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in
Literature, Culture, and Media**

Selling the Scent-sory:
An Exploration of the Power of Storytelling
Techniques in Fischersund's 'Authentic Icelandic' Brand

Katherine Marie Scott Stewart

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FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND CULTURE

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Ágrip

Sagnfræði hefur skotið upp sem öflugur verkfæri í vörumerkjanir, sérstaklega í menningar- og arfamótuferðamálum. Þar sem ferðamenn leita að ekta upplifunum sem endurspegla staðlega menningu, hefur eðlileg hagkvæmni orðið lykilþáttur í vörumerkjum og ferðamálum. Með því að nota Fischersund, íslenskan ilmgerðasöluverslun og verslunarmiðstöð í miðbæ Reykjavíkur, sem dæmi, rannsakar þessi ritgerð hlutverk sagnfræðinnar í því að þróast sem skynjað "ekta íslenskt" vörumerki. Rannsóknin skoðar hvernig notkun sagnfræðinnar í vörumerkjaskiptum hefur áhrif á skynfærni Fischersund sem "ekta íslensks" vörumerkis meðal gesta sem heimsækja landið.

Ritgerðin byrjar á að skoða skilning og áhrif eðlilegri hagkvæmni í vörumerkjanir og ferðamálum, auk marghliða eðlis þess. Greinin skoðar síðan víðara samhengi Íslands og ferðamála. Aðal rannsóknarspurning ritgerðarinnar er: "Hvernig hefur notkun sagnfræðinnar í vörumerkjaskiptum áhrif á árangur Fischersund sem skynjað 'ekta íslenskt' vörumerki?" Fókus ritgerðarinnar er á þremur greinilegum sagnfræðilegum aðferðum sem Fischersund notar, þar sem er rætt um notkun merkjamyndar, sögulegrar sagnfræði og sköpulegrar upplifunar með upplifunarsagnfræði, og hvernig þessar aðferðir hjálpa til við að festa vörumerkið sem skynjaðan íslenskan upplifun.

Byggð á yfirlitsrannsókn og greiningu vörumerkjaskiptaferlis Fischersund leggur ritgerðin fram tilgátu um að þessar sagnfræðilegu aðferðir hafi jákvæð áhrif á vörumerkið, aðstoða við að skapa skynfærni fyrir erlenda gesti. Með því að skapa sögur sem skapa tilfinningalega tengingu við ferðamenn og vekja jákvæðar tilfinningar, greinir Fischersund sig og hjálpar áhorfendum að finna sterkari tengingu við Ísland. Þessi ritgerð á að auka þekkinguna um sögulundin í vörumerkjasetningu með því að veita innsæi fyrir því hversu vel þessi aðferð virkar við að byggja upp sannarlega staðbundin vörumerki í stöðugt breytilegu ferðamálaíðnaði.

Abstract

Storytelling has emerged as a powerful tool in branding, particularly in the realm of cultural and heritage tourism. Since tourists are increasingly looking for genuine experiences that reflect the local culture, authenticity has emerged as a crucial component of branding and tourism. Using Fischersund, an Icelandic perfumery and retail store in the heart of Reykjavik, as a case study, this thesis explores storytelling's role in developing a perceived "authentic Icelandic" brand. The study looks into how the use of storytelling in brand communication affects Fischersund's perception as an "authentic Icelandic" brand among visitors to the nation.

The thesis begins by examining the definitions and implications of authenticity in the fields of branding and tourism, in addition to its multifaceted nature. The article then explores the wider context of Iceland and tourism. The primary research question of the thesis is, "How does the use of storytelling in brand communication impact the success of Fischersund as a perceived 'authentic Icelandic' brand?" This thesis focuses on three distinct storytelling strategies employed by Fischersund, namely the use of a signature brand story, nostalgic storytelling, and creating a memorable experience through experiential storytelling, and how these strategies help establish the brand as a perceived authentic Icelandic experience.

Drawing on the literature review and analysis of Fischersund's branding strategy, this thesis hypothesizes that these storytelling techniques positively impact the brand, helping to create a sense of authenticity for non-Icelandic visitors. By creating stories that emotionally connect with tourists and arouse positive feelings, Fischersund differentiates itself and helps its audience feel a stronger connection to Iceland. This thesis aims to add to the body of knowledge on storytelling strategies in branding by offering insightful information about how well this strategy works in building a true place-based brand in the ever-changing tourism sector.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Storytelling has been widely recognized as a powerful tool in branding, particularly when that brand has a close relationship to cultural and heritage tourism (Escalas, 2004; Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010; Mucundorfeanu, 2018; Wala, 2015; Woodside & Miller, 2008; Woodside, 2010). Authenticity is also a key factor in branding and tourism, with tourists seeking out genuine experiences that reflect the local culture (Arnott, 2022; Larsen & Urry, MacCannell, 1973; Pine & Gilmore, 1998; Wickens, 2017). This thesis explores the role of storytelling in creating an “authentic Icelandic brand,” as exemplified by Fischersund (*fischersund.com*), a perfumery and boutique shop located in downtown Reykjavik, Iceland. Specifically, this research investigates how the use of storytelling in brand communication impacts the success of Fischersund’s perception as an “authentic Icelandic brand” by tourists visiting the country.

