

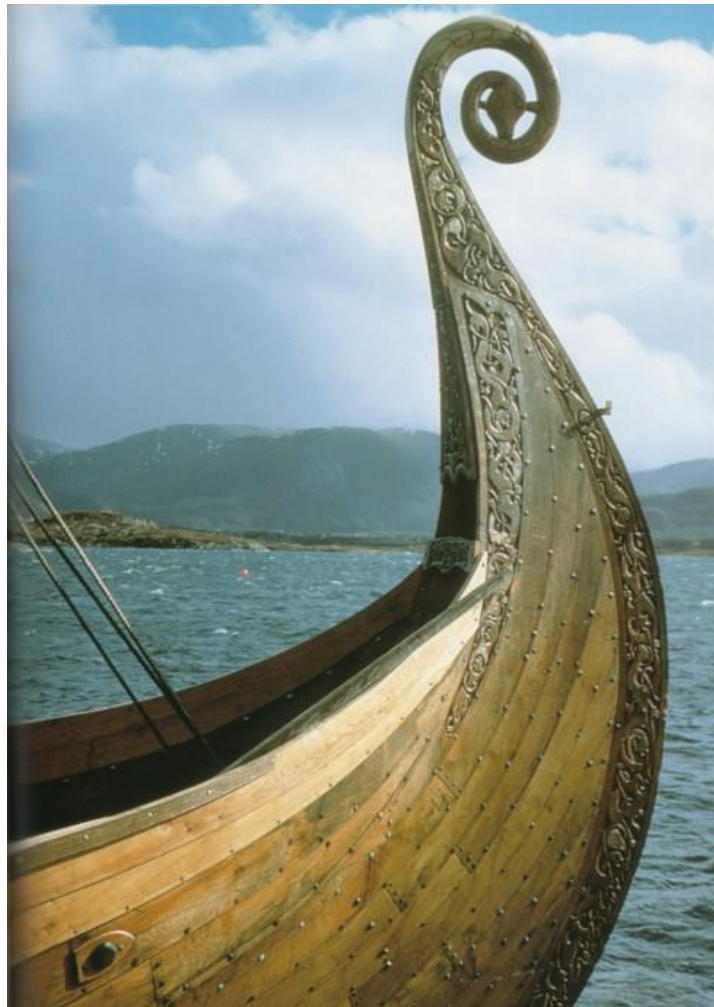


Universitetet  
i Stavanger

**MASTER'S THESIS**

**International Hotel and Tourism Leadership**

**Historical Re-enactments: The Production and Design of Viking  
Festival Experiences**



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AUTHOR

Student number:

218926

.....

218941

.....

Name:

Deimantė Jurevičiūtė

.....

Waleed Muhammad

.....

ADVISOR:

Øystein Jensen

ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF 2 BOUND COPIES OF THESIS

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Signature administration:.....

## ABSTRACT

Viking Age is a fascinating story, history – it's international and everybody knows about it. The Viking tourism has grown since the 70's and has its origins in the wider development of heritage tourism in Europe. This thesis takes focus on Viking Age re-enactments, since most of them are situated in Scandinavian countries. The main idea behind this study is to look into Viking festivals' contents, characteristics and its concept development. Together with that we test out the Experience design model effectiveness for using in the event studies.

In this paper we took the qualitative approach by interviewing different festival organizers and going on a field trip. We selected the referral sampling technique (snowball) to collect the data from the target population. Achieved sample was three semi-structured and one unstructured interviews.

The findings identify nine key elements of the Viking festival production, explain the role of content in the concept development and explore the success factors of these events. The creation of experiences can be analyzed using the Shedroff's Experience Design model, which is discussed in more detail later in the paper. In conclusions the recommendations are given to the festivals and the future research, as well as an explanation of the limitations of this study.

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## FOREWORD

This thesis is written as completion to the Master of International Hotel and Tourism Leadership, at the University of Stavanger. The subject of this thesis is the production and design of Viking festival experiences with the focus on the organizers' point of view. Little research is done regarding Viking festivals, so this type of re-enactment events is an interesting phenomenon to study, which is the main reason why we chose this topic.

We would like to thank our supervisor Professor Øystein Jensen for giving us advice and support always when needed. Special thanks goes to Przemyslaw Mikolai Eroz, Iselin Stjernholm Uldal, Atle Skarsten and other members of the Viking clubs, who warmly welcomed us and shared their knowledge, as well as gave us an opportunity to see the life inside the club. We would also like to thank our friends and families for motivating and inspiring us through the whole period of writing this thesis.

## INTRODUCTION

Today the heritage tourism business is based upon various archaeological findings, museums, heritage centers, theme parks, trails for travel, even village reconstructions, and, of course, highlighted by seasonal trade fairs, which are often boosted by the activities organized by reenactment clubs or so called “living history” societies. As Hallewood & Hannam (2001) suggests that the results of this is a calendar full of events and also a heritage tourism phenomenon that fosters a degree of European integration.

Recent research shows that entertainment can be an effective medium for educating visitors at historic places (Timothy, 2011). There is a term for the collision of these two subjects - so-called ‘edutainment’. Oxford English Dictionary describes “edutainment” as “an activity or product (esp. in the electronic media) intended to be educational as well as enjoyable; informative entertainment”. Timothy (2011) claims that it can be a useful tool in getting and keeping visitors’ attention, and the entertainment element in the historic sites appears to appeal more to the public, especially when the visitors themselves are encouraged to participate. So in tandem it is potentially adding a competitive advantage against the other alternatives of leisure. According to Timothy (2011), “re-enactments of famous people and events has frequently been shown to be an effective tool in getting guests to remember the characters, dates and incidents associated with specific places and events.”

One cannot fully assess the way heritage is produced and consumed in terms of a reflective model that oversimplifies how history is consumed in heritage practices (Crang, 1996). There are important implications in the idea of heritage sights (Urry, 1990), but historic buildings are just as often sites for interpretive activities. The globalization of capital, technology and labor has helped to create a dynamic, interdependent landscape and a culture industry that has multiplied

the range of leisure products and places available in the international tourism system (Jamal & Kim, 2005). There has been a recent increase in the number of festivals and events taking place globally alongside a developing academic interest in the purposes, meanings and consequences of these activities (Long & Robinson, 2004). Carnegie and McCabe (2008) implies that nowadays it is often required that any festival at the local community should attract “external visitors”, regardless of the goals the organizers are trying to pursue. They also distinguish one type of festival that doesn’t fall into the category:

“One interesting type of festival does not fall into the category of local festivals is the re-enacted historical event. These types of events are also increasing, with an estimated 550-600 established groups worldwide (the historical re-enactment society lists 556 groups and associated traders on a global searchable database <http://www.histrenact.co.uk/source/search.php>) and yet they have different characteristics in that they are often: organized by the management of visitor attractions or special interest societies; involve commissioned groups often not based within the locality; are staged with an educational aim to some degree; overtly seek to appeal to a tourist audience.”

(Carnegie & McCabe, 2008)

Reenactment is an increasingly popular cultural practice that appears to offer participants and audiences authentic experiences and representations of history (Gapps, 2009), and thus they began to play a significant role, generate media exposure, develop inbound tourism activity and raise the cultural heritage profile of a locality for community development and / or regeneration purposes (Carnegie and McCabe, 2008). Carnegie and McCabe (2008) also claim that “the (re-)presentation of cultural heritage in these forms creates a unique set of interactions between landscapes, local communities, tourists and heritage organizations.”



The Oxford English Dictionary defines “re-enactment” (def. 2) as “the action or process of reproducing, recreating, or performing again; esp. the action or process of acting out a past event. Also: an instance of this.” In the context of tourism studies, re-enactment events are defined by Carnegie and McCabe (2008) as forms of heritage festivals:

“We refer to re-enacted events as broadly within the wider class of ‘cultural heritage events’ since the main purpose is to present an aspect of a (located) culture’s past to an audience over a specified period as an event. Often these events are being performed (and organized) within the auspices of a historical or event society.” (Carnegie & Maccabe, 2008)

Variations of re-enactment have roots deeply in the history. Similar activities were already popular as a public spectacle in Ancient Rome, where in the amphitheaters they staged recreations of famous battles. In the Middle Ages and Renaissance period, tournaments, which are usually associated with martial games, actually became a form of art by using costumes, drama and symbolism, which often had historical themes, especially those of Ancient Rome, Tatars, and others.

Re-enactments have a division of periods, which affect the types of costumes, weapons, and armor used. The “period” of the event is the range of dates, which are basically timelines of world history. Popular periods to re-enact are:

- Classical re-enactment – focus on portrayal of Greco-Roman world, or so-called ‘classical antiquity’. Often attempts to reenact Roman legions, Greek hoplites and even Roman gladiator troupes. Also re-enactment Celtic societies and Gaels are included in this “period”.

- Medieval re-enactment – covering the period of European history from the fall of Rome to the end of 15<sup>th</sup> century. It has a wide range of eras - Dark Ages (or Migration period), Early medieval, High medieval and Late medieval. It is especially popular in Eastern Europe. Because of this complex variety, most re-enactment groups focus on a smaller time period, for example in Northern Europe - the Viking Age from Scandinavian history, or sometimes even a single siege or battle, like the “1066 Battle of Hastings” in United Kingdom.
- Renaissance re-enactment – usually referred to Renaissance period, the European Age of Exploration, encompassing timeline from 14<sup>th</sup> to mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. Most commonly portrays English Civil War, Tudors, and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in Europe and early colonial period in the United States and Canada. This period in form of fairs is primarily an American phenomenon.
- Modern re-enactment – most commonly covering events from 18<sup>th</sup> century to present. Includes attempts to portray Regency, American Civil War, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> World War events, etc.

This thesis takes focus on Viking age re-enactments, since most of them are situated in the Scandinavian countries, where the Viking period had a proportionally larger historical role.

Halewood and Hannam (2001) emphasize the importance of Viking heritage in Norway saying that it has “significant national political status and have been used to help construct a Norwegian sense of national identity”. For example, even roots of Norway as a country lie in the Viking age: in the second half of the 9th century the Viking chief Harald I Fairhair, of the Oslo Fjord area, pacified the western coast and after the final battle in Hafrsfjord, near Stavanger, proclaimed himself king of the Norwegians. The importance of the region is evident, and there are Viking

festivals and trading fairs organized in the area with an objective to mark the occasion, as well as to manifest the character and identity of the place. It is important to mention that very little research is done regarding the Viking festivals, and this makes this type of re-enactment events interesting cases to study. So one of the main reasons behind the choice of this particular topic is the lack of knowledge in the research concerning both event studies and re-enactment phenomenon.

It is important to underline that the term ‘Viking festival’ so far didn’t receive much attention in research regarding the attempts to define it, even though it appears to be a commonly used term. At this point it is quite difficult to clarify what should be called the Viking festival, which events fall under this term and which not. Many of these Viking themed public festivities call themselves “markets” or “trading fairs”, but they usually involve other forms of activities too, including musical performances, live demonstrations of the artisan crafts, reenactments of historical events, which, as it was mentioned before, fall out of the ordinary festival category. It is clear that the creation of new knowledge about this type of events must come from a combination of components in two disciplines – the festival sub-field in event studies and heritage tourism. So this study attempts to approach the phenomenon from an interdisciplinary perspective, which is applied through different backgrounds of the authors used – this enables us to look at the wider range of literature.

## **DEFINING THE VIKING FESTIVALS**

The name Viking at first (c. 800) meant a man from the Vik, the huge bay that lies between Cape Lindesnes in Norway and the mouth of the Göta River in Sweden and that has been called Skagerrak since 1500 (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2014). The term “viking” is defined like this:

“Viking, also called Norseman or Northman, member of the Scandinavian seafaring warriors who raided and colonized wide areas of Europe from the 9th to the 11th century and whose disruptive influence profoundly affected European history. These pagan Danish, Norwegian and Swedish warriors were probably prompted to undertake their raids by a combination of factors ranging from overpopulation at home to the relative helplessness of victims abroad.” (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2014)

The term Viking Age marks the period of years from about 800 to 1050 when Scandinavians set out on expeditions abroad. This great movement must have been caused because of the combination of factors like surplus population, superior ships and weapons, incredibly well-developed military organization, and their spirit of adventure. The Norwegians mostly sailed to the west and it was most likely their first raiding expedition to England (which resulted in destruction of Lindisfarne abbey in Holy Island) that started the Viking Age. Since then the Vikings were labeled as bloodthirsty savages. The chronicles of medieval England portrayed them as rapacious "wolves among sheep" (“Viking Age”, 2014).

