a possibility for high reach with a sacrifice of richness but advertising through Internet allows bigger audience, without sacrificing richness. In traditional advertising message is sent by the seller to the customer, but with online communication the customer must be motivated to read the seller’s communication. Here is the point where humour can be helpful tool.

In past few years several authors consider WOM (Word Of Mouth) to be the most effective form of marketing communication. In today's social media-led world people share their experience and information travels fast. Goldsmith and Tsiotsou (2012) note that tourism sector has to start using experiential marketing if they want to differentiate their products and services, and to gain competitive advantage. By providing unique and emotional experience, customers will be more loyal. Since humour is an important emotion creator and influencer, combining it to interaction and communication is needed, but humour by itself is not enough. To conclude the chapter aspects of humour and possibilities of using them in marketing communication and service processes will be combined (see table 3).

Table 3. Possibilities of using humour in different aspects of service

Different approaches of humour	Possibilities of using humour in marketing communication and service processes
using humour at someone's expense	communication has to be delicate and careful not to offend receiver, normally jokes would be at expense of someone that client does not relate to
a puzzle or hidden joke, that requires the receiver to think	a specially designed action or story that will culminate with a humorous solution
an unexpected result or surprise	explaining unique aspects of an accommodation establishment that visitor would not understand or notice otherwise
using humour as social control tool (mechanism and stabilizer)	a humorous sign or manual to explain how something should be done
using humour as a relief tool for breaking the tension or to cope with difficult or unexpected situations	humour in an interaction to solve a problem
overcoming an unpleasant situation	explaining shortcomings with humour

Source: La Fave, 1972 as cited in Palmer, 1994; Neuendorf, 2010; Martin *et al.*, 2003; Pearce & Pabel, 2015; Wilson, 1979 as cited in Willis 1992; Lynch, 2002; Samson & Gross, 2012

But maybe the best way of making sense of the success factors is by using Chaos theory instead. Koch (2007, p. 246–247) explains that in similar markets success factors can be very different, e.g. from accommodation field luxurious hotel versus cheap accommodation. Rules that work well in one place might not be suitable for another. Another idea of Chaos theory is to be ready for unexpected events. Humour always has

a bit of unexpectedness coded in and travelling brings new and unexpected experiences, therefore next chapter analyzes humour-tourism relations.

1.3. Specifics of using humour in tourism services

Since every-day life is stressful for many people, travelling gives a possibility to forget daily routine. Tourism sector is most oriented on making people happy (Pearce & Pabel, 2015, p. 24). According to Ball and Johnson, (2011, pp. 202,199) in history, travellers were considered as a threat for locals and humour was often a critical weapon that helped to reduce tension. The host in early hotels was the one that used humour to convert strangers into friends. In hospitality humour can be associated with friendliness and enhancing the wellbeing of all parties involved through the provision of food, drink, and accommodation. Binkhorst and Den Dekker (2010, p. 226) note that tourism is a very important experience generator and economic motor in many societies, but the sector with its enormous number of stakeholders of all sizes is not used yet to think in experience environments and experience networks in which tourists play a central role.

Gáll (2015) introduces and explains several accidental humour cases found, collected and posted on Internet. In those cases translator has not captured the nuances of English language, using phrases, that for people with good English knowledge will sound funny and the unsuspecting language user falls victim to unintentional humour. She also asks, where do the borders lie on such humour and at what point does miscommunication stop being humorous and become irritating to the native speaker.

According to Pearce and Pabel (2015, p. 141) outcomes of humour can either be positive and beneficial or negative and detrimental. Therefore it is important to ensure that humour delivery is designed appropriately for its tourism setting and audience. It has been shown that using humour in the pre-flight safety briefing videos is most effective in maintaining a participants' attention as well as the ability for viewers to recall of key safety messages (Seneviratne & Molesworth, 2015). For Johnson and Ball (2000) humour is not just a trivialising process, it can have many functions and benefits, yet, it also has limitations.

Frew (2006b) divides humour into two main areas of the tourist experience: first informal humour in the form of sharing jokes during difficult, awkward or frustrating travel situations and second, formal humour in the form of attendance at comedy festivals and/or comedic TV and film locations. He notes that humour, specially comedy festivals, can be a pull factor for tourists that she names “joke junkies” who search for humour.

It has been proven, that humour offers positive effects in many fields. Humour is often a highlight of tourists’ experience: whether that is in anticipating the travel, being on-site, social interaction, enjoyable settings or reflecting on personal and conveyed memories (Pearce & Pabel, 2015, p. 8). As noted in previous chapter, services depend on marketing mix. Following table 4 combines tourism-humour with the marketing mix.

Table 4. Marketing mix combined with humour in tourism

Aspects of marketing mix	Aspects of tourism-humour relationships
Product	Tourism offer has been designed so that customers will have a chance to smile/laugh
Price	Amusing price on offer, funny number combination that attracts attention
Place	Settings with: danger, safety, fun, mild message, strong message
Promotion	Technique types (jokes, stories, language tricks, style of narration etc. and medium (talks, text, mime, dance, visual, cartoons, film)
People	Source: tourists, guide/entertainer + target: tourist market segment, locals, employees, general audience
Physical evidence	Staff wears funny clothes; interior – signs on the walls, statues etc.
Processes	Humour types: playful, corny, silly, gentle, witty, clever, self-deprecating, mocking, farcical, sarcastic, embarrassing, cruel, black

Source: Van Vliet, 2011 as cited in Booms & Bitner 1981; Pearce & Pabel, 2015; Ball & Johnson, 2011, pp. 203–204

Regarding product, in case studies tourism attraction staff members provided humour based on standard script. In adventure tourism settings humour should be used because it made people have a positive time, made experience happier and helped to control anxious feelings (*Ibid*, p. 359). Ball and Johnson (2011, p. 201) say that client is “traumatized” when he/she is weary, hungry, thirsty, lonely, or stressed by unfamiliar situation. Hospitality in general relieves clients’ troubles and restores wellbeing. Deliberately offering product, with a twist will amuse customers.

Money is something people don't often joke about. Liu and Lee (2015, p. 51) found that people would recommend low-cost airlines if service quality improves, therefore if customer gets something extra, for e.g. humour, while consuming service, they would recommend given low-cost service. Customers do not normally appreciate humour in prices, but often accidental humour happens on price tags. Using unusual number combinations, might also get attention. From the aspect of place, Pearce (2009) identified some views of special role of tourism humour, for example promoting visitor comfort levels and assisting their concentration levels. The role of humour was seen as establishing social connections and commentary on tourism itself. The purpose of travelling is to reach new and interesting places, humour helps to create comfortable atmosphere in unfamiliar situation.

Promotion and marketing communication was already discussed in previous chapter and the topic is closely related to people since in addition to using different promotion channels, people promote tourism products and services. A good sense of humour is widely considered to be a valued characteristic in today's world (Pearce & Pabel, 2015, p. 10). Most of people enjoy positive emotions and people, who can make others laugh, are highly valued company (Martin, 2007, p. 10). FritzPatrick *et al* (2013, p. 96) recommend managing hotel workers intellectual capital for competitive advantage. Positive emotions are expected during travel so people who can provide humour for customers should be highly valued. Ball and Johnson (2011, pp. 202–204) show TGI Friday's, a restaurant, that utilizes humour in every aspect of their business for the benefit of staff and guests. Serving staff wear funny clothes and hats, written humour can be seen everywhere, the atmosphere in general is funny and quirky, and all the narratives and stories are humorous. This is an example how people and physical evidence from marketing mix could be combined. To integrate humour into service processes people are again an important factor. Co-creation and aspects of service design have to be considered.

Pabel and Pearce (2015, pp. 360–363) classified humour that was provided for tourists, into five categories: interest/attention, breaking the ice/bonding, entertainment/fun, alleviate anxiety, lighten the mood. Advantages of using humour by tourism operators

were: to create a distinctive and enjoyable visit, potential of creating repeat visits, extended period of stay at attraction, possibilities for word of mouth recommendation and adding a more professional image to a company. Pearce (2009) suggests that there are multiple uses of humour in tourism settings and that these roles and outcomes are performed and achieved through a variety of mechanisms. In his model (see appendix 2) Pearce shows three different roles humour might have: to establish comfort levels, to boost concentration, and to form a connection with tourists and their presenters. Palmer (1999, as cited in Ball & Johnson, 2011, p. 210) gives three reasons why humour should be used: as a tension reliever, team spirit builder and to create a common standards.

Lin *et al.* (2014, pp. 690–691) found that the most important thing for hotel guests is to to feel both respected and protected. The second issue of raising satisfaction is a good performance from staff and facilities, and third is an attractive consumer demand. Satisfaction of the consumer comes from the quality of hotel service. Kängsepp (2013, p 50) noted in her study that all interviewed guides use humour in their work and find it to be important. Workers of hotels can be considered guides for clients because they introduce possibilities, services, and rules to clients.

Benefits for tourists of using humour during their travel are: breaking the ice with strangers, dealing with overcrowded places and awful food, making the best of situation gone wrong, lightening the mood, comforting others, alleviating anxieties, resolving conflicts and coping with difficult and embarrassing situations. (*Ibid*, 2015, p. 362; Samson, & Gross, 2012) Laughter facilitates social bonding and social cooperation particularly among strangers (Van Vugt *et al.*, 2014, p. 28).

The main outcomes of using humour at tourism companies are, according to Pearce and Pabel (2015), comfort, concentration and connection (see appendix 2). Sirakaya *et al* (2004), found in their study conducted on cruise ships, that tourist who were in bad mood also had a lower level of satisfaction. So keeping customers in a good mood should also have benefits for tourism businesses. Tourists will experience a range of emotions during their travels, but the anticipation of pleasant emotions during their visit to a humorous event or place may encourage them to select these destinations over others (Frew, 2006 b). Frew (2006 a) discusses humour and the tourist experience, with

a particular focus on formal humorous experiences from comedy festivals or comedic TV and film locations. Frew reflects on the importance of understanding the role of humour in tourist experience, particularly in relation to the management of humorous sites such as comedic TV and film locations.

Participants in Pabel and Pearce's (2015) study mentioned that they would recommend their humour filled tourism experience to others. Humorous situations tend to be memorized better. Williams and Anderson (2005) suggest that retailers are defining themselves as a source of memories and "experience stagers" not solely service providers. Disney has even used humour to convey the eccentricities of history in some rides (Bryman, 2005, p. 100).

As noted earlier, there is very little academic literature about humour in accommodation establishments. Lynch (2009, p. 447) talks about tensions in American hotel chain kitchens, that have been solved with humour, and the study conducted by Guerrier and Abid (2000: 700) reveal that hotel workers have used humour to describe unusual behaviour from guests but not while communicating with them, even when the requests were not conventional. Humour is relevant to hospitality workers because it helps to cope with failure, criticism and stress that often occur due long working hours, unusual shift arrangements, stressful conditions and monotonous work (Ball & Johnson, 2011, p. 208). Research done about guest experience in Turkey boutique hotels showed that in addition to service quality, one of the aspects of creating a positive impact on customer satisfaction was humour of the staff (Kurtulay *et al* 2015, p. 45). In order to study humour usage in accommodation establishments, links between three important aspects, discussed earlier, have to be considered. When a customer has a problem they expect to solve it by using certain service. By marketing activities organisation is sending messages to the customers, how this particular company can help to solve the problem that client has. Both, humorous marketing communication and customer service processes, depend heavily on organisation's culture and strategic management.

2. EMPIRICAL STUDY: USING HUMOUR IN ESTONIAN ACCOMMODATION ESTABLISHMENTS

2.1. Overview of Estonian accommodation market and research methodology

Competition in accommodation field is tight and the amount of enterprises keeps growing. In 2010 there were 267 thousand enterprises operating in the European Union with accommodation services as their main activity (Eurostat Statistics Explained, 2013). In 2014 the number of tourist accommodation establishments was 570 thousand (Main statistical ... n.d.). According to the Republic of Estonia Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communication (n.d.) there are about 1600 accommodation enterprises in Estonia, offering more than 40 000 bed places. Estonian Tourism Law § 18 (Turismiseadus, 2000) cites that main categories of accommodation establishments are hotel, motel, guesthouse, hostel, camping & caravan, holiday house, guest apartment, bed and breakfast. During 2015 there were more than 3 million tourists staying at Estonian accommodation establishments according to the Estonian Statistical Office (Statistikaamet, 2016). Many of Estonian accommodation establishments belong to professional unions such as Estonian Hotel and Restaurant Association EHRL (<http://www.ehrl.ee/en>), Estonian rural tourism association Eesti Maaturism (<http://www.maaturism.ee/index.php?lang=en>) and Estonian Spa Association Eesti Spaaliit (<http://www.estonianspas.eu/about/about-us/>), who coordinate marketing activities and stand for members rights.

As noted before, Estonia has been using slogan “Positively surprising” for several years. It can be argued how the positive emotion will be guaranteed for each visitor. An American writer Alexander Theroux finds Estonians to be glum and sour-faced

(Murphy 2011), but actually humour has been used in several different levels of Estonian tourism sector. For example the tourism info homepage of Hiiumaa, a small island on the West coast of Estonia, says that the most important thing is to have a sense of humour and that people of Hiiumaa love jokes. (Welcome to ..., 2015) According to Estonia.eu (*n.d.*) Estonian writer Viivi Luik says that key characteristics of the Estonian sense of humour are: mockery, irony and self-irony. Estonian humour is blacker than that of the English, gallows humour is well accepted. The Estonian sense of humour is dry, sarcastic and quite often politically incorrect. In Europe, it is most similar to British humour, jokes at our own expense are popular. Although, you are much more likely to get a grin, not open laughter as a response. (Ways of life ..., 2015) Even Lonely Planet writes about the ancient Estonians' cruel sense of humour, when the Estonian warriors promised not to raise swords against knights, instead they used stones to attack the enemy (Lonely Planet..., 2012). Given research will give an overview how Estonian accommodation establishments have used humour and what else could be done.