This thesis investigates concepts surrounding notions of perceived brand and place-based authenticity, using the Icelandic-based brand Fischersund as its case study. First, the research will delve into the multifaceted nature of the term “authenticity,” exploring its definitions and implications within the realms of both branding and tourism and contextualizing this specific concept. This will help dissect and show how this researcher defined the term to be used in relation to *this* study’s exploration of both branding and tourism in relation to the Fischersund brand. Then, the study will examine the broader context of Iceland and tourism and perceptions of authenticity in this sector. This will also further contextualize Fischersund within its location and tourist destination of Iceland. With definitions of “authenticity” established for both branding and tourism, the research will then investigate how three specific storytelling techniques used by Fischersund - the use of a signature brand story, nostalgic storytelling, and creating a memorable experience through experiential storytelling - help establish the brand as a perceived “authentic Icelandic” experience to tourists.

1.1 Research Question

The primary research question of this thesis is, “How does the use of storytelling in brand communication impact the success of Fischersund as a perceived ‘authentic Icelandic brand’ to tourists?” To answer this research question, this thesis will explore the various aspects of storytelling and their impact on branding. Specifically, three techniques used in storytelling - signature brand stories, nostalgia, and experiential - will be the focus and used as a point of reference when exploring the Fischersund brand. By analyzing Fischersund's use of storytelling in its branding strategy, the thesis aims to provide insights into the effectiveness of this approach in creating a perceived authentic Icelandic brand for tourists.

1.2 Hypothesis

Based on the literature review and the analysis of Fischersund's branding strategy, this researcher hypothesized that the three specific storytelling techniques - the use of a signature brand story, nostalgic

storytelling, and creating a memorable experience through experiential storytelling - have positively impacted the Fischersund brand and helped it create a perceived “authentic Iceland experience” to its non-Icelandic visitors. By creating narratives that connect with these tourists on an emotional level and evoke positive feelings, Fischersund establishes a sense of a deeper connection to both the brand and Iceland for its tourist audience. This thesis aims to enrich the current body of literature on storytelling strategies employed in branding and offer valuable perspectives on the efficacy of this method in establishing an authentic place-based brand among retailers that are closely associated with the tourism industry.

1.3 Relevance of the Study

The study of storytelling in branding in relation to tourism is vital, particularly in Iceland's highly competitive tourism industry, where many stores have established strong branding based on the country's perceived identity. This thesis explores the unique approach of one particular shop, Fischersund, a retailer closely linked to the tourism sector, in creating an authentic place-based brand. By examining the specific storytelling tactics used by Fischersund, this study aims to identify what makes their approach compelling, memorable, and perceived as authentic. This analysis could be compelling for other retailers and tourist-focused brands in Iceland seeking to establish a similar perception of authenticity.

At first glance, Fischersund is merely a retail shop selling perfumes and scents, but this study aims to show it is much more than that. It is both a brand and an *experience*. This is why at times, both “authentic Icelandic *brand*” and “authentic Icelandic *experience*” are used when referring to Fischersund in this research. The tactics highlighted in this study will help identify how the experiences employed by Fischersund might be created and applied to other destinations and brands in Iceland to create unique and memorable experiences for tourists. By examining Fischersund's success in this area, this thesis can contribute to a broader understanding of authenticity in branding and tourism.

Ultimately, this study seeks to provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of storytelling tactics used in branding, particularly in creating a sense of authenticity with respect to cultural, heritage, and place-based brands. By examining Fischersund as a case study, this thesis aims to contribute to the existing literature on storytelling in branding and provide practical insights for retailers closely linked to the tourism sector.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is organized into several chapters. The following chapter, *Chapter 2*, will cover the methodology used during this research. *Chapters 3* and *4* will cover the very nuanced and complicated use of the term “authenticity” in tourism studies, how tourism in Iceland has changed over time, establish definitions for the term, and contextualize how it is used in this study. *Chapter 5* overviews the Fischersund brand and why that specific company was chosen for this case study and introduces the

reader to the brand. Then, this research will progress into storytelling and explore the use of specific storytelling tactics used in branding and which ones are used by Fischersund in *Chapter 6*. *Chapters 7, 8,* and *9* will be a deeper dive into the concepts of the signature brand story, nostalgic storytelling, and creating a memorable experience through experiential storytelling and Fischersund's employment of each. In *Chapter 10*, the cumulative information, research, data, and discussion will be used to give a summary of everything that has been discussed and how each of the various aspects of storytelling and its impact on the Fischersund brand, as well as how the concept of "authenticity" in both branding and cultural, heritage and place-based tourism affects this also. Finally, this thesis ends with a look at further investigations that could be performed and studied in relation to Fischersund and branding in *Chapter 11*.

