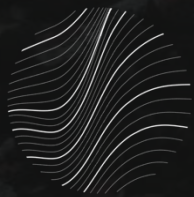



WHEN IDENTITY BECOMES ATTRACTION

By people for people

Helsinki, March, 24 2026

Elke Dens
Place Generation



The image is a painting depicting a vast sea of men, all dressed in dark suits and bowler hats. They are floating in the water, their heads and shoulders visible. The scene is set against a pale, overcast sky. A dark, semi-transparent horizontal band runs across the middle of the image, containing white text. The overall mood is one of uniformity and anonymity.

Destinations are places drowning
In the sea of sameness



Photo by [Fernando Garcia](#) on Unsplash

The paradox of destinations:

In the effort to become more
attractive,
places became less unique,
less interesting, and less
resilient

In our tourism bubble We tend to forget who's really hosting us...





Start with place, work with place

You don't prepurpose places for tourism.

You explore the identity of your place and

look at how visitors can help to

Make your place thrive.

WHAT IS PLACE IDENTITY?

1

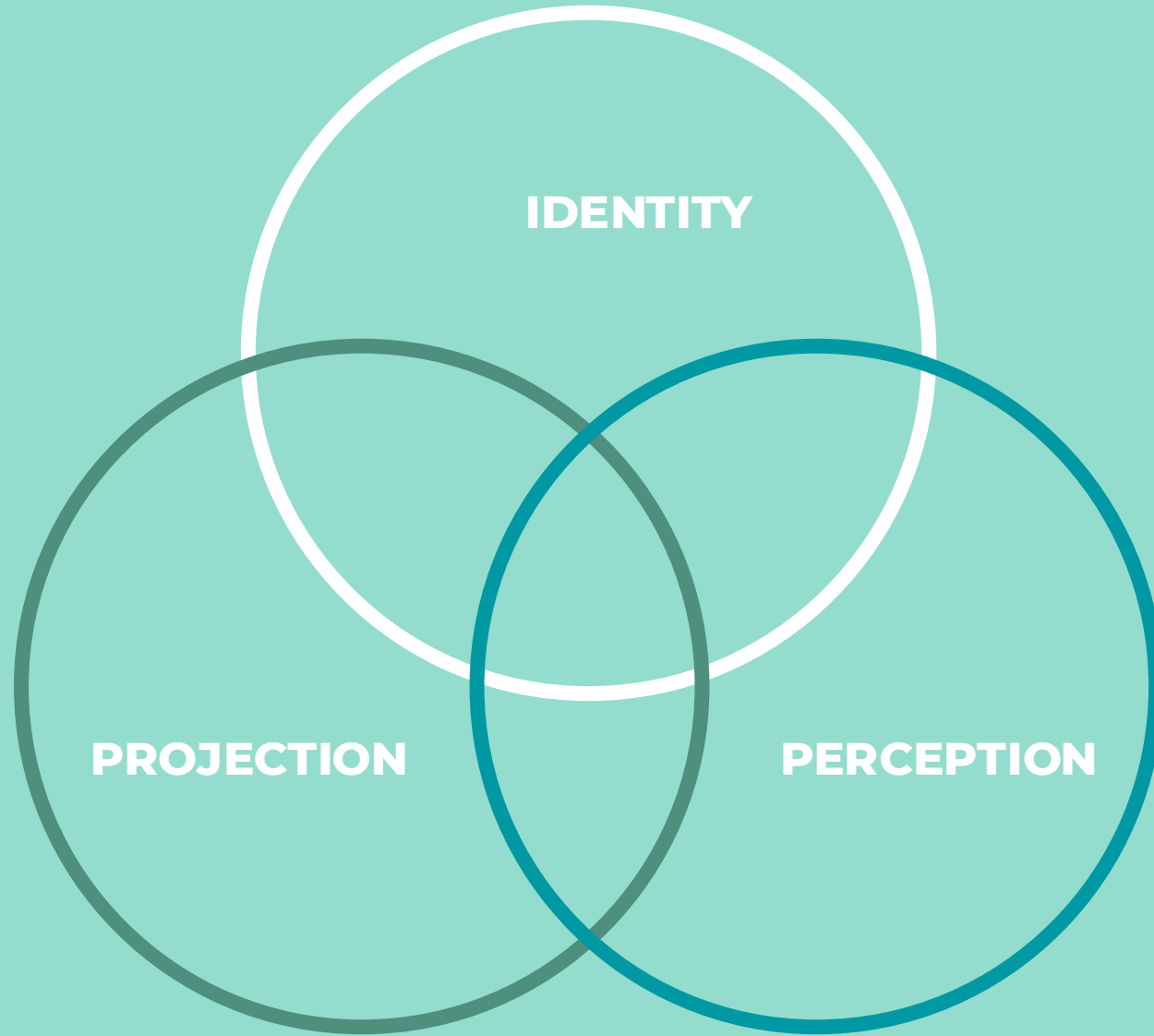
The core identity of
your place.