In 2005 several management articles about humour usage were written in Äripäev, one of the most important business newspapers in Estonia, among them "Humour helps to glue team together", "Amusing gift from company will be remembered for a long time", "Men and woman prefer different jokes", "Humourous advertisement attracts viewer to watch TV", "Humour helps to remember candidate" (Ettevõtluse Arendamise Sihtasutus, 2005, p. 223). Every year students conduct research different accommodation establishments. There are already 140 student works defended on a topic related to accommodation at the University of Tartu Pärnu College. Aspect of humour has not been covered so widely in Estonian academic literature. In University of Tartu search engine gave 51 defended thesis with a word "humour" in their title. Most of academic work is from the field of literature, few on psychology, semiotics and one in education.

Humour studies are often conducted in isolated so-called laboratory-conditions, where respondents are influenced by a piece of humour (Palmer, 1994, p. 70). All the methods and objectives used in given research can be found in appendix 3. Since humour in the tourism sector is rather a new academic approach, the author consulted several highly

valued tourism, design, and marketing specialists to collect ideas, how research about humour usage in the accommodation sector could and should be conducted. Unstructured interviews were conducted with valued tourism specialists Melanie Kay Smith and Tom Baum.

Internet search was carried out to see what kind of amusing videos, photos, and signs people have posted. In Google search words “humorous hotels”, “funny hotel”, “funny hotel signs” were used. Results can be found in appendix 4. Based on findings, a pilot study about how people from different cultures understand humour was conducted among international master students of University of Tartu Pärnu College. The author used so called laboratory condition focus group with master students. Students were filmed during the time that they watched videos of humorous destination marketing campaigns and funny pictures from accommodation establishments found during Internet search (that tourists have noticed, photographed and posted to social media or their web-page). After each destination marketing campaign clip, respondents had 1 minute to write down their opinion about the clip. Then several humorous accommodation establishment photos were analysed. A list of destination marketing campaigns can be found in appendix 5 and photos in appendix 4.

Pabel and Pearce (2015, pp. 362) found that positive feelings generated through humour can transform tourists into walking advertising boards, so it was decided to conduct a survey among end users on how they have perceived humour during their visits to Estonian accommodation establishments. Hiiob (2015, p. 64) notes that a commercial using of good humour spreads like virus and can travel around the world several times quickly. Since funny and amusing photos and videos are shared in social media a lot, it was thought that a humorous questionnaire would also be well shared and answered, and using Facebook would be the best way to get answers from many end users. Smith (2014) brings out that 35% male and 43% of female Facebook users want to see entertaining or funny posts. That was also a reason sex of a respondent was asked in the questionnaire. Social surveys collect data in a standardized way from the sample of respondents enabling the data to be codified and analysed. In today’s mobile world web-based surveys give an opportunity to reach many people. (Botterill & Platenkamp,

2012, pp. 170–173) The survey helps to find out how many people feel, think or behave in a particular way and helps to get the general picture relatively quickly (Hammond & Wellington, 2013, pp. 138). Snowball sampling was used, with a purpose of getting as much data as possible from people with different experiences and backgrounds. Snowball sampling is also called network sampling, and is mostly used when a researcher wants to contact people with unusual experiences. Traditionally one subject gives the researcher the name of another subject, who then provides researcher with another name (Vogt, 2005, p.301). The questionnaire used for end-user survey can be seen in appendix 6. Questions have been formed based on humour and communication theories provided earlier, the first question references the general humorous events that happened during respondents travel was added to break the ice with the respondent.

In order to explore peoples' attitudes towards engaging in humour during tourism experiences, an open ended question "Humour in tourism should be encouraged because..." was asked (Pearce & Pabel 2015, p. 359). The author used the same approach by asking several questions from accommodation establishments, to get an answer if humour should be used in a hotel environment and offering services (see appendix 7). Questions also had a purpose to find out if respondents see humour as a possibility and how their organisation as a whole feels about it.

As noted earlier, because humour is often culture sensitive, only Estonian accommodation establishments and Estonian end users were studied. Even when the cultural issues were excluded, it took time for the author with some responses to realize what was funny in the event described. Since there was no concrete advertisement, it was simply asked from respondents what was the most amusing or funny thing from respondents' travel that they remembered. It was assumed that respondents want to share their amusing travel experiences. Population of the end-user survey was 150 000 people, since according to Turu-uuringute AS (2013) 156 780 Estonian people took at least one inter-Estonia trip away from their home county and stayed in accommodation establishment in 2013. Answers were collected from 54 end-users – 44 were women and 10 men. 2 respondents had basic, 11 secondary, 2 vocational and 39 higher education. The oldest respondent was 67 years old and the youngest was 16. The

average year of birth was 1981. It has to be noted that the sample is highly influenced by the network and the relationship to the author's acquaintanceship. Three quarters of the respondents answered that humour is important or is a very important aspect of their travel. A sample is not representative and it is not possible to generalize the results to all Estonian people who have visited Estonian accommodation establishments. Yet the results give valuable insight as to what accommodation establishments should consider.

Even though the author got feedback that the research topic was interesting and the questionnaire was shared by more than 30 people in Facebook during one month, the amount of answers was modest. All together 55 end-users answered the questionnaire. Based on the fact that an average Facebook user has 200 friends (Smith, 2014), the questionnaire should of reached at least 6000 people. Hammond and Wellington (2013, p. 139) suggested to provide a symbolic reward in order to increase response rate. The author then re-posted her survey in Facebook with a possibility to win three cinema/bookshop gift-cards. It did not get the expected increase in responses. For the final week of research the author added an extra question to ask why the respondent decides not to fill the questionnaire and on the first of April, April Fool's Day, a call was made in Facebook for people to send funny pictures that they had taken in Estonian accommodation establishments. Data from survey was coded and analyzed using Microsoft Excel. The content analysis was done with open-ended questions.

A survey among accommodation establishments was conducted in order to determine that general attitude towards humour in Estonian accommodation establishments and to learn which practices were most effective. Visitestonia.com is a webpage that shares information about different tourism offers in Estonia, among them information about accommodation establishments in the country can be found. Since most of enterprises have entered their contact information into the system the author decided to use contact information provided in Visitestonia.com to ask about the attitude towards humour in their establishment. A questionnaire was sent to 1203 different e-mail addresses. After two weeks a repeat e-mail was sent to 1085 Estonian accommodation establishments that had not been answered the questions. The questionnaire can be seen in appendix 4. Author received answers from 194 accommodation establishments from 1203.

Sampling makes 16% of the entire population and therefore the amount of respondents is representative of the industry. Most answers came from holiday houses (26%), this was followed by guesthouse (19%), hotel and bed and breakfast (both 16%). Answers the remaining types of establishments were under 10%. 127 respondents were situated in rural areas and 63 in towns. Data was coded and analyzed using statistical system of SPSS. Both questionnaires were designed by the logic that people like to tell stories and talk about things that have happened to them. Several open ended questions were used with a purpose of allowing respondents share their thoughts about humour in accommodation establishments. The author also received seventeen e-mails explaining why humour is not appropriate in the industry or wishing good luck with this interesting topic. Additionally, several e-mail addresses were rather humorous, consisting of words like spoon, ghost-castle, bag-pipe farm, bear's nest and crows' café.

Second set of interviews was conducted with humour specialists and representative of hotel Estoria. The questions were based on questionnaires in appendixes 6 and 7. Interviewees gave their opinion about the usage of humour in accommodation establishments. Hammond and Wellington (2013, pp. 93) suggest that interview does not have to be carried out in one-to-one situation, due to the tendency of group interview interviewees to encourage each other and entice extra information from each other. The interviews were transcribed, and received data was coded inductively.

Case study researchers often have several data sources to choose from and according to Yin (2003 as cited in Botterill & Platenkamp, 2012, p. 19–25). The author decided to build her case study on documentation (virtual material), interview and physical artefacts. Pearce and Pabel (2015, p. 142) suggested on-site observation, so the author visited Estoria two times for data collection. Since case study requires the researcher to remain open different possible outcomes and provides levels of understanding that are still uncovered (Beeton, 2005, p. 46), it would be a suitable method for understanding topic not much researched yet. Interview answers and information from document analysis, and observations were combined into a case study and can be found in appendix 9. Within half a year vast amount of rich data was collected. In following chapter will cover the analyses and discussion of these research results.

2.2. Research results and discussion

Using humour in the field of accommodation has not yet been studied much but there are some successful hotels in the world that have integrated humour into their communication and services. A good example on how to use humour through everything they offer, is 25h twenty five hours hotels (<http://www.25hours-hotels.com/en/index.html>). Their whole concept is quirky and funny. There are several hotels in the world where funny “do not disturb” door signs have been used (<https://www.pinterest.com/citynites/funny-hotel-signs/>). Protea Hotels provides usable souvenirs with humorous sentences (see appendix 4) and Nordic Choice Hotels have amusing, yet informative materials in rooms. They are also a chain that offers jobs for cool people, who have never worked in accommodation establishments.

The videos and comments were analyzed in focus group. Respondents found most of the advertisements funny but some of the comments were unexpected for the author. One of the students who had strong religious beliefs, wrote that she felt offended in many aspects that the author and other respondents found quite amusing. Since cultural background plays a very important role on how people perceive humour, it was decided that for this study only Estonian end-users will be questioned. For the future studies, the topic should be widened to international target markets as well.

A total of forty-seven people shared their experience about funny situations that had happened during their travel. Most of their stories could be qualified under a comic situation (see figure 5) such as: funny travel-buddies, humorous servers, and unexpected events. Situational comedy was closely linked to misfortune of people mentioned in stories. Respondents wrote about accidentally forgetting some family and group members behind, hurting themselves, trying to find bathrooms, missing or almost missing a plane/boat, accidentally losing their clothes or walking into a bathroom meant for opposite sex. More than few of these events had something to do with bathrooms or the lack thereof. Several described events had something to do with bathrooms or not finding one. Only one respondent stated that she participated in an excursion in which a guide provided information through humour. Overall it was clear that people remembered and wanted to share their stories that had humorous touch to them.

Many of the funny misunderstandings between the respondents and locals came from two aspects: language and cultural differences. For example: ordering alcohol with ice cream instead of ice or in Italy ordering milk instead of coffee with milk. Respondents found especially funny situations where the tourists were trying to explain a situation: two gay men wishing to sleep in the same bed; a situation in which a man wishing to show that his food was good rubbed his stomach, instead of understanding the compliment, waitress started to clean his shirt or an event where a receptionist is giving a client a computer to type his message into Google translate).

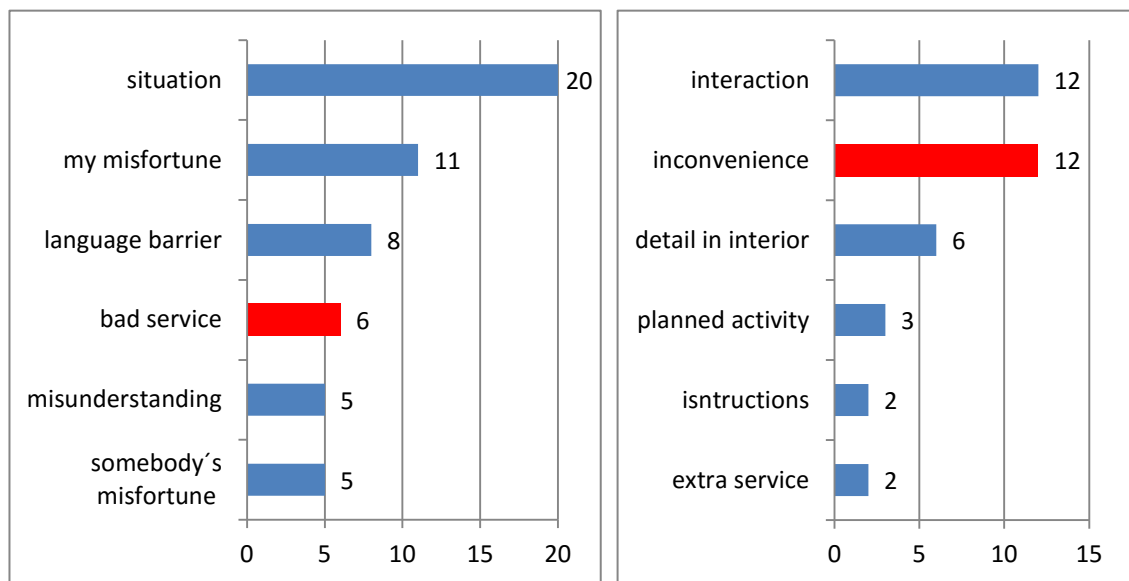


Figure 5. Humorous travel situations (n=55) and humour in accommodation establishments (n=45), compiled by the author

The most worrying aspect from an accommodation establishments' point of view, would be a service so bad that the client is only able to cope with it by telling humorous story of it. This category also covers the gap between expectations and reality. Respondents noted false advertisement on a webpage, a drunk owner or a worker causing humorous situations and even receiving accusations of stealing. Sex-related humour was mentioned the context of situational comedy. Some people could not sleep because of the thin walls or enjoy intimate moments to themselves because of interruption by local "ghosts". One man noted a sign in the bathroom saying "It is not as long as you think it is, so step closer, please!"