But the knowledge of historians and archeologists improves year after year. And with this progress, the image of the Viking Age as the times of vast plunder and violence becomes only a particle in the bigger picture, where the enormous cultural heritage from the Viking Age is coming to the front line.

The very stereotypical representation of Viking heritage comes from Anglo-American popular culture, displaying Vikings as blood-thirsty, sexist and pillager men living from the seamanship. This depiction has been widely propagated by films and novels in the 50’s (e.g. movies like “The Vikings” in 1954 by Richard Fleischer, or “Prince Valiant” by Henry Hathaway in 1958), as well

as in more recent Hollywood releases like the film “The 13<sup>th</sup> Warrior” directed by John McTiernan in 1999, starring Antonio Banderas.

Nowadays, the Vikings are back in different and controversial ways, but their image still proves to be entertaining and exciting. Recently there has been a bunch of films released – Beowulf & Grendel (2005), Severed Ways (2005), Beowulf (2007), Pathfinder (2007), Valhalla Rising (2009), The Viking Saga (2013), etc. – still depicting Vikings as illustrations of pure violence. A different approach is taken by Marvel Comics, where the Old Norse god Thor is reborn as superhero in their films, as well as the Tale of Ragnar Lothbrok, a part of the legendary 13<sup>th</sup> century Icelandic Volsunga Saga successfully brought to life in the popular TV series “The Vikings”. In the meanwhile many of the best-selling book series authors, like Giles Kristian, Tim Severin and V.M. Whitworth, who are portraying Vikings in their books, partly owe their success to the recent trend of the quasi-medieval high fantasy sagas like “A Song of Ice and Fire”, which was turned to a well-known TV series “Game of Thrones”.

In contrast, in Scandinavian countries the image of Vikings in popular culture has fewer references to war and warriors. Here the Viking representation is very much concerned with the people who “abroad were known as pirates, but at home lived in a well-oriented society” (Vestfold Kommune Tourism, 1998, as cited in Hallewood & Hannam, 2001). Though it is still believed that the bloodthirsty image is the one that inspires tourists to visit sites of heritage and this stereotypical depiction in the popular culture undoubtedly adds to the trend of Viking tourism in Europe.

This form of tourism has grown since the 70’s with new Viking museums being established, for example the Roskilde ship museum in Denmark or Bygdøy ship museum near Oslo, and older

museums shifting their emphasis towards more Viking material (Hallewood & Hannam, 2001). Historically, Viking tourism has its origins in the wider development of heritage tourism in Europe. The societies of re-enactors have been staging Viking heritage events in the United Kingdom since the 50s (Hallewood & Hannam, 2001). Most events in Scandinavia, meanwhile, have their origin in the 70s, as it has been mentioned above.

It has been claimed that festivals can be developed for a variety of reasons including: celebration, enhancement of community pride, and maintaining cultural identities (Roche, 2000). It is clear that the re-enactment events performed by societies and groups most often aim to celebrate and reaffirm some aspect of a culture's history and sense of place in the world (Carnegie & McCabe, 2008).

Festivals are important sub-field within event studies, and of particular interest to scholars in many disciplines because of the universality of festivity and the popularity of festival experiences (Getz, 2010). Getz (2012) defined them as "themed, public celebrations", a more reflective approach to our modern times, than that of Falassi (1987, as cited in Getz 2005) in the classical cultural-anthropological perspective as "a sacred or profane time of celebration, marked by special observances". Pieper (1965) believed only religious rituals and celebrations could be called festivals. Falassi (1987, as cited in Getz, 2012), in "Time Out of Time: Essays on the Festival", said that festivals were a social phenomenon found in virtually all human cultures. He said that in modern English, the term has several meanings:

- A sacred or profane time of celebration, marked by special observances;
- The annual celebration of a notable person or event, or [of] the harvest of important product;

- A cultural event consisting of a series of performances of works in fine arts, often devoted to a single artist or genre;
- A fair;
- Generic gaiety, conviviality, cheerfulness.

It concurs with the thoughts of Sonder (2004, as cited in Bladen, 2012), who groups together parades, fairs and festivals as “particular types of themed events that may simultaneously contain historical, cultural, ceremonial, religious, patriotic and social themes”.

Getz (2010) claims that numerous forms and themes of festivals are possible and term festival is often misapplied and commercialized; Bladen (2012) seconds that, saying the term ‘festival’ is used by event organizers to describe a broad range of events forms, from short to long term, celebrating one place or culture, or extending to numerous venues and performances. He also says that “festivals are both a particular kind of cultural event, each with its own history and tradition, and a specific celebratory form, with structural elements that can be used within a range of cultural traditions” (Bladen, 2012).

Getz (2010) expressed that no widely acceptable festival typology has emerged so far. Though Bodwin et al (2006, as cited in Bladen, 2012) used South East Arts’ categorization to divide arts festivals into seven distinctive types:

- High-profile celebrations of the arts.
- Festivals that celebrate a particular location.
- Art-form festivals.
- Celebration of work by a community of interest.
- Calendar.

- Amateur arts festivals.
- Commercial music festivals.

Bladen (2012) added one more category to this list with the reference to the conceptual framework of cultural events: celebrations of the expressions of specific cultural groups.

Viking theme events could fall into at least two categories of this list. Festivals that celebrate particular location, or the calendar – often Viking festivals are organized based either on an important historical day or in a historical place, e.g. Hafrsjordkaupangen, Viking market in Møllebukta, Stavanger, is being organized in the area that is associated with the Battle of Hafrsfjord, where the first king of Norway won the naval battle and united the country to one kingdom.

According to Bladen (2012), because festivals and society are so intertwined, it can be very difficult to isolate the elements that define ‘a festival’, so it is perhaps useful to consider a loose arrangement of elements that combine to produce a festival event:

- Themed content
- The presence of multiple individual events
- Possibilities for participation
- Extension in time and space
- Celebratory or commemorative functions

One of the term ‘festival’ meanings by Falassi (1987) as mentioned before is actually “a fair”.

Now if we take a typical Viking market or a Viking trade fair and put its concept into these elements, here is the complete profile of the “Viking festival”:



- Themed content: Viking age costumes, crafts, environment (tents, utensils, musical and work instruments), etc.
- The presence of multiple individual events: a full program, including re-enactment of a battle or a duel like “holmganga”, a performance of Viking inspired musicians or a storyteller, a display of Viking age crafts, and so on.
- Possibilities for participation: visitors are very often invited to try out games that were popular in the Viking period, also trying their luck at the archery contests, or participating in the courses of forging or Viking soap making, etc.
- Extension in time and space: usually such Viking themed events last the whole weekend, 1-3 days.
- Celebratory or commemorative functions: the reason of such event organization is often connected to the commemoration of an important historical date, also celebration of cultural heritage, traditions and links to the roots of the past.

The possibility to clearly draw this profile indicates that events which are called “Viking market” or “Viking trade fair” and which have all the required elements named above, actually fall into the category of festivals. So hereby the term “Viking festivals”, in combination with the ordinary festival concept can be defined as “a form of public festivity, portraying the Viking Age and celebrating its historical, cultural and social heritage”.

## **VIKING FESTIVALS IN RESEARCH**

To carry out an effective literature search for this thesis was not an easy task. In most of the cases we ran into a dead end. First we started by using varied combinations of keywords

“Viking”, “event”, “festival” and “tourism” in the University of Stavanger Library database, which all came to zero results. Using the same keywords, the search in Google Scholar database gave us three articles about European Viking festivals, none of them without free access to the full text. At this point we decided that consulting several of the textbooks on festival management, event management and cultural and heritage tourism will help us to improve the variety of keywords associated with the theme, and so we expanded our search with inclusion of words like “re-enactment”, “performance”, “live /living history”, “heritage”, “historical”, “role-play”, “edutainment”, “archeology”, “authenticity”, in addition to those mentioned before. We ran the search using combinations of these keywords in databases of Google Scholar, Emerald and EbscoHost (Hospitality and Tourism Complete, and Academic Search Premier), also University Library database. The search returned with improved results. We have found articles on Viking heritage tourism, re-enactment events and tourism, re-enactment authenticity and re-enactor motivations. Looking at the references that were used in these articles, as well as in the textbooks, additionally improved our theory base.

There have been very few studies done regarding Viking heritage, and especially Viking themed events in Norway. So far only two studies focused on Norwegian Vikings. First, a master thesis “Integrating cultural heritage into a tourist destination, illustrated by the Lofotr Viking Museum in Borg, Norway” by L.R. Peter was conducted in 2009 in Switzerland, University of Lugano. Another study, Norwegian master thesis by J.K. Sandvik done in 2010, focused on re-enactments and archeological records with an example of Lofotr Viking Festival. But there is quite a few studies conducted outside of Norway. Majority of research work revolves around the themes of authenticity and identity. In 1996 M. Crang attempted to look at the practices of interpretation, communicative work and authenticity involving heritage tourism, in his qualitative research

paper “Magic Kingdom or a Quixotic quest for Authenticity?” Another qualitative study regarding authenticity theme “Re-enactment Events and Tourism: Meaning, Authenticity and Identity” by E. Carnegie and S. McCabe was published in 2008. Their study presented interdisciplinary review of debates and criticism to these events’ educational value, as well as argued about re-enacted events range of purposes. In 2009 S. Gapps published his qualitative study on historical re-enactments and authenticity issue “Mobile monuments: A view of historical reenactment and authenticity from the inside of the costume cupboard of history”. One of the main notes in his paper is that “re-enactors’ self-reflective attention to historical accuracy in performance is a key element of the practice of re-enactment” (Gapps, 2009).

A qualitative research paper by C. Halewood and K. Hannam “Viking heritage tourism: Authenticity and Commodification” was published in 2001, which explored the key dimensions of the Viking heritage tourism emerging in Europe, concluding that Viking heritage tourism is a significant phenomenon in Europe, especially in terms of its scale, international profile and contribution to economic and cultural identities in local communities. (Halewood & Hannam, 2001). Later another research paper followed, “European Viking Themed Festivals: An Expression of Identity” published in 2006, examining the geographical and organizational depth of Viking themed festivals in Europe and continuing the argument that these festivals are used as an expression of identity.

All these authors mentioned above, have highlighted numbers of gaps and problems in the research of this theme. Carnegie and McCabe (2008) expressed that “there has been a surprising lack of academic focus on such events as phenomena” and “more research is needed to be able to capture some of the richness of the experiences for all concerned with such events and understand the activities engaged within and feel that such events would make and important

contribution to our understanding of people's engagement with cultural heritage landscapes".

They also proposed series of questions for future research, in themes of: relationships between re-enactment societies, events management and tourism policies; crucial dimensions of 'roles' adopted by stakeholders; discourses of authenticity played through the creative process of such events; politics and history involved and events becoming conduits for development.

Authors in the books on cultural heritage and tourism, also highlight some of the research gaps. Moscardo (2010) in her article "The Shaping of Tourist Experience: The importance of Stories and Themes" published in the compilation book on managerial perspectives on tourism and leisure experiences, expressed that "in tourism research much of the existing focus has been on narratives in general with only a few researchers explicitly analyzing tourist stories" (Hsu et al., 2009, as cited in Moscardo, 2010). She argues that we need to develop integrative conceptual frameworks in order to better understand the nature of tourist experiences.

At this point the conclusion is that this type of events have not been studied broadly, and most of the focus appears to be on the participant (re-enactor) motivations, event commodification in tourism, sense of identity, and especially concentrated on the question of authenticity, which often is sidetracked to the authenticity of equipment and materials used, instead of the authenticity of experience created to the visitor (or observer). Storytelling and narratives have been ignored, while tourist who is participating in this event experiences are completely neglected in the research.

Looking at the festival studies in general, there is quite big divergence as well. Probably the best described ups and pitfalls regarding the research of this field are in Getz article "The nature and scope of festival studies", published in 2010. He made a compilation and analysis of a large-

scale literature review of 423 research articles, which were published in English-language scholarly press. His conclusions were the definition of “festival studies” with elaboration on the core phenomenon; three major discourses (or structured lines of reasoning and knowledge creation) which also disclosed the major research gaps and priorities. This paper was of great help when deciding the direction which this thesis should take.

