

OTDK Dolgozat

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**A Mikulás – avagy hogy lehet a kedves öregúr a marketing egyik
leghatékonyabb eszköze?**

**Santa Claus – how can the jolly old man be the most powerful tool of
making profit?**

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III. évfolyam

Gazdálkodási és menedzsment (angol nyelven) B.A.B.A.

Pécsi Tudományegyetem

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A Mikulás – avagy hogy lehet a kedves öregúr a marketing egyik leghatékonyabb eszköze?

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A karácsony történetének legismertebb formája – a médiának és filmiparnak köszönhetően – az Amerikai Egyesült Államokból ered, ahol a Téliapó a szánkóján hozza az ajándékokat a jó gyerekeknek. De nem kell messze mennünk ahhoz, hogy lássuk, nem minden gyerek várja december 24-én a Téliapót: Magyarország csak egy azok közül az országok közül, ahol a karácsonyt és Mikulás napját külön ünneplik – a Téliapó december 6. napján érkezik. Bármelyik helyzet is álljon fenn, mindenképpen igaz az, hogy a tél szezonális marketingkampányait nem lehet vizsgálni anélkül, hogy a Téliapó személyére ne térnénk ki.

Kutatómunkám során arra kerestem a választ, hogy válhatott ilyen fontossá ez a kedves, vidám figura a termékek és szolgáltatások propagandájában. Miután jobban megismertem a Téliapó személyiségfejlődésének folyamatát az évszázadok során; óvónőkhöz és gyakorló tanítókhöz fordultam segítségért, hogy fókuszcsoporthoz interjúk során betekintést nyerhessek abba, mit is gondolnak az emberek a Téliapó köré szerveződő marketingtevékenységről.

Munkám alapját két esettanulmány képezi, melyeket egy áttekintő fejezet előz meg a márka- és értékesítési stratégiákról, különös tekintettel a „Téliapó Márkára”, és annak a vásárlói magatartásra gyakorolt hatására. Az első esettanulmány alanya talán az egyik legfontosabb vállalat, amely a Téliapót értékesítési célokra használja: a Coca Cola Corporation. Ez a tanulmány elsősorban másodlagos adatforrásokon alapul. Második esettanulmányom célja, hogy egy átfogó képet nyújtsak a Finnországban, Rovaniemiben található Téliapó-falu működéséről, amely a világ legkeresettebb, Téliapóval kapcsolatos turistacélpontja. 2011-ben lehetőségem nyílt helyszíni kutatást végezni a Téliapó-faluban, ahol személyesen készíthettem interjúkat az ott dolgozókkal. E kutatás során megismerhettem a különböző, a területre települt vállalatok legfontosabb tevékenységeit. Az ott töltött idő során megfigyelhettem a falu marketingtevékenységeit, hogyan erősítik egymást a különböző létesítmények hirdetéstechnikái, és milyen hatással van ez a látogatók létszámára.

Krisztina Bence

III. course

Bachelor of Arts Honors in Business Administration (B.A.B.A.)

University of Pécs

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Santa Claus – how can the jolly old man be the most powerful tool of making profit?

A Mikulás – avagy hogy lehet a kedves öregúr a marketing egyik leghatékonyabb eszköze?

The most commonly known way of the Christmas legend – thanks to the media and the movie industry - is the American tradition, where Santa Claus brings the presents to the good children. However, we do not have to go far to see that not every child of the world waits for Santa on 24th December: Hungary is just one example of those countries, which have both Christmas and Santa Claus, but separated: the jolly old man brings presents on the 6th of December. Any of these is the case; no research about the winter-seasonal marketing campaigns can be made without Santa Claus.

During my research I decided to take a closer look on how his figure had become so important in the promotion of goods and services. After analyzing the evolution of his character through the centuries I turned to kindergarten teachers and trainee teachers via focus group interviews to get a better insight into what people actually think about Santa Claus as a marketer and his power.

The core of my work consists of two case studies, which followed a general overview of branding and promotion strategies with respect to the Santa Brand and their impacts on consumer behavior. The first case study was carried out on probably the most important company using Santa Claus in promotion of goods: Coca Cola Corporation; and it relies mostly on secondary data sources. In my second case study I aim to provide a more comprehensive analysis about Santa Claus village, located in Rovaniemi, Finland, which is the most-visited tourist attraction related to the figure of Santa Claus. In 2011 I had the opportunity to carry out a field research on the location and make personal interviews with its workers, which provided me a great help in finding out more about the firms located on the area and their main activities. During the time spent there I could observe how the synergic effect of the promotional efforts of these entities works, and how it affects the number of visitors.

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1. Introduction

There are many facts about Christmas: It is the festivity of love. It is one of the most widely celebrated festivities in the world. This is the time of the year when people spend the most. But why is it so? Why did the most intimate celebration of the Christian cultures become the most profitable season for all the managers in the Western societies, and why is it starting to become even in other parts of the world? When I started to search for the reasons on the internet, all the things coming to the screen were tips and ideas how to market the products in the winter season, how to set up a good Christmas campaign for goods or services and how to attract more customers to a shop, hotel, restaurant, adventure park or basically any firm that is dealing with people.

Certainly there have been researches made about the psychological background of the increased buying habits around Christmas; some scientists have even researched why Santa Claus is the most powerful brand of the world, but these are only parts of the whole thing: how are companies using this powerful tool for their own purposes – and how can they convince people of not doing so? All these new questions came up to me, while I was trying to find answers to the previous ones.

And when one starts to wonder about Christmas, it soon comes to the surface how different cultures are according to their habits and customs – even if they are celebrating the same thing.

The most commonly known way of the Christmas legend – thanks to the media and the movie industry - is the American tradition, where Santa Claus brings the presents on his sledge and delivers them to the children who behaved well after entering the house through the chimney. But we do not have to go far to see that not all the children of the world wait Santa on the 24th of December: Hungary is just one example of those countries, which have a majority of Christians, do celebrate Christmas, but in another way. Yet, in these countries as well as in many others, people spend huge amounts of money on Christmas decoration, meals and presents for their relatives and friends. And even in these countries Santa Claus is present in a way. Many cultures have a special Santa's Day on the 6th of December – a celebration very different from Christmas Eve, but strongly related to the red-coated figure of it.

Finally I realized that no research about the business of Christmas can be made without Santa. But who is he? Why is he the best helper in selling any good or service in wintertime, when many industries suffer from drop in sales and strong competition? In the

end, as I realized that ‘every road leads to Santa Claus’; I decided to examine this kind and extremely popular character instead of taking a look at the business of Christmas as a whole.

2. The history and development of the image of Santa Claus

There have been many researches made about why Christmas is the most profitable season of the year, and why people are spending huge amounts of money on presents for their relatives and friends and colleagues.

2.1 The origins of Christmas

According to the findings of Antonio Zamora (Zamora; www.scientificphysics.com) the tradition of giving gifts at Christmas-time is originated in the legend of the birth of Jesus. In the Holy Bible it can be read: ¹¹'On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.' (The Holy Bible, Matthew 2:11 The visit of the Magi). This was the first time when gifts were given at Christmas time: the wise men visited Little Jesus on the orders of King Herod, and instead of reporting the whereabouts of the newborn child to him, driven by joy and respect; they gave the child gifts and treasures.



Picture # 1 – The origins of Christmas (Source: <http://ishara.hupont.hu>)

However, in some sources the tradition of giving gifts in December is dated back to much earlier than the birth of Jesus. In the article of Anja Heij (Heij; www.realmagick.com) with the title 'How Odin Became Santa Claus: Symbolism and Pagan Origins of a Gift-Giving Saint' she highlighted that much earlier than the Christian traditions there was a pagan celebration called Saturnalia between the 17th and 24th of December, when they celebrated the midwinter by feasts, charity and giving gifts to each-other (Heij; www.realmagick.com).

It was also believed, that Odin, one of the most powerful gods worshipped by the German tribes visited the Earth in December. Traditionally these times he entered the houses

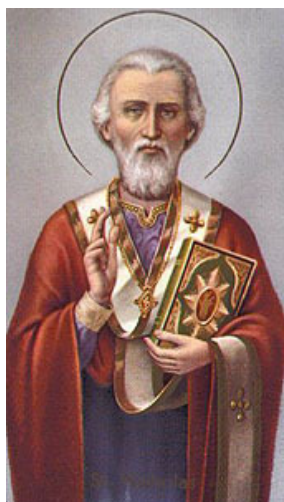
through the chimneys, or sat together with the families during the Saturnalia feasts, listening to them in order to find out who was content with what he had. For those, who deserved according to his judgment, he often left small presents behind (Hubert von Steufer; www.christmasarchives.com).

These ancient pagan celebrations could have an effect on the date and nature of the Christmas traditions that we have nowadays – and although the correlation is quite controversial, we cannot exclude these factors, when we examine the development of the Catholic Christmas.

2.2 The birth of the bishop of Myra

Since the birth of Jesus the Christmas traditions have developed and expanded in various ways in different cultures, and a very important and determining character has turned up in the Christmas legends and developed in slightly different ways in numerous countries: Saint Nicholas, or Santa Claus (also known in various names in many European countries). There are quite scarce and dim sources about this person actually was – some even questioned whether he was an existing at all -, but most researchers agree that the initial figure was a Bishop of Myra (currently an area belonging to Turkey), who lived around AD 300 (Green; 2010).

The source, which is regarded the most reliable, is written by Michael the Archimandrite about three death. According to this source, unknown date. He dedicated all exemplary life. He became an this was the time when he started the wealth he inherited to those, than he did. The most famous tells about a poor man, who had the man was so poor, that he was daughters, and therefore no one



hundred years after the bishop's Nicholas was born in Patara on an his life to Jesus, and lived an orphan at a very young age, and his generous career. He gave all who he thought to need it more legend about the acts of Nicholas three nubile daughters. However, not able to provide a dowry to his was willing to marry them. The poor father was already about to send his daughters to work, when Nicholas decides to help them. On three nights he throws three purses full of gold through the window – so that all the tree girls are able to get married. However, once Nicholas was caught by the poor father of the three girls, who is very grateful to the generous young man (Lendering, 2005).