A respondent noted that so-called official hotels were often too serious yet some people were able to recall some humour provided in accommodation establishments. After reviewing answers six specific categories appeared (see the second half of figure 7). In most cases categories overlapped, for example the respondent had mixed feelings about the room-service washing her underwear; a toilet bowl and shower being so small that the customer could not wash herself normally, changing rooms that had cockroaches and being woken up at seven o'clock because the receptionist wanted to know what time was suitable for a customer to take a massage. All together twelve respondents actually had unpleasant experience that they turned into amusing story. One respondent even noted that negative events were easier to remember than positive.

Most positive humorous interactions were described as the ones planned by accommodation establishments. For example a guest, requested a wake-up call due to the fact he often cannot hear the alarm clock. In response the receptionist woke him up by singing to him through the door. Additionally, when guests left, everybody who is working went to the door and waved to guests until he or she exited the gate. Finally, a waitress, seeing that guests looked tired and needed some cheering up served a child a glass of beer and father with a Coca-Cola, making guests laugh at the obvious mix up. Funny artwork by Estonian artist E. Evestus and special-looking stump-toilets from Witch's country (*Nõiariik*) were also mentioned. Additionally, respondents remembered specific places where they had experienced humour: Vihula manor, Klaara-Manni, Aisa Motel, Jurna tourist farm, hotel Tartu, Ojako Puhke ja Koolituskeskus, Vanamõisa caravanpark, Radisson Blu Sky Hotel in Tallinn, Kubija Spa, Spa Hotel Lavendel, different caravan parks in Estonia, Hedon spa restaurant Raimond, Paganamaa puhkemaja, Aleksandri camping's restaurant, Rannahotell, Viitna camping, Parvematkad - floating house and Hotel Euroopa, Tallinn.

With today's increased ability to capture and share appealing moments in social media, several respondents sent pictures that they have taken in Estonian accommodation establishments (see appendix 7). Estonian accommodation establishments have used humour in different aspects while providing their services, therefore it was asked if people had noticed anything amusing while staying in Estonian hotels, hostels, motels

etc. Thirty-three respondents answered that they have noticed and fourteen noted that they have not seen anything funny in the Estonian accommodation establishments. Based on Pearce and Pabel's model, respondents had a possibility to pick different options from the list or write down their own answer. Over a quarter of respondents noted that they had humorous contact with a worker, nearly the same amount had noticed amusing signs (see figure 6). So, several workers perform humour.

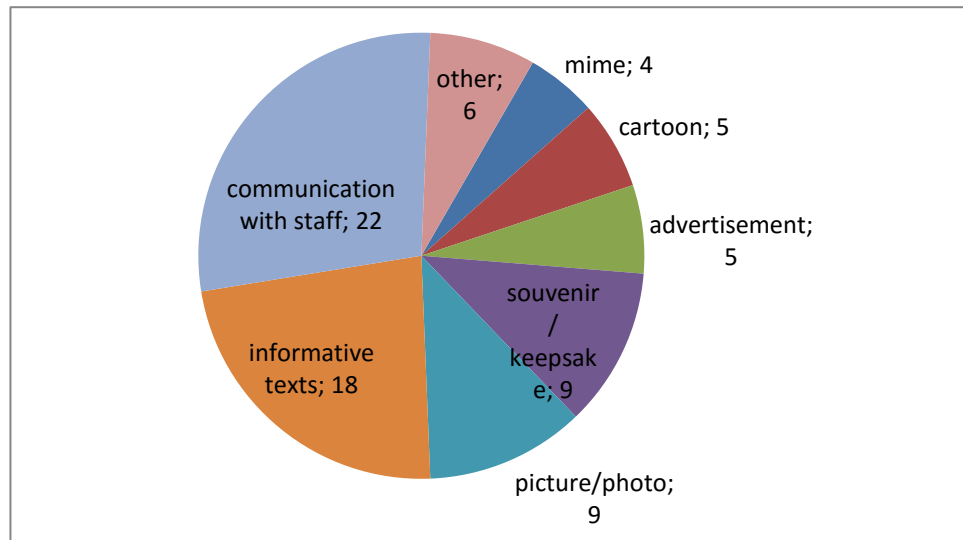


Figure 6. Different ways humour has been noted in Estonian accommodation establishments (n=38)

Nine respondents wrote that they would not visit the place again where the humour occurred. Most of them had bad experience that they turned into a funny story. Nine also stated that they shared their experience with friends. Twenty-seven respondents answered that they would go back and 26 of them said that they shared their amusing experience with a friend. Even if the difference is only one person, it could be said that more people talked of their bad experience than about positive ones.

One couple was assigned to a room that smelled like cat pee. When they went to change the room they were told a story how in the previous week there was a gathering for Lonely Hearts and one attendant had a local fat cat accompany her. Heijbel (2010, p. 35) suggests that companies tell stories that illustrate an organisations' values in order to shift customer experiences into a more positive light. This suggestion when applied,

such as the lonely lady and the cat, is able to neutralise an unfavorable situation with a humorous story.

Even though fifty-five people answered the questionnaire, the author expected more opinions from end-users. After adding an extra question to the questionnaire on the final week to ask why the respondent decided not to fill the questionnaire, the author got several responses saying that, even after thinking for a while, the respondents could not remember anything amusing or funny from their travel experience. One respondent answered that he could not take the research topic seriously and another explained that it took too much time to answer. Results confirm Smuts (2010) theory that people cannot often explain, what was good in the particular situation. They often remember the overall experience but not precise facts about a humorous event.

As seen on the below (figure 7), 66% of respondents thought that having a humorous experience during their travel is important or very important for customers. 120 accommodation establishments have not used humour deliberately, 69 said that they have.

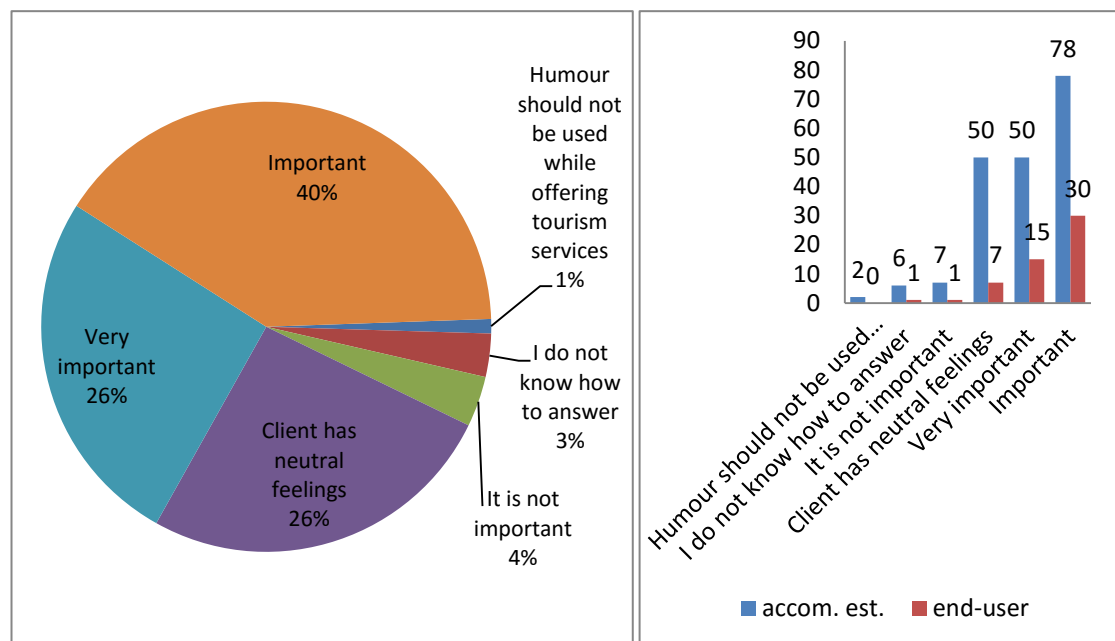


Figure 7. Accommodation establishments (n=193) opinion of how important they think humour is for their customers and a comparison with the end-user (n=54) opinions

To compare answers from hotels and guesthouses, then answers from hotel were more towards neutral, while guest- and holiday houses thought their guests appreciate humour more. In general people do not remember concrete humorous aspects from accommodation establishments, almost 1/3 of responses from people who's everyday life is accommodation, wrote that they cannot remember anything. Seventeen respondents mentioned that they have noticed some sort of signs or guidelines (funny wi-fi password; humorous notices and guidelines on expected manners of guests; amusing artwork; funny names for different rooms in a hostel; comics on the walls of the rooms; a humorous warning sign for tall people on a small door that said "Hit your head here"; a teddy bear with cucumbers in its eyes advertising a spa in hotel; funny poems on a bathroom door; the receptionist of a Latvian hostel was wearing pants with an anatomically correct picture). Funny events related to animals were mentioned five times and twelve people wrote about funny situations that occurred in a hotel. Ten respondents wrote that they had experienced a specially designed interaction process that included amusing and funny elements. Several times Witch's country (*Nõiariik* <http://noiariik.ee/eng/noiariik>) was mentioned as a humorous example (where guests are greeted humorously and several services are offered with a twist).

Most of the respondents (110 from 188) thought that humour should definitely be used in accommodation establishments and 15 were against it. Of those who answered that humour should not be used, only two explained why. One stated that she hates when somebody is trying to make a joke while the other stated that humour has no place in advertisement because people are looking for trustful and precise information. Even though most of the respondents who thought humour was important or very important for their customers, many answered that accommodation establishments should use humour while providing service, although four of them noted that it was not suitable to use it in accommodation establishments.

87% of respondents, who thought humour was very important or important for their customers, have used it in their organisations (see figure 8). One respondent thought humour was unimportant for the customer but still used it in his/her accommodation establishment. The reasoning behind this was to create positive emotions. Among some

of the comments, respondents explained that humour is part of life; they enjoy the process and do not think about the results; since guests come to have good time, humour helps to relieve tension and aids in connecting with people. For example it can be used to explain serious topics about Estonian history, to explain shortcomings, make communication “lighter”, make people talk about the place, and motivate workers. One respondent explained using humour as: “it is like tickling – little bit is enjoyable and funny, too much is tiring”.

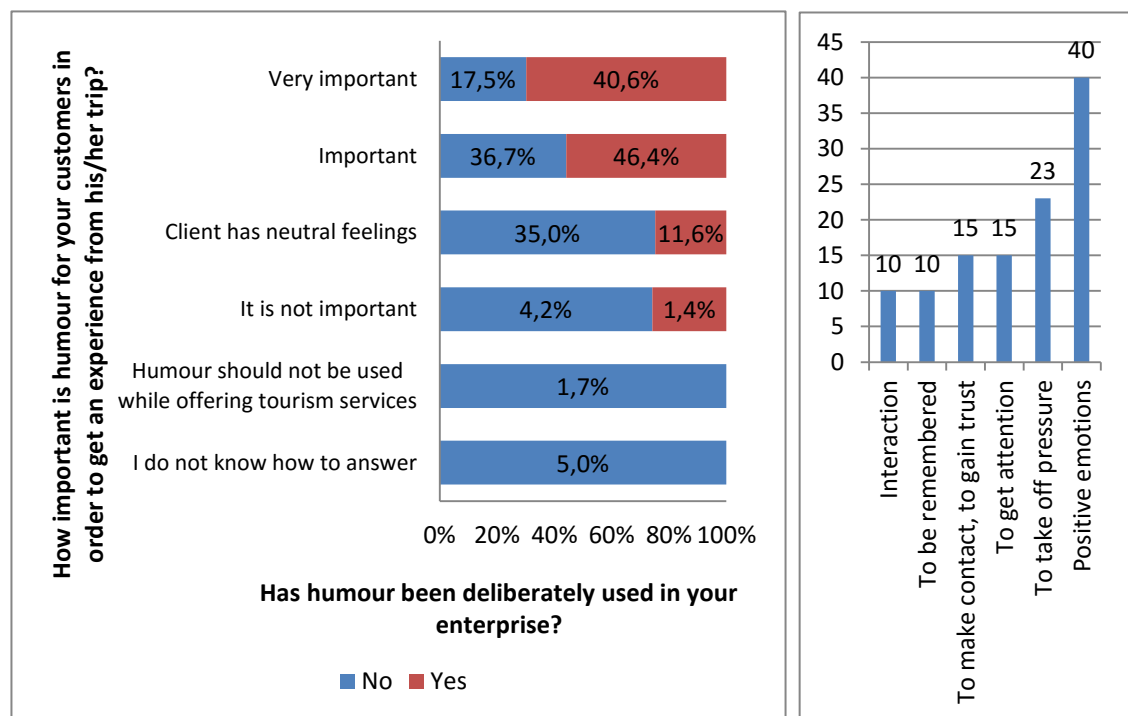


Figure 8. Relationships between deliberate use of humour in accommodation establishments and opinion about end-user expectations (n=189) & why was humour used

Several channels can be used for communicating humour in a tourism context. The author decided to use Pearce and Pabel’s (2015, p 19) selection for mediums. Respondents evaluated on a 5-point Likert scale, how relevant would the use of humour be in following aspects of accommodation establishments. The average was calculated by using the following rating system: very important = 5; important = 4; neutral feelings = 3, it is not important = 2; humour should not be used = 1.

Respondents found that the best solution would be using humour in a one-on-one communication between an employee and the customer (see figure 9).