Getz (2010) identified a number of sub-themes, few of which are very dominant in the research works. He first explains that the festivals are commodified in tourism studies, which are dominated by the positivistic quantitative research. According to him, festival marketing theme is very well established, while the understanding of festival motivations has been suppressed, in terms of cultural needs and social identification. The study of festival motivation (regarding the participation and demand) is well established theme too, while constraints and non-attendance is largely ignored. He concludes that research works so far over-emphasized consumer motivations and economic impacts, in general.

There was plenty of research work done on authenticity (identity, commercialization, etc.) and political and social/cultural meaning and discourse. Rather neglected topics include liminality, pilgrimage, myths and symbols, spectacle. Dominant themes in regards of outcomes of festivals are economic impacts, social and cultural impacts, increasingly explored is also the theme of personal impacts.

In regards of research about planning and managing festivals, marketing, planning, evaluation themes are clearly dominant, where stakeholders sometimes are taken as secondary topic.

Cultural entrepreneurship was completely abandoned theme, with only one article fitting this theme – Acheson, Maule and Filleul (1996) profiled entrepreneurs who started the Banff

Television Festival. Here Getz (2010) suggests that the research on the founders and owners of festivals must be considered a priority for the future.

His article conclusions included a long list of research gaps and thematic priorities that should be studied more in future, including the methodological aspects. His suggestions include these topics (Getz, 2010): festival growth and sustainability; cross-cultural differences; strengths and weaknesses of the ownership, core values and influence of founders in organization culture; cultural entrepreneurship or social and private entrepreneurship; understanding of festivals as social and cultural phenomenon and the festival experiences; a line of research of how choices are made, instead of model building and testing; network analysis, potentially within policy, stakeholder and market environments; neglected topics like financing, innovation, logistics and control systems, site planning, professional staff development, branding, evaluation methods and accountability; assessing festival outcomes and their value. On methodological aspect of research, Getz (2010) suggests more whole-population studies, cross-cultural comparisons and experimentation where it is possible to attempt.

Combining the various given suggestions in the literature introduced before, we have decided to take a deeper look in one of the themes that is quite neglected in both – festival studies in general and the specified field in cultural heritage tourism – historical re-enactment events. How re-enactors create the experience for public in Viking festivals is one of those topics that we want to get a better understanding of.

## THE EXPERIENCE CREATION

Crang (1996) said that “the experience living histories attempt to provide is the recreation of an entire environment, and thus a world apart from the present, a “magic kingdom” where the past lives. They are described in terms of time travel and time ships (e.g. “time capsule”, “the museum time machine””. An event can be seen as a simulated stage-managed environment, creating authentic moments of experience within that setting for guests and participants (Berridge, 2011). Shedroff (n.d.) says that “while everything, technically, is an experience of some sort, there is something important and special to many experiences that make them worth discussing – in particular, the elements that contribute to superior experiences are knowable and reproducible, which make them designable (Shedroff, n.d.).

Event design is the concept of a structure for an event, the manifest expression of that concept expressed verbally and visually which leads, finally, to the execution of the concept (Monroe, 2006). Berridge (2011) adds, that “The Event Experience Design Framework suggests that if event design underpins all initial decisions about planning and managing the event, then the planned experience becomes the core of all subsequent action, leading to final analysis that considers the true nature of the overall experience”.

Speaking of methods used in the research of this field, Gouthro (2011) in her article on qualitative methodology in tourism experience research, states, that the experience of tourism has been explored and discussed theoretically by Cohen (1979), Uriely (2005) and Wang (1999), and in places of heritage more specifically the tourism experience has been discussed by Beeho and Prentice (1995, 1997), Chronis (2005), McIntosh and Prentice (1999), Nuryanti (1996), and Prentice et al. (1998). She asserts that theorizing the nature of experiences is complicated and “there remains a plethora of variables to consider in conceptualizing experience as a broad, all-

encompassing phenomenon”, and also arguments by citing Uriely’s (2005) point of view that this theoretical conceptualization should be ‘complementary extensions to the earlier theories’ as opposed to the results of attempts to contest them (Gouthro, 2011). Later in her article she explains that both quantitative and qualitative methods of research have been used in exploring aspects of consumption and experience of heritage, for instance, attempts to study the experiential dimensions of tourism through identification of common themes, also one of the other common and closely related topics was the types of visitors that heritage sites attract. Various research perspectives have been adopted and applied in the tourism literature, such as socio-demographic characteristics with grouping into experience market segments, in-depth narratives from tours, etc. (Gouthro, 2011)

However, Gouthro (2011) affirms, the manner, the way in which visitors experience tourism at the heritage sites still remains relatively under-researched with, in particular, a limited variety of qualitative perspectives in evidence. She agrees with the Uriely (2005), who pointed out that “experiencing heritage is an emerging research area of heritage tourism” concluding that the theoretical context between tourism and heritage remains less developed in the literature.

It is very noticeable that what many authors neglect in their reviews is the study approaches which are trying to analyze the way experiences are created, the origins of them. At this point we put the Experience design under magnifying glass, as it is one of such topics which are still in discussions, and which some scholars agree upon, others deny.

Within the practice of event management, design is essential to an event’s success because it leads to improvement of the event on every level (Brown & James, 2004). Getz (2010) agrees and elaborates on festival experience design:



“Festival experience design is both art and science, and must draw heavily upon environmental psychology, for a more complete understanding of the interactions between people, settings and programs or management systems. Mostly festival experience design has been in the realm of creative arts or traditional cultural performances, but it is increasingly being viewed as a specialist field within event management.” (Getz, 2010)

Shedroff, who is one of the pioneers in experience design, on his website dedicated to his books, speaks of it not being “any newer than the recognition of experiences”. He says that as a discipline Experience Design is still very young, but has become newly recognized and named. That’s why it makes it an interesting topic to study.

Experience design has been described by quite a few authors: Berridge (2006) has devoted a whole book to it, Shedroff (2010) and his colleagues did as well, Brown and James (2004) provided some basic principles. Though Getz (2012) in his book on Event studies have dismissed the idea of experiences being possible to design and engineer, with arguments that “it is not possible to guarantee or predict what individuals actually “experience” cognitively and emotionally as an outcome”, and also that “designer cannot know for certainty what meanings will be attached to those event experiences, or will they have any transforming impact”.

But, as Franklin and Crang (2001, as cited in Gouthro, 2011) argue, ‘what is lacking in tourism research and academic settings is discussion and debate on the diverse qualitative research approaches that can be employed to do justice to the inner-disciplinary domain of tourism studies – and hence to facilitate legitimation of the area of tourism scholarship’.

Shedroff (n.d.) explains why such double sided view to his design exists:

“Many see it only as a field for digital media, while others view it in broad-brush terms that encompass traditional, established, and other such diverse disciplines as theater, graphic design, storytelling, exhibit design, theme-park design, online design, game design, interior design, architecture, and so forth. The list is long enough that the space it describes has not been formally defined.” (Shedroff, n.d.)

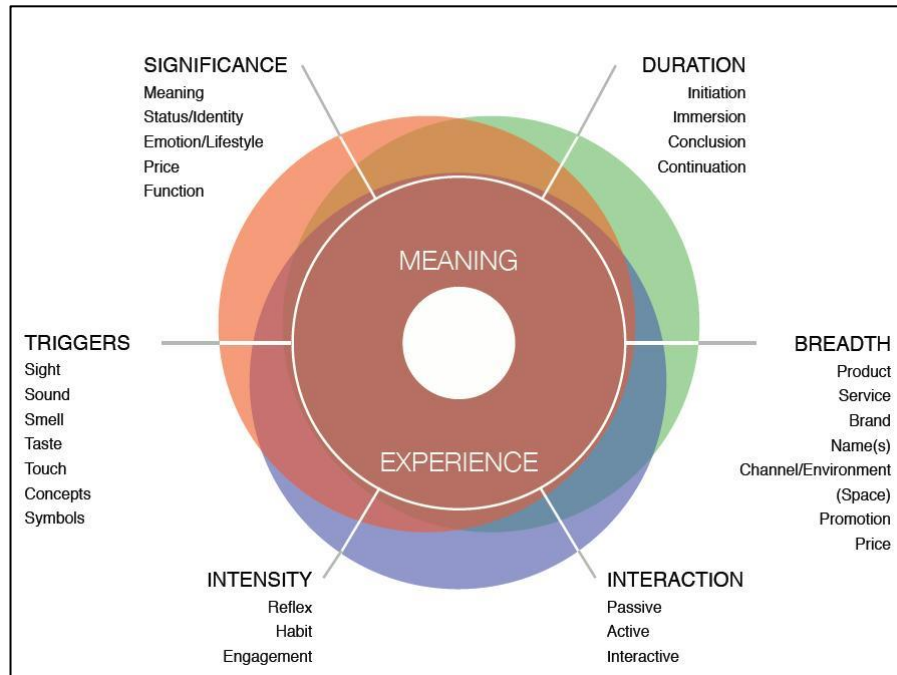
Nevertheless, Shedroff’s Experience design is an interesting and innovative approach, since it is, as the pioneers themselves say, developed to fit practically any medium, it has in consideration many different aspects important to the overall experience, be it services, digital products, installations, or events. On his website, Shedroff defines this design:

“Experience Design is an approach to creating successful experiences for people in any medium. This approach includes consideration and design in all 3 spatial dimensions, over time, all 5 common senses, and interactivity, as well as customer value, personal meaning, and emotional context. Experience Design is not merely the design of Web pages or other interactive media or on-screen digital content. Designed experiences can be in any medium, including spatial/environmental installations, print products, hard products, services, broadcast images and sounds, live performances and events, digital and online media, etc.” (Shedroff, 2010)

Shedroff (2010) suggests that there are six dimensions of experiences (see the Figure 1 below for the summarized model):

- Duration (Initiation, Immersion, Conclusion, and Continuation)
- Intensity (Reflex, Habit, Engagement)
- Breadth (Products, Services, Brands, Nomenclatures, Channels/Environment/Promotion, and Price)
- Interaction (Passive, Active, Interactive)

- Triggers (All Human Senses, Concepts, and Symbols)
- Significance (Meaning, Status, Emotion, Price, and Function)



*Figure 1. Model of Experience Design by Shedroff (2010)*

The online search (using combinations of keywords “Shedroff”, “experience design”, “study”, “research”, “utilize”, “use” and similar) for additional literature and studies done about the usage of this design revealed that so far it was limited to interactive systems, information technology and digital product creation. Since this experience design model is still fresh new and unique approach and highly debatable topic by quite a few scholars, it is surprising that apparently there were no attempts to actually apply it in the tourism and event studies so far. We see this as an opportunity and in our study, seeing re-enactment as an object and the festival as an “arena” for the production of those experiences, in order to draw the profile of the Viking festival, we plan to test Shedroff’s model (see Figure 1).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The aim of this paper is to clarify the “Viking festival” concept by discussing its defining characteristics and exploring these characteristics by means of drawing the festival experience design profile. The research questions we will try to answer with this study are the following:

- How is the reenactment experience created for public in the Viking festivals?
- What are the key elements in the Viking festival production?
- What is the role of content in the Viking festival concept development?
- What are the success factors of the Viking festivals?

### **Research design**

The study takes exploratory approach to the phenomenon – little is known about the organizational aspects and the process of developing the concept for the Viking festivals, and to better understand their success, which is resulting in the emersion of a specific type of tourism, we need to look at the core of them, at their origins and the process of designing them.

To achieve this, the qualitative data is required, which is non-numerical in nature, and captures more depth and insight to questions “why” or “how” – the latter is the priority in our study. It has emphasis on the validity and is easier to develop. But it has some disadvantages as well, and the ones we have faced in this study in particular were the time consumption to capture the data and analyze it, also because of that there is difficulty to have a larger sample.

### **Measurements**

By far the most common form of social measurement is the verbal or self-report. Such reports consist of replies to direct questions, usually posed in interviews or on questionnaires. Verbal reports vary widely with respect to question wording and response formats (Singleton & Straits,

1999). According to Silverman (2001), interviews offer a rich source of data, which provide access to how people account for both their troubles and their good fortune.

The data was collected through three semi-structured interviews, and one unstructured interview in a field trip. To answer the question of how the experience is created in the Viking festivals, we will discuss the collected material which describes the main characteristics of these three events. The questions for the interviews were formulated to reflect these characteristics. Questions were grouped around focal points, which included origins, organization and coordination, participants, visitors, community involvement, content, finances, risks, marketing and feedback system. All the questions can be seen in the Appendix 1 (for respondents from Haugesund and Stavanger) and Appendix 2 (for respondent from Bergen).