Picture # 2 – The bishop of Myra, the first predecessor of Santa (Source: <http://saints.sqpn.com/saint-nicholas-of-myra/>)

This story of the generous bishop – who was normally depicted wearing a red cloak - is regarded as the one, which has initiated the traditions of Santa Claus, or Sinterklaas. Saint Nicholas – who was made a bishop after giving away all his material wealth – died on the sixth of December of an unknown year. This is the source of the tradition in many cultures, like The Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Hungary, Romania and many others, where Santa Claus brings presents to the children on the night of the sixth of December.

Saint Nicholas – he became a saint due to the several miracles happening before and after his death, reported primarily by sailors and merchants of the sea, and this made him the protecting saint of sailors – was buried in Myra. His tomb became a very popular place for pilgrims throughout the centuries, until the area has got out of the Christian authority. This was the time when merchants started to worry about the relics of their saint – and also wanted to gain the advantage of the numerous pilgrims and visitors – so some groups from Venice and Bari decided to go and take the remains to a ‘safer’ place. Finally the Barians succeeded to do so, the relics of Saint Nicholas (according to some sources the transportation was done on the orders of the Saint himself) arrived to the city of Bari on 9th May 1087. This is why Saint Nicholas is often referred to as the Saint of Bari by the pilgrims, who visited the remains of the Saint. But this transition was the source of other important facts as well: Bari soon became a part of the Spanish Kingdom of Naples. This provided a source for the Dutch form of Santa Claus, called Sinterklaas, who comes from Spain each year according to the legend, and is helped by some black helpers, depicting the Moors, who conquered Spain in that time. (St. Nicholas Centre; www.stnicholascenter.org)

However, the generous Saint Nicholas was not the only source and predecessor of the red-coated, white-bearded Santa Claus, who every child knows nowadays.

2.3 The pagan origins of Santa Claus

Before the Christian times, there were some Northern German tribes that worshipped a god called Odin. Odin was a very powerful god of wisdom, poetry, ancient runes, magic and war, who represented the goodness in the world and wore a long white beard and a cloak. He had a white, eight-legged horse called Sleipnir, with whom he could even fly in the skies and visited the Earth each December. He often entered the houses through the chimneys over the fireplaces to look around by the night – or he visited the fires and feasted with the people at

Saturnalia, listening how content they were, leaving some small gifts behind for those, who deserved it. Odin's helpers were originally black ravens and his warriors also painted their skin black – according to the legend this represented Odin's wisdom of being able to see that world is not only black and white, and things are not always what they seem (Heij; www.realmagick.com).

According to Heij this picture of Odin has also contributed to the development of the image of the well-known figure in The Netherlands: Sinterklaas. In some countries the image of the generous saint has faded away, especially after the reformation, but some countries – and the Dutch the strongest of all – still insisted on the celebration of Saint Nicholas, bringing gifts on the evening of the 5th or by the morning of the 6th of December (Heij; www.realmagick.com).



Picture # 3 Odin, the pagan god (Source: <http://euroheritage.net/facts-of-mythology.shtml>)

The majority of the European countries are holding these traditions even nowadays, including The Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Romania, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Poland, Germany, France – although the strength of the tradition, and also the customs are slightly different at each of them.

In spite of all these beloved figures of the European cultures, Sinterklaas was the one, who has really become 'world-famous', since he provided the basis for the world's strongest brand: the image of the 'real' Santa.

Sinterklaas, just like Mikuláš of the Visegrad Countries (Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary) has developed from the original figure of Saint Nicholas – with some characteristics of Odin, the German god. Sinterklaas is an old man, wearing white beard and a red cloak, and he is generously distributing presents to the kids in The Netherlands on the night of the 5th of December – just like Saint Nicholas did centuries ago. Sinterklaas is able to

ride the skies and land on the roofs with the help of his white horse – which shows clear resemblance to Odin. Sinterklaas has black helpers, the Black Jacks, who are following him during his trips by the night and help him distributing the gifts and punishing those, who deserve it. The idea of the black helpers can be seen in both the legends about the god, Odin, and in the myths about Saint Nicholas, the Saint of Bari: Odin's black ravens and the Moor dark men are both associated with the Black Jacks, who are believed to take the naughty ones back with them to Spain - the empire to which also Bari belonged to centuries ago (Heij; www.realmagick.com).

This image of Sinterklaas is the one, that has been transported by the Dutch conquerors to the colonies such as South Africa, Suriname, Indonesia – and New-Amsterdam in North America as well (St. Nicholas Center; 2008 www.stnicholascenter.org).

But before taking a closer look on the image of the red-coated figure, who is visible practically everywhere as Christmas is drawing nearer; there is one more predecessor, who had a huge effect on the person so well-known nowadays. And this is Father Christmas.

2.4 What Santa Claus has got from Great Britain

His figure has been present in the English culture since the fourteenth century, when an allegory of a merry old man with long white beard, well-nourished figure and green or fur coat was used to personalize Christmas itself. Father Christmas did not bring any gifts in the beginning; he was only a happy and always welcomed visitor, feasting together with the



families at Christmas-time. This person was also known as Lord Christmas or Sir Christmas, and although he was banned by the Puritans at the times of Cromwell, he did not disappear: his figure appeared with the same name (Papá Noel, Babbo Natale, Noel Baba) in several other countries as well (Spain, Italy, Turkey and numerous others within and out of Europe). Father Christmas has also been influenced by the ancient German god, Odin: he visited the families in their homes at Christmas time, and usually feasted with them together (Hubert von Steufer; www.christmasarchives.com).

Picture # 4 – An English postcard with the original Father Christmas (Source: <http://www.zazzle.co.uk>)

Soon in Europe the image of the merry old man personalizing Christmas has been merged with that of Saint Nicholas, another kind old man with white beard, visiting families and bringing gifts to them. However, for the first time some contradictions appeared in the legend of the generous old man: while Saint Nicholas traditionally came on the night of the night of the 5th, or by the morning of the 6th of December, Father Christmas – as his name indicates – visited the families at Christmas time, which is almost identical with Odin's Saturnalia visit. Although the traditional green outfit of Father Christmas has been replaced by the red color worn by Saint Nicholas, he kept on visiting families at Christmas Eve. Unlike Saint Nicholas, he put his gifts not into the window, but under the Christmas tree, which was decorated by the families.

And this was the time for another common belief to develop: the chimney-tradition. Father Christmas - just like Odin – was able to enter the houses through the chimneys, in order to leave the gifts under the Christmas tree or in the socks of children in their rooms. Odin has provided a source for another important element of the Christmas traditions: the eight reindeers. The German god traditionally arrived on an eight-legged horse, which was able to fly. Sinterklaas or Saint Nicholas also used a white horse when visiting people and they were arriving to the children from Spain in December. On the other hand Father Christmas was believed from the north, from the Finnish mountain of Korvatunturi in Lapland, which made it more likely, that he uses reindeers instead of a horse. However, number eight remained unchanged: the eight-legged flying horse of Odin has been replaced by eight flying reindeers pulling a sledge (Heij; www.realmagick.com).

2.5 America – the melting pot of cultures

During the times of colonization both the Dutch and the English were able to gain some territories in North-America and as the authority over New-Amsterdam (currently New York) and the surrounding areas has changed hands several times in history, the cultures of the inhabitants have been mixed with each other (Bancroft; 1902).

This merging of cultures has also resulted in the mixing of different traditions held by the inhabitants of the colonies. While the Dutch kept on celebrating the arrival of Sinterklaas at the beginning of December, the children of English families were still given their Christmas-gifts by the jolly old man, Father Christmas. Soon the two characters – being

originally already so similar – have been merged with each-other throughout the years – and this is how the Dutch name, Sinterklaas has been Americanized to Santa Claus; a name that was first mentioned in the New York's paper Rivington's Gazette in 1773. Sticking to the English tradition, Santa brought presents at Christmas time, wore green coat and he used reindeers and a sleigh as well, but his image already resembled more to that of Sinterklaas: he wore a white beard and visited the children who were good in order to give them presents, and punishing those, who were bad (Sinterklaas traditionally took the bad children with him to Spain, or let his helpers punish them). This merging resulted in that nowadays Santa Claus, and the English Father Christmas have become synonyms for basically the same person – in spite of the fact that they were totally different some years ago (Bowler; 2007).

This image of the new Father Christmas has been first depicted in this way in Washington Irving's book "The History of New York from the Beginning of the World till the End of the Dutch Dynasty" (Irving; 1809). There the person called Santa Claus wore still the green coat, but he looked nothing like a bishop any more: he was a fat, white-bearded jolly old man with a pipe in his view (Irving; 1809).

Although Irving's book was more of a caricature of the of the Dutch inhabitants of New York, this image of Santa has been known by many, and most probably this was what provided the source for the anonym poem 'A visit from Saint Nicholas' or 'The night before Christmas', where basically all the nowadays-known Christmas-customs are mentioned. This poem was published in the paper Sentinel in Troy, New York state on 23rd December 1823, and according to some sources it might have been created by a professor of Columbia University, Clement Clark Moore. This poem tells the whole story of Christmas Eve, with such details that, since then, can be found in almost all North-American Christmas-tale (Bowler; 2004).

'[...]When, what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a miniature sleigh, and eight tiny reindeer,
With a little old driver, so lively and quick,
I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick.
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name;
"Now, Dasher! now, Dancer! now, Prancer and Vixen!
On, Comet! on, Cupid! on, Donner and Blitzen! [...]'