2

The sense
of place.

3

The epicenter of all
experiences and
stories that your
place generates.



THE PLACE IDENTITY PROCESS

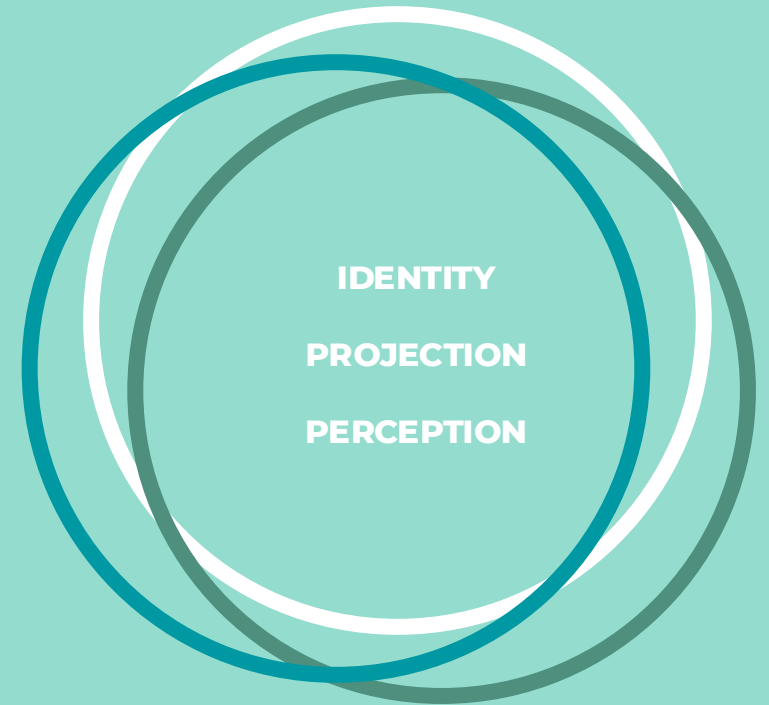
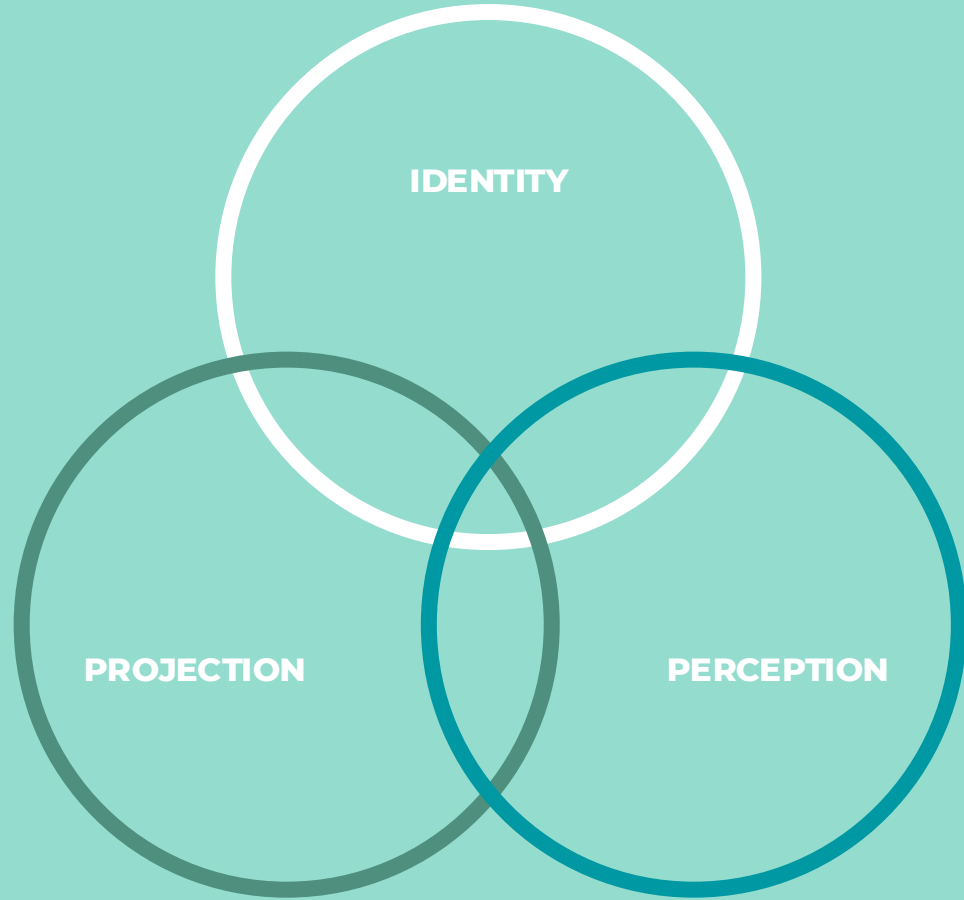
1 IDENTITY

2 PROJECTION

3 PERCEPTION

4 NARRATIVE GAP ANALYSIS

The more alignment
THE STRONGER THE REPUTATION



WHY PLACE IDENTITY?