Then to test the effectiveness of Shedroff's experience design, we will assign these festivals' characteristics to the six experience dimensions in the model using them as a frame which should result in the overall Viking festival experience profile. The dimensions are described as follows (Diller, Shedroff & Rhea, 2005):

- “Intensity” dimension is explaining what is the creation of experience relying on, does it involve just basic reflexes, habits, or requires full engagement from both participant and observer?
- “Duration” dimension analyzes the period of time the whole experience is lasting, when does it start, what is the “attractors” or signals to the start of it, how long the participants and observers engage in event's activities, as well as when and how it ends – is it abrupt or subtle?

- “Breadth” dimension explains what are the touch-points that connects the festival to its visitors and participants, and which elements are missing.
- “Interaction” dimension, as it is obvious from its title, describes how active or passive the reciprocal communication is, if the festival allows only passive observance, or it has a degree of interaction allowing the visitors to engage in one or another activity.
- “Triggers” dimension is explaining what aspects are sparking the interest, which components of environment are used to create the overall atmosphere of the festival.
- “Significance” dimension, in the context of business selling a physical product, is describing what the customer decision factors to buy it are. In the festival context, ‘significance’ will explain it on another level – external aspects like the function of these festivals in the community, success or failure impact, competition and potential, as well as internal aspects like values and emotions attached.

The key elements of the Viking festival production will be identified, as well as the role of the content explained. The success factor aspect of these festivals was included in all the interviews as a separate question. Respondent answer analysis will provide some insight to it, together with the overall understanding about the Viking festivals gained throughout the study.

### **Population and Sample**

The study unit of analysis is Norwegian Viking festivals. To define the festival population of our study was an unsuccessful attempt. First of all, we tried to find out the Viking festival population of all Norway. Online searches didn’t give much result – a complete list of festivals is not available. Only the “Destination Viking” website provided a calendar with ten Viking Markets in Norway. This number is inaccurate, because several known markets held in Stavanger, Bergen and some other cities are not even mentioned there. So we narrowed down our search to only

south western Norway, with hopes this way to define the population geographically, and conduct the whole-population study. We have sent emails to the accountable authorities in Rogaland and Hordaland Counties, asking if there is any information available about Viking festivals organized in their region. Unfortunately, we haven't received any replies back. So our conclusion is: the population is unknown, and because of this situation it was impossible to define our study sample.

So, to conduct the interviews we took advantage of the referral sampling technique called "snowball sampling", which uses a process of chain referral: when members of the target population are located, they are asked to provide names and addresses of other members of the population, who are then contacted and asked to name others, and so on. (Singleton & Straits, 1999) A basic assumption of snowball sampling is that members of the target population often know each other (Singleton & Straits, 1999).

## **Methods**

According to Singleton and Straits (1999), interviewers and interview schedule permit a great deal more flexibility than possible with a self-administered questionnaire, and open-ended questions, to which respondents have to answer in their own words, usually will give fuller, more complete response, in contrast to closed-end questions with specific response options, or questionnaire requiring writing down the answers. In addition, interviews are easier to utilize, especially when a certain question does not apply to a particular respondent, and then it is skipped, while such format may be confusing in a paper or online questionnaire.

The oldest and most highly regarded method of survey research, face-to-face interview has a number of advantages in addition to the ones already mentioned (Singleton & Straits, 1999). One of them is the higher response rate than that of surveys. The reasons behind it might be,

according to Singleton and Straits (1999) “the intrinsic attractiveness of being interviewed, the difficulty of saying “no” to someone asking for something in person, and possibly the fact that the importance and credibility of the research are conveyed best by a face-to-face interviewer who can show identification and credentials”. It is appropriate survey mode when long answers are needed. Another advantage is that the visual aids like photographs, drawings or cards with response options can be used, as well as unobtrusive observations that may be of interest to the researcher. As Singleton and Straits (1999) suggests, disadvantages include the costs, the difficulty of locating respondents, the effective coding if the interview was not recorded, and finally interviewer himself may introduce bias into the data by not following the interview schedule, suggesting answers, or through a respondent’s reaction to interviewer’s gender, race, clothes or personality.

### **“Snowball” process**

We have started our “snowball” with a contact in Haugesund which was available at hand in thesis supervision process. It took us a while to get in touch with this person, since he was available only at certain hours, but he at once agreed to meet us. Face-to-face interview was conducted on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014 in Haugesund, and audio recorded, lasting around 45 minutes. The respondent has mentioned other closest festivals around the area, so we have asked if he has any contacts. Respondent suggested us to contact Archeology museum in Stavanger, who are involved in festival organization in Møllebukta, and also promised to look for contacts of festival organizers in Fana, Bergen.

As for the contact with organizers of festival in Fana, Bergen, we did not receive any more information from our first respondent. Therefore we decided to check the festival’s website for possible contacts. We found the volunteer coordinator’s phone number and called. She promised



to speak with her team about possibility to meet us. Unfortunately the team at this time was already very busy, since the start of the festival is happening in few weeks period, so the meeting for interview face-to-face was not possible. But the volunteer coordinator agreed to talk with us, thus the interview was scheduled for May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2014 and was conducted through Skype video call, as well as audio recorded – lasted around 40 minutes.

For the contacts to the festival organizers in Møllebukta, the museum was not very helpful, we received only a phone number of person who might know someone who is the actual organizer, but the given contact did not answer any of our calls. Then we took another approach and sent an email to the Hafrsfjordvikingene club (email address provided on their website), who were taking part in this festival. We received a quick answer from their previous leader with an explanation that it is actually the club who is organizing this festival, not the museum, and said that they are interested in our study and would gladly talk to us about it. We carried out and audio recorded the face-to-face interview the same day as the Skype video call to Bergen - on 6<sup>th</sup> of May, 2014 in Tananger, lasted around 1 hour and 30 minutes. In the midst of the interview the respondent was interrupted by a call from the current club leader with an invitation to a meeting next week, and when he mentioned us and our study, hereby we have been invited to meet other club members as well. So as it was scheduled, we made a short field trip to in Rennesøy on 13<sup>th</sup> of May, 2014. We ended up in Vikevåg, in one of the club member's farm which they use as the practical training ground for archer group, and this was one of their weekly training meetings. We had a chance to talk to some of the members, as well as their new leaders, take a look at their equipment from up-close, as well as to try out the art of archery ourselves. Since before going there, we did not know what people we will be meeting, what exactly is the environment and the concept of the club's meeting, we did not prepare for any interview and thus did no recordings,

except one short audio clip (around 20 min.) while talking about archery contests and bow making to one of the club members. The group apparently did not know about us joining them this day as well and clearly met us with surprise. So we did not intrude in their activities and mostly observed their training and other preparations. This fieldtrip was very enlightening in regards of the hard work that is put in the preparation for this short season of Viking festivals.

### **Achieved sample**

The Viking festivals that we have managed to pull into our study are these three: Bjørgvind Marknad in Fana, Bergen, Vikingfestivalen in Karmøy, Haugesund, and Hafrsfjordkaupangen in Møllebukta, Stavanger. They all happen one after another, start with Bergen festival on first weekend of June, Haugesund festival on second and Stavanger festival on third weekend. Festivals are of similar age: Bjørgvind Marknad was started in 2003, celebrating for 11<sup>th</sup> time this year; Karmøy festival started around the year of 2006; and Hafrsfjordkaupangen started in 2007, which actually has roots and same organizers from Hafrsfjordspillene, which started in 2004 but was canceled in 2007 due to lack of financial support – that is when the actual Hafrsfjordkaupang started.

In our study when discussing the findings and citing the words of our respondents, we refer to them as “Respondent #1” – representing Bjørgvind Marknad, “Respondent #2” – representing Vikingfestivalen in Karmøy, and “Respondent #3” – representing Hafrsfjordkaupangen, as well as “Respondent #4” whom we talked during field trip to Rennesøy. The speech used in citations in the texts is not altered.

## FINDINGS

### Origins

There is always a big push behind every big event either by receiving a demand from the community or a new entrepreneurial way to benefit them. Viking festivals organized at different places have different historic roles and purposes, some of them starting with a few enthusiasts which later turned into a club, another ones initiated by local municipalities, but with many approaches they conclude that there is a general need of Viking market which can provide the cultural awareness as well as benefits to the society.

The interviews revealed that the origins of these festivals lie in historical background of the area they are organized in. Bjørgvind Marknad is held in Bergen which is long known as a Viking established trade center and the intentions behind this festival were, first of all, to maintain the old traditions and show them to the community, spread the information about the historical roots of this town. Viking festival in Karmøy is based on the historical land where the first king of the unified Norway, Harald Fairhair lived. The purpose of this festival is to create awareness of this region as an actual birthplace of Norway. Talking about Hafrsfjordkaupangen in Stavanger, it is organized by the beautiful Hafrsfjord, where the battle resulting in the unifying of Norway took place, so it has the same historical link as the festival in Haugesund.

Actually all these festivals had a very different start. The initiative in Bergen was by a group of volunteers who simply decided to organize a market by one of the heritage sites belonging to Hordamuseet, and is still run completely by the volunteers. The Karmøy festival was initiated by the Haugesund municipality, since there was a project of longhouse reconstruction in Bukøy Island and in combination with that a decision to build a history center was made, which gave a head start to various historical events including the Viking festival. As respondent #2 expressed,

“the reason for it is historical, reason that it was the birthplace of the country and just to promote this region, and they start to think that the best way to promote the region is actually this historical alignment.” The Hafrsfjordkaupangen has a completely different history – it has roots in another festival. The Respondent #3 from Stavanger was very open and explained a lot of details about it. He said that in the year of 2004, wife of one of the professors in the University of Stavanger has written down the Viking Opera called “Rygekongen” and decided to arrange it for public and due to our respondent’s interest in history, he got involved in the arrangement if this event which was called Hafrsjordspillene. His duty was to arrange a speech event where different people were doing various speeches about local Viking history and a guided tour around the fjord. By then the respondent #3 come up with an idea to initiate a small Viking market to demonstrate the Viking life as an addition to the Opera. In 2005, the respondent #3 organized the whole arrangement with a huge outdoor opera in Møllebukta with the help of municipality; the festival was arranged with a big market, the day for the local school children, an art exhibition, speeches at the university and some Viking ships, re-enactors and traders. The next year was a peak, as said by the respondent it was “the biggest arrangement ever sponsored by Rogaland and Stavanger municipality, the opera was bigger than ever with 2000 people in the audience, a big market, speeches at the university, gathered the most Viking ships ever - 11 of them in Møllebukta, had two days for the school children (1000 children coming each day) and probably the first time in the world - the whole Sunday school aboard the Viking ships”.

2006 was the last year for Hafrsjordspillene – it was cancelled because of the funding problems, but the volunteers who participated in this event wanted to continue re-enacting, therefore in 2007 Hafrsjordvikingene club was established and organized the festival at Island Rott in 2007 with private sponsors. Event had a Viking market, paid the re-enactors for fighting performances,

riding horses and archery, also dedicated a school children day, especially for 6th grade students which had Viking Age in their history curriculum – overall it made the festival popular and successful. The respondent #3 emphasized that it was not so easy to get transportation for equipment and people on the island, but they managed to arrange one of the big ferries which goes to Lysefjord to go every half an hour in and out of the Island Rott, and this all was funded and due to good sponsors they managed to attract. Later they refused the Polish re-enactment group which they hired every year (by the way, the same group performs in the Viking festival of Karmøy) because they started asking for higher pay. Respondent #3 explains:

“It was an amazing event and that was the last time we had Polish guys, and they wanted more money every year, and wanted more and more. And they were selling like crazy. So we have learned that after a while, but then we had such a good reputation, so we didn’t have to pay people. Now we pay if people come to demonstrate something, or to sing, or test swords. Then we pay them, because they don’t make money on the market. But if they are traders selling things, then we do not, because they make good money.”

The good reputation they earned through all these years allowed them to move the festival closer to the city, back to Møllebukta. Then they arranged it twice at the Iron Age farm, because the previous setting was occupied by swimmers. And then back in Møllebukta until present day, with a break in 2012, because, as the respondent #3 expressed “everybody was sort of getting burnt out and the group was getting smaller”.