(Clement; 1823; line 15-21)

These lines of the poem include the sleigh of Santa, which he is riding the skies with, and the eight reindeers also appear, whose names are mentioned written for the first time – and these names are the ones that are most commonly used nowadays in the Santa-stories. But these are not the only lines, where important features of the Christmas story appear:

‘[...]So up to the house-top the coursers they flew,
With the sleigh full of Toys, and St. Nicholas too.
And then, in a twinkling, I heard on the roof
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.
As I drew in my head, and was turning around,
Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound.[...]’
(Clement; 1823; line 26-31)

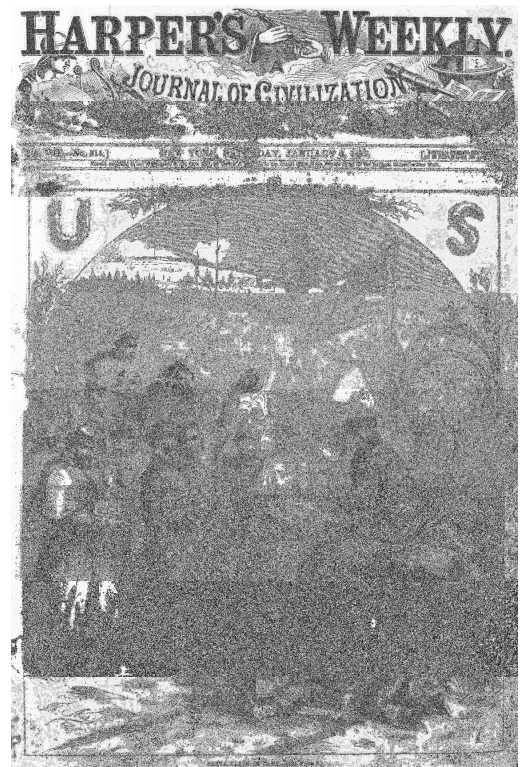
Here it is also mentioned, that Santa lands on the roof with his sleigh, and arrives to the houses through the chimney in order to put the presents into the socks of good children. This poem was one of the first times, when the socks were included in a Christmas-story, and also the first time Santa’s bag was mentioned, in which he brings the toys to all the children, and which never gets empty (Bowler; 2004).

2.6 The first time when Santa Claus turned up in front of people’s eyes

An American caricaturist and illustrator, Thomas Nast was the man, who is considered as the one, who has drawn the first ‘real’ and ‘official’ Santa Claus. His first picture of Santa Claus giving gifts to the children during the Civil War was published in the newspaper called Harper’s Weekly in the edition released 3rd January 1863.

Picture # 6 – The first ever picture released of SantaClaus (1863) (Source:

<http://www.odinartcollectables.com/antiques.asp>)



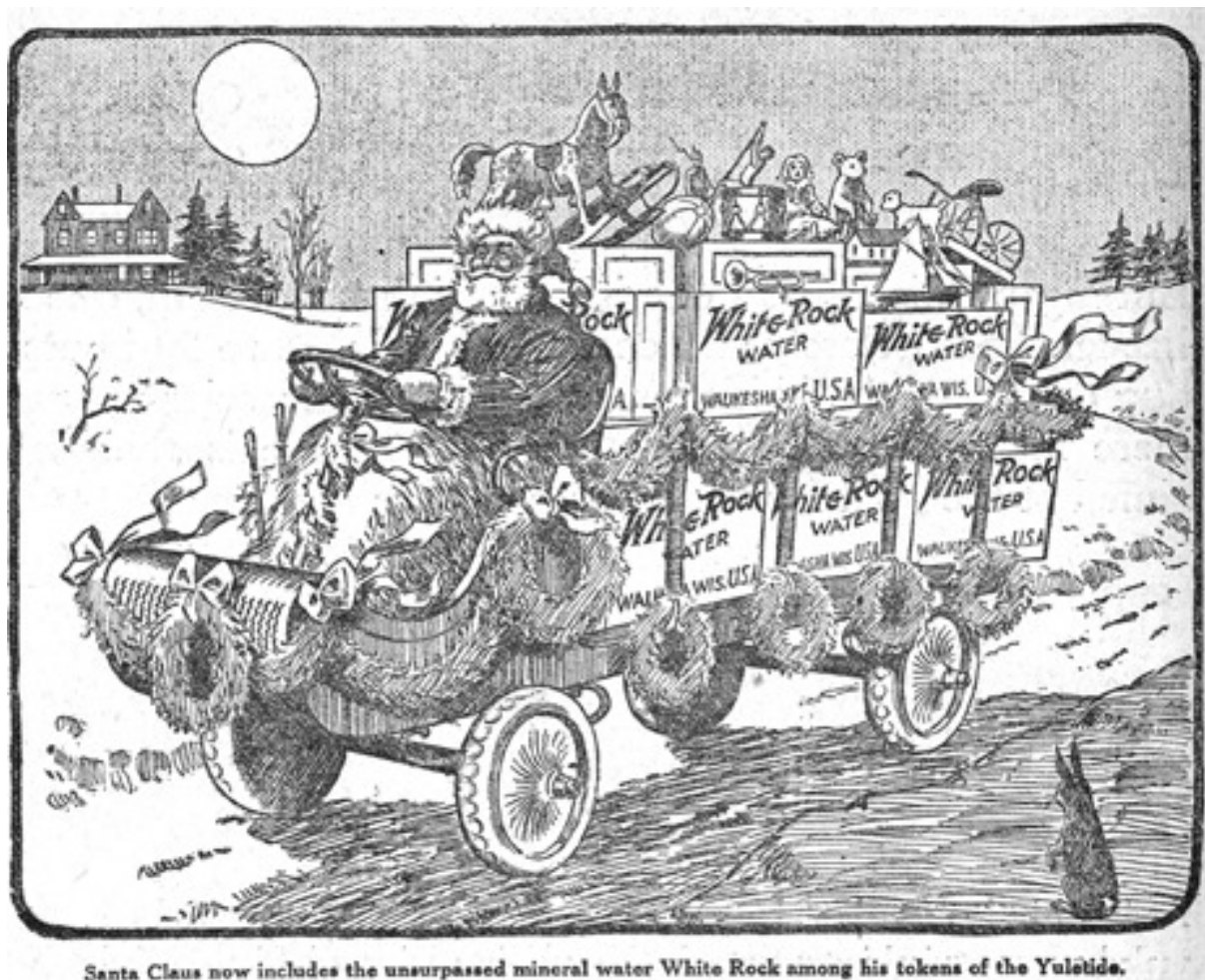
On Nast's picture Santa is sitting on his sleigh, which is being pulled by reindeer – just like it is written in the poem of Clement. Nast was also the first one, who said that Santa Claus came from the North Pole - this was written on one of his pictures drawn about Santa in 1869. Some years later Nast created a portrait of Santa Claus, which was published in Harper's Weekly on 1st January 1881 – and this looks exactly like the figure Clement has described – and how we imagine Santa Claus nowadays. With the creation of this photo we can say that the Santa Claus of modern ages has been born (Casselman; 2007).

However, these pictures were black and white, which did not raise the topic of Santa's coat being green or red. At the beginning of the twentieth century an American magazine called Puck has released more than one Christmas editions, where Santa was on the cover, wearing a coat that was red. This was the first time that Santa Claus has been printed with his 'real' colors of nowadays (Bowler; 2004).

2.7 The jolly old man's first connections with marketing

But who was the first one to use the jolly old man in order to gain higher sales? According to the White Rock Collectors Association it was the company White Rock Beverages, who used the image of Santa Claus in their marketing campaign for the first time.

The White Rock Products Corporation, founded in 1871 has started its sales with offering mineral water and ginger ale to its customers in the United States. Their initial campaign was based on the White Rock natural spring, which was believed by the natives to spread water with special medical properties. This was a good initiative to attract those seeking for a healthy life, especially in spring and summer – the time of hiking and holiday making outside. The need for refreshment in summertime has boosted the sales of one season for White Rock Beverages – however, the sales managers of White Rock realized that they need to improve their winter results in order to balance their performance throughout the year (<http://www.whiterocking.org/santa.html>).



Picture # 7 - The first Santa Claus advertisement of White Rock Beverages (1915) (Source: <http://www.whiterocking.org/santa.html>)

On 19 December 1915 an advertisement (Figure # 1) of White Rock Beverages appeared in San Francisco Examiner with the image of Santa Claus sitting on a truck, transporting bottles of White Rock water. Although the traditional Santa-image, associated with Clement (1823) has been slightly changed – the reindeers were not present on the picture – the picture of Santa Claus himself was almost a perfect illustration of what the poem has described almost hundred years before (<http://www.whiterocking.org/santa.html>).

This release was followed by various others, and in 1923 White Rock Beverages extended its Santa Claus campaign to another product: their ginger ale. On 12 December an advertisement appeared in Life Magazine, promoting the White Rock Ginger Ale, suggesting that this was a good choice, because it was what made Santa happy before (<http://www.whiterocking.org/santa.html>).

This was not the first time Santa has appeared in a colorful picture, but White Rock was definitely the first company to use him in their marketing campaign. Although this image

of Santa contradicted with some of the traditions – for example the green suit disappeared, just like the black helpers due to racist implications – it has been in line with many others: the red outfit of Saint Nicholas, and the round, elderly, white-bearded figure of Clement’s poem (Ritson; 2003).

In spite of the rumors White Rock does not claim to have invented the picture of Santa Claus, on their website they clarify, that the pictures “show what we have come to accept as the image of Santa, a big guy in a red suit with a beard” (<http://www.whiterocking.org/santa.html>; 14:2).