Before diving into the bulk of the work, it is important to cover a few definitions. Because there may be various uses and definitions of a few of the keywords used in this research, such as authenticity, brand, and nostalgia, the following section will lay out a few basic definitions of the words as they are used in *this* specific research. Though a more in-depth look at the definitions of most of the terms will be covered in later chapters, this list can be referred back to at any point and used as a minimalist and basic definition.

1.5 Definitions

These definitions are laid out in terms of best practices for using storytelling to create an authentic brand in the context of cultural, place-based, and heritage tourism will be identified using the analysis of the data gathered. With this in mind, the researcher has created a select list of terminology that can be referred back to and is worth reading through before diving into the essay.

Brand: "The sum of all feelings, thoughts, images, history, opportunities, and market rumors that manifests itself in relation to a particular sector, group, company, product, service, idea or person" (Green, 2009, p. 32); the sum of all the details communicated by an entity and the associations that can be made with it (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010, p.43).

Authenticity, general: The character of what is genuine and true (Houaiss, 2004, p.77); when what someone or something says matches what someone or something does (see *genuine*).

Genuine: From the *Cambridge English Dictionary* (n.d.), "it is real and exactly what it appears to be." Therefore, something is genuine and authentic if it is what it appears to be.

Authenticity in branding: The story is perceived as genuine, and there must be "substance" behind it. The audience does not perceive the story as phony, contrived, or a transparent selling effort. The story *can*

be fictional, but it should not try and push a mission or belief that it is unbelievable or obviously motivated by sales goals. The presence of substance confirms and supports the message (Aaker & Aaker, 2016, p.50). For the purposes of this research, authenticity in branding is measured by how well aligned a brand's actions are to its core messaging; do what they do match what they say? This is the substance. *(Will be further explored in Chapter 3)*

Authenticity in tourism: refers to the perception of a real, genuine, and first-hand experience of a destination's history and heritage, as well as its landscape, townscape, and people. This experience is perceived as what makes the destination unique, and the narratives, stories, and experiences that occur are shared to help create a personal connection to the destination. For the purposes of this research, authenticity in tourism is measured by how well aligned a brand's experience is to its core messaging; does what a tourist experiences match what the brand aims to create? This definition is an amalgamation of definitions used in *Chapter 3*, based on the concepts put forward by Wickens (2017), Ballengee-Morris (2002), Williams (1977), Thorne (2009), and Smith (2015). *(Will be further explored in Chapter 3)*

Consumers, visitors, tourists: This research uses these words at various points. Because the study is focused on the perception of *tourist* consumers of Fischersund - those who do not live in Iceland, are not of Icelandic nationality, and do not consider themselves Icelandic - it is safe to assume that any reference or mention of consumers in direct relationship to the brand are visitors or tourists to Iceland unless otherwise stated.

Nostalgia: When used in marketing, the term "nostalgia" refers to a positive preference for things (or experiences) from the past that can be the result of individual memories or a historical or communal nostalgia that was not personally experienced by the individual (also known as "vicarious nostalgia") (Muehling & Sprott, 2004, p.26). Selective and generally positive, nostalgia of this type tends to evoke a range of emotions, including warmth, joy, gratitude, affection, and innocence. *(Will be further explored in Chapter 8)*

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Why Fischersund?

Fischersund is a shop that at once involves elements of a store, an experience, and a place of heritage and culture. It also believes in, uses, and promotes storytelling in almost every aspect of its branding. This is the reasoning behind the selection of this specific store in Iceland. It is a tastefully constructed art gallery, an Icelandic family-run business, a cultural attraction, and a retail store where one can buy products that were designed to capture the essence of the owners' personal expressions of Iceland. Every product and every surface area of the physical store have been meticulously planned, designed, and made in order to tell the Fischersund story. Through interactive displays, thoughtfully designed ambiance, and guided tours, visitors can expect to fully immerse themselves in the history and culture of both Fischersund *and* Iceland. This makes it perfect for investigating the role of storytelling in a brand closely tied to cultural and place-based tourism.

2.2 Research Design

This study will utilize a qualitative research design with a case study approach. The case study will focus on Fischersund as an example of a successfully perceived “authentic Icelandic brand” that uses a signature brand story, nostalgic storytelling, and experiential storytelling in its brand communication. Qualitative research aims to understand social phenomena in their natural environment thoroughly. Instead of concentrating on the “what,” it emphasizes the “why.” It relies on the first-hand accounts of people to serve as the primary interpreters of their lived interactions. For the study of human phenomena, qualitative researchers use an array of systems of inquiry, such as biography, case study, historical analysis, discourse analysis, ethnography, grounded theory, and phenomenology, as opposed to logical and statistical methods (*Subject and Course Guides: Quantitative and Qualitative Research: What Is Qualitative Research?*, 2023). Qualitative research is appropriate for this study as it allows for an in-depth exploration of the research question, in this case, on understanding the role of storytelling in branding communication.