WHAT KIND OF STORIES OR EXPERIENCES ARE WE GOING TO PROJECT TO VISITORS, STUDENTS, FOREIGN COMPANIES?

THE DANGER OF NOT DOING THIS 1:

none validation of your work (non authenticity)

THE DANGER OF NOT DOING THIS 2:

The permission to do marketing (non credibility)

PLACE IDENTITY IMPACTS DEVELOPMENT & DESIGN

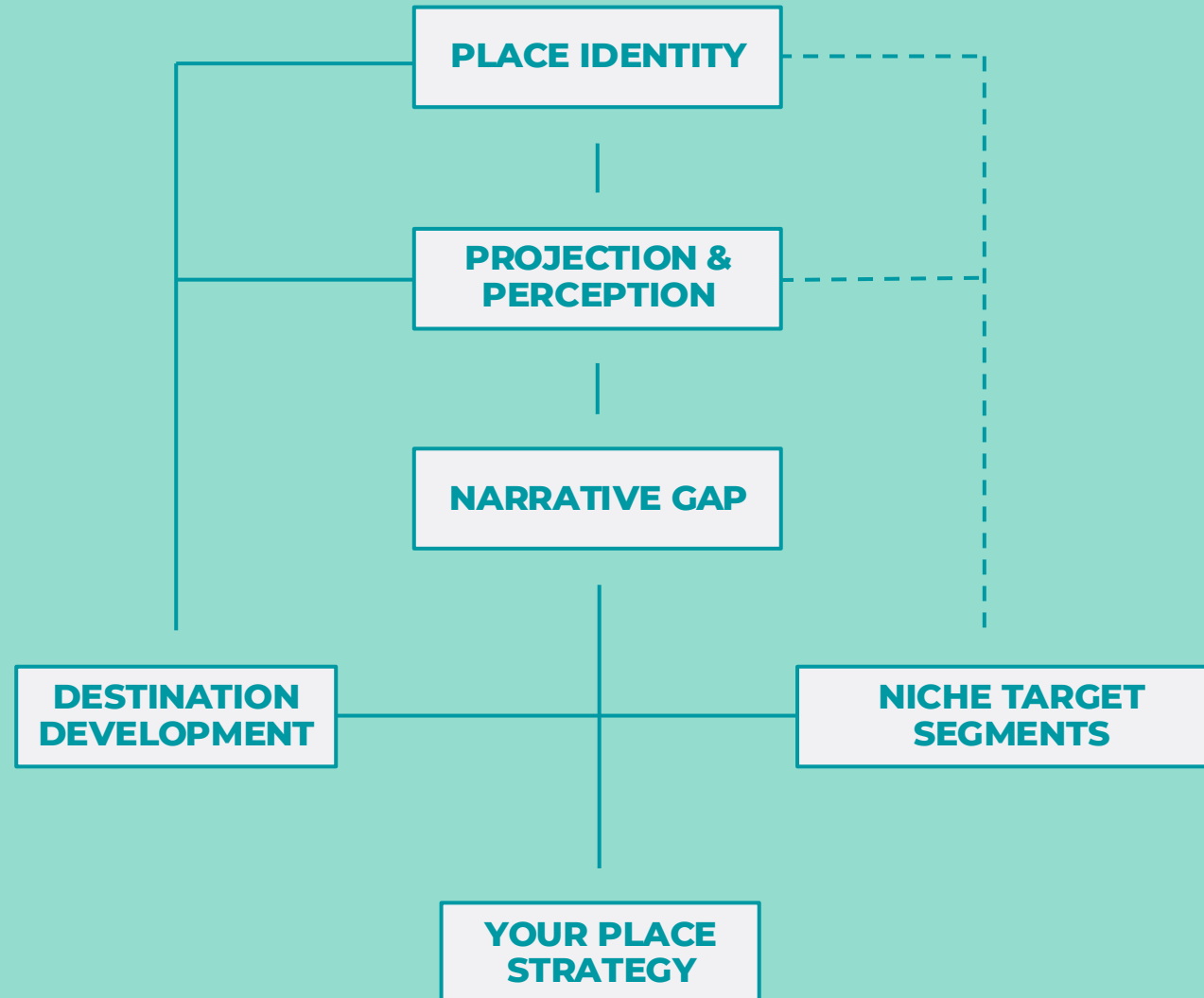
- By optimizing the customer journey.
- Developing remarkable experiences.
- Filling gaps in your product offerings.
- Animation.