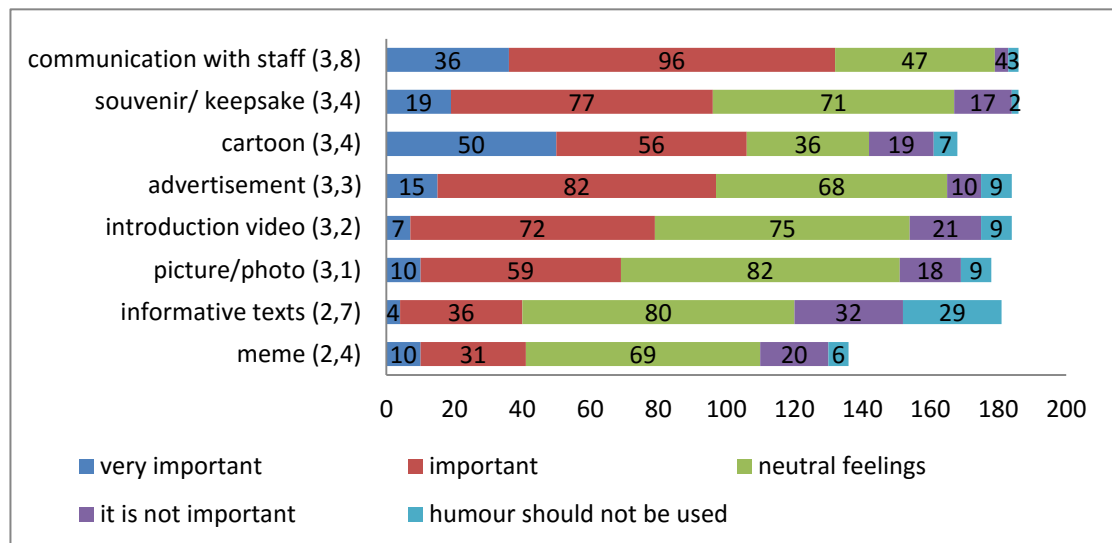


Figure 9. Importance of humour in delivery mechanisms

Humour was mostly used in direct communication between the client and an accommodation establishment's employee (see figure 10). Two respondents answered that they had made a joke about a client. Many accommodation establishments even have humorous stories that they use. For example a little lake that dries out by the end of summer was named the "mud-spa" that clients can enjoy and at the beginning of summer, when it is full, customers can listen to natural music at the "frog's marriage waltz".

As noted earlier, stories are also a powerful communication tool. Hotel has a story about their name: Before hotel Kongo was established there was a popular bar in the same building where men liked to gather and drink. After drinking they started fighting. Because at the same time there was a civil war in the Republic of Congo, people started saying that these men were fighting like in the Congo. Since the building had a known nick-name the owners of the hotel did not want to waste a good story and named the hotel Kongo. When clients asked about a tiger skin on the wall of one rural guesthouse, hostess told a story about incidents years back when some animals from the Tallinn zoo escaped and the tiger was captured on their property. The story was so believable that several years later some new clients knew about it from their friends.

The entire concept of Hiiu Õlle Koda (*Brewery of Hiiumaa*), which is part of a hotel in Hiiumaa, is full of humour (<http://kassarikeskus.ee/Brewery>). There is a bad internet connection in one rural bed and breakfast and the owners use a joke to explain it: “If you have seen mobile operators’ advertisements where they promise 99% of coverage anywhere in Estonia, then at this moment you happen to be in that 1% area”. A guide who introduces a manor-hotel uses humour to test if people are listening or not, it is very important element in every tour. Guests seem to love it if someone sees the world differently than they have thought of it.

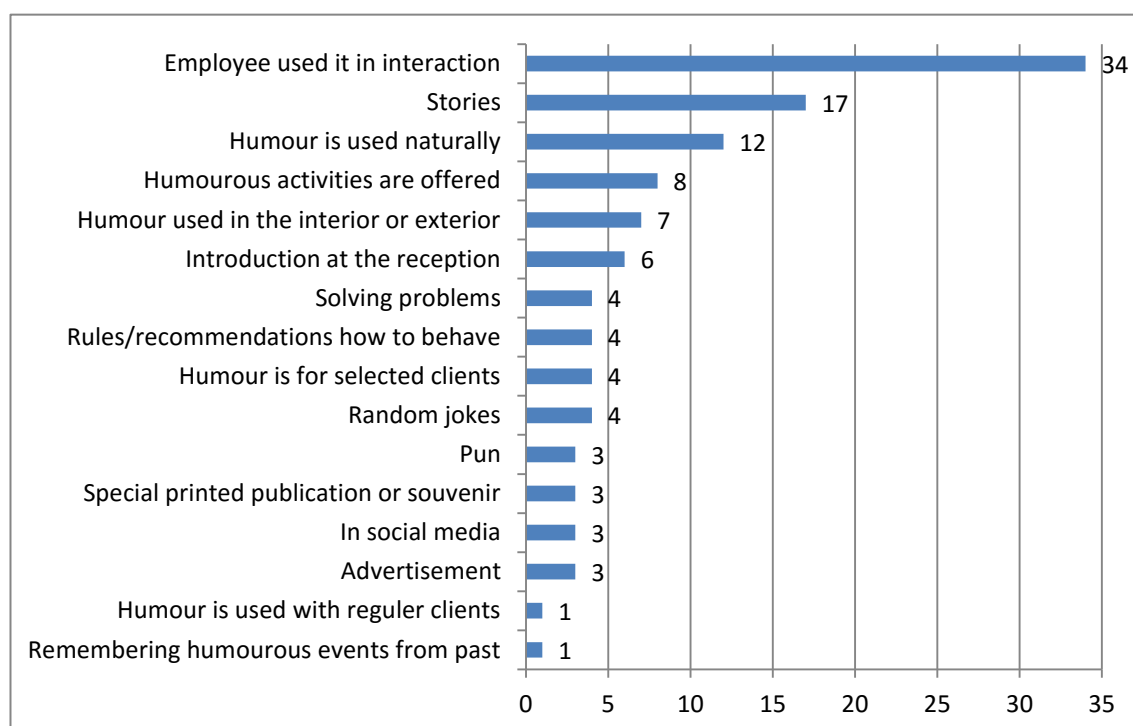


Figure 10. Ways humour has been used in accommodation establishments

One rural area guesthouse got a request from a client to decorate a rose hip bush with red roses. On the next day several by-passers stopped their car and took pictures next to that beautiful plant. Later the owners introduced that special bush to several clients and asked them to determine the plant. One manor used a combination of a story and action. During an excursion the guide was talking about how many apples the trees in the garden produced and how local boys often stole them. In the next moment guests saw a basket full of apples under the tree. Special “bear’s cookies” have been offered to

clients. However, in one bed and breakfast a respondent stated that they had naturally good atmosphere and they do not want to ruin it with forced humour.

Seven accommodation establishments have used humour in both the interior and exterior of their establishment. Some of the examples can be seen in appendix 8. One respondent said that his town hostel had a button on the wall with a sign “Pointless Button”. A respondent from a bed and breakfast, that that is according to owner situated in a forest, has “long-distance telephone booths”. In one case a rural guesthouse inherited a large amount of books, so they built bookshelves in each room and used the slogan: ”wi-fi out, book in”. Funny signs and explanations have been used in saunas explaining how guests should use it. Some signs have been observed saying not to bring a horse or a bicycle to your room and also slogan saying “5000 years of golf”. One guesthouse in the countryside has rooms with names like: Lake villa has The mouse burrow (*Hiireurg*), Squirrel's Nest (*Oravapesa*), Mole's hole (*Muti mullaauk*), Greenbottle fly (*Porikärbes*), Butterfly (*Liblikas*), Bee (*Mesilane*), Frog (*Konn*) etc., and the Swallow's Villa (*Pääsu Villas*) has Raven's Nest (*Rongapesa*), Swan's Nest (*Luigepesa*), and the Swallow's Nest (*Pääsupesa*). Another uses themes from fairytales. One guest apartment is called Souptown Apartment, because it is situated in an area that is called Supilinn which in English means Town of Soup or Soup Town. One guesthouse had a big fabric crow hanging on a tree. Some respondents described language pun, e.g. the word “*tünn*”, can mean barrel sauna or also letting someone down, so the farmhouse offers to their customers biggest “*tünn*” of their lifetime. Another accommodation establishment uses a slogan that in winter storehouse is used for storing crop but in the summer for storing tourists.

When accommodation establishments were asked if they had a humorous character, story, joke, picture etc. that they use, sixteen respondents answered that they have used humorous stories (see figure 11). Stories were for example about an angry cat Kusti and two ghosts; beaver; lady Saara who had always something humorous to say about everyday life; a Caucasian Shepherd Dog Alex who's territory is marked with the signs “expert of lower leg bone”; the crazy count Peter August Friedrich von Manteuffel (who fell off the roof with his flying machine), a lady who asked a fisherman, if the fish

caught from dark-water bog lake were already smoked, and legendary fun-loving worker that a customer remember years after.

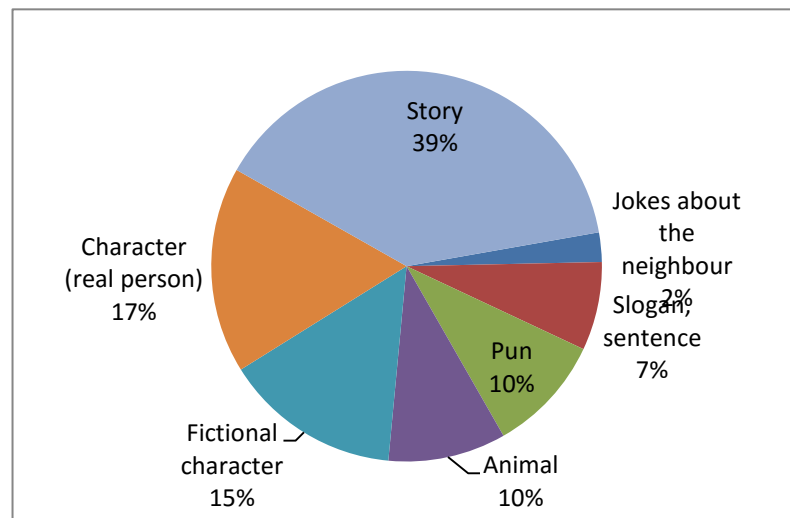


Figure 11. Aspects of humour that accommodation establishment are using through several different channels (n=41)

Clients' reactions to humorous communication were, according to respondents, mostly positive (see figure 12). Even though most answers were in the style that guests are feeling happy and positive, an important factor was also WOM advertisement. There is always a possibility that humour is not understood or appreciated due to differences of people. This data showed that about 10% of guests were unable to understand humour.

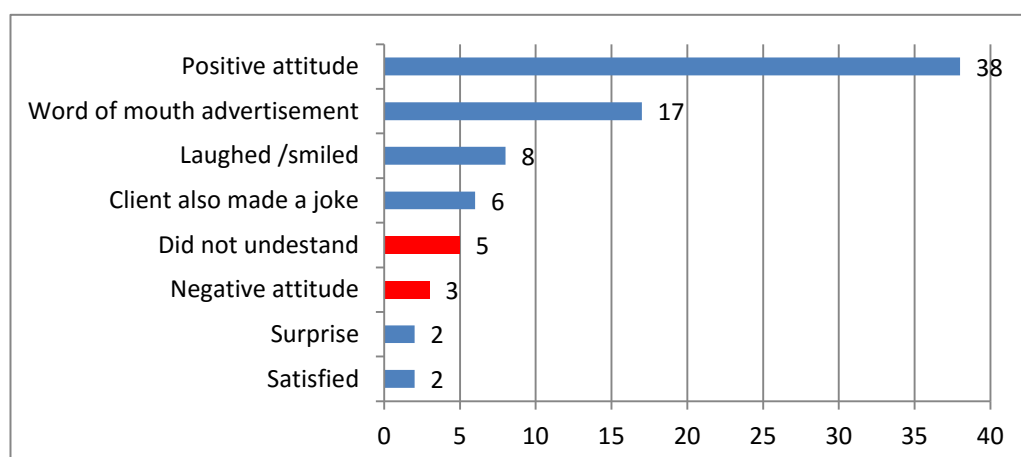


Figure 12. Clients' reactions to humorous communication (n=81)

It was noted that promising humour in hotel advertising is not the best idea due to the fact that guests will come with high expectations of being amused. Several respondents said that humour helps to solve problems. One respondent felt that the government is treating accommodation establishments as if they are a joke and then the owner jokes with clients about these issues, how pointless several regulations are, and how they can be broken while providing services. So the joke in this case would be on government. One rural accommodation establishment owner noted that it is not possible to use humour in booking systems and introduction systems like puhkaeestis.com / visitestonia.com, since the administrator will not let to use humour.

The group-interview with humour specialists supported the humour theories in most aspects. Interviewees provided the author with several funny and amusing stories however, many were not directly related to accommodation establishments. Instead the answers were connected to everyday life and travelling, also mentioning Estonian origin cartoonist Edmund Valtman, who won The Pulitzer Prize. Experts noted that in today's world people are very sensitive and it is often hard to make a joke without offending. Many aspects that influence perception of humour are dependent on experience, culture and even health condition. They noted, like Suls model in appendix 1, that humour had always an element of surprise and communication is funny when distanced story-lines come together, that was confirmed by Laroche *et al* (2011, 2014), Neuendorf (2010, 2015) and Speck (1991). Authenticity of the story is also an important factor.