This research measured “success” at how well the Fischersund brand followed the theories set out in each of the three categories: their signature brand story, nostalgic storytelling, and creating a memorable experience, which is laid out in experiential storytelling. Each of the three categories relates to authenticity in that the success of each positively correlates to feelings and perceptions of authenticity in a brand. This research measured “success” at perceptions of authenticity by how well Fischersund's storytelling aligned with notions of authenticity in both branding and tourism.

2.3 Data & Information Collection

Research on branding, storytelling, nostalgia, and authenticity in tourism, as well as an examination of Fischersund's promotional materials, media, and online presence, was used to gather

secondary data. The concepts surrounding branding, storytelling in branding, and authenticity in tourism were the main focus of the academic exploration. A few specific concepts will be used throughout the thesis to help support the claim that the use of a signature brand story, nostalgic storytelling, and experiential storytelling have all positively impacted the perception of the Fischersund brand as an authentic Iceland brand and experience by tourists.

The collection of data involved both primary and secondary sources. This data was synthesized to comprehend the pertinent concepts and theories fully. The amalgamation of this data provides a comprehensive understanding of how these concepts and theories are interconnected and how they might be applied to create effective branding strategies. In addition to validating the hypotheses derived from the literature review, all of this data offers useful insights into how brand stakeholders and tourist consumers alike perceive and interact with a brand's storytelling strategy. Additionally, best practices for using storytelling to create an authentic brand in the context of cultural and place-based tourism could be identified using the analysis of the data gathered.

2.3.a. Primary Sources

The primary data source was a semi-structured interview with longtime employee and brand stakeholder Rachel Jonas, a brand ambassador, resident brand “storyteller,” and sales floor manager. Semi-structured interviews in this research study can be defined as “a qualitative research method that combines a pre-determined set of open questions (questions that prompt discussion) with the opportunity for the interviewer to explore particular themes or responses further” (KnowFife, n.d.). Rachel's perspective as a frontline employee provided relevant insights into the customer experience and how it aligns with the company's overall mission and values. The interview took place in person and was recorded on audio.

This semi-structured interview also provided valuable insights into the brand's history, values, point of view, and marketing strategies from the day-to-day context. On top of this, the researcher of this study also gained beneficial information, insights, and perspective by visiting the physical Fischersund shop located in downtown Reykjavík 101 at Fischersund 3 (hence the brand name) on four separate occasions to witness consumer engagement and experience, speak with sales associates, and interact first hand with the space.

2.3.b. Secondary Sources

Three main sources of secondary information were utilized: scholarly journals and textbooks, previous media interviews with various Fischersund team members, and social media analysis of their main Instagram channel. The academic journals, essays, and textbooks served as the foundation for the concepts and theories examined in this study.

As Fischersund relies mainly on social media and word-of-mouth instead of paid advertising to promote its brand narrative (Gaiten, 2023; Frame, 2019), an investigation of its social media presence is warranted, as it could be considered one of the brand's primary marketing avenues. In addition to analyzing media interviews, first-hand accounts of consumer interactions with the brand were researched through an analysis of the brand's social media, capturing real-time and post-experience consumer perceptions and sharing. A small sample was collected from Fischersund's main Instagram channel (@fischersund) to gain insight into consumer interactions with the brand. The sample was collected by analyzing posts and comments from March 15th, 2023, to November 1st, 2022, including an examination of the words used to describe the brand, examples of brand usage, and the emotions evoked by the brand.

Furthermore, interviews from various media with Lilja, her brother Jónsi, and select members of the management team of Fischersund were used. These interviews provided additional valuable insights into the owners' perspectives on and interactions with the brand. A variety of media interviews is outlined below:

1. *Travel & Leisure magazine*: American-based, global readership, focuses on leisure travel (with a luxury lean) and says its mission is to “inform and inspire passionate travelers.”
2. *Visir.is*: Online Icelandic newspaper covering a wide range of Icelandic news
3. *The Reykjavík Grapevine*: Free “alternative” monthly newspaper printed entirely in English and read by both local Icelanders, but has a big focus on tourists and a large tourist following
4. *The Financial Times*: British daily newspaper, both printed and online, focused on business and economics
5. *66 North Website*: Online website for Icelandic outdoor clothing brand
6. *Rolling Stone magazine*: American-based monthly magazine that focuses on music and pop culture
7. *Pantechinon magazine*: London-based print & online magazine focused on “Stories of Creativity and Craftmanship,” also based on their fine dining experience
8. *Morgunblaðið*: Icelandic-based daily newspaper read throughout Iceland

As can be seen, there is a fairly wide variety of outlets for which these interviews were sampled. This also helped in studying the consistency of the brand messaging across media. These interviews in their entirety can be found in *Appendixes G-N* on pages 105 to 121.

2.4 Sampling

A purposive sampling approach was used throughout the entirety of this research. Purposive sampling, also referred to as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling, is a non-probability sampling technique where the researcher chooses participants from the population based on his or her own sound

judgment. When only a small number of people can serve as primary data sources because of the nature of the research design and its aims and objectives, the purposeful sampling method may prove to be useful (Dudovskiy, n.d.). The samples for this research included individuals who are involved in the branding, marketing, and consumer product sales of Fischersund and have knowledge of the use of storytelling in their branding communication, consumers who have interacted with the brand, and media who have either interacted with the product, the shop, or the company owners.