PLACE IDENTITY IMPACTS PROMOTION

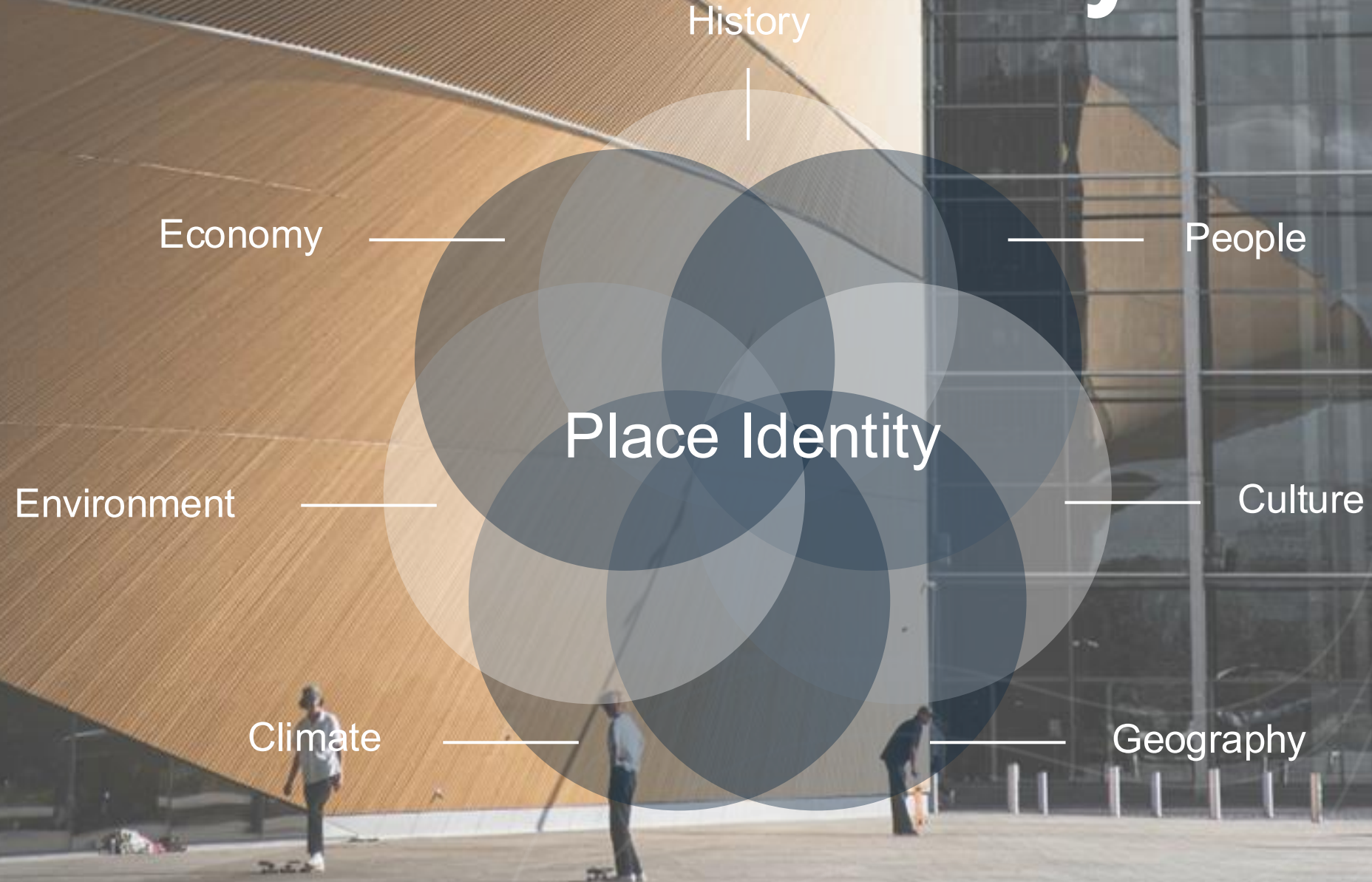
- Improving your positioning.
- Audience segmentation.
- Setting up storytelling.
- Tailor-made promotion.