## **Organizers**

Festival organizers are responsible for the whole production - from its conception to the completion. Bjørgvin Marknad in Bergen is led by the voluntary group consisting of six members who organize the festival every year by favoring a place from municipality. As

respondent # 2 mentioned, “Björgvin Marknad is the name of the festival, but we also have a group called Björgvin Marknad, and I am from this group myself. <...> The area is owned by the place which was a museet, which was a museum, area is made up of old houses and stuff like that.” The festival in Bergen is completely dependent and based on volunteers, so the club asks for volunteers at early stages and set them to work at different posts and tasks. Municipality also plays a main role by supporting them through providing the area on conditions that the organizers should design a risk analysis report and submit it to make sure that the festival is safe as well as the heritage site they use is prevented from such things like fire, etc.

The Respondent # 2 from Karmøy states that, “It’s not that I am organizing, because I’m not the only person, it is actually the Karmøy Kommune which is organizing all the festival up here”.

There are of course few traders who are helping municipality by the information and knowledge for the betterment of the festival. As municipality is taking care of everything, then in other means municipality is an organizing body holding every kind of responsibility. All the risk precautions are covered by the municipality and they hire people to help them. When respondent #2 was asked about his role in festival, first he described it as more or less a networking position:

“I’m usually giving up contacts of the people who are in there. Yes? I’m making the contacts with people who are in there, so for example if I know a blacksmith, yes? And the blacksmith is good enough to show, for example, then I’m giving a contact to Karmøy Kommune and then they contact him in person. <...> actually I’m invited by Karmøy Kommune, and Karmøy Kommune actually give me money to find, they support me, financially support me”.

Later in the dialogue respondent #2 talked about the committee which is like a puppeteer pulling all the strings, and there are around fifteen people in the team that is actually “standing back the festival”. He described his own role as more of a coordinating, controlling person ‘on spot’:

“As I said we have this core of a festival, which is the committee, and they are sitting on the top, and actually they are not in the Viking clothes, they’re just watching the logistics. Logistics is the most important thing. They’re watching for everything, watching if there will be fire alarm, because they’re trying to get everything as safe... <...> usually I’m trying to catch up, to find out what is happening, then I’m going to the committee and discussing the problem, and then solve the problem. All the people on the festival usually are bounded more to try the festival to go as smooth as possible.”

When asked about other people working in the area, respondent replied “yes, there are more people around the area, and everyone actually involved in creating of this festival are responsible to get it right, to get it smooth.” Though the festival is quite old, but still there is no one to come up with a team or a club which takes the responsibility to get the festival growing and developing.

When it comes to Stavanger, it is a completely different view. As the idea for the Viking festival grew out of another successful festival, the municipality had a positive impression and contributed for the first few years but then the organizers in Stavanger were so active that they started accepting different projects and shows to perform at different places, not only at Viking festivals. Recently, for past 3 years, the Hafrsjordkaupangen in Stavanger is being organized based on its own finances, though they do ask for the festival place from the municipality and as respondent # 3 explained:

“But then we got a good dialogue with Stavanger Kommune, so the last three, I think, time runs... But I think three times, we been to Møllebukta which is a very beautiful place for this event. So we fence off and we to get allowance to do the market, we had actually to build a bridge, there is a wooden bridge over the creek. So people, when we fence off, because we have

to get people to pay to get in. So when we fence off, people get no way to get over the creek, so we had to build a bridge over the creek and then after when we finish we were supposed to tear it down then the Stavanger Kommune said, ‘wow nice, we pay you 30.000 NOK for it!’ We made a good money from that.”

The club now has the new board and two leaders, who are very active people and running the organization of the festival. Hafrsfjordvikingene does festival in cooperation with Archeological museum of Stavanger as well, so this way they divided some of the work a bit. Museum now is taking care of the advertising, the day for schoolchildren part, and also networking part, whereas the respondent #3 used to do the communication all by himself. Now the museum has a person working on this full time, and the club is taking care of the rest. Respondent #3 elaborates a bit more: “they also are having people being in the camp selling tickets and stuff like that, also have a stand there, but we are the ones risking money. So we are the one who pays for everything.”

So, it all depends a lot on the contribution of active society members to create a team of organizers and bring forward all the ideas and knowledge into practice.

The cooperation between the Viking festival organizers in Norway is getting better, because before they used to see each other as competitors. Now they have leadership meetings every year, it became sort of national organization, which has a closed Facebook page where they can as well discuss various issues they’re facing. The Respondent #3 expressed:

“We got together and started talking on the internet and we also met in York, and started discussing, because for a while I felt like we are sitting on each mountain top and “eerrgghhh [growling], don’t get into my weekend’, or something like that, instead of co-operating or working together. <...> So in Bronseplassen, one year, or it’s quite a few years ago now, all of the Viking chiefs got together and we discussed this, and if it’s supposed to be a ‘crashy’



weekend, let's try to keep it on eastern part of the mountains in Oslo area and stuff like that. They could have the same weekend as me, but as west coast – let's try to split it up, and on the east coast split it up geographically, so keep sort of like... regions, and it's been working.”

## Risks

Festival organizers also have to look into the possible risks while organizing the festival. As all respondents mentioned that they all have different kinds of concerns and some of these risks are certain and uncertain. As respondent #3 mentioned that they have to submit the risk analysis beforehand to the municipality and also to make sure that all the precautions are good enough to avoid tragedies. Giving an example of some safety measures respondent #3 stated that, “we have a guy from security company, whose there and he stays there whole night not doing the day time but in the night he goes on patrol”. And he also specified that the participants living in the tents know how to take care of their belongings. Whereas asking the same question from respondent #2 about the security measures and personnel, he described:

“Yes, yes. We've got security. Usually we have the Red Cross on the isle, through all the festival, and in and out as well, and we've got Securitas. From the first day up to Sunday night. So both, Securitas and Red Cross are present. And all the people from the committee, people who organize the place, they have both, the first aid help”.

As mentioned above those different locations have their own risks and uncertainties as respondent #2 also stated while discussing about possible risks, the festival is organized on a very small isle and the biggest risk would be fire. According to him, “Then there's only one way out from the isle and the second is with a boat. Of course we have a system that local fire brigade do get a boat, and if something happens they're sending the boat to the isle and they are loading the people up and driving too”. And talking to respondent #1 about the risk parameters for

Bjørgvind Marknad, she explained that the location is safe because it's an open area quite far from the road to the city. But again, though the festival is run by the volunteers, they do also have to present risk analysis report to the local police department. As respondent #1 expressed:

“Yes we have, before the market we always speak with Police for e.g. to make them aware that we are having a huge festival and stuff like that and we also have people who are not allowed to drink, who knows to help themselves and can help people if something happens. And also we have people who are well-known about the fire equipment if something catches fire. There are quite strict rules for some reasons for e.g. we cannot play bonfire where everyone stays. Because there is very old houses and maybe fire catches for some reasons. We could actually, if someone having fire for example, he would actually not be allowed to come again next year.”

While talking on this issue with respondent #3, he mentioned that the participants have to follow some rules and standards for having their tents in the festival. He said: “we also demand that all the participants have, every single tent have to have a fire extinguisher <...> yes but they are hidden in there. We used to have three fire extinguishers around.” He also explained that there is a lot of water around, with fjord and creek running through, but if one of the tents catches fire – there is no time, so they took precautions – everyone is now required to bring their own fire extinguisher. Other than that the main risk for all these festivals is the weather where a rainy day can make the festival flop and the visitors won't show up in numbers and it can also be a risk when volunteers don't show up.

## Finances

When it comes to big events and festivals, everything has to be well financed and without it there is no way of getting people interested in gathering at such event. Interesting fact about the Viking festivals is that, according to respondent #2 “in some festivals, just like Wolin festival in

Poland, nobody gets paid. On some festival you need to pay to come. And on some festivals you get paid for coming.“ When the respondent #1 was asked about the finances or sponsors for the Bjørgvin Marknad in Bergen, we came to know that this festival is completely arranged with the finances provided from municipality, no external funds were used. Until 2010 the festival was free to the public and only in 2011 with an intention to start improving the quality of the event and invite more professional artists, the so called “indulgences” of around 30 NOK was added.

Respondent # 2 from Haugesund also mentioned that it is the responsibility of municipality to arrange everything, there is no private sponsors which provide funds. The festival entrance costs 50 to 100 NOK, the price differs depending if it is a family ticket, children fee or adult fee.

Though about the investing this money in development and expansion of the festival, respondent #2 expressed a disappointment:

“They don’t do anything. This is just tragic, to be honest with you. Because every year we get more and more people, and every year you get more money of course, the tickets are every year more expensive. That... demand is growing to the community and it just disappears. <...> you compare it to the other events, you know, this is like nothing, this is just like a drop in the ocean, but we still could use this money to get some more people here to expand the festival. But unfortunately...”

In the case of Hafrsfjordvikingene, when the people were organizing Hafrsfjordspillene, they got finances from both, sponsors and municipality and as respondent # 3 explains, when they managed to register themselves as an organization and held a Viking festival in Rott Island in 2007, they received a good financial support from external sponsors and also from municipality to cover all the expenses of the festival. How big the support was he explained with examples of

arranging the ferry to take the equipment and the people to the island, or the expenses that cost to transport one Viking ship to the festival area and back, using the cranes to take down the mast to get it under the bridge and then to put it back in again. Since the club is doing other activities outside the festival, like events for companies, speeches, take part in the commercial advertisement filming and similar things they have started a foundation where earned money splits in half – one part goes to the people participating in the activities, the other half to the foundation, also membership fee goes in the same account. Most of the festival expenses are covered by tickets that people buy at the entrance, and the profit goes to the club and the improvement of the festival, as well as extra wages to the people working with this event part-time or full-time.

### **Participants**

Participation relies entirely on the initiative of performers and merchants who chose to put a cheers and fun at the festival. It is the committee's decision who can or cannot participate in the Viking festivals. The committee can be a person or a group of people responsible for accepting the proposals of performers, traders and volunteers. As the respondent # 3 describes that the main participants are the traders who build their shops in the festival and participate in the different shows or competitions as well. Most of the participants are coming back every year, and also join the other festivals around the region as well, because they are now in a dialogue with the Viking festival leaders, who started more cooperation between themselves. It benefits everyone – the festivals have more re-enactors coming in (everyone participating is required to have at least a basic “costume” reflecting the adequate period) and the participants have more convenient situations to travel around and trade and perform, because that's the way they make a living. Respondent #3 explained:

“We have meetings together where we arrange and now we sort of lock these dates so now the trader <...> basically in 2 weeks he can go to 3 different markets. I mean the first weekend, the second and the third. Just a few hours’ drive and you are there. So that make very attractive to them because they want to make money.”

Respondent #2 spoke about the festival season, which lasts “from beginning of April to the end of September”. And it is not only Viking festivals but also medieval and renaissance fairs.

Festivals happen every weekend, all over Europe, and according to him “that’s how actually most of the merchants are doing their money. They’re using the week to go from place to place, and in the weekend they’re actually at the festival.”

All respondents clearly expressed that the variety of participants in the festivals is the priority.

Respondent #3 said that “you have to stay on the edge to know who is coming and whom do we have and how many people, and you don’t want too many of the similar things. You don’t want too many selling jewelry because then they will be pissed off <...> and I don’t want mess, I don’t want to make it too big competition for them. I want to spread, I want maximum of things, I want poultry, I want leather, I want wood, all kinds of things.” That is one of the reasons why many of the festivals have plenty of people joining them from all over the Europe. Respondent #1 said they have “people coming from overseas, from Poland, Germany and Denmark”. These three countries were mentioned a lot by all of the respondents, because they have many enthusiasts, big re-enactment clubs and they participate everywhere they can. Another of the reasons to have foreign participants is first of all because local clubs are not big enough to actually have so many things to show at once, and secondly – the quality and diversity of material and designs of things sold or shown is important, e.g. the archeological findings in one or another country, regarding the same Viking age might be very different, more rich, more

interesting and better preserved (Norwegian coast is known to have a type of soil which is not in favor of archeologists) and the things sold by the merchants are usually based on them. It is also the matter of change; the program has to be interesting and attractive every year. One way to do it, besides the traders, is to have people showing crafts. For instance, the local Viking club in Haugesund is participating in the festival and showing lots of woodwork. Bjørgvin Marknad invites people who have different crafts like metal work, or wood, or similar things. In Stavanger a Danish tattoo artist according to the respondent #3 is “a special thing in the Viking village, with a guy doing it the old way” – it is “special” that much that they do not announce when he is participating anymore, because his services become fully booked beforehand. But sometimes, the same people who are selling things are the ones showing the craft as well. Respondent #3 gave an example of Polish students joining them, who are selling things and at the same time showing how to spin the wool, how to do braid weavings, or how to make shields and similar things. The excerpt from the interview with Respondent #2 in Haugesund also describes this matter very well:

“Respondent #2: Most of the visitors are coming there because something is happening. We had some discussions about this, because every year we’ve got the same re-enactors. I know it’s quite fed up with that. I will try to have some more people, new people, and less people who are actually showing something. That you’ve got, for example, a fighting hunt, fighting hunting – this is extremely nice thing to show, and beads making, glass beads making, and salt making, for example, yes?”