2.5 Limitations, Bias, & Ethics

Lilja Birgisdóttir & Jónsi Birgisson, whose interviews with the media are referenced several times, both have a vested interest in the research as two of the sibling owners of the company. Fischersund was also informed that the researcher's presence in the store and any interview with employees and Rachel were for the purpose of studying storytelling in branding, and perceptions of creating an "authentic Icelandic brand." The researcher adopted a reflexive stance throughout the research process and acknowledged their positionality as an outsider to the brand to address potential bias. Any and all participants interviewed were assured that if they wished, their personal information would be kept confidential, and even their names could be redacted if they so wished. The researcher also sought their informed consent before recording or using any of their interview data for research purposes.

2.6 Analysis

Thematic analysis, which involves finding themes and patterns in the data gathered and researched, was used for the analysis. The semi-structured interview was transcribed and is available in this thesis as *Appendix F*, starting on page 100. The research question and the literature on branding, storytelling, nostalgia, and authenticity was compared with the emerging themes for analysis.

This methodology was created to give a thorough understanding of how the success of Fischersund as a perceived authentic Icelandic brand is impacted by the use of storytelling. This thesis aims to shed light on the efficacy of Fischersund's storytelling approach by investigating the various storytelling techniques, such as signature brand stories, nostalgia, and experiential, and looking at the idea of authenticity in branding and cultural tourism. A clear framework for analyzing Fischersund's branding strategy lays the groundwork for the subsequent chapters of this thesis, which will present and discuss the findings in more detail.

3. AN EXPLORATION OF AUTHENTICITY

Authenticity is a complex and contested concept that has been widely debated across various academic fields (Van de Port, 2004). In the context of branding and tourism, authenticity takes on particular significance as it influences consumer perceptions and behaviors. This chapter aims to delve into the multifaceted nature of the term “authenticity,” exploring its definitions and implications within the realms of both branding and tourism. The chapter will dissect and show how this researcher defined the term to be used in relation to this specific study’s exploration of both branding and tourism in relation to the Fischersund brand. Then, in *Chapter 4*, the study will examine the broader context of Iceland and tourism and perceptions of authenticity in this sector and ground Fischersund contextually as an Icelandic brand.

Through a critical review of existing literature, this chapter seeks to establish a clear framework for understanding and employing the term “authenticity.” This chapter lays the foundation for this thesis's subsequent analysis and discussion by elucidating authenticity's theoretical underpinnings and conceptual nuances. This chapter will first look into notions of perceived authenticity as it pertains to branding. As Fischersund’s relationship to its home country is a substantial element in its storytelling and branding, it is critical to explore authenticity in cultural and place-based tourism then. These sections look at the authenticity trend in cultural and place-based tourism, specifically narrowing in on Icelandic tourism and how this might affect a brand whose identity is made up in large parts of its relationship with its mother country, like Fischersund. This will be accomplished by investigating various definitions of authenticity in tourism, exploring cultural and place-based tourism and their meanings, as well as looking at considerations when dealing with the term "authenticity" in tourism and Edgar Morin’s concept of the Complexity Theory of Tourism.

With definitions of “authenticity” established for both branding and tourism, the research will then investigate in *Chapters 7, 8, and 9* how three specific storytelling techniques used by Fischersund - the use of a signature brand story, nostalgic storytelling, and experiential storytelling - help establish the brand as a perceived “authentic Icelandic experience” to its visitors.

3.1. Authenticity in Branding

Authenticity is a crucial aspect of branding, as it pertains to the perception of a brand's story and its genuineness (Aaker & Aaker, 2016; Escalas, 2004; Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010). According to Aaker and Aaker (2016), “[a]uthenticity means that the [brand] story audience does not perceive the story to be phony, contrived, or a transparent selling effort and that there is substance behind it” (p. 50). This implies that for a brand to be perceived as authentic, it must have a sense of substance and not appear forced or fabricated. Aaker and Aaker (2016) emphasize that a brand story does not necessarily have to be real; it can be fictional as long as it does not lead to a *conscious* belief that it is unbelievable or motivated solely

by monetary goals (p. 50). This highlights the importance of striking a balance between storytelling and believability in branding efforts, ensuring that the story resonates with the audience and does not come across as contrived or overly promotional.

The presence of substance is crucial in establishing and maintaining authenticity in branding. Aaker and Aaker (2016) assert that “substance” should confirm and support the brand's message, while its absence can “tarnish the brand” and “undermine the story's authenticity” (p. 51). This implies that brands need to ensure that their stories are backed by substance, such as genuine brand values, heritage, or unique offerings, to enhance their authenticity and credibility. By using Aaker and Aaker’s (2016) definitions of brand authenticity as a guide, this researcher has established the following definition of authenticity in terms of branding for this research:

Authenticity in branding: The story is perceived as genuine, and there must be "substance" behind it. The audience does not perceive the story as phony, contrived, or a transparent selling effort. The story *can* be fictional, but it should not try and push a mission or belief that it is unbelievable or obviously motivated by sales goals. The presence of substance confirms and supports the message (Aaker & Aaker, 2016, p.50). For the purposes of this research, authenticity in branding is measured by how well-aligned a brand’s actions are to its core messaging; do what they do match what they say?