PLACE IDENTITY AS YOUR FUNDAMENTAL



Place Identity



SUOMENLINNA

HUMOUR

WHITE CITY

GREEN SPACES

SAFETY

HERITAGE & CULTURE

ARCHIPELAGO

DESIGN

SOCIAL CARE

NEIGHBOURHOODS

ARCHITECTURE

PARKS

MARKETS

LOCAL TRANSPORT

ROCK CHURCH

RESTAURANTS

FOOD CULTURE

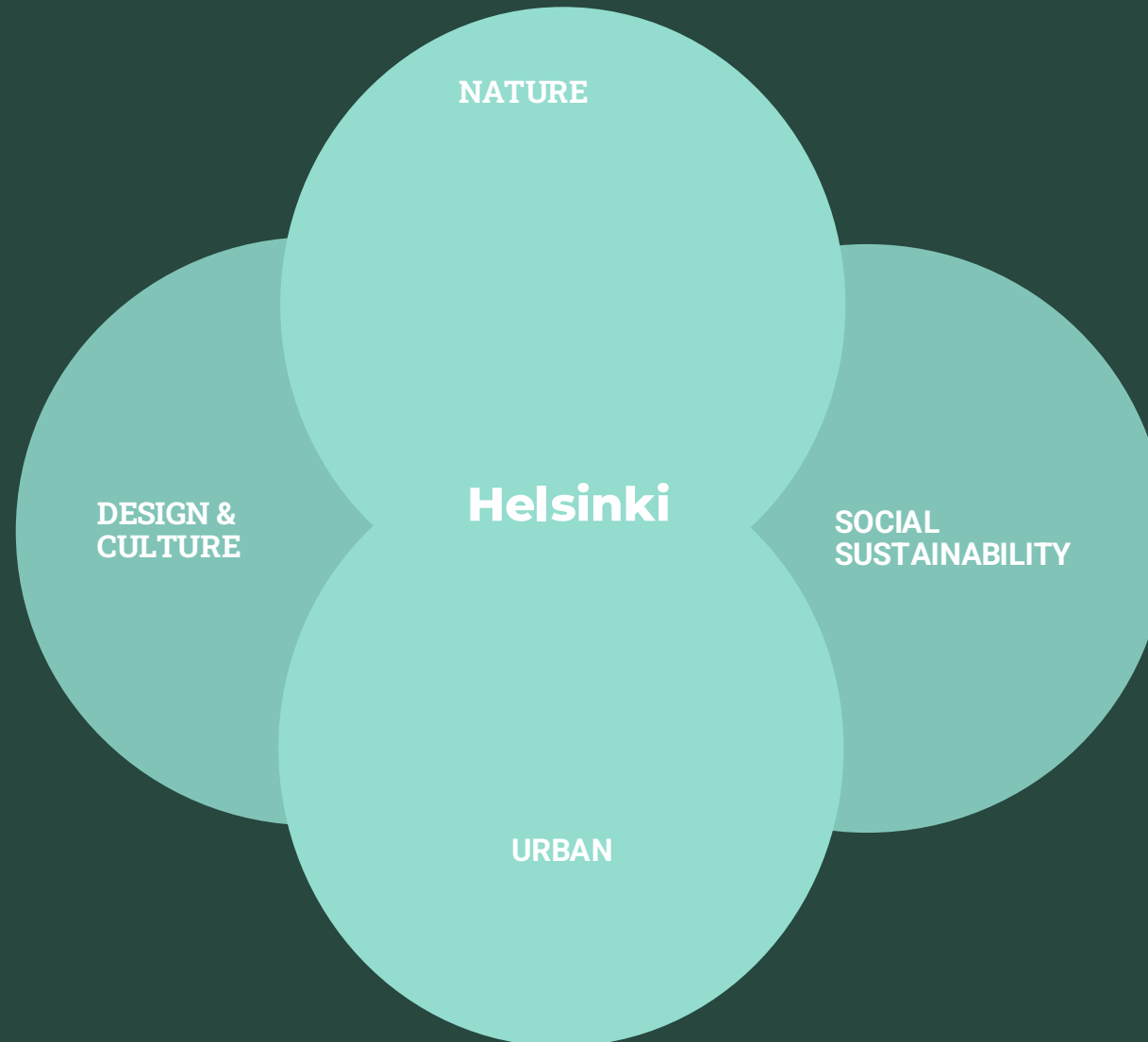
DNA ELEMENTS



WHAT MAKES HELSINKI, HELSINKI?



WHAT MAKES HELSINKI, HELSINKI?





GAP BETWEEN DNA / PROJECTION / PERCEPTION



ENHANCE THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL OFFERINGS



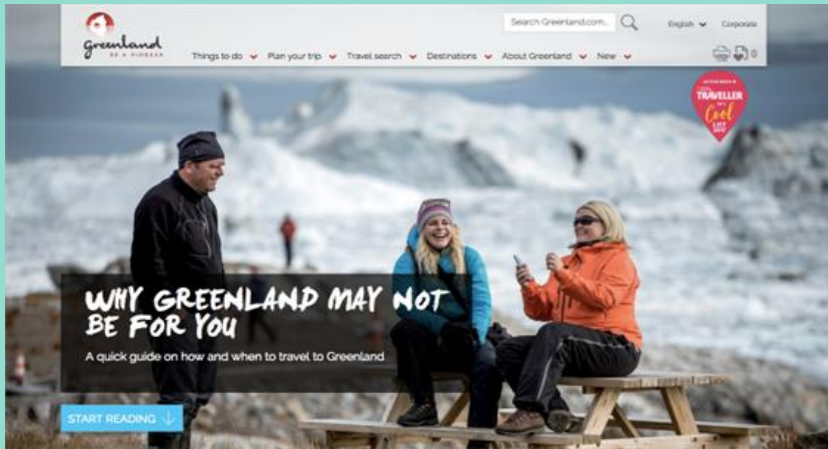
CULTURE: JEAN SIBELIUS WAS NOT METIONED ONCE IN ALL WORKSHOPS AND INTERVIEWS BY HELSINKIANS, JUST MENTIONING.....