2.8 Coca Cola brings Santa the fame

The last – but according to many the most important – step in Santa Claus’ life was when Coca Cola company started to use his image in order to boost their winter-sales. The company was established in 1886, but for more than forty years – in spite of their great overall success - they were not able to reach satisfying winter-sales compared to the huge sales of the summer season. In 1931, after trying various promotion techniques, also including Santa, but failing with their attempt; the marketing manager of Coca Cola contacted Haddon Sundblom, a



Swedish speaking Finnish man from the Aland-islands, who was a famous illustrator of his time. They asked Sundblom to find out a new Christmas-campaign with the image of Santa Claus, and illustrate it as well. According to the story at that very night Sundblom had a visitor, Lou Prentice from next door. Sundblom used his friend – a white bearded elderly man – as a model, and created the Coca Cola Santa Claus. He was a round, jolly old man with white beard and black belt, wearing a red suit (Ritson; 2003).

Picture # 8 - The first release of Santa

Claus in the Coca Cola campaign – photo of The Coca Cola Company

The Coca Cola campaign was a success. The winter sales boosted – they became balanced with the summer season, and since then the company has used Santa Claus for their winter campaign every single year. In fact the campaign was so successful, that an urban legend was created: according to the Coca Cola fans the company was who actually created Santa Claus, and the reason why he is wearing red suit and black belt is that the original color of the company is red, while Coke is black. The truth is that Coca Cola was not even the first one to use Santa Claus in their marketing campaign: we could see that White Rock already sold beverages with the help of Santa, wearing the same colors as nowadays – but clearly Coca Cola was the one, who has gained the most on his image so far (Bowler; 2007).

3. Is Santa in the eyes of people also a good marketer?

Prior to carrying out further research on why Santa Claus has such a great power in marketing, I decided to test, whether people really think about the Santa Brand how marketers assume they do. I did not carry out the survey with an aim of proving or denying the extraordinary role of Santa Claus in advertising; my purpose was to get a better insight into people's thoughts and feelings about his symbolic figure used as a mean of creating profit in both goods and services industries. I aimed to justify the secondary data I have collected during the research process by finding out whether people really agree with what researchers say about the marketing power of Santa Claus. For this purpose I decided to carry out a qualitative exploratory research on a small, non-representative sample in order to show the correspondence or contradiction with the existing data and get a better view of people's underlying motives.

During my survey I have done focus group interviews with one mini-focus group of five kindergarten teachers, all of them living in Kaposvár; and a larger group of ten trainee teachers. The reason why I thought these two groups would be suitable for my purpose is that all the members of my sample are dealing with children; which – as for my assumption – makes them more acquainted with the issue of Santa Claus as well. Although this characteristic was crucial when choosing my sample for the interview, I have put an emphasis on differentiation as well – this made me create two focus groups. The group of kindergarten teachers was made up from pedagogues, who have worked in this field for several years and have already raised their own children as well. On the other hand the group of the trainees consists of students, all of them younger than 25 years old, currently executing their internship in one of the primary schools in Kaposvár. They – contrary to the other focus group – have not raised any child yet; but part of them still live with their families, and they can also recall their childhood memories and traditions of their home related to Santa.

The reason why I chose respondents only from one location and institution was due to the geographical and time limits of my research: making a survey in Kaposvár made it possible to gain a pool of respondents without complications related to the timing and location of the interview, since the members of each focus group were present on the same geographic location, so agreements had to be made only about time.

3.1 What and why do the respondents buy?

On 22 and 23 March I posed the same set of questions (Appendix # 1); at first to the focus group of trainees, then to the kindergarten teachers about what they know and think of Santa's relations with marketing and what are their Santa Claus-related customs at home and at their workplace.

Although the age of children whom these pedagogues get acquainted with is varying, there has been high degree of uniformity in their responses regarding certain questions. For instance, when I aimed to find out more about the nature of the products the respondents purchase in connection with Santa Claus; all, except only one respondent agreed that they buy Santa Claus chocolates in the majority of cases. Apart from these the group of kindergarten teachers emphasized that they also buy decorative materials very often, which was mentioned by some of the trainees as well. Furthermore Santa Claus gift packages, greeting cards and postcards, Santa costumes were mentioned; however there was only one person who said that she buys the products of Coca Cola labeled with Santa Claus. Since the sample is not representative, no conclusion can be drawn regarding the whole population – but it is true for the focus groups I examined that Coca Cola seasonal products are not in priority for them.

When talking more in details about their buying habits, it became clear that most of the respondents buy the above mentioned products yearly – and even those who do not do it on a regular basis said that they purchase such products quite often. Another important aspect, which came to surface, was strongly emphasized by the kindergarten teachers: they often buy products related to Santa Claus, because they can delight the children with these items. This viewpoint in their case – as they indicated - was partly tied to the fact that they have their own children; but on the other hand it is true in connection with the children they work with as well. Though smaller proportion of them, also trainees indicated that they usually buy Santa Claus items in order to delight the children, but in this case they mostly referred to their younger siblings and other relatives.

This has revealed an important fact about the motives driving the purchase of Santa Claus labeled products: for many members of the focus group the real reason for buying such goods is the presence of children around them. Although this phenomenon cannot be generalized to the whole population on the basis of the research; considering the general nature of the Santa Claus legends, and the Anglo-Saxon Christmas habits, which are generally focused on children, we can assume this to be true.

3.2 Santa-services

When the topic was switched from products related to Santa Claus to touristic destinations, the answers of the respondents became more negative in both focus groups. The majority of respondents have never visited any seasonal tourist attractions related to Santa Claus; and only one respondent in the group of kindergarten teachers mentioned that she knows – and has visited once – the Santa Claus village of Hungary in Nagykarácsony. In the group of trainees a few students indicated that they have heard of the Santa Claus village in Finland; however they did not know any more details about it, and could not name the city of its location either. Yet again these responses cannot be subject to any generalizations or conclusions; we can only say that within the two focus groups examined – contrary to Santa-related products – the touristic sights dedicated to the jolly old man are not popular at all.

The same applies to the case of agencies providing Santa Claus services, which turned out to be even less-known than the destinations related to him. Only one kindergarten teacher and two of the trainees said that they have ever heard of this kind of agencies or services – but they have never used such a service. The rest of the group members in both focus groups said that they have never heard of such a service, and did not know that ‘ordering’ a Santa Claus is possible in any way. Hearing this, it was obvious that in the mind of the members of my two focus groups the opportunity of purchasing Santa Claus services is not matched to the ideas and thoughts related to the man in red suit.

3.3 Motives for further research

From the answers given in response to my questions related to the different means of creating profit with the help of Santa Claus, I could conclude that in the focus groups the marketing power of Santa Claus prevails in the case of several products. However, these results have shown slight contradictions with the worldwide secondary data I collected: various sources emphasized the effectiveness of the seasonal Coca Cola campaign (Ritson; 2003), which was barely mentioned by the respondents, just like tourist attractions, such as the Santa Claus village in Rovaniemi, Finland (Hall; 2008), which have not got the expected popularity either. On the internet one can find the websites of numerous agencies distributing Santa Claus services for companies and individuals in different countries – United States and Great Britain in most cases -, but seemingly they cannot not have such popularity in the case of Hungarians, otherwise more of the respondents would have heard of them at least.

These findings made me more interested in the reasons for the businesses using Santa Claus being so successful, so I decided to analyze Santa Claus village in Rovaniemi, which enjoys such a great. During my further work I analyzed the elements of success of this huge and complex entity of Christmas tourism.

4. The theory of branding behind the success of Santa

Even in spite of Santa's visible success in selling practically any good or service there are many, who question him being truly a brand – the strongest brand of the world in fact. The question is, whether Santa Claus could be identified with what scientists define as a brand.

According to the American Marketing Association a brand is „Name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers.” (American Marketing Association, Dictionary <http://www.marketingpower.com/layouts/Dictionary.aspx?dLetter=B>).

If we think about Santa Claus, we can see that he *is* a symbol. Although he is not an identification for the products or services of only one company, he has a name and image – and Santa Claus as a brand can be regarded more as the symbol of a season and the traditions behind it. The image of Santa is something that far more people know, than those, whose countries actually have a tradition related to him, or one of his ancestors (Sinterklaas, Saint Nicholas, Father Christmas – as mentioned above), and his image has a meaning even for these people nowadays. Matt Cheuvront explained his identity as a brand with clarifying that Santa Claus defines an experience for the people, the feelings and thoughts it raises in those, who are aware of its meaning (Cheuvront; 2010)

4.1 The Santa Brand?

If we take a closer look on the characteristics of a good brand, we can see more clearly, why Santa Claus can be really called a brand – and what is the reason for him being the strongest brand of the marketing world.

First of all Santa Claus is standing out of all those other brand images on the market: due to his red-suited, jolly, round image he is recognizable and distinguishable of any other figure promoting products in the world. He is present everywhere, visible to the customers of any segment, delivering the same message, regardless of location. He is jolly; he is good, happy and generous. He loves, listens and serves everybody on this world, no matter where he or she comes from or who he or she was born. These are the most important values associated with his name and with the Christmas season that he represents; and these values are clear to everyone, even for those, who do not celebrate Christmas or Santa's Day at all (Arruda; 2003).

Santa Claus is also the most consistent brand in the world, thanks to his long history dating back to the beginning of Christian times – and to the fact that since he is present in the business life, his image and identity has barely changed. He has always been the same round, old, happy figure, who loves children and knows who was nasty and who was good, and he has always symbolized the happiness and coziness of the Christmas season. He has always been trustworthy in marketing as well, since children love him, and those, who have known him as a child still remember the nice memories of the good old times (Arruda; 2003).

Picture # 9 – The greatest power of Santa Claus: love
(Source: <http://www.kids-crafts-fun-and-games.com/santa-claus.html>)

The greatest power of Santa is the emotional connection to the people that is built up in early childhood. In several countries around the world children grow up believing in Santa Claus. Later on they find out the truth; yet still some of them pretend to believe in him – especially if they have younger siblings – and try to keep the cozy, intimate feeling of the festivities. The nice memories associated with Santa Claus never fade away, and this makes Santa



what he is: the strongest personal brand of the world. According to Horn he is the person having the most fans on the Earth, and his personal brand value is estimated to \$300 billion - even beats Coca Cola, without whom Santa probably would never have become so famous as he is (Horn; 2011).