3.2 Authenticity in Tourism

The definition of “authenticity,” as it is used in everyday speech, is “real, actual, genuine, original, and first-hand” (Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, 1993). Authenticity in tourism has been a subject of much debate, and it refers to the real, genuine, and original aspects of a cultural experience. Over the years, there has been a lot of discussion and debate surrounding the idea of authenticity in relation to tourism and cultural studies. Although the word itself is never used, Boorstin (1962) is regarded as the first author to discuss the topic of authenticity in his book *The Image*. However, there is no universal definition of authenticity, as it varies based on tourists' expectations and is considered to be socially constructed and, therefore, highly influenced by tourists' expectations.

Tourists’ decisions about where to visit and what to experience are highly influenced by their perception of authenticity. As noted by Wickens (2017), “judging the tourist experience as authentic or inauthentic involves a selection of certain criteria,” which are “negotiated and selected according to the analyst's cultural values and perceptions of the ‘real other’” (p. 269). The idea of what is authentic is up to the individual tourist. Wickens (2017) argues that it is essential to recognize that people assign their own

meanings and value to their holidays and trips. This can lead to various degrees in what may or may not be deemed an “authentic” cultural experience.

Due to the term's ambiguity, numerous discussions have centered on the consumption of cultural experiences. Culture, according to Williams (1977), includes “patterns of everyday life” of the local population, such as their lifestyles, customs, traditions, and entertainment, in addition to historical structures and cultural sites (Wickens, 2017, p.267). It can be challenging to define cultural authenticity, especially for visitors to a new location. Authenticity questions frequently revolve around “how one defines art, lore, and traditions” (Ballengee-Morris, 2002, p.241).

Authenticity in tourism is thus a complex and socially constructed concept that, as mentioned, is highly influenced by tourists’ expectations. Understanding how tourists interact with a location and how tourism practices affect the landscape can help us better understand the concept of authenticity. As Wickens (2017) points out, it is important to acknowledge that people give their holidays different meanings and values and that any interpretation of the authenticity of a cultural experience is selective and incomplete. Defining the meaning of particular tourism terminology is challenging because it is a complex phenomenon that has changed over time and will continue to do so.

3.2.a. Place-based Cultural Tourism

Smith (2015) states that scholars have defined the concept of culture in many ways, with Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) having collected 166 definitions of the word. Cultural tourism, a narrower concept than culture, also has multiple definitions, with variations in classifications, including heritage tourism, which will be investigated shortly. In the context of *this* paper, cultural tourism refers to tourism trips in which appreciation of a place's culture plays a significant role. It can be a form of experiential learning where tourists actively engage with the culture they are visiting, often through activities such as attending cultural events or visiting historical sites.

Cultural tourism covers more than just museums and festivals; it also takes into account a destination's history, heritage, landscape, and even inhabitants. Cultural tourism includes various attractions and activities considered to be cultural. The appreciation of a particular culture might be demonstrated by engaging in activities like buying regional goods, trying out regional cuisine, or going to cultural events. According to Smith (2015),

‘Place’ has been discovered in many realms of scholarly and professional practice; not in the sense of new locales or sites, but in the sense of the explicit awareness of the importance of the interrelationships of values, beliefs, experiences, social and political history, natural environment, economic and political practices, rituals and traditions of a geographically-defined region

or community that characterize a 'place' (p.220).

Destinations support cultural tourism for a number of reasons, such as generating income, offering pleasurable visitor experiences, and reviving local cultures. Beyond its financial advantages, cultural tourism can boost locals' self-esteem and give tourists a more interesting experience. Place-based cultural tourism promotes the appreciation of and improvement of the elements that give a place a sense of place. According to Thorne (2009, p. 3), cultural tourism:

... is about encountering a destination's history and heritage, its narratives and stories, its landscape, its townscape, its people. It is about discovering what makes a destination distinctive, authentic, and memorable. It is about the experience of 'place.' Accordingly, place-based cultural tourism identifies, and then capitalizes on the unique cultural character and sense of place that distinguishes one place from another. (p.3)

Tourism is attracted to a location because of its perceived uniqueness, which encourages visitors to look for an "authentic" glimpse of what exactly sets the location apart.