Humour experts have noted that humour helps people to relax when stress is high and that it is suitable to any accommodation establishment in a moderate amount. Humour sometimes helps to show a client how absurd a situation is, yet there are always situations in which a person does not understand or situation cannot be explained in a joke. It is also sometimes easier to explain a situation using a humorous story. Experts suggest that accommodation establishments to study their target markets' humour-preferences, before applying it. Finding a right joke requires a search because a repeat visitor wishes to experience something new. When a question was asked if they had noticed anything in Estonian accommodation establishments, the answers from expert were "no" and "I do not remember". They explained that distances in Estonia are short,

so they don't usually accommodate in Estonia but will go back home for the night. Similarly in a group-interview with the end-users, humour experts said, that while choosing accommodation establishments the most important factors are price and location, however, a tension-free atmosphere also plays an important role. When a person is in a good mood, they are more willing to pay greater amounts.

In hotels, experts suggested using stories from previous guests, specially, if there have been someone famous, because a story about a famous guests always get attention. One of the experts told a story about a famous cartoonists meeting in a hotel where the party ended with a big ceiling-painting. During their party famous cartoonists drew funny pictures all over the restaurant ceiling. The hotel kept this piece of art for several years to entertain guests. The most important aspect of business is good service but humour helps to generate a pleasant atmosphere. In order to do this hotel atmosphere could be eased by adding humorous figures or statues, even funny elements on a webpage. Other options are to present caricatures of hotel owners, provide aphorisms in room design or offer guests the possibility to participate in "good mood raffle", where the guest could pick up a good wish or a thought at the reception before he/she leaves.

Humour has the ability to raise credibility if applied modestly. Laughing out loud kind of humour can be in some situations offensive but smirking may give an extra essence to the situation. Over-doing it with humour can be harmful, but the ability to laugh at yourself is a valued characteristic. Facts are important, but changing the focus of the story often gives it a twist that is interesting and humorous for customers. Sometimes an event itself is not funny but when put in different context gives it an essence of humour. For example, when using humour for introducing tragic events, a joke will be about a person or an organisation responsible for those evil happenings. In this case both superior and relief theory could be applied for neutralizing the event.

The author received ten different photos from Estonian accommodation establishments and from end-users, showing examples of humour in Estonian accommodation establishments. Table 5 classifies humorous communication based on different levels of humour usage on photos accommodation establishments and end-users provided. Photos can be seen in appendix 8.

Table 5. Analysis on received photos from Estonian accommodation establishments

	hidden humorous communication	intended humorous communication	humour is designed into some activities	humour is promised
Photo 1		x		(x)
Photo 2	(x)	x		
Photo 3	x			
Photo 4		x		
Photo 5		x	(x)	
Photo 6	x			
Photo 7	(x)	x		
Photo 8	x			
Photo 9		x		x
Photo 10	x			

Source: Compiled by the author

On the first photo a wild boar is wearing sunglasses. Employees of accommodation establishment wanted to gain attention, However, by doing so they must also be ready to explain their action in case client asks why. Therefore, due to client questions, it is likely that verbal humorous communication also occurred. It cannot be sure if making little humorous gestures is a constant throughout all the services or it was just something that was done because it seemed funny at the moment. Photo 2 is a clear message through humour that whining and complaints are not appreciated and the response to them could be placed throughout the spectrum of humour. It could also just as easily be just a decoration on the wall if the customer does not understand the irony.

Photos from third accommodation establishment were just decorations on the wall to lighten up visitor's moods and in the author's opinion did not carry a deep message. They were placed into areas of the room where they would make most sense to the guests. Even though the author does not find using stuffed animals in decoration funny, it could be assumed that the set up at the hotel restaurant window was to catch attention and to send a humorous message to by-passers about the possibility to eat. A Christmas card with winter beach activities is a staged act to distinguish their hotel from others (since most of the Christmas cards sent to and by companies are rather similar-looking). A message behind the card could also read "even though we are a beach hotel that customers mostly visit during summer, we are thinking about you in winter as well".

The author admits she did not understand the humour behind photo 6 at first. An explanation from the guest house was needed in order to determine that all the customers, even cats, will be pampered at this accommodation establishment. The sign on photo 7 is understandable only for people who speak Estonian, who have knowledge not only in fishing vocabulary but also understand slang. The message itself is clear “I am not at home” this can be also used as an element in decoration. Photo 8 is a cartoon-art of a rural area accommodation front page that could be classified under hidden humorous communication, since it is only place where given cartoon was used.

It could be said that the accommodation establishment that sent photo 9 has humour integrated into their organisation culture. Besides a funny posts on April Fools’ Day, this tourism farm uses cartoons in their decorations and several signs are hand-painted with humorous aspects. The last photos (see appendix 8, photo 10) were taken in a luxury hotel that has some well hidden humour within their interior. Only attentive quests will notice the hidden humorous messages.

During her travel around Estonia and looking through several web-pages, the author noticed many amusing, cute, funny etc. ways accommodation establishments have deliberately or unintentionally used humour in their offers. One humble request in both questionnaires was to send amusing photos, taken in Estonian accommodation establishment, to the author (see appendix 8). Solo Sokos Hotel Estoria in Tallinn is one of the successful examples that provides its’ guest with a possibility to get information about Estonia through a spectrum of humour in their specially designed rooms and from a quirky fact-book that describes hundred reasons to visit Estonia (see the case study in appendix 9).

Many interesting aspects came from the empirical study of accommodation establishments, tourists and experts from tourism and humour field. The following section will combine these studies with theoretical approaches.

2.3. Humour research's conclusions and suggestions

As explained by several authors, not many studies have been conducted in the field of the deliberate use of humour in businesses. Ball and Johnson (2011, p. 205) speculated that humour has not been researched much because business is a serious matter. These thoughts are likely to change as client opinions are shifting and business must keep up with their client base if they wish to be competitive. Studies have shown that there is growing interest about the topic of humour possibilities in different academic fields. Since personal approach will become more important in every aspect of life, author is convinced that service design combined with humour will become an important topic soon. Three quarters of end users think that humour is an important part from travel experience and 66% of respondents from accommodation establishments thought that humour is important or very important for their customers travel experience. So accommodation establishments are already exceeding customer expectations.

The biggest surprise for author was that despite interest of humour in general in social media channels, sharing funny videos and photos, the amount of replies from end-users was modest. It was assumed that accommodation establishments will not reply to questionnaires as actively. Based on an empirical study the author can conclude that end-users usually do not remember little details that they saw or experienced during their travel. They remember overall experiences. There is, of course, an option that nothing funny occurred during their travel but in order to prove the point, more studies should be conducted. There is a little controversy between answers of end-users and service providers. According to accommodation establishments answer that humorous communication is often something that end-users recall and humorous stories are retold by customers. Yet, since questions were answered by 16% of Estonian accommodation establishment population, there is a possibility that answers were only given from those hotels, hostels, guest houses etc. where humour is accepted in throughout the organisation and generalisations cannot be made. Humour has an important part in organisation culture. When employees are happy and satisfied, they will satisfy customers as well.

Cultural differences can often be a reason humour occurs in many travel situations, however, when deliberately providing it, it must be ensured that the client will not be offended. When staff of accommodation establishment find out that something is amusing for their clients the same or similar interaction could be used again. An important factor that has been stressed by both marketing and service design theories is that a company has to know the customer and design services that cater the clients preferences and pay attention to what is called “clients pain”. In tourism, people normally want to have good time and providing humour can help to accomplish this objective. It is a good possibility to use humour “left behind” by previous customers.

Based on a humour communication process model (see figure 3) it could be said that misunderstandings occurred in the decoding phase because of differences in cultural background and a lack of language skills from both parties. Respondents from accommodation establishments mentioned on 8 occasions (out of 81) that the client did not understand the humorous message or a had negative reaction towards humour provided. The model on the communication process of humorous message on figure 3 could be used to explain the process. Therefore in about 10% of the cases humour failed and should on not been used.

Vos and Schoemaker (2006, p. 12) pointed out that people have to make a connection in their brain with previously stored memories in order for a person to remember company. Since only a few accommodation establishments have communicated themselves as positive and humorous, not many end-users were able to remember particular places. Yet few places were mentioned also by the name of accommodation establishment where they have experienced something funny and also remembered it. Taking into account the power of social media and photos, it could be suggested that if the detail catches the eye, there is a change it will also be liked and / or shared in social media channels. Humorous stories could be used to explain these values, but also to have a generally important part in any kind of communication.

Four accommodation establishments noted that they have used humour to solve problems, yet most of the stories that end-users found funny were related to problematic situations. As Samson and Gross (2012) explained, positive humour is related to the

reappraisal of the situation, but negative humour helps to create an emotional distance from the negative event. With this explanation it could be understood why one fifth of respondents shared an amusing story that was actually related to bad service. If an accommodation establishment knows their own weaknesses, then humour could be used to let clients know about those weak points in service processes in order to avoid disappointment in a later stage. Humorous approaches for solving problems may work once per client but eventually customers will expect disturbing problems to be removed. It could also be questioned, if for example, the server in an Egyptian hotel used humour (or just solved the problem) when he put batteries from a remote control that was not working into his mouth and afterwards back into the remote which then fixed it. Good core service is in today's competitive world obligatory.

Pabel and Pearce (2015, p. 360) classified humour, that was provided for tourists, into five categories: interest/attention, breaking the ice/bonding, entertainment/fun, alleviate anxiety, lighten the mood. Results from their study gave a rather similar outcome to the accommodation establishments (see table 6). Meaning that even though accommodation establishments are static and their offer is stable, there is an option to use humorous solutions.

Table. 6. Humour provided in tourism sector in general vs. accommodation establishments

Classification from Pabel and Pearce (2015)	Results from accommodation establishments survey
interest/attention	to be remembered; to get attention
breaking the ice/bonding	to make contact, to gain trust; interaction
entertainment/fun	positive emotions
alleviate anxiety	to take off pressure
lighten the mood	positive emotions

Source: combined by the author

Even though it first seemed relevant, after survey the author thinks that Porter's Generic Competitive Strategies model is not the best solution to apply while using humour. Humour for differentiation will work but in author's opinion humour can be used in both low cost oriented and differentiation-oriented establishments. Interviewees thought that promising humour already in marketing communication and promotion stage would

not be the smartest strategy because then client's expectations will be high and it is harder to exceed them.

Based on the Design Ladder, the author created a ladder/pyramid of accommodation establishment humour usage, with the intention to explain that there could be different levels of how humour could and should be used in accommodation establishments (see figure 13). It could be questioned if bottom level "unintentional humour in different communication channels" should be part of the pyramid, since it consists of bad service and miss-spelled signs that customers notice and share in their social media channels. But based on an end-user survey this unintentional humour mostly qualified as funny in accommodation establishments. In order to have customers in the future, entrepreneurs have to ensure good service therefore the bottom of the pyramid should not actually be considered as part of the suggested model for accommodation establishments to use. Level two gathers humorous communication that is provided by the employees of accommodation establishments and is largely dependent on the situation. This humour can be planned but must seem random to the customer. Normally this type of humour requires a good sense of humour from both parties.

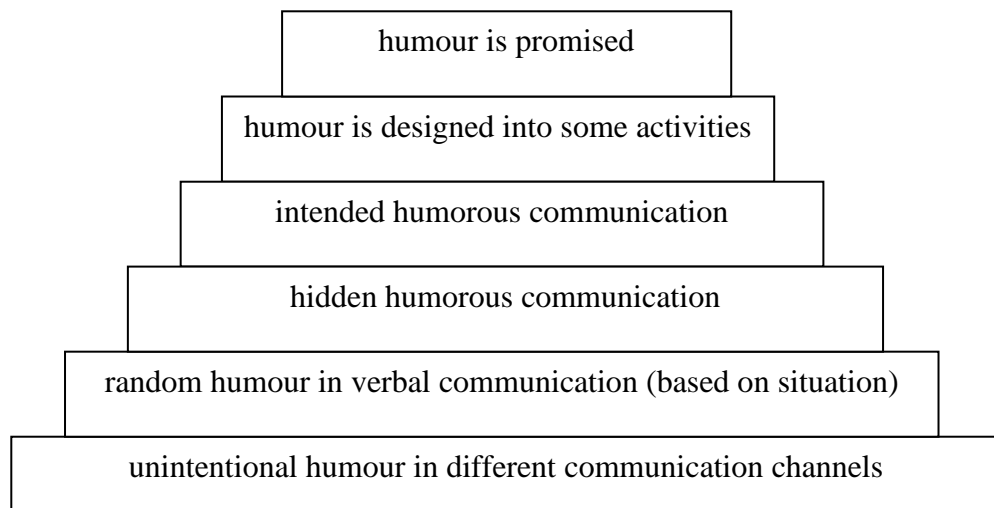


Figure 13. Pyramid of humour usage in accommodation establishments (compiled by the author)

The third level contains communication that could be understood if a client is attentive and observant, has the background knowledge or is able to notice small details. Under that category could be qualified, for example, the chandelier made from silverware or a bucket of cold water hanging above the sauna door in the high class luxury hotel (see photos in appendix 7). There is a fine line between “hidden humorous communication” and “intended humorous communication”. Both could consist of funny and amusing art, decorations etc. Funny souvenirs, names, signs are classified under “intended humorous communication”, a special category under this section would be warning signs and providing information about shortcomings of service that cannot be, for some reason, eliminated.

Some Estonian accommodation establishments have long and interesting history and stories connected to the building or to its previous inhabitants. Amusing stories can easily be combined with services or be a platform from where new products and services could be developed. An example of the highest level of humour usage in accommodation establishments, using marketing communication and service processes, would be a niche hotel where a client knows that everything has a twist. It does not have to be a humour hotel, but it most certainly has to have a strong concept that is supported in different marketing channels, strategically by management and organisation culture.

Often members of organisations do not have similar feelings towards a company narrative, therefore stories will help to convince them. As Ball and Johnson (2011) said, humour increases the “fun factor” in situations and generates warmth, openness and trust. This was also the case with the accommodation establishments, where 40 respondents from the accommodation establishments noted that the main reason why humour was used was to create positive emotions.