In the Principles of Marketing (Kotler-Armstrong; 2010) it is mentioned that a successful brand image is something that people associate special ideas and emotions with. This description fits to Santa Claus one hundred percent: even those, who were not born into a culture with Santa-cults associate Santa with Christmas or Santa's Day, presents, happiness and childhood spirit, thanks to the effects of globalization and the emerging power of global media. The good brand has personality – just like Santa has, and what more, Santa Claus is associated with the best thing possible for marketers: giving. This property of Santa Claus makes him the most important, most famous – and also the most successful tool of seasonal advertising, generating great profits in less than two months (Arruda; 2003).

There has been a popular image created by Cotter Visual Communications Inc., published numerous times, which summarizes the most important features of The Santa Brand. This picture sums up on the right side why people like Santa, and why he is such an important brand: here there are collected all the good features of Santa as a person and as a businessman: being happy, organized, consistent and punctual, always fair and kind to everyone and generous, most important of all. The picture on the left side indicates also the crucial points of successful brand building.



THE SANTA BRAND

Jolly
(with a wink, a smile and a twinkle in his eye)

Well-organized
(makes lists, checks them twice)

Keeps a promise
(each year, December 25th)

Delivers on time
(each year, December 25th)

Gives
(asks his customers what they want)

Good and Fair
(is kind to all people and animals)

Collaborative
(elves and reindeer help get the job done)

Global recognition
(known all over the world)

Simple Market Entry
(through chimneys)

Appropriate Tagline:
Ho! Ho! Ho! (display of joy)

Stand out.
Be consistent.
Create an emotional connection.
Remain visible to your customers.
Whether you believe in him or not, Santa is a model for branding that we can all strive to attain.

Cotter Visual Communications Inc.

Picture # 10 – The Santa Brand (2011) (Source: <http://blog.cottervisual.com/?p=456>)

The figure created by Cathy Cotter – though containing some of the arguments only for fun - lists many of the characteristics that a brand needs to have in order to gain success.

4.2 There is no strong brand without people's responses

The aim of advertising is to create the desirable response from the target group of customers – which is often measured by the Facets Model of Effects (Wells-Burnett-Moriarty; 2011). This model sums up the six types of responses that an advertisement can generate in customers, and the effectiveness of each part can be evaluated by taking a closer look on people's attitude towards the advertising tool. The six facets of effective advertising are the perception, the affective, the cognitive, the association, the persuasion and the behavior facet, which, if applied for the Santa Claus brand, can tell us more about how effective it is.

Santa Claus is definitely strong at the perception facet: his unique image with his red suit, round figure, white beard and huge smile catches people's attention everywhere, just like the distinctive 'ho-ho-ho' laugh of his own. He is very visible, very eye-catching and bears with a clear meaning for people – which have a strong connection with the affective facet of effects.

Santa Claus has a long history of giving, dating back to the times of old Bishop Saint Nicholas, who generously gave money to help three young girls. Since then the image of Santa has always been associated with being good and helping people – which raises positive emotions in everyone. And who could be a better face for advertising, than someone, whom everybody loves? And the traditions just strengthen the positive effects of Santa Claus on people's emotions: those, who have once experienced a nice and peaceful Christmas, waiting for Santa to come, then saw the presents under the Christmas-tree; or an exciting morning on Santa's Day with stockings or boots full of surprises, they will never forget the great feeling of excitement of that wonderful moment. And this is what Santa's real power lies in: he raises the good memories and association in people, and they cannot stop liking him.

Santa Claus has an even stronger effect on children. Although they cannot yet be regarded as a source of demand, since they do not have their own purchasing power (Kotler; 2010), they have a huge effect on their parents instead. The true and most affective fans of Santa Claus are children, who truly believe in him – and this strong feeling of their beloved children is what the best stimulates parents' behavior – as it was proved by my focus group interviews as well (Appendix # 1). However, in their acts the cognitive effect of Santa Claus is playing a strong role as well. The tradition is well-known: the Christmas season is

associated with giving and Santa Claus is the one who gives presents (either on Santa's Day or at Christmas). This is what makes people buy more things at this time: Santa Claus reminds them of the traditions and persuades them to act like it is desired – buy gifts, candies, special food and any other goods or services that are connected and promoted with Santa Claus.

Although they acknowledged the effects of Santa Claus on their buying behavior, the respondents of my two focus groups, when I asked them what they think about Santa Claus being used as a mean of seasonal promotion (Appendix # 1), most of the responses were negative. This phenomenon was stronger among the kindergarten teachers, where four of the five group members strongly agreed that it is not good at all, that a figure loved by children so much, and the character to whom most adults associate nice memories is used so frequently in the commercial world. Some members of the group even said that they think it could be a general attitude of people that they are against the business use of Santa. Though the opinion of the trainees did not seem to be so strong, half of them indicated that they find the use of Santa Claus in marketing more negative than positive. But the members of both groups also indicated that their disapproval of the commercial use of the jolly old man does not affect their buying habits.

By reviewing these aspects of the effects of Santa Claus – even in spite of the slight negative judgment of him being used in such a way - we can be convinced that he indeed has a very strong effect on people, and therefore he is clearly a really powerful tool of seasonal advertising. According to Peter Horn (Horn; 2011) Santa has been so far unbeaten in this field – and if the predictions can be trusted, an even greater growth is to be perceived in the future (Horn; 2011).

5. Case study - The real Santa Claus

Finns claim that Korvatunturi near Rovaniemi in Finland is the place where the real Santa Claus lives - and so do several European nations; and this gives great power to Finland, when managing its touristic resources. During the past decades Finland has used its competitive advantage to create probably the most attractive center of Christmas tourism in the world (Hall; 2008).

5.1 The birth of Santa Claus village

The first building on the area of the Santa Claus village has been built over 50 years ago. This was a small cabin, the first indicator of the financial aid provided by the UNRRA -the predecessor of the current Unicef - for the post-war Finland for reconstruction and recovering their tourism industry. In 1950 Eleanor Roosevelt - who was a key figure of UNRRA at those times – decided to visit the Finnish Lapland by surprise, which made it necessary to make the first step towards creating nowadays' most important Santa-village. Although the idea had already been invented a few years ago, in 1950 the mayor of Rovaniemi made the best out of it: the place, where since a while tourists were stopping by to ceremoniously 'cross the Arctic Circle' was destined to host the Arctic Circle Cabin (Napapiirin Maja in Finnish) and the welcoming ceremony of Eleanor Roosevelt. A small cottage was built out of Finnish wood on 66° 33' 39" in approximately one week, and was ready just in time before Mrs. Roosevelt arrived on the 11th of June. Her welcoming ceremony was the first event attracting a bigger crowd to the Arctic Circle, which meant the initiation of the history of the Santa Village – and also this was the time of creating the Polar Circle postmark (Tourism Board of the City of Rovaniemi; no publishing year available).



Picture # 11 – The Arctic Circle Cottage in Santa Claus village (Own photo; 28.10.2011)

Eleanor Roosevelt really enjoyed her time in the Finnish Lapland, and since her visit the area has started to attract so many visitors, that extensions became necessary – also due to the fact that an increasing number of letters arrived for the name of Santa Claus, many of them bearing only the ‘address’ Arctic Circle, Finland. This made Rovaniemi City Tourist Board – the authorities responsible for the area – build the second, bigger cottage next to the initial one, and the Santa Claus’ Main Post Office, just a few meters south from the Arctic Circle itself. During the 1970s the yearly number of visitors has already reached 90,000 (Tourism Board of the City of Rovaniemi; no publishing year available) – which was still just a start of a long, and successful era in the history of the Santa village.

5.2 The Finnish ‘Santa Claus industry’

The power of this wild and seemingly unimportant location lies in the centuries-old and many times transformed legend of Santa Claus, the friend of all children; which was used well for boosting the attractiveness of this peripheral area. Finland definitely had the first-mover advantage of creating the ‘official home’ of Santa Claus, which provided them with the mark of originality ever since. After the creation of the Santa Claus village in Rovaniemi numerous other northern countries realized the opportunities lying in Christmas tourism for those, who bear with the suitable environment – such as Iceland, Norway, Canada, and even the northern region of the United States. However, neither of these countries has ever become as famous for their Santa Claus village as Finland, the first one, the original one (Hall; 2008).

In Finland the ‘Santa Claus industry’ is also strongly supported by the government - and it has been so ever since the building of the small Arctic Circle Cottage. The Polar Circle postmark is officially accepted by the international post, what more – the Santa Claus Main Post Office is run by Posti, the official national post of Finland. Finnair, the national airlines strongly promotes the area, and carries a huge number of Christmas-tourists each year to Rovaniemi and the nearby airports in Lapland. Visit Finland, the official travel and tourism portal of Finland has a distinct section for Christmas and Santa Claus, listing all the opportunities associated with Christmas tourism, with special respect to the Arctic Circle, Santa Claus village and enhancing the fact that Finland is truly the real home of Santa.

This national attitude towards Santa Claus is a crucial element of the Finnish Santa-phenomenon: according to my experiences after four months in Finland, people are all enthusiastic advocates of the jolly old man, and are proud of their national ‘treasure’. Not only the first mover advantage, but also the synergic effect of the different ways of promotion

highly contribute to the success of the Finnish Santa Claus. The fact that the location is ‘the official home’ of one of the best known characters in the world, combined with the several ways in which Finns attempt to direct people towards the place is what has brought the real success for the Santa village.

5.3 Field research with the help of Santa’s elves

On 22 October 2011 I had the opportunity to see and carry out a field research in Napapiirin Pajakylä, the official Finnish Santa Claus village, and personally ask the people working for and around Santa about the village itself (Appendix # 2).