According to Smith (2015), when place-based cultural tourism is the focus of tourism development, the emphasis is "on visitors, articulates the history and culture of the place for visitors, and connects visitors with the stories and experiences associated with a place" (p.223). Place-based cultural tourism, according to Smith (2015), "requires that the visitor is able to develop a sense of connection with the locale, even if only briefly," in order to be considered a "success" and an authentic experience (p.223). This connection is integral to the experience, as it is what allows visitors to gain a deeper understanding of the culture and history of the place they are visiting. To create such a connection, the tourism experience must be "more involving, immersive and distinct from other forms of tourism, even traditional forms of cultural tourism," and it must create a feeling that "the visitor is *in* a place, not just at a place" (Smith, 2015, p.223). What is this *Icelandic* place, then? In *Chapter 4*, this research will investigate tourism in Iceland specifically.

3.3 Authenticity: Considerations

Authenticity can obviously be a controversial and nuanced idea that is influenced by a wide range of elements, including history, culture, language, and social standing. As many people write about or debate authenticity, it has numerous definitions. Finding "a universal definition of authenticity" has been compared by Van de Port (2004) to "an impossible mission" (p.6). Modern anthropologists have moved beyond the limited view of culture as being essentialist and now acknowledge the existence of multiple, multifaceted authenticities. As we have just previously encountered, the concept of authenticity is complex and contested, influenced by a wide range of factors, including history, culture, language, and

social standing. As a result, there is no universal definition of authenticity, and scholars from various fields have different understandings of the term (Theodossopoulos, 2013).

Overall, it is crucial to recognize the complexities of using the concept of authenticity and be more accepting of the different ways the term is used and defined. By using the Complexity Theory of Tourism - which will be touched on momentarily - this researcher can still acknowledge a variety of definitions for authenticity and, at the same time, narrow in on a specific definition for the purposes of a specific study.

3.3.a. Complexity Theory of Authenticity

Bueno et al. (2018) suggest using the complexity theory to comprehend authenticity in tourism more fully, or at least a bit more leniently. The modern world cannot be understood using fragmented and hyper-simplified thought, according to the French philosopher Edgar Morin (2011), because it breaks the world down into small parts that cannot provide coherent explanations. The complexity theory laid forth by Morin acknowledges the interdependence of systems and ecosystems, taking into account the object and the person.

If someone were visiting a castle or a historical site as a tourist, Morin's philosophy would suggest that they should consider both the physical object (the castle or site itself) and the human element (such as your own experience as a tourist, as well as the impact of tourism on the site and its surroundings). Morin's philosophy encourages people to think about cultural heritage sites and natural wonders more holistically, considering both the physical object and the human element and how they are interconnected.

Morin's philosophy is backed up by the more recent work by Bueno et al. (2018). These scholars also recognize that the tourist experience involves *multiple* possibilities for analysis and more knowledge can be gained by letting go of “existential” or “objective authenticity supremacy.” Bueno et al. (2018) assert in their study that the authenticity phenomenon can be more thoroughly understood by observing it while also taking into account the extreme amount of complexity. All of those involved in the tourism sector, according to Cohen (1979), are critical to the truthfulness of tourist experiences. Therefore, the complexity theory can help researchers consider not only the viewpoint of tourists but also that of the local populace, service providers, and other stakeholders (such as government leaders), in addition to the physical aspects that are being observed. Bueno et al. agree with Morin but suggest that more knowledge about tourism experiences can be gained by not prioritizing *one* specific way of thinking about them. Overall, Bueno et al.'s perspective encourages us to let go of the idea that there is one “true” or “authentic” way to experience a tourist destination. Instead, they argue that we should embrace multiple perspectives and ways of thinking about the destination in order to gain a more complete understanding of its significance.

Tourism authenticity is a complicated phenomenon that requires thorough comprehension *and* an open mind. Morin's complexity theory offers a theoretical framework that acknowledges this interdependence of all parties and systems—from tourists to locals to government officials—involved in the tourist experience. Adopting this complexity paradigm will help the readers of this research better understand how authenticity is viewed in the industry and allow them to examine and understand the use of the term from various viewpoints.

3.4. Authenticity in Tourism For This Research

The definition and use of the term “authenticity” in tourism used in *this* research are based on three things: the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (1993) definition, Houaiss’s (2004) definition - “the character of what is genuine, true” (p. 77), as well as the focus on experiencing both a personal connection and a sense of place as similarly laid out by researchers Thorne (2009), Smith (2015), Poria et al. (2003), and Arnott (2022). The term that will be used in the following chapters is based on the amalgamated definition below:

Authenticity in tourism: refers to the perception of a real, genuine, and first-hand experience of a destination's history and heritage, as well as its landscape, townscape, and people. This experience is perceived as true to the destination, and the narratives, stories, and experiences that occur are shared to help create a personal connection to the destination.

It is clear that the idea of authenticity in tourism is nuanced and complex. As mentioned, it can be influenced by a range of elements such as social standing, history, culture, and language. Since scholars have explored many different definitions and points of view surrounding the idea of authenticity in tourism, this research uses the *Complexity Theory of Tourism* to dissect the phenomenon and give support for the idea of solidifying and creating a specific definition of the term to be used in rest of this thesis. Hopefully, this chapter has improved readers' understanding of tourism authenticity overall. Before delving too deeply into a specific country’s authenticity (such as Iceland), it was crucial to comprehend the concepts, theories, and difficulties of authenticity in cultural, place-based, and heritage tourism. In the following chapters, this research will explore the idea of an “authentic” Iceland, what that might look like, and how the Fischersund brand fits into this interpretation.