As Pabel and Pearce (2015) have shown, the advantages of using humour by tourism operators were to create a distinctive and enjoyable visit, the potential of creating repeat visits, extended periods of stay at an attraction, possibilities for word of mouth advertising, and adding a more professional image to a company. Half of the end users answered that they would visit the accommodation establishment again and according to accommodation establishments word of mouth advertising works when they have

deliberately used humour. It cannot be said if humour in accommodation establishments would extend the stay but replies confirm the willingness for repeat visit. The author agrees with Pearce and Pabel (2015) that the main outcomes of using humour within tourism companies are connection and comfort. Concentration ability and levels of the client should be in author's opinion researched differently. The connection and comfort from humour does not apply only for customer-server relationship, it has important part in organisational culture as well. The subject of tourists experience and perceptions of humour should be investigated deeper using different research techniques, tools and methods.

Since Binkhorst and Den Dekker (2010) concluded that co-creation increases value of experience, respondents of a study were asked to leave their e-mail addresses if they wished to receive copy of the final master thesis. 33 from 55 end-users and 65 from 194 accommodation establishments were interested of reading the results of given research. So, based on that fact the author can say that humour is important in general at least in context of accommodation establishments. It is important for accommodation establishments to offer certain quality service but many people are expecting something extra from the service they used to. However, asking people directly what they expect out of establishments is not always the best solution. It is good to explain the topic with a famous quote by Henry Ford: "If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses." The author uses the expression to illustrate and draw parallels once again with humour usage and design usage in companies. Customers do not often know what they want. Yet, both, humour and designing services are successful when the client is the most important factor and company bases its offer from the need of client.

As noted several times, in order to have customers in the future, entrepreneurs have to guarantee good service. Clients can laugh at misunderstandings and use humour for coping with bad service, however this should not be present in the first place. Regardless, accidental use of humour that comes naturally and fits the situation is part of every-day communication. Tourism is an international sector and if workers of a company use an open approach towards humour it could give a competitive advantage

to a company and possibly the ability to differentiate itself in the eyes of travellers. Tourists are and will be different in the near future but even now many wish to experience unusual things. Humour is also usable among staff of accommodation establishments. It not only helps workers to cope with hard work and long hours, but also gives an opportunity for company values to be explained in a more engaging way.

Normally people do not remember particular jokes, photos, signs etc. (unless those are so funny that they feel the need of taking about a photo and sharing their photos in social media) but they remember good emotions. The weakness of this study was the time lapse between answering survey questions and actual tourism experience. However, in the author's opinion research question was answered and the results showed how humour can be used in marketing communication and service processes, creating a competitive advantage and making the general offer more attractive for end users. In communication humour cannot be forced. It has to come naturally. Yet if workers have a script what to say and how to communicate humorously, it can be beneficial. It is understandable that many accommodation establishments would choose not to use humour, there will always be situations in which humour will not be accepted or appreciated and there are people who will not understand.

SUMMARY

In today's fast-changing world, every company wants to win customers over and offering a quality service is not enough anymore. This master thesis was written on a topic that has not been thoroughly researched but the author hopes that students and scholars will take humour more seriously and see benefits of intentionally using and researching it after reading this paper. Deliberately using humour in accommodation establishments, marketing communication, and service processes with the purpose of making an offer more attractive for customers, will become an important issue in the near future since customers have changed and wish to experience products and services in ways other than the ordinary.

The objective of this thesis was fulfilled and several suggestions for accommodation establishments were made. Suggestions such as how to integrate humour into their services with the purpose of making a product offer more attractive for customers and therefore creating a competitive advantage. Based on the communication, service design and tourism humour theories, the "Pyramid of humour usage in accommodation establishments" model was combined to show several different levels of how humour could be used in accommodation establishments.

Humour has an important place in peoples' lives and it definitely cannot be overlooked when offering tourism services. The current thesis gave an overview of humour into Estonian accommodation establishments and based on the study results, it could be said that the willingness to try new things and offer services with a help from humour, with the purpose of delighting customers, exists in Estonian accommodation establishments.

The set research questions were answered, as follows:

How has humour been used in Estonian accommodation establishments? 37% of respondents have used humour. Companies situated in rural areas are more active when it comes to finding humorous solutions while offering their services. The most important way of using humour was in real life customer interaction. Several respondents answered that humour comes naturally to them and they often use stories. The author was provided with several amusing stories and pictures showing how humour has been used. There are many accommodation establishments with an interesting concept but humour in most cases is a side factor that is not integrated into business strategies.

What kind of humour have end-users experienced, noticed, seen, felt etc. in Estonian accommodation establishments? Most end-users told stories about unexpected situations, often related to unprofessional service and misunderstandings that they found funny afterwards. In most cases humorous interaction was recalled. Little details were often not noticed or remembered.

How could humour be used more efficiently in accommodation establishments' service processes and marketing communication? Humour does not depend on star rating or classification of accommodation establishment but depends from people working there. A little humorous signs, pictures, figures, design elements only gives value to overall experience even if the detail itself is not remembered. However with today's wide use of social media there is a chance that humorous event or photo of some detail could be shared with the world. Humour also helps people to cope with unexpected and stressful situations that may occur during work yet in most of the cases is just a good opportunity to lighten the mood and is definitely a valuable tool for coping with general situation in the world. Even simple smile will change the atmosphere.

It was interesting to acknowledge that even if the end users appreciate and value humorous experiences while travelling, stories are often related to bad service experiences that were neutralized by humour. Accommodation establishments admitted that humour has been used to explain shortcomings. Humorous stories have been told and retold by customers and humour is most important within communication situations.

The author was positively surprised by the amount of answers and positive feedback received from the accommodation establishments' side, so it could be said that Estonian accommodation establishments do their best in order to help to justify the country slogan "Positively surprising" to the world. Many interesting and funny stories were shared. It could be questioned if a survey was the best method to use for collecting data from end-user in this particular case, however since there was no previous research in the field of accommodation establishments' humour, the author believes it was justified. For further research the author suggests that questions in survey should be combined with visual elements, in order to trigger the respondents' memory and open their mind. Compared to several other humour studies it could be said that the range of respondents was wider.

There are so many different layers of humour within accommodation establishments therefore the topic should be researched further. One research ideas would be to study how could humour change financial situation of accommodation establishment using experiment.

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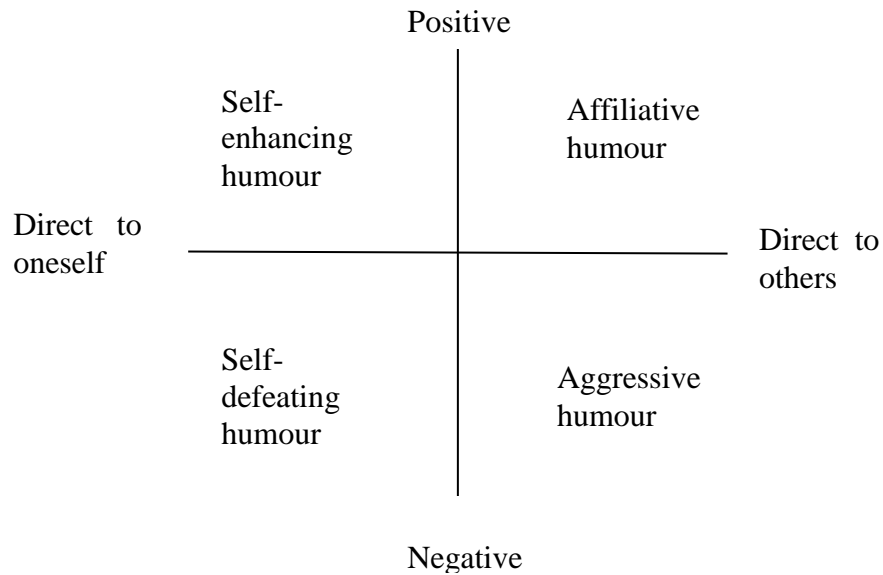
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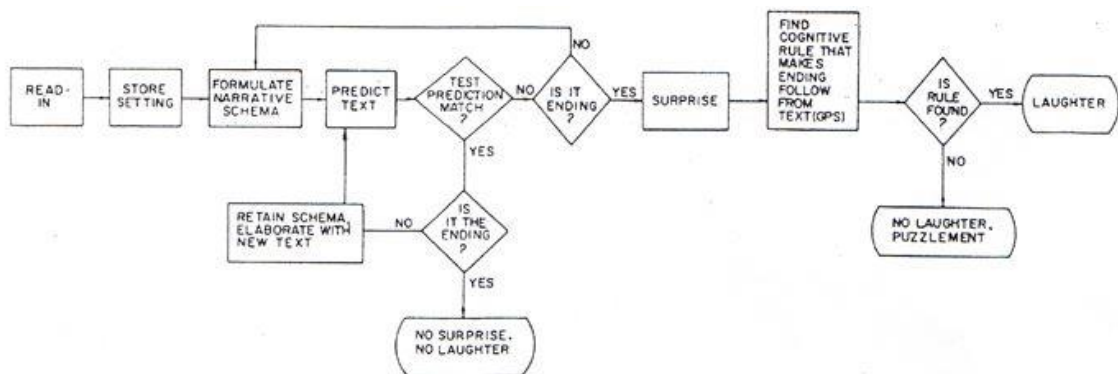
Appendix 1. Models of the different humour styles and appreciation

1. Models of the different humour styles



Source: Martin *et al.*, 2003

2. Suls' humour appreciation model



Source: Suls 1972 as cited in Willis, K. 1992

Appendix 2. Tourism and Humour: Patterns and Pathways

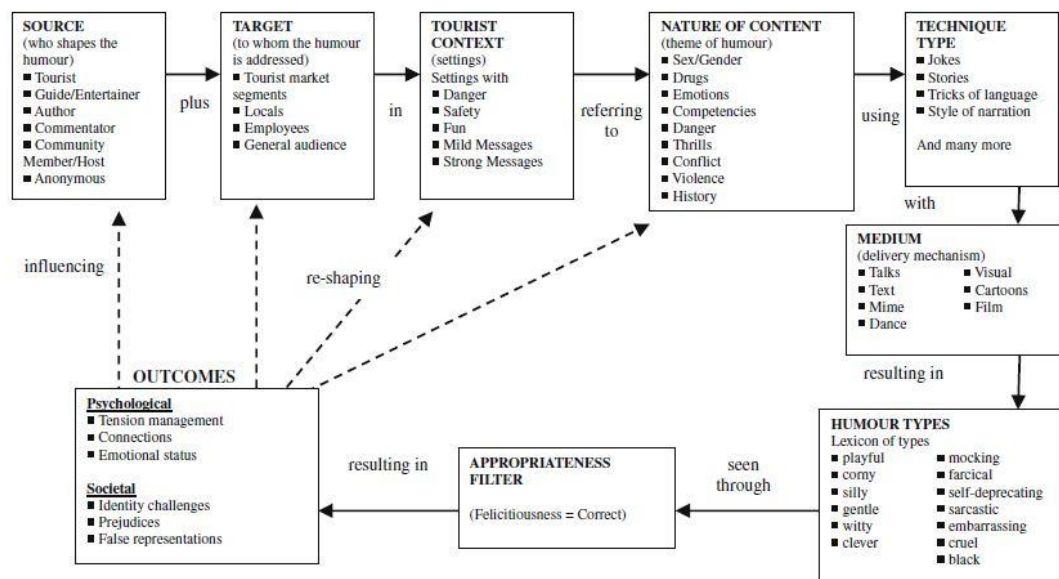
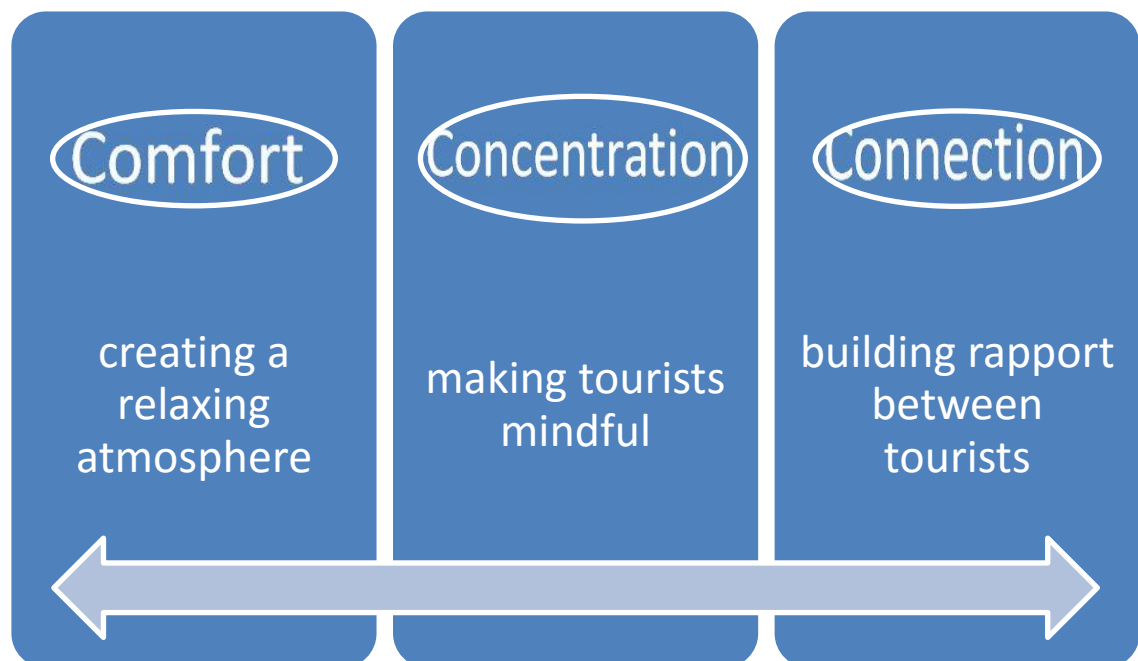