5.3.1 The Main Office of Santa Claus

One of Santa’s elves called Annika (I was asked not to reveal her surname), who has been working for Santa Claus for eight years, agreed to answer my questions regarding the Santa Claus village and the surrounding area.

First of all I aimed to find out more about the history of the village, since on the official homepage only the history of the first building, the Arctic Circle Cottage is displayed. Annika told me that the Main Office of Santa Claus - where he meets people daily - was raised in 1985, complemented by a bigger building in 2007. This place is currently the core of the area run by Jarmo Kariniemi, the reason why most people visit Rovaniemi: here they can see the real Santa Claus. And this is where one of the core points lies: visiting Santa Claus is



completely free. This aspect does not seem to be too important, since how could seeing Santa Claus be not free? But the fact is that this small thing can have remarkable psychological effect on the potential visitors (Wells-Burnett-Moriarty; 2011).

Picture # 12 – The Main Office of Santa Claus on the Arctic Circle (Own photo; 28.10.2011)

In nowadays' material world the term 'free' seems to have enormous effects on people: Annika, who is working at the entrance of the Main Office of Santa Claus said that there are several visitors asking whether it is true that they can meet Santa for free. Although this shows that for several visitors it is not the reason why they travel to the place – the main point of attraction will always remain Santa, regardless of price – the free service has an impact on return visits; for which the best example is myself. As many other visitors, I did not know it either, that entering Santa Claus village is free of charge, but when I realized that it is so, it convinced me to return to the spot. As the statistical data of Tilastokeskus Rovaniemi (Tourist Office of Rovaniemi) from 2010 shows, there are numerous visitors in town, who visit Santa more than once during their stay – and also a great number of tourists return to the town and to the Santa Claus village yearly, or at least several times in their lives (Tilastokeskus, 2010).

Another great competitive advantage of the place among many of its competitors is that it is open all-year-long. The majority of Santa Claus related tourist attractions have only seasonal opening hours – ranging mostly from two months before Christmas till one or two months after Christmas, depending on whether they consider the Orthodox Christmas or not. On the contrary, Santa Claus village in the Finnish Lapland is open all through the year, providing opportunity to see Santa Claus also for those, who prefer not to travel into the extreme cold of the Finnish winter (www.santaclausvillage.info).

This makes it possible for the village to host over 350-400,000 visitors yearly, including the tourists of approximately 180 different nationalities. As Annika said, according to the records of the Main Office there is one peak season – December, Christmas-time, of course -, but there are other periods as well, when there is a boost of visitors. One of them is the beginning of January, the time of Orthodox Christmas, when the majority of the visitors arrive from Russia and the Baltic-countries – from which countries the area is a popular destination all through the year anyway, due to its proximity. Apart from these there is a boost in the summer season as well, when those people come, who would like to experience the endless day and meet Santa Claus at the same time, without having to do it in approximately -26°C.

As the statistics of Tilastokeskus Rovaniemi indicate (Appendix # 3), there are almost 500,000 visitors yearly, who spend at least one night in the city of Rovaniemi due to touristic motives. In 2010 this number was 468,623, out of which 72,763 visitors arrived in December, and 171,638, so almost forty percent (36.61%) arrived between December and February. The

diagram below (Diagram # 1) clearly indicates the peak seasons, which have been mentioned by Annika as well: the time of Catholic and Orthodox Christmas, and midsummer, the time of endless days.

Not surprisingly most of the visitors are Finnish citizens – practically almost fifty percent -, and the second most represented country is the close neighbor, Russia. Among the top five visitors, according to the number of visits in 2010 after Finland and Russia we could see Germany, Great Britain and France – these countries together account for more than fifty percent of the total number of visitors in every single month.

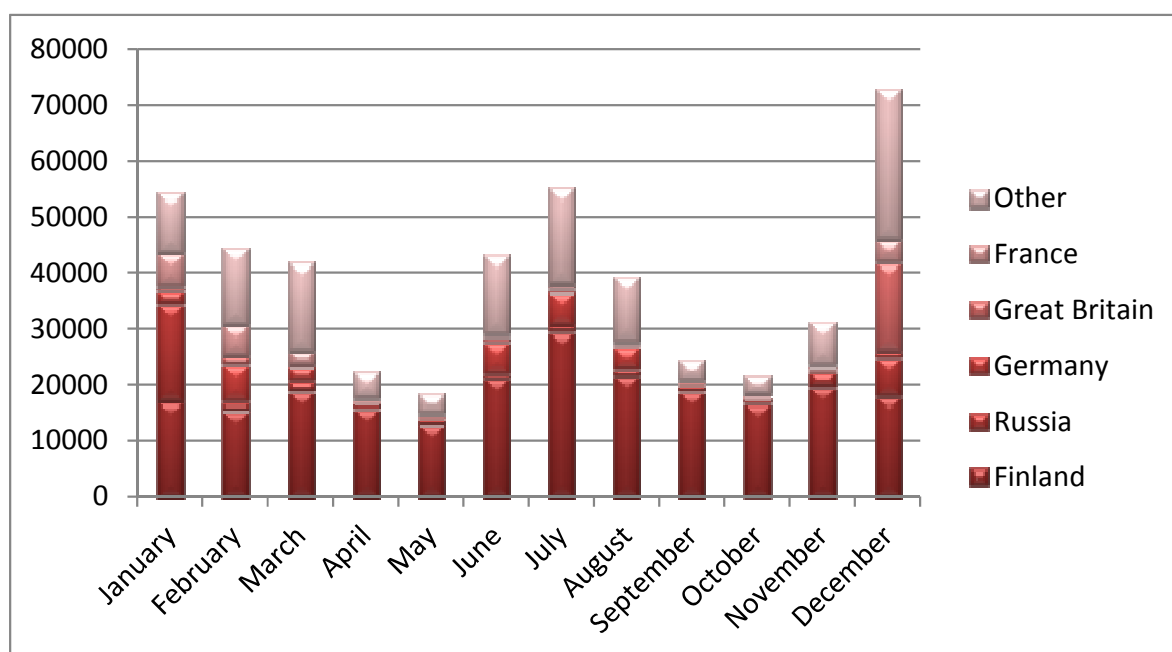


Diagram # 1 – The distribution of overnight tourist-visits in the city of Rovaniemi in 2010; based on the data provided by Tilastokeskus (Appendix # 3)

Though we cannot know it for sure that everybody, who spends at least one night in Rovaniemi visits Santa Claus as well; according to what the leader of the Tilastokeskus Rovaniemi said, the majority of visitors do so; and the distribution of those visits follows practically the same pattern – as it was confirmed by my interviewee as well.

But simply visiting Santa Claus does not generate any profit for the area. What the main office gains its income from – although this is only a small proportion of the business activities of the whole area – is the sale of the photos, videos and tokens with the picture of tourists with Santa in his office. Due to the uniqueness of these items there is a great demand for them, even in spite of their outstandingly high price - here the emotional motives are far more important drivers of buying behavior, than any other aspects. But even these items are not what provide the majority of its returns for Santa Claus village – and nor do the reindeer-

rides offered near the office, what – according to Annika’s observations – are not as popular as they could be, due to the small number of applied reindeers and the high prices.

5.3.2 The businesses settled around the Main Office

If we examine the place from the business point of view, this Main Office of Santa Claus and the visits to him are ‘only’ a highly efficient way of promoting an area. According to the interview with Annika the main sources of profit for the Santa Claus village are the souvenir shops operating around the Main Office, and the Santa Claus Holiday Village, which provides high-quality accommodation for the visitors of Santa Claus village with additional program packages.

On the map of the area below we can see the location of the indicated buildings: in the center of the area we can see the Main Office, in front of which the Gift House can be found, hosting the majority of shops and one restaurant. Next to it the first building of the village, the Roosevelt Cottage or Arctic Circle Cottage can be seen near the Post office, and behind the Christmas House with some other shops the Santa Claus Holiday Village is visible. The map shows how well the buildings are distributed: the entrance is located just behind the bus stop, which implies that it leads people through the gift shops already before meeting Santa – and leaving is possible here too. In order to target those, who arrive by car, the parking place is also surrounded by a huge number of shops to enhance the purchase of souvenirs even stronger. This is a good example of conscious placement and organizing that has an effect on people’s mind, without them noticing it.



Picture # 13 – Map of the Santa Claus Village (Source: www.santaclausvillage.info)

There are over thirty different companies and sole traders present around the main building, offering gifts and souvenirs related to Santa Claus, original handicrafts from Lapland, and even goods that are not in connection with the Christmas industry in any way. These entities rent premises from the Santa Claus village, where they can sell their products for the visitors of the area. These relationships are profitable for Santa village in many ways: first of all the rents – for which no exact data has been revealed – are pretty high, but of course there are no empty spaces anywhere near Santa's Office. The owners of the above businesses, while advertising their own shops, unwillingly also advertise the Santa Claus village itself in a highly effective way. Because what could be a better campaign slogan, than promoting goods, which can be purchased in the neighborhood of Santa Claus.

The marketing campaigns of these shops highly rely on the internet, as well as the campaign of the village itself; and the synergic effects of the various advertising campaigns helps a great deal in the promotion of Santa village. If we take a closer look on the websites of the different companies – some of the are selling goods only in Santa village, but there are larger store chains as well, which have other outlets within, and even outside Finland, for example Marimekko – we can find indicated their shops at the Arctic Circle, which gain extensive attention during the Christmas season. In return the direct links of the websites of

these companies can be found on the web page of Santa Claus village (www.santaclausvillage.info), which is useful for these entities; but also makes the profile of the area even richer.

The issue is the same in the case of magazines, where the home of Santa Claus and the nearby shops advertise themselves: the shops and the village are interrelated, if the advertisement of one of them catches one's attention; that will result in more knowledge about the other entity as well.