UNLEASH HELSINKI'S DESIGN POTENTIAL



DESIGN : IT WAS AALTO WHO COINED THE EXPRESSION 'CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY'

POSITION HELSINKI AS LEADER IN SUSTAINABILITY



SUSTAINABILITY : EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL VALUE BASED CAMPAIGNS WITHOUT EVEN MENTIONING THE WORD SUSTAINABILITY

DON'T TURN THE UNDERDOG IN A MAINSTREAM MUTT



RETHINK SEGMENTATION





Fly Fishing



Photography



**Dinosaur
Enthusiasts**



TOWARDS REGENERATIVE



WHAKATANE, NEW ZEALAND - CASE STUDY OF HOW THE KIWI CAPITAL SAVED THE KIWI

Places to go

Things to do

Practical tips

Visit Finland – the happiest country in the world



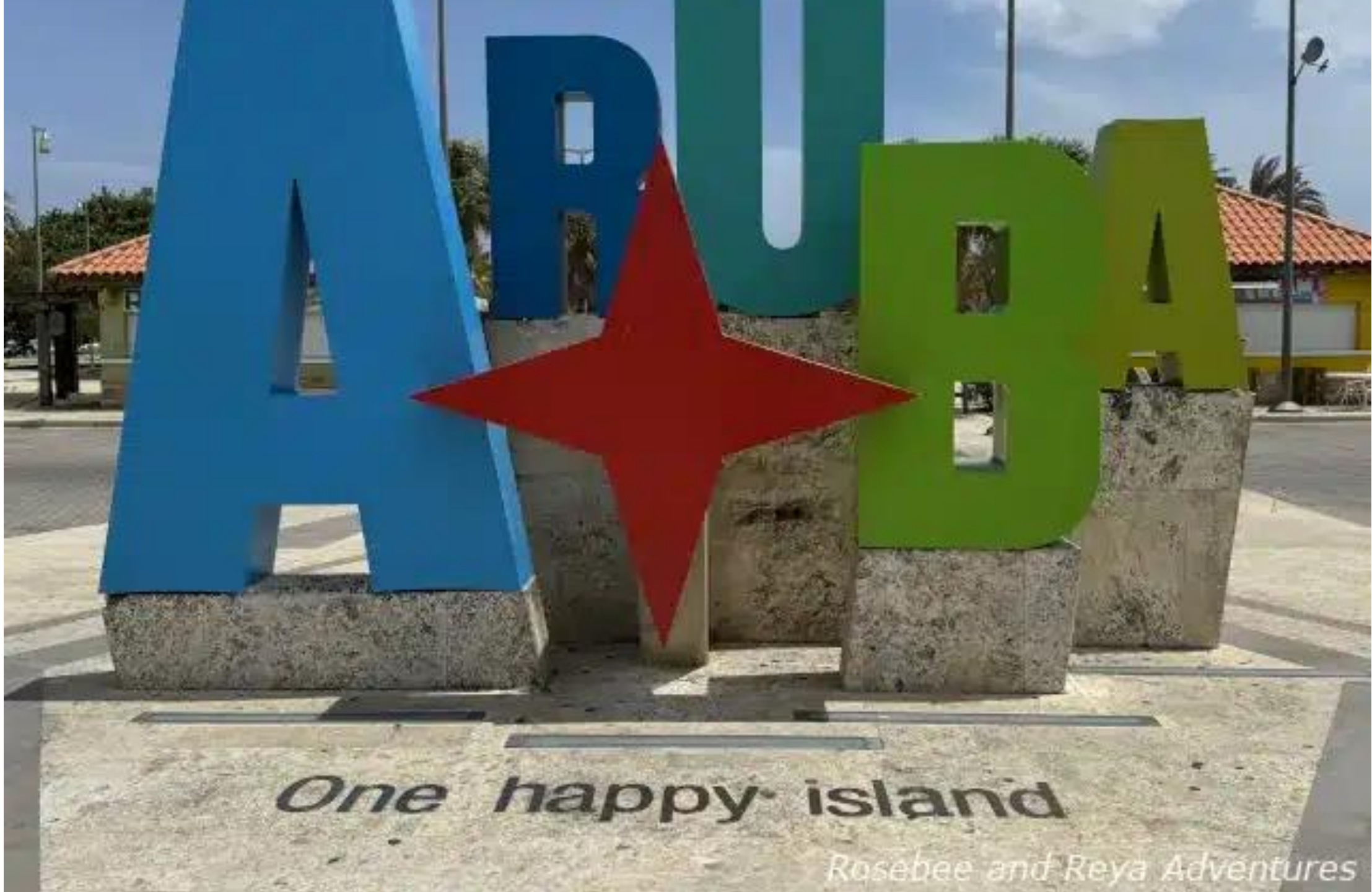
F

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J

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WHERE
HAPPINESS
COMES
NATURALLY