Figure 1. Tourism and Humour: Patterns and Pathways

Source: Pearce, 2009, pp. 663; Pearce & Pabel, 2015, p.19



Parts of Pearce & Pabel (2015, pp.19; 143) model

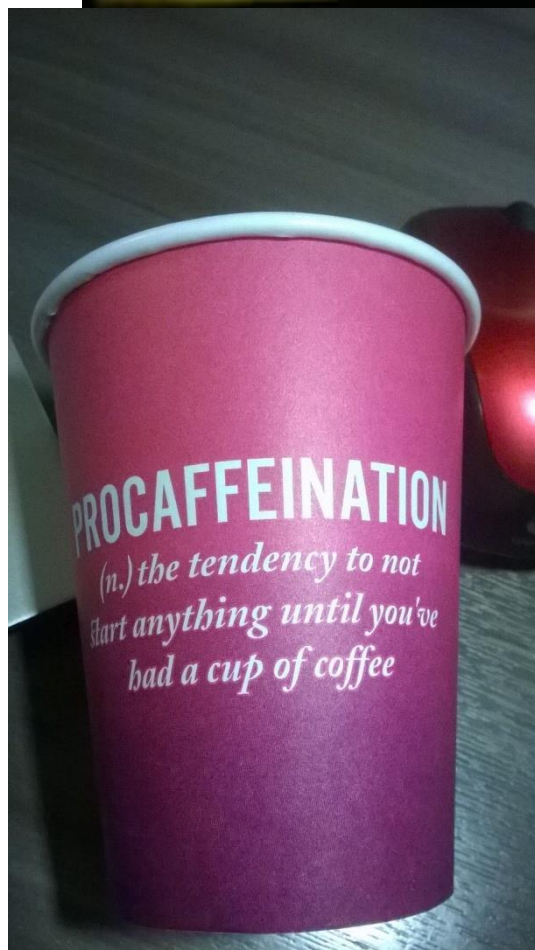
Appendix 3. Research plan

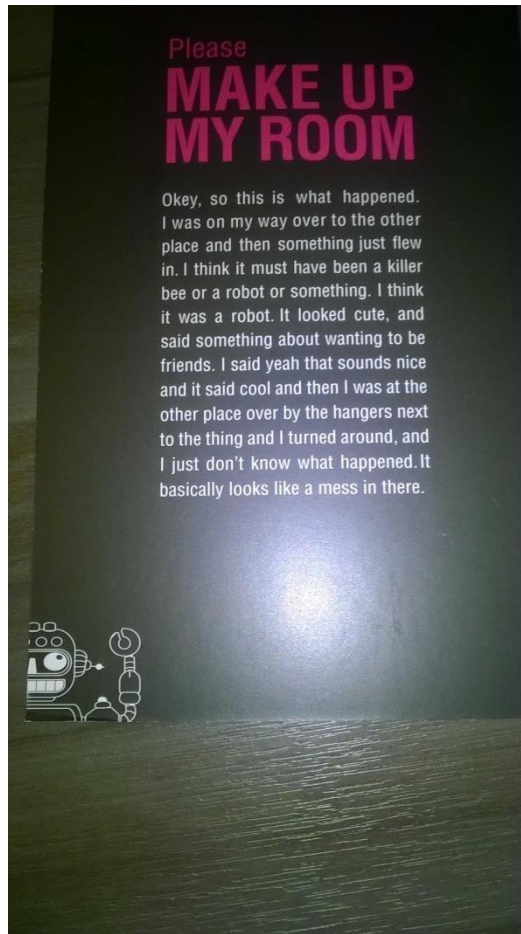
Method	Objective	Period	Sample
Internet research	to see, how humour has been used in the accommodation sector in the world	October to December 2015	Pinterest and Google search amusing, funny, humorous pictures of hotel humour
Interviews (1 hour 30 minutes and 1hour 20 minutes)	to get ideas and to find out the perspective of the research topic	November 2015	2 international tourism specialists – Melanie Kay Smith, Tom Baum
Focus group	to test how people with different cultural background perceive humorous communication attempts from hotels and destinations	December 1 st 2015	4 international master students and a lecturer at the University of Tartu Pärnu College
Questionnaire survey of tourists in Estonia	end-user poll in Facebook, to find out what are the funny aspects people remember from travelling and visiting hotels	February 1 st – March 1 st 2016; April 1 st	snow-ball method based on Facebook liking and sharing + newspaper Postimees readers
Questionnaire survey of accommodation establishments	to find out how many Estonian accommodation establishments have deliberately used humour in their service design and how they had done it	February 2 nd – March 2 nd 2016	direct e-mails to 1130 accommodation establishments in Estonia
Case study based on interview (35 minutes) and secondary data	to become familiar with one of the best practices in Estonia	February 23 rd 2016	Peep Ehasalu, Communications Manager of hotel Estoria
Group interview (50 minutes)	to get comments on survey and end user poll results	February 26 th 2016	3 Estonian humour specialists: Heiki Raudla, Teet Lindmaa and Valter Parve

Appendix 4. Humour usage in accommodation establishments worldwide

Photos have been collected mostly from Pinterest, Google search and sent to the author by the end-users.













Appendix 5. Humorous destination marketing videos

Switzerland

Switzerland – more than just mountains:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UD0qCPAY2oU>

Swiss Tourism preparations: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHIFkUk-WkU>

Israel

No wonder we did not make it to world cup:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pNk8kgdtRGE>

Welcome to Israel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CYuL6S4e64g>

Size doesn't matter – Israel a big paradisa: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=69tNR-46XNQ>

Australia

Paul Hogan Ad 1984: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xn_CPrCS8gs

Island

Inspired by Iceland: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=npawmHVaf-E>

Top 7 funny tourism commercials. Louisville: Where Happiness Lasting More Than Four Hours is Perfectly Normal: <https://abouttourism.wordpress.com/2010/09/17/7-funniest-tourism-commercials/>

Appendix 6. Questionnaire for accommodation establishments' end user

I am sure that you have seen in Internet many funny photos of signs, pictures, souvenirs etc. that people took on their trips. Or maybe you have seen humourous destination marketing videos, funny safety instruction on air-plane or participated in amusing excursion?

I am a Service Design and management master student at Pärnu College, University of Tartu and I am writing my thesis about humour in Estonian accommodation establishments. I would be really grateful if you could find 5–10 minutes to answer following questions. Answers will be analysed anonymously. If you have questions, you can contact me: marit.piiroman@ut.ee

1. What has been the funniest thing ever happened to you when travelling (it doesn't matter if it happened in Estonia or abroad)?

2. How important is humour in your travel experience?

- very important
- important
- doesn't matter
- it is not important
- humour should not be used while offering tourism services
- don't know how to answer

3. What kind of amusing joke, humorous happening or funny thing do you remember from your visit to some accommodation establishment (it doesn't matter if in Estonia or abroad)?

4. Have you noticed or experienced something funny/amusing/humorous/uplifting in some Estonian accommodation establishment (hotel, hostel, guesthouse, caravan etc.)? Yes / No (If you don't have an experience, please move to question nr 5)

4.1. What was the funny thing that you experienced in that accommodation establishment?

- advertisement
- communication with staff
- informative texts
- meme
- picture/photo
- cartoon
- introduction video
- souvenir/ keepsake
- other (please specify) ...

4.2. If you remember, please write the name of that accommodation establishment

4.3. Would you visit this accommodation establishment again? Yes / No

Comments ...

4.4. Did you share your experience with friends? Yes / No

Comments ...

5. Sex (Female/Male)

6. Year of birth ...

7. Level of education

- basic education
- secondary education
- higher education
- vocational education
- other ...

If you wish to read my thesis in summer 2016, please leave your e-mail address

If you wish to participate in a raffle with a possibility to win Apollo gift-card, please enter your e-mail address

Appendix 7. Questionnaire for accommodation establishments

Using humour in Estonian accommodation establishments

I am a Service Design and management master student at Pärnu College, University of Tartu and I am writing my thesis about humour in Estonian accommodation establishments. Competition in tourism is tight, competitive advantage will have those who manage to distinguish. Would humour be an option?

I would be really grateful if you could find 5–15 minutes to answer some humour related questions. Answers will be analysed anonymously. If you have questions, you can contact me: marit.pirman@ut.ee

1. What do you think, how important is humour for your customers in order to get an experience from his/her trip?

- very important
- important
- client has neutral feelings
- it is not important
- humour should not be used while offering tourism services
- don't know how to answer

2. What kind of amusing joke, humorous happening or funny thing do you remember from your visit to some accommodation establishment?

3. How do you feel about deliberately using humour while offering accommodation services?

- humour should definitely be used
- could be used, but it does not add value
- should not be used

Please explain

4. In your opinion, how important it is to use humour in following aspects

	very important	important	neutral	not important	humour should not be used	don't know how to answer
advertisement						
communication with staff						
informative texts						
meme						
picture/photo						
cartoon						
introduction video						
souvenir/ keepsake						

5. Has humour been deliberately used in your enterprise? Yes / No

If you answered No, please move to last four questions

5.1. How do / did you use humour in your enterprise?

5.2. What was the purpose of using humour?

5.3. If there is a humorous character, story, joke, picture etc. that you use in your enterprise (homepage, brochures, signs etc), please write bit more about it.

5.4. Have you had feedback from your clients about using humour? How did the client react?

6. Your enterprise is (please pick one):

- hostel
- hotel
- bed and breakfast
- guest apartment
- guesthouse
- motel
- camping & caravans
- holiday house
- other

7. In which area your accommodation establishment is situated?

- rural area / countryside
- urban area
- other

Data will be analysed anonymously but you can leave your e-mail address, if you don't mind me getting back to you if I have some questions or you want me to send you my final report.

Appendix 8. Humour usage in Estonian accommodation establishments

Photos have been sent to the author by end-user and accommodation establishments.



Photo 1. During food-fair accommodation establishment introduced their food-products with a boar who is wearing sunglasses.



Photo 2. "You have a complaint ... Press red button ..."



Photo 3. Signs in small rural raft house. Sign in a wardrobe: “Usually I am an angel but on weekends I put wings into bag”, sign by the mirror in bathroom: “It’s better to be late, than to arrive ugly.”



Photo 4. The feast of stuffed animals



Photo 5. Hotel, situated on beach, sent out Christmas cards with this photo



Photo 6. “Individual service for each customer” – photo from guest house web-page



Photo 7. Pun from island “I went to catch fish with a weir vs. I went to fuck a bitch”

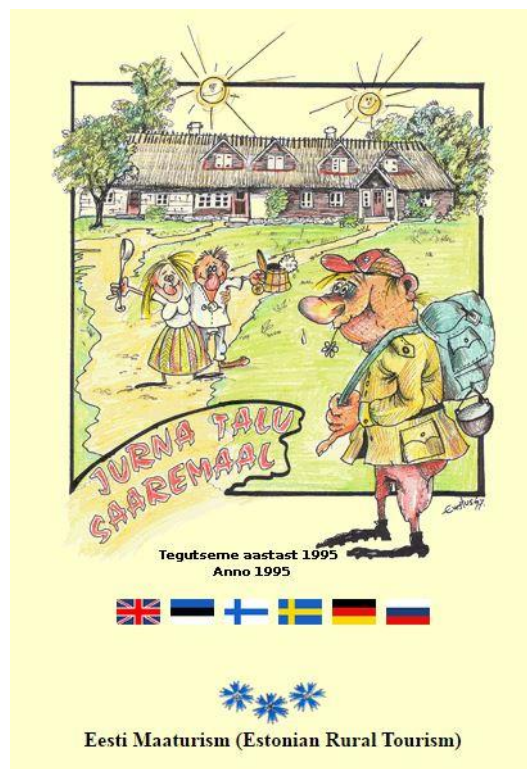


Photo 8. Front page of farm-accommodation on an island



Vaskna turismitalu

1. aprill kell 10:12 · 🌐

Seoses filmivõtetega on Haanjamaale saabunud kuulus briti koomik Rowan Atkinson, rahva seas tuntud kui "Mr Bean". ERR-i uudistele antud intervjuus tunnistas "Mr Bean", et ta on võlutud kohalikest inimestest ja loodusest aga eriti meeldis talle suitsusaun, kitsejuust ja suitsuliha. Viimaseid lubas ta tutvustada oma sõbrale Jamie Oliverile.

Vaskna turismitalu tunnistas suure saladuskatte all, et "Mr Bean" majutub meie talus aga kes tunneb ära, et millises numbris?



Photo 9. On April Fools' Day rural bed and breakfast posted a Facebook advertisement, that famous British comedian Rowan Atkinson is staying in one of their rooms and promised to introduce local delicacies to his friend Jamie Oliver.



Photo 10. Chandelier made from silverware and bucket of cold water hanging above the sauna door in luxury boutique hotel

Appendix 9. Case study of Estoria

Solo Sokos hotel Estoria is a unique hotel in the centre of Estonian capital Tallinn, where humour is hidden into different aspects of the hotel. The hotel was opened 2014 after well planned design process. Rooms were built to area that was problematic for legendary soviet hotel Viru (legendary, because it was one of the few where foreign tourists could stay during reign of Soviet Union).