There are some magazines, such as Ylläs and TravelRovaniemi, which are specialized in the promotion of Christmas- and winter-tourism in the area; and also the city of Rovaniemi has a special edition available in more than five languages, focusing on the all-year-long operating Christmas village and its facilities. Here – just like in the previous cases – the different companies have a synergic presence in line with Santa Claus village at the Arctic Circle, and another very important component: the service providers.

Annika told me that the other very important partner of the Santa Claus village is the Santa Claus Holiday Village. This is a set of 19 cabins containing 38 rooms with high-quality and high-comfort equipment and furniture, providing accommodation for the overnight visitors of Santa Claus.

The Holiday Village is run by a family enterprise called Napapiirin Lahja Oy, which has been present on the Arctic Circle by operating a souvenir shop and the Christmas House Restaurant & Coffee Bar since 1994; but in the latest years they extended their activities to providing accommodation as well. The area is run by Marko Jääskö and his wife, Inga, who are specialized in the tourists of the Santa Claus village and the Christmas tourism.



Picture # 14 – The entrance of Santa Claus Holiday Village (Own photo; 28.10.2011)

Just like the souvenir shops, the Holiday Village also takes significant part in the promotion of the area: they are present in the magazines of the city of Rovaniemi, and also in the tourist offices within and outside Finland.

When I asked Annika about the most important tools of marketing; aside from the activities of the souvenir shops, she mentioned also the activity of tour operators – especially from Great Britain, but they are also present in numerous other countries. These agencies generally offer tour packages including visit to Santa Claus and accommodation at the Santa Claus Holiday Village; but they are usually combined with various other programs, such as husky-safaris, northern light-tracking or reindeer-farm visiting – and of course the programs organized by the Holiday Village itself, especially around Christmas-time. Any of these is the case, the emphasis is on the promotion of the village itself: when an agency advertises such tour options, they also communicate information about the facilities in the area: Santa Claus' Main Office and the Post Office and the services and goods that can be purchased – therefore here again the synergic effect takes place.

5.2.3.3 Santa Claus' Main Post Office

After finding out so much valuable information about the companies in partnership with the Santa Claus village; I turned my attention to the Santa Claus' Main Post Office, which was said to be also an important source of profit – even if it did not look like so.

In Santa Claus' Main Post Office I asked another elf, Anette about the activities and importance of the post office (Appendix # 2), and though she has been working there only for a couple of months, she provided me a great deal of interesting and useful information.

She told me that there are approximately 600,000 letters arriving to Santa Claus from all over the world yearly from 198 different countries – which means almost 15 million letters since 1985, containing the wishes of children in various languages. In the number of letters sent the United Kingdom is clearly the leader: there were 190,000 envelopes arriving to the post box of Santa Claus in 2010, which is far more than the double of the letters sent by the



children from any other countries. The reason for this phenomenon has not been researched yet by the creators of Santa Claus' Main Post Office's statistics, but as for the opinion of its workers it can be so because of the strong traditions in British culture related to letter-sending to Santa (Diagram # 2).

*Picture # 15 – A set of letters that have arrived to Santa Claus in the second half of 2011
(Own photo; 28.10.2011)*

The second biggest mailing partners of Santa Claus are Italians, followed by Romanians: there are approximately 70,000 letters arriving from these countries. Surprisingly Finns are not sending so many letters to their ‘own’ Santa Claus, there are less than 30,000 of them arriving to the Main Post Office from within the country.

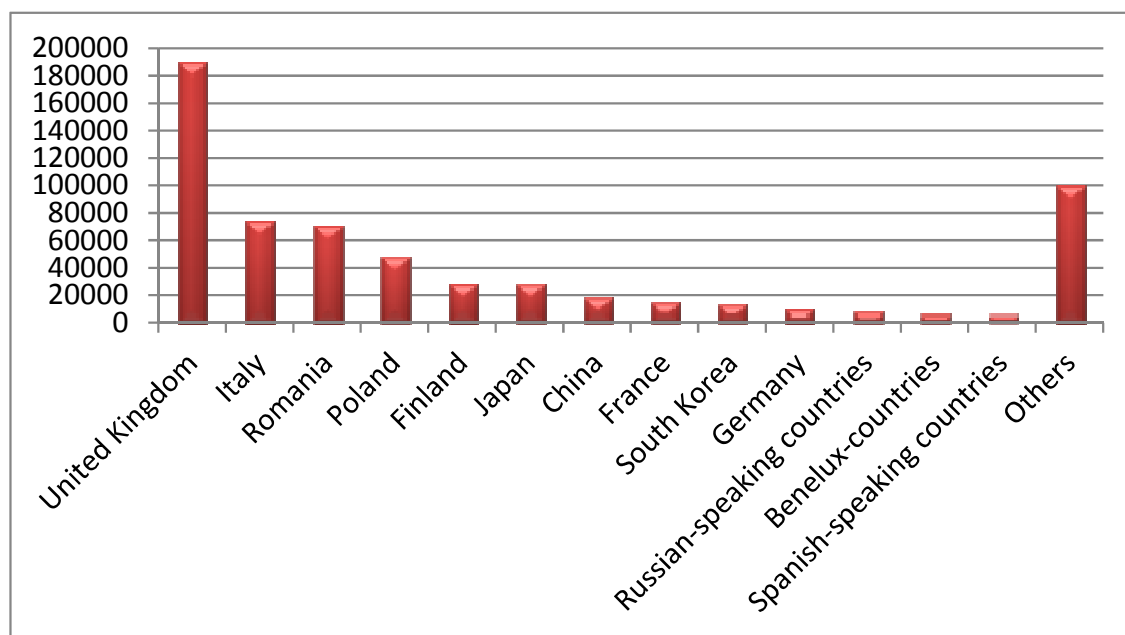


Diagram #2 – the distribution of letters arriving to Santa Claus from different countries in 2010; based on the data provided by Santa Claus’ Main Post Office

But where is the business in this? Anette explained to me that not the arriving envelopes are what count, but the responses for them and the letters sent. It costs 7€ to order one letter from Santa Claus to home for Christmas – this is said to be the most popular function of the Main Post Office. One can choose among twelve languages, on which to receive the greeting from Santa Claus, including English, Spanish, Russian, Chinese and Japanese; and the service is sponsored by Posti, the Finnish National Post as well. Santa Claus answers and sends over 40,000 letters each year to various parts of the world, complemented with a small exercise- and coloring book.

Just like letters, packages can also be sent from the Arctic Circle, bearing with the special Arctic Circle postmark, and arriving just in the right time for Christmas. The price of these packages ranges depending on their size and weight, but they are quite popular among the visitors arriving right before Christmas. As Anette said, most often people send products that they have bought in the different shops of Santa Claus village – mostly because they find

out about this opportunity on the spot -, therefore it is good for the shop owners and the post at the same time.

Ordering letters, postcards and the delivery of presents is also possible via internet on www.santagreeting.net, where customers can purchase postcards, Santa greeting letters for children, families or even companies – not only for Christmas, but also for Easter, New Year, Valentine’s Day and even the end of school. On the homepage there are numerous sample letters listed, together with their prices, from which customers can choose for the purpose. People can also buy the products of the shops of Santa village to send as presents for Christmas or other festivities. This option seeks to promote the products of the companies selling in Santa Claus village – but is also a great opportunity for the Main Post Office.

Anette told me that there is also a great demand for the famous Arctic Circle Postmarks that have always been produced ever since the founding of the Santa Claus village in 1950. These postmarks are not only important for the collectors of special stamps and postmarks – though they are also highly interested -, but also for the tourists and passers-by, who often would like to send also their non-Santa-related postcards and letters with this special mark for their friends. These postmarks – as Anette emphasized – are probably the most-sought items in the whole Santa Claus village, together with the tokens made of the photos of tourists with Santa himself.



Picture # 16 – Display of the Santa Claus’ Main Post Office (Own photo; 28.10.2011)

5.2.3.4 Where is Santa Village heading?

We can see from the previous examples that the activities of Santa Claus village are pretty wide-ranged and highly efficient – especially in some countries. Finns were able to use their competitive advantage derived from the legends of Santa Claus, and they have built a tourism and service center to the Arctic Circle that has beaten anyone so far, who tried to challenge them in Santa-tourism.

However, there are always means of developing and improving, and to be successful in the long run, even such a well-performing company has to monitor opportunities and threats carefully.

According to my interviewees there are plans for widening the portfolio of Santa Claus village in several various ways, including extending the accommodation and entertainment services. The newly built Santa Claus Holiday Village is still being enlarged in northern direction, including more cottages of a varying size.

The owners of the area are also trying to provide a wider range of opportunities for entertainment in the area – since the city of Rovaniemi is not that close to the village, and is not a highly touristic city, since its most important attraction is the nearby Santa village, the challenge is set to the operators of Santa Claus village to extend the facilities of visitors, and thereby increase the amount of time the tourists spend there.

On the western edge of the current borders of the village a husky-safari has been created – though still closed at the moment -, which seeks to represent the old traditions of husky-farms of Lapland. Previously tourists often travelled to more northern locations, such as Hetta, Enontekiö or Inari to experience travelling in the snow on sleighs pulled by huskies – this is why the leaders of the area now try to bring this opportunity under the same roof as well, in order to attract more people with the help of the wide range of opportunities provided by the Finnish Lapland.

For those, who prefer the higher speed, there is an also newly built – but already operating – snowmobile park, offering tours of different length into the wild Lapland days and nights.