One happy island

Rosebee and Reya Adventures Generation

IDENTITY IS MORE THAN A SLOGAN

Bhutan, happiness is the place
Fiji, where happiness finds you
Aruba, one happy island,
Sandiego, if you're happy and you know it, clap your hands
Pennsylvania, pursue your happiness,
Sukothai, dawn of happiness
Drury hotels, Travel Happy
Walt Disney World, the happiest place on earth

IDENTITY IS MORE THAN A THIRD PARTY VERIFICATION OR AWARD

**FINLAND NAMED
HAPPIEST COUNTRY
IN THE WORLD 5TH
YEAR RUNNING**

FINNS:



**FINLAND WIN ICE
HOCKEY WORLD
CHAMPIONSHIP**

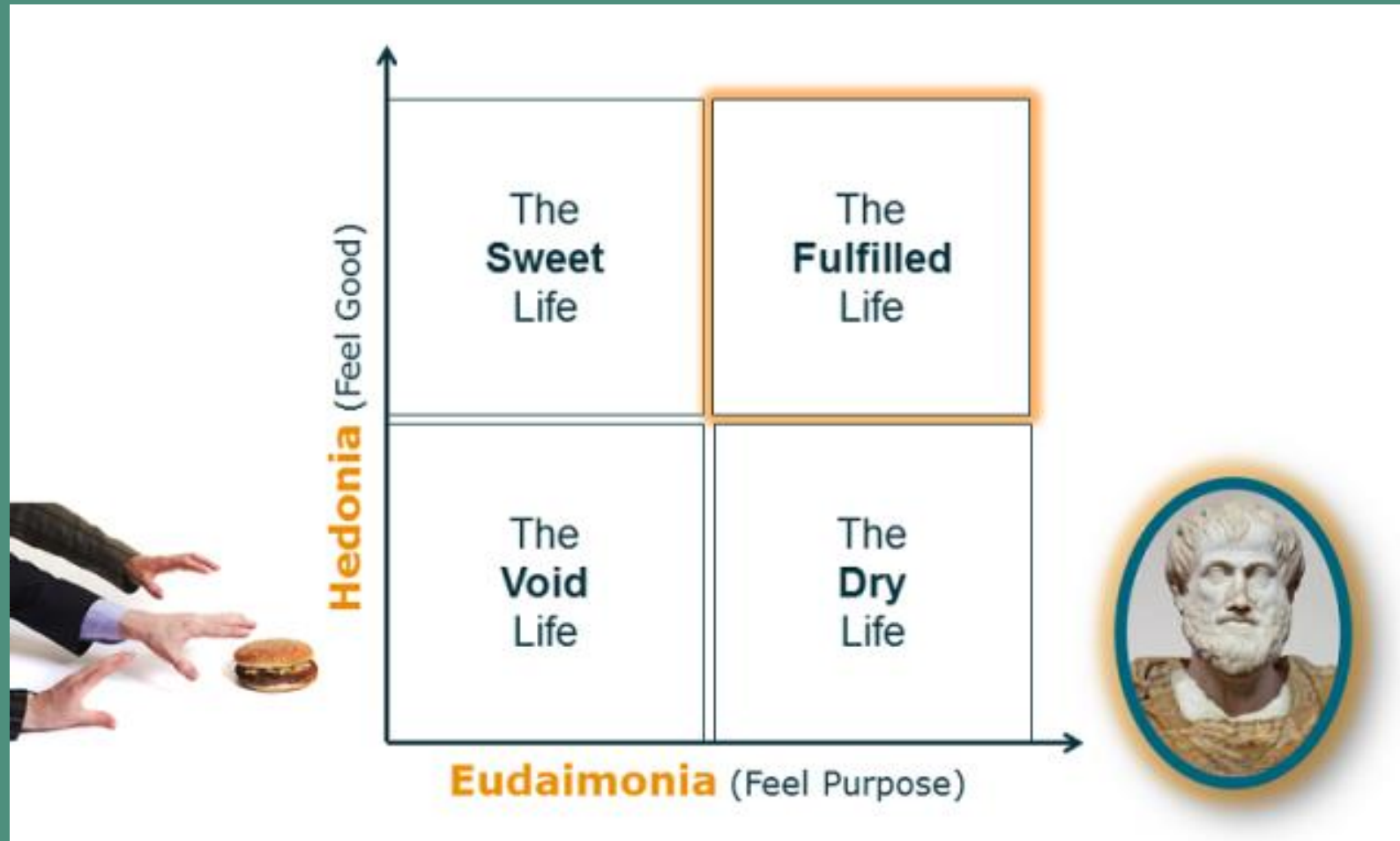
FINNS:



Onnellisuus is...