Interviewer: More to the crafts side? Not only the fights?

Respondent #2: not only fights, not only people, you know, walking around in the Viking clothes, because they are showing, okay – they are showing the clothes. That’s it!

Interviewer: Like exhibition.

Respondent #2: Like exhibition, yes. I want to show the people that actually Vikings, they were craftsmen, they had lots of other things to do, <...> that those people weren't only, you know, the heathens standing around killing the Christians, but as well craftsmen and farmers and they were extremely skilled at that."

Speaking of fights re-enactors, a group of them from Wolin in Poland is popular to include in the festival performances. Though the most popular, most mentioned type of re-enactment here is archery. As the respondent #3 states "that's actually the big thing for Hafrsfjord Vikings, we have a huge group of shooting arrows." One interesting thing about participants is that most of them have all their families involved. Respondent #3 said "most of us have the whole family, especially a bit older". They not only enjoy festivals, but participate in other related activities as well. For instance, respondent #4 took pride in his children saying:

"We had Norwegian championships in shootings with bows like this, two times a year. One indoor is in March and outdoor competition is in August normally. So my family competed and my son was Norwegian Junior Champion from last winter. <...> and my oldest daughter she won some of the titles last year in the outdoors event from shooting on animals, not alive but, yes, fake figures, and at speed shooting."

Another kind of re-enactment which is incorporated in the festivals, apart from craftsmen, merchants and fighters, is, of course, the performers. Respondent #2 spoke of the group from Denmark, who are the theater actors interested in Viking Ages and they get together, drive around Europe and show the Beowulf play. He also mentioned the musicians: "We've got of course lots of musicians, like musicians from Germany, from Flemsburg, but they are not only musicians, they are making the re-construction of the instruments of the Viking Age."

Respondent #3 said: “And we have singers, we have had from Belarus to come and play and act and sing. This year one guy is coming from Holland. He and his wife plays and they have puppetry and stuff like that, and there is, I think, there are some other entertainers.”

Respondent #3 also spoke very highly of the storyteller they have every year:

“He looks like a Hobbit, but he is an amazing guy. <...> He really goes into it, and he climbs trees and does all kinds of things. Everybody loves him; he is an amazing cool guy. <...> He has his own pride, so he doesn't tell the same story every year. I have heard him tell the story at our market, and telling exactly the same in Gudvangen, but they are totally different. I mean same story, but he acts and walks around, he tells something, and he has got his walking stick and he is so cool...”

The performers are usually the ones who get paid for entertaining the crowd, and usually there is just one problem – to get the time for people to be able to experience everything to the maximum, so to achieve that they try to make a program so that there is no overlap in performances.

Last but not least type of participant is volunteers, who are neither craftsmen and merchants, nor fighters and performers. They are simple people helping out to run the things. Respondent #3 says “being in the market, and being helping taking cash or selling hot dogs or stuff like that, we bring people in and there is one guy – he brings his whole family. They are not taking part in anything else, but when we have market, they take part.” Festival in Haugesund doesn't have a big number of volunteers; most of them are kids from local school. Respondent #2 indicated that they usually try to place them accordingly to the knowledge they have, and for the part of where to place the tents, food and other logistics – then they need the people who know something about it. As the respondent #2 explained: “it's like a pyramid: committee responsible for



logistics, responsible for everything which is the most important, and then you've got the other people.”

In contrast to these two festivals, Bjørgvin Marknad is depending entirely on volunteers.

Respondent #1 said that in previous year (2013) they had 25 volunteers, and this year (2014) – around 31, and they are expecting more. The volunteer can be anyone, and if they don't have the correct clothing which is required, they can rent or borrow.

The other people, e.g. traders, in a way can also be called volunteers, because they come to the festival by own choice, the organizers are not paying them, but they earn from what they sell.

Also local fighting groups like the one in Bergen who show performances during the festival are voluntary group, because they don't get paid.

The biggest concern regarding volunteers is, of course, them not showing up. Another problem that Respondent #1 expressed was the activities after the market is closed for visitors and the feast for the participants start:

“For example, if volunteers want to be a part of the feast, they have to sort of have a guardian for people that aren't over 18, because they are not allowed to drink. And at this feast and the market, there will be people drinking different alcoholic stuff. So it has to be acceptable for children to be going around the market as well.”

The volunteers are also not allowed to participate in the fighting performances, apart from the professional groups, because they have strict rules. Respondent #3 specified that “you have to go on a special course, because it's dangerous. Its heavy metal and they are not sharp, but you break your teeth and get cuts, and, oh, you have to be a member of the club, they don't take anybody in.”

## Visitors

There are interesting activities for both, children and adults, families and larger groups. The visitors of the festival either can be a tourist or a local resident as well. All the festivals are having tourists paying a visit from very different countries, but it is local community that makes the majority of the crowd. Most of the local residence visit with their family members or even try to get involved in the environment as volunteers, not only watch the handicraft demonstrations (workshops, demonstrations, and lectures), actively participate in the Viking games and competitions, try their hand at the archery or axe throwing, enjoy juggling and tricks, theatre performances of various kinds, concerts and of course the fighting shows.

Respondent #2 explained: “there are lots of people who have lots of children, lots of the schools are coming to the festival, but most of the visitors are coming there because something is happening.” Respondent #3 confirmed this saying that usually who show up in the festival are “a lot of families, a lot of younger men with interest of this environment. <...> Fridays are only school children.” Respondent # 1 also described that a lot of families with their kids come in, and especially expressed that sometimes they don’t experience the festival the same way as others because of the kids, so this time Bjørgvin Marknad came up with some new idea, as respondent #1 said “Actually this year, we have been trying something new, so we actually bought this huge tent from Germany and children that are a bit smaller, maybe 14 and that much, can be there, play and hang together and without having to go around the whole market if they want to”.

Speaking of foreigners, respondent # 1 described that in Bergen they have experienced tourists from all over the Europe: “we have people from Germany, Poland, England, from Ukraine, from actually all over Europe. Sometimes we have people from USA. It’s not common having people from USA, but sometimes yes”. Similar situation is in Karmøy festival, as said by respondent #2:

“Got lots of Germans, especially the summer time. Some English... Some people from England as well, of course. Lots of Americans last year.” When we asked about the translation possible to the foreign visitors, he added that they have translation only at the history center: “we got translation both in German and English, but not at the spot, not at the festival.”

And also in Hafrsfjordkaupangen there is a great variety of visitors. As respondent # 3 explained there are a lot of foreigners who are interested to visit the festival: “bunch of girls suddenly called me ‘Can we come to your market?’ ‘Yes, sure!’ And they came from Finland, so they drove all the way and stayed here for the weekend and drove back and had their best time <...> So we get from England, we get Danish, we get Swedish, a lot of Swedish and now from Poland”. Respondent #3 also mentions the tourists visiting Stavanger for few hours or a day like people from cruise ships. Respondent #3 expressed his disappointment, that they are always in a contact with tourist information office and cruise companies to schedule a small tour to Viking Festival for cruise tourists, but most of the time the guides get frustrated because of already a tight schedule, and the tourists become so interested in the festival that they don’t want to go anywhere further. As he says:

“But the problem is if we tell the cruise companies that we had the market, they barely put that in as a special tour for the people on the cruise ship. So the one we get they go to see the swords on the park and then they have 20 min stop over to see the swords and people can walk and take pictures and they all go to Viking village and then they are there for only 20 min and the guides are so frustrated because they need them, they have a whole program <...> And the guides were coming and pulling them out and the problem is that the guide company don’t make it. Well we tell them every year but they don’t make it as a special tour for the cruise passengers, but then cruise passengers always have some hours, like a lot of other tourists, that are in Stavanger”.

## Feedback System

Feedback is an evaluation process that creates more direct contact and is intended to encourage the dialogue between both professionals and un-experienced public. One of the best ways to ensure continued success for a Viking festival is to make sure everyone has an amazing time. There is always a big chance that people having their great time will share their positive experiences with their friends and family. This is not only important for festival organizers but also for the festival consumers such as volunteers, artists, visitors and delegates. Bjørgvin Marknad, the festival in Bergen is lacking with the process of receiving such feedbacks and now when we have asked about this, they came to notice how important it is. The respondent # 1 declares that “Yes. I think too, it’s a good idea. <...> I have been doing volunteering for other things as well. For example other festivals that is also in Bergen and there we actually have this like ‘fill out’ for customers. That was quite practical I guess”. Bjørgvin Marknad will be implementing some sort of feedback system from the volunteers, according to respondent #1 from Bergen. As talking to another interviewee, respondent #2 from Haugesund, he described, “We have had actually. We made lists last year, the people get to fill out the list and deliver back to us. We have the same feedback system at the history center and the Viking festival, but I’m sorry I don’t know the results”. Festival in Haugesund is following the interest of artists and visitors by asking them to fill the form every year. Hafrsfjordkaupengen is also in a stage of improvement as the respondent #3 from Stavanger expressed:

“Not that much feedback, but we do have, there is a chance for feedback. Though it’s open for comments, [www.hafrsfjordkaupangen.no](http://www.hafrsfjordkaupangen.no), that’s the name. Yes I made that just couple of months ago. But we have [www.hafrsfjordvikingene.no](http://www.hafrsfjordvikingene.no), we have a home page and then we changed server and now we have to build up again, but we just started. But there is a good article in, historic articles, various articles, we put link to various articles, good pages and we try to make one site

for every year's market with some pictures and information. So we can go back and see what happened that year.”

## Competition

When at least two Viking festivals are sharing the same weekend or struggling for the same goal without cooperation they become competitors to each other. There are a lot of Viking festivals taking place in Norway, respondents from Bergen and Haugesund takes every other festival as a competition while Stavanger don't consider themselves to be challenging for and with others. As asked by the respondent # 2 about the big festivals around Haugesund and he mentioned. “Yes, yes. You've got quite big festival in Bergen. The biggest festival is in Borre, it is sixty kilometers from Oslo. And every second year it's a Viking festival and every second year you've got the Middle Ages festival. And this is the biggest one. <...> Second biggest is Gudvangen in the Sogn og Fjordane, you've got one festival in Egge in Drammen, then you've got lots of festivals, and they're growing. The biggest in Europe right now it is Wolin, in Poland. It is the old Jomsburg, as according to the Jomsburg saga, you've got Moesgård in Denmark, you've got Foteviken in Sweden, and there are lots of festivals”. Respondent #2 also mentioned that they see Bergen and Stavanger as the biggest competitors, especially Hafersfjordkaupangen, because the respondent #2 believes that Hafersfjordkaupangen is having good support from archeological museum in Stavanger and they make good profit out of it. In contrast, the respondent #1 from Bergen states that the festivals in Rogaland region are quite big and Bjørgvin Marknad is run by the volunteers and is always set in the last weekend of May or the first of June and they are quite satisfied with organizing it, because they always have the same weekend. And this year they a new market appeared which was decided to be held the same weekend. As respondent#1 said, “actually this year has been another festival in Ølve, decided for some reason to have it on same weekend but I don't think it's as bigger competition for us. Because Ølve is a quite long road

from Bergen and it's the first time that this market has started". On the other side, Hafrsfjordkaupangen is organized by the club with members who pay their membership fees, and since the festival is completely sponsored by the club, it would appear that they should be competing in who has the biggest event, who has the best to offer, who attracts the most visitors and similar. But actually it is quite the opposite: respondent#3 believes that all these three – Stavanger, Haugesund and Bergen – are not in competition and they shouldn't be, because they already have set the weekends to avoid crashing and make it more convenient for the participants to travel. And he as well convinced all the Viking leaders to meet and make plans and decisions where and when they all can feel comfortable to organize a good festival in their area. As it was discussed earlier in the part about organizers, it is clear that Hafrsfjordvikingene is an active club bringing out new ways and ideas to the table. Since respondent #3 was the one leading the club before, he spoke that making Viking festival organizers cooperate as a national organization would benefit everyone and make events more enjoyable, instead of having bad blood boiling in between themselves all the time. Nevertheless respondent #3 doesn't throw away the possibility of competitive environment in the future, as he also mentions that the chances are growing: "they are popping up all over the place, so now soon there will be more collision when it comes to weekends."