Estoria is not humour-hotel but it uses aspects of it through stories, little details and friendly communication. At the beginning it was not clear for designers how to create a concept. It was asked from clients what are the expectations hotel has to fulfil, but the answers were not helpful because they stated what was already known. Most of the respondents answered that they want calm sleep, good breakfast and wi-fi connection. But this is expected criteria already in most accommodation establishments. Then the design team used the approach of stepping into customer shoes. Many quests visiting Tallinn and hotel Estoria are there for very limited time and do not have a possibility to experience different sides of Estonia. So the idea rose to provide some information about country already in the hotel room.

People today will not have patience to read long descriptions with big amount of datums, they want bullet points and lists of “biggest”, “smallest”, “craziest” etc. Nature is various and beautiful everywhere in the world, smart internet solutions and high-tech infrastructure is established in many places. Estonia does not have deepest lakes or highest mountains, so other aspects have to be addressed, or stories found with a twist. Humorous approach gives story believability and freedom. It also allows to talk about serious topics, like Soviet rule and KGB, that has important role in Estonian and hotel Estorias history.

Concept designers understood that they don't have the knowledge on different fields, so they turned to different partners for insight. In co-creation more than 80 organisations participated and as a result storybook was published, that is now in every room of hotel Estoria. Each room is decorated with details from one story. Hotel has also museum that introduces Soviet secret service agency KGB and its actions in the hotel, using slightly humorous approach. KGB was organisation that tortured and killed many people and it

could be hard to understand how it would be possible to joke about events like these. Ehasalu said that in case of tragic events caused by someone's behaviour, the jokes are on the expense of those, e.g. KGB, Nazis etc.

It is important, that everybody who is involved into process, has fun. It has not been objective to provide humour in Estoria. Small humorous details, healthy and open minded outlook on life and positive attitude of staff has created an environment where people feel good. The main objective is to offer best service possible, get attention and make people to stay longer, exploring different aspects of the country. Normally hotel is a place where tourist comes to sleep and eat and then goes to somewhere else to get what he / she really wanted, but Estoria wishes to provide something that also makes tourists feel that they got something already from the hotel. Offering just accommodation and food service is the most boring thing, it is important to provide experience. Estoria does not qualify itself as accommodation and food service provider, they are in hospitality business.

Humour, used in Estoria, is neutral and universal, not the laughing out loud kind of humour but more of smirking approach. And it is normal to make mistakes, in life or sending out humorous message that other party does not understand. Giving workers freedom is important. Accommodation is not real-estate business, it is people's business. And humour makes communication easier.

Case study was written based on interview with Peep Ehasalu from Estoria Sokos Hotels Tallinn. More information about the hotel could be found from their web-pages: <http://www.estoria.ee/#/storybook> and <https://www.sokoshotels.fi/en/tallinn/sokos-hotel-estoria>


ESTORIA
SOLE BY SONOR HOTELS
PRESENTS



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100

EXCITING, QUIRKY, UNIQUE
AND IMPORTANT
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ESTONIA!



YLI 100 AINUTLAATUISTA SYYTÄ TULLA VIROON!
БОЛЕЕ 100 НЕПОВТОРИМЫХ ПРИЧИН ПРИЕХАТЬ В ЭСТОНИЮ!
ÜLE 100 PÕNEVA PÕHJUSE, ET TULLA EESTISSE!

RESÜMEE

HUUMORI KASUTAMINE EESTI MAJUTUSASUTUSTE TURUNDUSKOMMUNIKATSIOONIS NING TEENINDUSPROTSESSIDES

Marit Piirman

Turism on tõsine valdkond, mida on uuritud palju ning mis on maailmas muutunud üheks olulisemaks majandussektoriks. Tänapäeva kiirestiarenevas maailmas jäävad ellu need ettevõtted ja sihtkohad, mis suudavad eristuda ning pakkuda turistidele üllatavaid ning ootusiületavaid emotsioone. Ka huumor on tõsine teema, mille mõju ja võimaluste kohta tehakse aasta aastalt järjest enam uuringuid. Huumorit ja turismi koos on põgusalt uuritud ja teaduskirjanduses käsitletud viimasel kümnel aastal, aga kuna tarbijad on muutunud ning tahavad lisaks kvaliteetsele tootele ja teenusele ka elamusi, muutub uurimisvaldkond järjest olulisemaks.

Eesti on aastaid kasutanud tunnuslauset „*Positively surprising*“ (Positiivselt üllatav) ning positiivsed emotsioonid on tihti seotud huumoriga. Samas jääb tihtipeale arusaamatuks, kuidas Eesti ettevõtted oma klientidele positiivse üllatuse garanteerivad. Turismiteenuse üks olulisimaid komponente on majutus. Majutuse pakkumine näitab kasvutrendi ning lisaks seaduse järgi reguleeritud majutusasutustele nagu hotellid, hostelid, motellid, külalistemajad, kämpingud, puhkekülad, puhkemajad, kodumajutus jne, on erinevaid jagamismajanduse platvorme kasutades turule tulnud hulk eraisikuid, kes samuti majutusteenust pakuvad. Majutusasutuste olukorda ei lihtsusta ka 2017. aastast jõustuv majutusasutuste käibemaksu tõus. Üldiselt on majutusteenus staatiline. See koosneb valdavalt vaid voodi kasutamise võimalusest, tihti ka toitlustusest. Enamasti ei mäleta turistid, millises hotellis nad peatusid, seega ühe võimalusena võiksid majutusasutused mõelda huumori kasutamisele oma ettevõttes. Antud magistritöö eesmärk ongi teha majutusettevõtetele ettepanekuid, kuidas saaks huumorit

turunduskommunikatsioonis ja teenindusprotsessides paremini kasutada, et eristuda ning endale konkurentsieelis luua.

Käesolevas magistritöös püstitati kolm uurimisküsimust:

- Kuidas on huumorit Eesti majutusasutustes kasutatud?
- Millised humoorikad kogemused on olnud Eesti majutusasutusi külastanud kaasmaalastel?
- Kuidas saaksid majutusasutused huumorit efektiivsemalt kasutada enda turunduskommunikatsioonis ning teenindusprotsessides, et muuta pakutav teenus turistidele atraktiivsemaks?

Uurimisküsimuste lahendamiseks seati omakorda uurimisülesanded, eesmärgiga:

- uurida huumori, teenuse disaini, turunduskommunikatsiooni ning strateegilise juhtimise teooriaid ning nende kasutamist turismi sektoris;
- nende põhjal koostada küsimustikud ning viia läbi uuringud;
- analüüsida uuringutulemusi ning nende ja teoreetiliste käsitluste põhjal teha ettepanekuid, kuidas majutusasutused huumorit efektiivsemalt kasutada võiksid ja saaksid.

Huumori mõistet on püüdnud selgitada paljud teadlased, kuid ühtses definitsioonis pole suudetud kokku leppida. Huumorit klassifitseeritakse erinevatel alustel, kõige laiemalt on seda käsitlenud Laroche et al (2011, 2014), tuues huumori omadustena välja iroonia, sõnamängu, üllatusfaktori, võrdluse, liialdamise, omaduste omistamise, alahindamise, lõbususe ning tõsiduse puudumise, ehk nalja. Turismi sektoris on huumorit käsitlenud Pearce & Pabel (2015, lk. 360), kes klassifitseerivad turistidele suunatud huumori viide kategooriasse: huvi tekitamine, kontakti loomine, lõbustamine, närvilisuse vähendamine ning tuju tõstmine. Huumorit on uuritud mitmetes erinevates valdkondades ning valdavalt on selle mõjud uuritavatele olnud positiivsed. Negatiivsete aspektidena tuuakse välja kultuurilised erinevused, huumori mitte mõistmine või sellest valesti aru saamine. Mitmed uuringud väidavad, et huumor töötab hästi reklaamides, aga tänapäeval peab lisaks lubadustele, mida reklaamis antakse, suutma ka reaalselt kvaliteetset ja ootusi ületavat teenust pakkuda. Selleks, et ettevõttes huumorit teadlikult kasutada, peaks see olema väärtusena aktsepteeritav nii organisatsioonikultuuri, strateegilise juhtimise kui ka teenuste arendamise ja pakumise tasandil.

Autor loob paralleelid teenuste disaini ja huumori kasutamise vahel, kuna mõlemad valdkonnad on orienteeritud avatud meelele ning lähtuvad klientidest. Oluliste aspektidena käsitletakse koosloomist, mängulisust, lugude kaudu väärtuste edastamist ning turunduskommunikatsiooni aspekte, mida tähele panna, kui huumor sõnumitesse integreerida. Lisaks käsitleb magistritöö mitmeid edukaid kaasuseid, kus turismiettevõtted huumori abil konkurentsieelise saavutanud on. Töö keskendub majutusasutustele, kuna selle sektori olukord on Eestis hetkel nii tihedast konkurentsist kui ka muudest faktoritest tulenevalt keeruline. Seega millegagi eristumine on vajalik.

Kui tavapäraselt uuritakse huumorit nõ laboritingimustes, kus uuritavate reaktsioone jälgitakse vastavalt teadlaste poolt pakutavatele humoorikatele kaasustele / objektidele, siis autor valis peamiseks uuringumeetoditeks küsitluse ja intervjuud. Küsitluse kasuks rääkis asjaolu, et humoorikaid pilte ja videoid jagatakse sotsiaalmeedias meeleldi, samas intervjuu võimaldab ekspertidelt koguda sisulisemat ja detailsemat informatsiooni. Ka lõpptarbijate (Eesti majutusasutuste külastajate) ning majutusasutuste Interneti teel saadetud küsimustik koosnes suures osas avatud küsimustest, et vastajatel oleks võimalikult vabalt võimalus oma kogemusi tutvustada. Lisaks luuakse kogutud materjali põhjal näidiskaasus Tallinnas asuva hotelli Estoria kohta.

Uuringute tulemusel leiti vastused uurimisküsimustele. Uuringus osalenud Eesti majutusasutustest 37% on ettevõttes huumorit kasutanud. Kõige olulisem oli huumori osakaal kliendiga suhtlemisel. Töö autorile saadeti mitmeid lõbusaid pilte ja lugusid, kuidas huumorit majutusasutustes teadlikult kasutatud on ja milline on tagasiside. Enamasti on huumor osa suhtlusstiilist ning strateegiliselt seda Eesti majutusasutustes veel ei kasutata. Uuringutulemustest on kõige huvitavam ilmselt asjaolu, et majutusasutused olid lõpptarbijatest oluliselt aktiivsemad vastajad ning suhtumine huumorisse oli vastanutel positiivne.

Lõpptarbijatele jääb meelde üldine majutusettevõttest saadud positiivne kogemus ning detaile üldiselt ei mäletata. Nead kasutavad huumorit hoopis kaitsemehhanismina, rääkides halbadest teeninduskogemustest läbi huumoriprisma. Oluliseks peetakse teenindaja positiivset hoiakut ja suhtlusstiili, kuid mõned turistid märkavad ka väikeseid

ja humoorikaid nüansse, mida majutusettevõtte erinevatesse teenindusprotsessi ja turunduskommunikatsiooni etappidesse on integreerinud. Humoorikatel lugudel on nii suhtluses kui ka suust-suhu turunduses oluline roll. Huumor aitab inimestel toime tulla keeruliste situatsioonidega ning tekitab avatud ja positiivse õhkkonna. Kuna reisides ollakse tihti tundmatus olukorras, on huumori abil võimalik ärevustunnet vähendada. Majutusasutused on huumorit kasutanud, et selgitada mõningaid vajakajäämisi teenuses.

Ettevõtte seisukohalt on kõige olulisem pakkuda kvaliteetset teenust ning teenindust. Lisaks ootab turist sõbralikku ning avatud suhtlust. Huumori kasutamine ei sõltu majutusettevõtte reitingust või tähtede arvust, vaid inimestest, kes organisatsioonis töötavad. Huumor aitab toime tulla stressiga, aga luua ka üldise positiivse õhkkonna. Rohkem kui kümnel protsendil Eesti majutusasutustest on valmisolek huumorit oma ettevõttes kasutada või teevad nad seda juba praegu. Üllatuslikult oli ettevõtete sõnul 10% ka nende inimeste osakaal, kes humoorikast ettevõttepoolsest kommunikatsioonist aru ei saanud. Väike humoorikas silt, pilt, kujuke, disainielement annab üldisele elamusele väärtust juurde, isegi kui detail ise meelde ei jää. Kui, aga keegi mõnest märgatud detailist foto teeb ning selle viitega majutusasutusele sotsiaalmeediasse postitab, on võimalused, et ettevõtte jõuab paljudeni maailmas. Majutusettevõtetel on võimalus kasutada varasemate klientide lugusid. Huumor aitab edasi anda ning selgitada ettevõtte väärtuseid. Kõige levinum huumori kasutamise eesmärk on hea tuju tekitamine nii endale kui ka klientidele. Magistritöö panus teadusesse on „Majutusasutustes kasutatava huumori püramiidi“ mudeli loomine. Selle põhjal saab iga majutusettevõtte ise otsustada, kas ja millises ulatuses huumorit kasutatakse.

Kokkuvõtvalt võib kinnitada, et Eesti majutusasutused annavad endast parima, et riigi positiivse üllataja lubadust täita. Uurimisküsimustele leiti vastused ning magistritöö eesmärk täideti. Kuna tegemist on temaatilise ülevaateuurimusega ning esimese omataolise teadustööga, tuleks huumori võimalusi ettevõtetes kindlasti veel uurida. Edasised lõpptarbijate ning ettevõtte majandusnäitajate muutusi käsitlevad huumoriuuringud on teaduse maastikul igati oodatud ja vajalikud.

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