The other important competitive advantage of the area is the Aurora-tourism. As Annika said, there are several people coming from different points of the world to see the Northern Lights, the Aurora Borealis. Since the Santa Claus Holiday Village has been built, an increasing number of people – especially Asian young couples – arrive to the village with the hope of catching a glimpse of the miraculous lights. As my interviewee explained me, there is a good reason for the high number of Asian couples visiting the place: in Asian cultures there is a strong belief that if someone sees the Aurora Borealis once in a lifetime, the person will live happily ever after. For this reason the number of honeymoon-makers has increased since the Holiday Village exists. At the same time tour-operators started to be more interested in the opportunity: new and new sole traders and companies seek for the partnership with the village with an aim of offering merged Santa-Aurora packages for holiday- and honeymoon-makers.

And the opportunities are endless, and it is just a question of time till someone recognizes the new path and boosts new means of the Santa-industry.

6. Conclusion

After revising what Santa Claus has been able to achieve throughout the decades of his presence in sales promotion, we can clearly conclude one thing: he *is* a good marketer. His consistent presence and enormous popularity – in line with the efforts of businesses to use him for their own good in seasonal marketing – has made him what he is now: the strongest brand of the world.

Although there are people who do not regard it as a good thing that such an innocent and kind figure is used for commercial purposes; we have to admit that even in spite of their disapproval, most of the people do not remain unaffected by Santa Claus. There are various reasons for this, including memories, emotional ties, but probably the most important is the driving force of children, who are the ‘closest’ to Santa Claus in so many ways. But they are not the only ones. Santa can amuse anyone, who once gets acquainted with his real magic, and never let them go.

This is the power Finland has used when creating Napapiirin Pajakylä, the real and original home of Santa Claus. But competitive advantage is not enough for building up an entity that is able to attract and host 350,000-400,000 visitors in every single year. For this there was a need for careful planning and continuous development of facilities, fulfilling the needs of different segments.

And this is the real power of Santa Claus village: though they have started their acts as a place to ‘officially cross the Arctic Circle’, complemented soon by post office services and an unique postmark; they boosted their popularity over the years by offering to meet the most loved character of the world, beating even the famous celebrities. Providing an outstanding service, and using well the synergic advantages provided by those who wanted to take a share in Santa’s success as well has gained the village more and more visitors each year.

This is one good example of the several ones, that indicate the seemingly never-fading power of the jolly old man, which can be unbroken ever after, until there are people who believe or have ever believed in Santa Claus.

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and own pictures taken in Santa Claus village, Rovaniemi, Finland between 22-28.10.2011

8. Appendices

Appendix # 1

Question sheet

For focus group discussions 22.03.2012 and 23.03.2012

1. How old are the children whom you get acquainted with during your work?
2. To your view do the children you get acquainted with believe in Santa Claus?
3. Are there any traditions of celebrating Santa's Day in the institution you are working at?
4. Do you have children? If yes, how old are they?
5. Do you celebrate Santa's Day at home?
6. Do you usually buy products related to Santa Claus? If yes, what kind of products?
7. Do you agree with the following?
 - a. A product is more attractive for me, when it is bearing a symbol of Santa Claus
 - b. A product is more attractive for my children/the children I know, when it is bearing a symbol of Santa Claus
 - c. I often buy Santa-related products to delight my children/the children I know
 - d. I think it is a good thing that Santa is present in practically every industry, shop and on every product before Christmas
 - e. Generally, products with a symbol of Santa Claus are more popular than others among customers
 - f. Products with Santa Claus are more popular than others only among families with small children
8. Do you visit tourist attractions related to Santa Claus? If yes, where and how does it happen?

Have you ever heard of agencies providing 'Santa Services'? Have you ever used them? If yes, when and how has it happened?

Question sheet

For field research interview on 22.10.201

in Santa Claus's Main Office

9. How long have you been working for Santa Claus?
10. Do you know when the place was founded?
11. What was the idea behind the foundation of the place?
12. Who is the leader of Santa Claus village right now?
13. How many people come here to visit the place yearly?
14. What are the peak seasons?
15. Which nationalities are the most represented here?
16. What does the Santa Claus village make profit from?
17. What are the main businesses settled around the Main Office of Santa Claus?
18. What are the most important factors of promotion for the place?

For field research interview on 22.10.201

in the Arctic Circle Post Office

1. How long have you been working for Santa Claus?
2. Do you know how long the Arctic Circle Post Office has been operating?
3. How many letters arrive here yearly?
4. From which countries?
5. Why is the Arctic Circle Post Office so profitable for the village?
6. What can be sent from here, and to which locations?

Appendix # 3



Registered overnights 2010 by country of residence

698 Rovaniemi	Total	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Total	468 823	54 427	44 448	41 958	22 361	18 258	43 025	55 019	39 236	24 428	21 623	31 277	72 763
Finland	224 557	17 109	15 509	18 732	15 928	13 010	20 960	29 335	21 422	18 807	16 404	19 549	17 792
Foreign countries	244 266	37 318	28 939	23 226	6 433	5 248	22 065	25 684	17 814	5 621	5 219	11 728	54 971
Europe	210 843	34 854	23 617	17 837	4 798	4 583	19 122	24 065	16 184	4 273	3 847	9 300	48 363
EU-27	153 320	16 710	21 500	15 216	3 246	2 814	14 871	16 969	12 106	2 404	2 137	5 452	39 895
Scandinavia	23 455	434	1 010	1 688	1 248	1 388	4 117	6 108	2 507	1 243	1 040	1 531	1 141
Asia	24 106	1 733	4 875	4 570	1 435	399	1 429	691	817	867	1 107	1 842	4 341
Oceania	2 890	172	170	229	65	129	272	246	226	153	100	121	1 007
Africa	431	27	19	14	1	6	75	36	22	1	5	16	209
America	3 491	213	101	313	83	113	916	312	288	259	93	358	442
Sweden	8 697	153	505	1 025	574	658	1 601	1 597	755	560	347	533	389
Germany	30 518	2 355	6 572	2 541	316	456	5 584	6 081	3 889	479	374	597	1 274
Russia	37 793	17 294	1 355	1 822	809	959	1 143	1 211	1 427	1 074	938	2 692	7 069
Great Britain	21 964	977	1 664	352	272	262	877	676	417	134	179	525	15 629
USA	2 165	176	71	108	28	85	579	163	177	222	44	242	270
Norway	12 181	226	385	453	618	651	1 634	3 803	1 577	577	657	911	689
Netherlands	12 777	1 065	2 691	2 365	142	272	2 033	1 975	917	71	84	111	1 051
Italy	17 433	2 578	790	836	253	148	535	824	2 440	202	218	1 162	7 447
France	21 355	5 773	5 601	2 807	256	190	614	865	504	94	159	358	4 134
Japan	10 759	1 344	2 331	1 120	162	44	257	219	309	451	850	1 434	2 238
Denmark	2 426	40	114	200	56	79	874	705	153	46	36	60	63
Estonia	3 228	451	89	96	116	85	296	281	138	102	131	271	1 172
Switzerland	6 938	399	362	305	116	144	1 434	2 069	1 065	157	102	195	590
Spain	14 188	1 394	1 969	2 586	644	244	708	981	1 548	203	183	464	3 264
Poland	3 797	905	97	525	131	26	480	1 005	224	56	47	93	208
Austria	2 298	106	212	613	69	32	212	337	193	55	62	129	278
Belgium	2 591	268	568	291	89	49	169	393	165	75	19	118	387
Canada	599	11	2	24	5	19	237	88	55	28	20	73	37
China	3 305	184	706	179	53	152	499	144	229	190	131	159	679
Australia	2 729	162	170	225	61	106	244	234	205	152	99	113	958
Latvia	1 751	146	49	61	53	92	141	146	160	123	114	211	455
Greece	1 864	162	12	29	15	10	237	112	95	17	19	90	1 066
Czech	1 263	61	77	148	91	89	79	274	100	39	53	84	168
Hungary	1 002	32	56	59	39	9	127	133	71	21	25	246	184
South Korea	247	24	6	30	1	5	2	33	62	12	7	30	35
Brasilia	408	2	5	147	41	1	80	28	24	6	11	15	48
Lithuania	1 233	168	80	66	32	58	78	125	85	69	38	169	265
Portugal	1 681	48	265	491	21	13	100	41	124	7	14	75	482
India	1 096	10	68	40	43	100	396	114	19	90	29	1	186
Taiwan	491	6	87	7	4	26	77	32	47	8	13	15	169
Israel	5 294	55	1 092	2 933	1 015	5	48	16	71	42	9	0	8
Ireland	873	0	6	29	57	16	28	101	9	13	30	53	531
Thailand	648	13	158	182	122	3	2	50	15	1	7	20	75
Turkey	325	23	34	33	20	0	36	1	4	19	0	106	49
Iceland	151	15	6	10	0	0	8	3	22	60	0	27	0
Other countries	8 198	692	684	488	109	160	616	824	519	166	170	346	3 424

Appendix # 4



LETTERS TO SANTA CLAUS 2010

Santa Claus received letters for Christmas 2010 from:

United Kingdom	190 000 letters
Italy	74 000
Romania	70 000
Poland	47 000
Finland	29 000
Japan	28 000
China	18 000 (& Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao)
France	14 000
South Korea	13 000
Germany	10 000
Estonia-Latvia-Lithuania	8 000
Russian speaking countries	8 000
Benelux	6 000
Spanish speaking countries	5 000 (Spain, Argentina, etc.)
Other countries	100 000
Total:	620 000 letters from all around the World

Since 1985 Santa Claus has received nearly 15 million letters from 198 countries. At Christmas 2010 many letters included a sincere wish for saving the planet for next generations and more time together with family.

In their greetings to Santa Claus children tell stories about their everyday life, their country and their wishes. They also ask lots of questions about Santa Claus himself, elves and reindeer. Children send drawings, photographs, gifts, cookies and sweets to Santa Claus. For reindeer babies they send hundreds of old dummies and even carrots!

Every spring after his Christmas hurries, Santa Claus replies more than 40 000 letters in 12 different languages: English, Italian, Polish, Finnish, French, German, Japanese, Spanish, Swedish, Portuguese, Korean and Chinese.