## **Content**

We have talked quite a lot about the contents of these festivals while discussing what types of participants they have which adds up to the overall atmosphere of these festivals. Though the whole experience would be impossible without actual Viking Age reproductions that people 'in camp' wear, the equipment and tools they use, the surroundings, smells and sounds. The correct clothing and tools is the most important thing for the re-enactors, on which they spend the whole

other half of the year beside the festival season. Basically all of the things people wear and carry with them are handmade, either by themselves or by other re-enactors, the ‘traders’ as we referred to them before. And usually festivals and clubs have common rules which everyone must follow, so deviations from what is authentic (in this this case ‘authentic’ refers to original work which is matching the historical sources or actual archeological findings) are often not acceptable. Respondent #3 explained:

“We try to keep a strict standard with the re-enactors in the camp; I mean no watches, no mobile phones. Even no visible cell phones and no water bottles, stuff like that. Keep it as authentic as possible. So one time there was somebody coming and selling this kind of weird stuff, modern stuff. Then they were not welcomed the next year. So we try to keep it as authentic as Viking Age.”

Respondent #2 as well described that the personal equipment he has is his own, not rented or borrowed, like clothes and armor and weapons, but bought from other re-enactors who create this stuff.

We have discussed before that the image of Vikings in the popular culture is mainly created by the books and movies which mostly praise the negative features of this age and gives the wrong idea to the public. All our respondents expressed that Viking festivals greatly add to the creation of more positive image of the Vikings. As respondent #3 said:

“Viking Age is a fascinating story, and it’s fascinating history, and it’s international and everybody knows about it. So, and now it’s instead of being just bloody and raping and pillaging and burning and stuff like that, coming more over to the artistic and handicraft and ships and stuff like that. So a little bit more of positive side. They were really entrepreneurs and they were masters in many aspects.”

There is a huge niche in the market regarding the Viking Age, the museums are expanding with new exhibitions open to the public and lots of companies are interested in hiring re-enactors for shows – it is something that is lately selling very well. Nevertheless, the positive image that festivals create, it is clear that people prefer to see action, to see things that they can only experience in the movies, and very rarely live and up-close. Respondent #3 specified: “in a market people want to see... things. They want to see fighting, they want to see archery, this year <...> the fighters will demonstrate the sharp swords on a pig to cut it. I mean, it’s already dead, there will be no blood, but to show the power of the sword”. Respondent 2# as well spoke of the importance to show the real weapons, even to the children and expressed the reason why:

“The problem is that the people have no respect to the weapon. <...> It’s not a toy, you know. You have to show them the real thing. That’s why I’m usually showing them a sharp sword. Because you know – if you cut yourself, you get respect for the weapon, for all you’ve got. <...> You will never learn if you never experience in order to feel that this is a sharp weapon, the same with arrows, the same with some other weapons.”

Showing crafts and armament is not the only thing they do at the festivals. Respondent #4 spoke about how important was the looks and fashion for the Vikings, and this as well has to be reflected. Excerpt from the conversation with the respondent #4:

“Respondent #4: Vikings were really vain. Their vanity was important for them, their hair was important, how they look by the face. They were very mature, meticulous about how they look.

Interviewer: Fashion also?

Respondent #4: Very fashionable.

Interviewer: Accessories and stuff?



Respondent #4: Oh yes!”

We have asked our respondents if these events have an educational touch, a special story that they want to implement or similar things, but all of them expressed that entertainment takes the bigger part. Respondent #2 in Haugesund stated that “the entertainment comes first, because usually people when they hear the word education they get scared... <...> but when you’ve got people on the spot, then you try to educate them. But usually the best way to educate them is to educate the way they don’t know about it.” Obviously, the learning to the visitors comes unconsciously while seeing the clothes, listening to the craftsmen explaining their work or storytellers speaking of the old days and mythology. Respondent #3 explained that they had educational side of the event before when they organized speeches from professors and history experts in Hafrsfjordspillene. He added that this was exactly the thing that pulled him into re-enactments. According to him at the moment they have finally got Archeological museum to bring in the objects that have been found around Hafrsfjord to show and tell about them and that is the only educational touch.

The educational side also comes in through the interaction with the audience. It’s not only entertaining but as well teaching new skills and raising interest in history and re-enactments. There are two ways to interact with the audience. First is showing the battles or fights like ‘Holmganga’, a Scandinavian duel with set of rules and story behind it, and commenting about what is happening in the ‘arena’. Another way is through direct contact, like letting the visitors participate in the games or even compete against each other. For example, in Hafrsfjordkaupangen they have a special program for children where they give wooden shields and wooden swords and gloves to put on, and get one or two of the fighter guys to teach them what to do, make them scream like Vikings and also make them fight. Respondent #3 adds on:

“But I think all the parents understands, it’s wood sticks, it’s not going to kill you, you might get a bruise on the nose or something like that, and I think yes, all the parents understand why this is kids fight. And also they are very strict with them. And the big guys scare them to stand in line and they are standing there with their swords. It’s so cool, I mean we had it after the big fighting, because then everybody is gathered and it’s packed.”

Hafrsfjordkaupangen organizers also let the visitors to try out archery and axe throwing, or try breaking the shield wall. But respondent #3 gave a good notice – you have to do some business thinking: “you should not let everybody try it. Somebody has to say ‘oh, next year I am coming back to do this or tomorrow, tomorrow I’m going to get this’, so you have to think a little bit of business as well.”

All our respondents expressed, that for many re-enactors being a Viking is a lifestyle. Either you are a trader, a craftsman or a fighter; at some point it becomes more than a hobby, and more than a work – your way of life. Respondent #1 from Bergen said that “a lot of people actually are sort of full time Viking; like, they walk around in more Viking inspired clothing the whole year – so, I don’t do that, but I know people who are.” Nevertheless, others, who are full time Viking only on the festivals, also get to enjoy the pros and cons of this kind of lifestyle. Respondent #4 from Rennesøy said:

“That’s good fun and, of course, when you live like a Viking, everything happens outdoors. Of course we sleep in tents and we make all food from the fire. But after closing time, it’s not like this. Beers comes in cans. That’s allowed. I don’t use glasses when I am a Viking. I use contact lens.”

One thing that many of us, visitors, don’t get to see and experience is the feast which happens after the festival is closed for the visitors. All respondents described it as the best part of the

event. They usually have a separate program just for the people living in the camp. Sometimes it even involves the performances that were not available for public, for example flame throwing. Respondent #1 said: “In my experience, what happened after the market is closed, that’s the fun part of this event – you sit around a bonfire and drinking and yes, it’s wonderful...” Later she added that it is really recommended to stay after the closing if you are participating in the event:

“Respondent #1: Last year it was so amazing, they have people playing medieval instruments and songs, and people who are, like, familiar with medieval dances. What you call the the people who are blowing flames?”

Interviewer: You mean flame throwers?

Respondent #1: Yes, flame throwers. Last year we had one of those. So late in the night people are dancing, and listening to music, getting to know people. So it’s amazing.”

Respondent #3 explained that they “always have one serious competition in the evening after people have gone, between all the various people, because a lot of people selling things – they can’t get away to take part, so we have to have a real competition in the evening – then we have a very nice prize.” Respondent #4 when speaking of competing against his fellow Vikings referred to the feeling like a child again: “Most of the people like to make things and like to dress up, but of course like fighting and things like that. <...> It’s a way to compete and feel like a kid again, because when you fight in your brain, there are no consequences, but of course <...> if I fall now, it’s differently when I fell over when I was 18. The same was referred by respondent #3, who said: “this is something all the boys did when we played cowboys, Indians and stuff like that, so most of us have done this in childhood and I really enjoyed archery.”

History is everywhere the same – in Poland, England, Germany, and it's the common interest in it is what brings these people together. As our respondent #3 told us the environment is amazing, because you can see “there is a doctor, there is an unemployed, and there is a student, I am a pilot myself and you can't tell who is what - we are all similar and talking, and discussing, and everybody can put their work in. <...> and being dressed like this we all are similar, so there is no difference – you don't have your gangster tone or whatever, so it is quite cool.” Respondent #1 as well expressed the feeling of equality: “it's that the people are so accepting, that you can be yourself and you can just feel free for the weekend”. She also added that they as Norwegians take huge pride in having Vikings as their ancestors and it is important to maintain that tradition, do not let different parts of it get lost in the modern times.

## DISCUSSION

It is now clear that these focal points that emerged in our conversations with the respondents are the key elements of the Viking festival production. In order to test the Shedroff<sup>®</sup> experience design we have to discuss it's each dimension while putting our findings in them. This design was developed and confirmed to get the overview from the customer's perspective, so here we take a different approach and test if it works from the event organizers point of view when he doesn't have the verdicts of the visitors. The expected result is a solid Viking festival profile which explains how the experience is created.

### Intensity

The intensity of experience is rarely constant, it is changing with every visit, every try, and the extent of it usually fades over time. Though the global evaluation is likely to play an important role in future behavior and decisions, one can form overall evaluation by capturing the remembered intensity of the experience as a whole the moment such an experience is over. The intensity of experience depends on the participants who take part in Viking festivals and provide the authentic insight to the visitors by presenting the Viking Age lifestyle, how their ancestors lived and where their traditions came from. Some of the programs are designed in a way that participants and visitors have to get involved in the activities to get a true and authentic experience. For example, participation in the axe throwing contests or games from the old times, as a result making visitors feel proud about themselves and their traditions and culture. However, it reflects the picture of Vikings standard of living and how they fought to win their land. Basically, organizing Viking festivals is a way to maintain their cultural traditions and the participation of visitors in the different programs gives more genuine experience to the public about the nature of the festival.

## Duration

Viking Festivals mostly last for three days and are only organized on weekends, as the interviews with few festival organizers from different cities showed. The preparation starts one week earlier by rigging and building the area, fixing the tents and fences according to the theme, level of crowdedness and event setting, all the participants join the organizing team with their helping hands as well. Therefore, festival officially starts on Friday and some of the festivals has the first day scheduled for the school children only where they can play, be entertained and learn some interesting stories and myths told by storytellers and also get involved in small games like crushing the shield walls or fighting with wooden weapons and so on. The start of the festival begins with an official opening of the “Viking village” through the speech made by one of the officials or the “mayor of the village”. The participants (traders, re-enactors and volunteers) stay with each other till the festival ends. They spend quality time during the festival schedule as well especially in the evenings when sitting beside each other by the bonfire and having a feast. The events close on Sunday

## Breadth

Breadth of the Viking festivals involves everything that connects them to their visitors and participants, as well as the elements that might be missing. It can be as well called consistency. Viking Age and its history is the same everywhere in the world, people know what they can expect and thus the whole festival of course revolves around it – you cannot simply put a character from the Stone Age or Renaissance times in a Viking village. The authentic equipment for crafts and daily utensils (even cups and plates), the tents people put up in the festival camp, the clothing and weapons they wear, which are at many times even self-made, up to the point of the food they cook and how they cook – it all works for the festival as a brand, the same way as, for instance, the color and shape and symbols work for manufacturers of mobile devices or

computers or any other product. It is all in harmony with the environment they are in – usually it is a historically important place, so another connection made to the visitor is through the values and meanings attached to it.

Products and services available for the visitors as well are a part of consistency in these events.

The modern things are not allowed to sell or show, only authentic ones corresponding to the depicted period – and people can buy these things, and they can pay for the other things like participation in the games, or even authentic traditional food inherent for exactly that epoch.

It is ironic how the promotion of these festivals, which are praising history and authentic heritage, are actually promoting themselves through modern tools like blogs and Facebook profiles. The word-of-mouth is always there, but it is business thinking that pushes festival organizers to reach the audience through the modern channels.