- ✓ The Power of Sisu
- ✓ Nature as a Healer
- ✓ The Magic of Sauna
- ✓ The Art of Simple Living
- ✓ Work-Life Balance
- ✓ The Role of Silence in Happiness
- ✓ The Finnish Diet and Well-Being
- ✓ Education and the Joy of Learning
- ✓ The Strength of Community
- ✓ Nature's Right: Jokamiehen oikeus
- ✓ The Power of Small Pleasures
- ✓ Designing a Happy Home
- ✓ Raising Happy Children
- ✓ The Art of Slowing Down
- ✓ Financial Contentment Over Wealth
- ✓ Seasonal Living and Happiness

Onnellisuus is The Finnish Eudaimonia



Your identity can build a resilient tourism.

Finnish identity pillar	What it means in daily Finnish life	Opportunities for future design in tourism
Sisu (quiet resilience)	Staying with challenges, not giving up easily	Commitment to long-term care for places and communities
Nature as a right (Jokamiehenoikeus)	Everyday access to forests and lakes, with shared rules	Visitors become co-stewards, not just users of landscapes
Sauna & small rituals	Simple, repeated practices for unwinding and connecting	Low-impact wellbeing that depends on healthy water, forests and air
Work-life balance & slowing down	Protected time for family, hobbies, nature	Fewer, longer, deeper visits that respect local capacity
Silence & emotional safety	Comfort with quiet, low social pressure	Limits noise, crowding and over-tourism in fragile places
Education & joy of learning	Curious, equal, learning-oriented culture	Trips become learning journeys about nature, culture and regeneration
Seasonal, place-based living	Embracing dark winters, bright summers, local rhythms	Tourism aligns with what ecosystems and communities need each season

Our recommendations:

- Dive more deeply into the Finnish identity
- Explore the narrative gap
- Communicate in a deeply Finnish way: your words, your culture: there's no English word for (Danish) Hygge
- Build an umbrella brand with the Finnish identity and collaborate with every Finnish region/city in accordance to their specific identity.
- Sustainability will need to have a central position, without even communicating the word. The sustainability label is a basic need for guests and host, but not a differentiator in attraction.



Copyright Visit Finland



Hawaii has a
strong and
rich sense of
place.

mālama 'āina

Hawaiian

The reciprocal, symbiotic relationship between humans and the Earth; where community cares for the land both physically and spiritually, and in turn the land cares for community.



Place Generation



Place Generation

Each island has it's own plant or flower

<i>Hawaii</i> Lehua flower	<i>Maui</i> Lokelani rose	<i>Kahoolawe</i> Hinahina plant	<i>Lanai</i> Kaunaoa plant
<i>Molokai</i> Kukui Nut flower	<i>Oahu</i> Ilima plant	<i>Kauai</i> Mokihana berry	<i>Niihau</i> White Pupu shell

Your identity is **VERY** attractive



"Quietcations" are on the rise as travellers seek out restorative trips that centre on comfort and silence
(Credit: Getty Images)

Silence is gold



Copyright: BBC, Trends 2026

Hushpitality: Seeking Sweet Silence

The Why: In 2026, travelers will look for destinations and experiences to dial down life's distractions. Seeking calm—even moments of silence—signals a change in why people are traveling, where they're going, and how they'll relax.



[our approach](#) [about](#) [stories](#) [gallery](#) [contact](#)

SKYCAVE
RETREATS

A SANCTUARY IN THE
wilderness

OFFERING DARK RETREATS

Nestled in the Cascade-Siskiyou Wilderness in Southern Oregon
near Klamath Falls.



SOFTEN - SOFTEN - SOFTEN
simply exist

Place Generation

Even in the business sector

Busyness of Business Travel

While they appreciate the relationships forged and strengthened on the road, an increasing amount of business travelers are also prioritizing their own personal wellness and finding small moments of silence or solitude before or after their daily commitments. **In fact, more than 1 in 4 (27%) business travelers actively seek alone time during work trips to fuel up or re-energize. For some, the appeal of business travel extends beyond the workplace—over half (54%) of business travelers say they'd take a trip just to get a break from their family or partner.**



Motto by Hilton Philadelphia Rittenhouse Square

THANK YOU!

By people **for** people

Helsinki, March, 24 2026

Elke Dens
Place Generation