### **Interaction**

When discussing about interaction, it is very well-known that participants and observers are engaged in different active and passive activities. These interactions directly and indirectly connect the visitors to put their involvement for the ultimate experience. For example, some parts of the programs in the Viking festivals are unplanned such as archery contests, axe throwing and fights between re-enactors where the degree of interaction with the audience gets so high that visitors demand to get a chance to participate and perform themselves, whereas on the other hand, very few other the things in the program are passive where the participation and interaction is less, more as an exchange of things (money and product) and thoughts (asking questions to the craftsmen or storytellers, applause to the performers). Speeches and lectures about the knowledge and history in such festivals can be a good example as well. As mentioned earlier in

our findings, there are two ways of interaction – by presenting or by participating, which are passive and active accordingly.

### Triggers

There are a lot of triggers when it comes to specific and conceptual festivals. Different aspects arouse the interest of the visitors and build their understanding of the Viking age environment. Visitors and observers literally find themselves surrounded by Vikings, as if they jumped on a time machine a thousand years back in time. The sight is primary and probably the most important component here as everything you see reflects it – the clothes, equipment, decorations, and buildings. Many of the Viking festivals are organized close to water because that's where the Vikings used to live, ships were used as a transport (and sometimes festivals have enough luxury to actually showcase them. The setting itself is giving you a historical background as well, for example Vikingfestivalen in Karmøy is set in supposed place of residence of the first king of unified Norway; or Hafrsfjordkaupangen in Stavanger enlightens one of the biggest fights fought by the same king.

Other components also play an equal role, for example smell, taste, texture, concepts and symbols. The sound of clashing swords and shields, the intricate or exoteric melody in the background definitely adds to the overall atmosphere the visitor experiences. Respondent #3 from Stavanger spoke about one of the aspects – smell: how people cook food and make drinks always outdoors, outside the tents, so for example one big animal (a pig, etc.) being roasted in an open area so you can smell the delicious scent everywhere – it definitely induces the hunger feeling and a lot of visitors decide to go towards them. Some of the main triggers are the concepts and symbols, which characterize the lifestyle of 'old days' with tents, weapons, animals, sometimes even ships everywhere. Small things like accessories, runic writings and



patterns – they all have meanings that with basic knowledge are easily recognizable. All the participants including re-enactors, volunteers and traders are dressed in a way Vikings used to be. They scream, speak, walk and behave in a same way and present you a proper Viking, not the one the current popular culture is trying to instill.

As discussed earlier in our research findings and the literature review as well the authenticity is always the main focus in the festivals revolving around heritage and re-enactment. No single participant is allowed to wear a watch or have mobile phones in hand, everything looks real which gives more credibility and a positive interest to look for more in these festivals.

### **Significance**

It is difficult to explain the social impacts of success (or failure) of the Viking festivals without the knowledge about opinions of the visitors - that's why additional research is necessary, investigating the emotions and meanings they attach to what they experienced in these events. Our study is limited to the perspective of the organizers, and thus we can discuss about the value for money that people get or the function of the festival in the local community without requiring additional data.

The value for the price people pay to get into these festivals is big. The intangible benefits are that you get indirect education which broadens your knowledge and understanding of your own culture and traditions. You also get unique type of entertainment, which has recreational importance, since it is the natural human desire to share his joys and sorrows, where the festival gives free vent to your feelings.

One of the primary functions of the Viking festivals in the community first of all is the promotion of the place. Most of them are organized in the places which have some degree of

historical importance – a rebuilt heritage site, a known trade center in the past, etc. – and after archeological excavations you get more knowledge about it. More knowledge means a possibility to identify yourself with the place and heighten the sense of national pride and glory. And it has international importance too, since it brings better understanding about the achievements of the country and greatly reflects their cultural life. A better promotion brings more visitors and tourists, which of course means higher income which can be invested into the development of the place. Successful festivals in general are known to contribute to the increasing development of the cities or regions they are organized in.

Another function of the festival of course is the entertainment. A very good example of the importance of their Viking festival was given by our respondent in Haugesund. Explanation said that smaller towns like Haugesund are always overthrown by big cities, like in our case – Stavanger and Bergen – in regards of number of events happening, especially bigger in scale and variety. This again refers to the recreational importance which was mentioned earlier before.

### **Explaining the Success**

We asked our respondents if they could identify the main factors, the actual cornerstones that make these festivals successful. But none of them managed to find the words for that and explain clearly. After the analysis of our findings we gained more insight in the matter and can see a clearer image.

First of all, the Viking festivals work as a giant spider web, a network. If you look at it from a different angle an interesting business model is visible. Most of the participants are the same in many of the festivals of the season, simply moving from one place on one weekend to another.

When the festival weekends “crash” (two festivals happen at the same time) – they communicate and try to make it so that the ‘crash’ is between different regions which are wide apart from each other, for example eastern and western parts of the country. This level of cooperation give better distribution and condition the participants, letting them visit more places throughout the season and this way make more money. Better distribution gives more variety of offers, meaning that the visitor demands are satisfied and this increases the chances of them returning next year.

Success depends a lot on the content as well, which is actually directly influenced by the festival participants (traders, performers, etc.) – the bigger the variety, the more interest it sparks, because it simply covers more areas of interest. People have different tastes and opinions on things, so the variety of amusement (from music to flame throwing) and the variety of things sold, starting with garments and jewelry, finishing with ceramics and metalwork already have a wider range of customers – while women might be more interested in the accessories, the men may be looking at the practical household tools, while children may enjoy the puppetry show or possibility to fling around with a wooden sword and imitate the ‘big guys’ surrounding them, the adults may be more inclined to join the archery contest. Of course these relationships are just our guess and could to be investigated in a separate research.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to clarify the concept of “Viking festivals” and discuss its defining characteristics and test the effectiveness of Experience Design model (created by Shedroff) in event studies with the organizational point of view. Also to explain the role of content in the concept development and point out the success factors of these festivals.

One of our first objectives was to define what the “Viking festival” is. We have concluded that events which are called ‘Viking markets’ or ‘Viking trade fair’ actually fall into the category of festivals. So hereby the term “Viking festivals” can be defined as “a form of public festivity, portraying the Viking Age and celebrating it’s historical, cultural and social heritage”.

The literature review revealed that experience design is a debatable topic, on which scholars have different opinions – whether it should be utilized in tourism and event studies or not. We have chosen to test out the Experience design model created by N. Shedroff, which in fact should help to explain how the re-enactment event experiences are being produced for public.

We can now conclude that the production and design of Viking festival experiences is possible to describe using the Shedroff’s model which was developed to work through the customers’ opinions but its dimensions can also be analyzed from the organizers perspective (when he doesn’t have the verdicts of the visitors). The model gives a positive result which is a solid Viking festival profile explaining the creation of experience.

The interviews we have conducted with four respondents involved in different festival organization and coordination have disclosed the focus points which can be called the key elements of Viking festival production. They have been identified as: origins, organizers, risks, finances, participants, visitors, feedback system, competition and content. These characteristics

define the place, leading teams, types of sponsorships, re-enactors and volunteers, their purpose in the festival, levels of cooperation and competition, evaluation processes, interactions and networking, etc.

These festivals are growing bigger every year as it was said by the respondent # 3: “Its growing. I mean every year there is a new market. So now on the west coast, there is at least one new and I think there is one between as well and they are popping up all over the place.” This shows that the demand is growing for such festivals and many municipalities and clubs are following the trend. Museums are expanding, with more focus on the Viking Age, and this new knowledge inspires local people to start re-enactment movement and join the festival network. It also gives a clear image of competition in the future as the weekends will be clashing each other more often and because of that the national level cooperation among the Viking chiefs is necessary.

We see the space for improvements in the Viking festivals which they should put into practice in order to attract more attention not only towards their event, but region, culture and traditions in general:

- There should be an option for the participants and visitors to give their opinions and suggestions for improvement as they are an important part of the festival.
- To put more interest in the festival, visitors could be offered a possibility to role-play (to become Vikings themselves by getting clothes and some weapons to get authentic feelings and experience).
- Social media can be used more extensively to promote the festivals.

### Limitations of the study

We have been confined by the time schedule for this study, thus looking into the festival visitors perspective was impossible, since the festival season starts late in May. Another limitation was the lack of relevant literature on the Viking festivals and heritage tourism related to events.

The unknown population size have determined our choice of the sampling method, which itself became limiting because you cannot predict the outcome of the sample in the end. The long process of contacting potential respondents and waiting for their reply and approval to meet for the interview made it even more difficult to speed up the progress of the study.

The following recommendations are presented for related research in the field of event studies: carrying out the research about actual Viking festival visitor experiences; descriptive study about the Viking festival visitors; study the social impact the success or failure of the event does to the local communities; do whole population studies in order to fully identify it and come up with the complete list and calendar of the Viking festivals; analyze the festival stakeholders and the impacts of different types of leadership as well as the types of sponsorship and what is their effect on these festivals.

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## APPENDIXES

### Appendix 1

General questions:

1. What kind of events are/were organized by you and your team?
2. How old is this event?
3. Have you had predecessors? (People working before you joined the team)
4. Where did the idea come from to organize this event? What is the story behind it?
5. Have you gone through some historical background? (Archeological findings, legends, etc.)

About the festival:

1. Do you ask volunteers to come and act just for this event or do you hire a professional team which performs everywhere, not only in this event?
2. Are these re-enactors professionals or amateurs, or maybe it is a mix of both? How do you prepare to work with them?
3. Do you prepare any special scenario, a narrative, a story that you want to tell?
4. Are you reenacting real events, or you perform stories that are made especially for this event?
5. What about equipment you use? Is it owned or borrowed? Do the actors have to use their own gear?
6. What is your role when the event starts? Have you ever been yourself a part of these reenactments? Or do you only observe? What is your experience with this?
7. Does the festival have competition? If yes, who they are and how do you try to stand out?

About visitors:

1. Do you know who the main visitors of this festival are? Is it local people, or from whole Norway? Or maybe you get international attention? What is the main focus group?
2. Do you invite visitors to participate? For example by providing clothes to put on, other equipment like fake weapons and armor, making them to blend in the crowd.
3. How do you think, what impact do this festival do to the visitors? (do they identify themselves in these actors, get the sense of belonging to the place)
4. Is there an educational touch to the things performed? (So called “edutainment”.)

5. While reenacting fights or other kind of action usually there are comments going on in the background. Is there any translation available for foreigners?
6. Do you use any other tools of information to the visitors, like brochures, social media, etc.?
7. Is it accessible to the disabled people or e.g. people with hearing or sight impairment?
8. Do you have any system for feedback of the visitors, like surveys?
9. Have you had any researches done about or during this festival, like marketing, economic influences, motivations, tourist experiences, etc?

Community involvement, costs:

1. How much the community gets involved in the festival? Volunteers, musicians, artisans, other kinds of people? (Is it difficult to find people who'd like to dress up like ancient Vikings and act like them?)
2. What is the role of municipality in the organization of event? Are they easy to collaborate?
3. The event is not free of charge. Does it buy off to do this type of event? Do you invest some of the profit to expansion of the festival?

Success, failure, risks, potential:

1. What are the biggest risks while organizing this type of festival? Have you had any big failures or the opposite, big success stories?
2. What do you think are the main success factors of this festival?
3. In your opinion, what is the potential of this type of events in general? There are very big festivals up in the north, is there a potential for western and southern Norway too?

## Appendix 2

1. Introduce yourself a little bit. What is your experience working with this type of events (Viking festivals). What kind of events are/were organized or coordinated by you and your team?
2. How old is this event?
3. Have you had predecessors? (People working before you joined the team)
4. Do you know where did the idea come from to organize this event? What is the story behind it?
5. Have you gone through some historical background? (Archeological findings, legends, etc.)
6. Who are the volunteers you are coordinating? What are their main roles?
7. Do you need people with some special knowledge or expertise?
8. Is there some kind of reenactment happening in the festival? Like a battle, or daily life?
9. Have you ever been yourself a part of these reenactments? Or do you only observe? What is your experience with this?
10. Does the festival have competition? If yes, who they are and how do you try to stand out?
11. A bit about the volunteers. Motivation and rewards.
12. Do you have any feedback from volunteers, like surveys?
13. What are the biggest risks while organizing this type of festival? Have you had any big failures or the opposite, big success stories?
14. What do you think are the main success factors of this festival?
15. In your opinion, what is the potential of this type of events in general? There are very big festivals up in the north, is there a potential for western and southern Norway too?