4 “AUTHENTIC” ICELAND

Icelandic tourism is heavily focused on both cultural and place-based travel (Visit Iceland, n.d.; Guide to Iceland, n.d.; Iceland Travel, n.d.; Lonely Planet, n.d.). Before this study can explore what might constitute an “authentic” Icelandic experience, it is vital to at least have a basic understanding of Iceland's tourism history. The topic of tourism in Iceland will be briefly examined in three parts: first, prior to the Great Financial Crisis (GFC) of 2008; second, the GFC and its impact on how Icelandic tourism has changed; and third, the experience economy in relation to current Icelandic tourism and what might be considered the “new” Icelandic experience.

4.1 Iceland's Early Tourism

A growing English nationalist idealization of Iceland as the ancestral ground was sparked by Lord Dufferin's visit to Iceland in 1856, as well as other adventures of other such seafarers. In the 19th century, many Victorians believed, according to Forbes (1860), “all that was good about the British people ‘may be traced to the spark left burning upon our shores by these northern barbarians (p.81).’” The British were more than eager to tie their history to that of the Icelanders with their perceived brave seafaring, adventurous, and conquering spirit. A wave of literary travelers, artists, and writers, including William Morris, Sabine Baring-Gould, and W.G. Collingwood, were also influenced to pick up their pens and set sail for Iceland by the rise of translated saga literature, such as Walter Scott's “Eyrbyggja saga” extracts and George Dasent's “Njáls saga” translation which became popular and in wide circulation around this time (Spray, 2015).

The general interest in northern antiquity fostered and captivated research into the key principles of northern Romantic Nationalist philology through the writings of scholars like Percy, Blackwell, Thorpe, and Laing. These widely accepted romantic notions urged more travelers, such as Richard Burton in 1872, who was determined to map the racial makeup of the North (Spray, 2015). Up until the turn of the twenty-first century, even Icelanders themselves continued to use nationalism and an idealized past as defining characteristics of the country.

Iceland has historically been associated with the idea of the north, with images of it as a mythical land or the edge of the known world (Aldred, 2015, p.22). *I Wish I Was Where I Was When I Was Wishing I Was Here: Mentalities and Materialities in Contemporary and Historical Perspectives* by Aldred (2015) highlight Iceland's influence on the mentalities of historical Europeans. Since its settlement, Iceland has been a part of numerous trade networks, but it was not until the 18th century that it became more widely known among most Europeans (p.22). The north, including Iceland, held a special allure for Victorians in the 19th century, who at the time was also highly involved with and in the process of romanticizing the history of the Scottish Highlands and the Western Isles. Icelandic writers were also keen to emphasize the

heroic past of the Vikings as well as the rise of idealized nationalism. The term “Viking” was first used during this period and was fundamental in supporting Iceland's claim to sovereignty (Wawn 2000).

According to Aldred's (2015) research, the rising popularity of the translated tales from the Icelandic Sagas was a major factor in the number of British artists, writers, and other thinkers of the time traveling to Iceland. In particular, William Morris' trips to Iceland in 1871 and 1873 produced a kind of “guidebook” for future travelers by using poetry and illustrations based on the Eddic poems and sagas to depict landscapes and locations that could still be visited (p.23). Collingwood and Stefánsson (1899) also journeyed to Iceland and yearned to travel and experience the route of the sagas, as had been laid forth by Morris years before. Their work, *A Pilgrimage to the Saga-Steeds of Iceland*, was used and viewed a bit differently than Morris' work. Whereas Morris created a straightforward and *visual* guidebook, Collingwood and Stefánsson created an “articulation of histories and *experiences*” (Aldred, 2015, p.23). As Aldred (2015) summarized it eloquently, their work was,

used to recreate the imaginative scenery for historical
Events and to provide a route map for prospective tourists
by creating narratives that described and illustrated the
scenes in an historical sense and in an experiential sense
– the observation of the materiality of the site and its
emotive associations (p.23).

It appears that Collingwood and Stefánsson had a similar concept of experiential tourism, which holds that visitors should have a sensory *experience* in addition to the visual enjoyment of the historical and cultural landscape. Their belief was that one could go to Iceland and be able to “touch history.” It was a location where busyness and modern invention had not yet taken hold.

For both foreigners and Icelanders alike, the saga and nature tourists of the 19th century contributed to romanticizing Iceland considerably. However, romantic images of nature were not limited to beautiful sunny days and wide grassy fields. Gumundur Hálfðánarson (2001, p. 205) claimed that it was marked by ferocity, cold and wintry conditions, and incredibly strong winds. The nation's citizens were encouraged and strengthened to carry out their daily activities by this fierceness and harshness in nature (Whitehead, 2018, p.153). An enormous celebration honoring the establishment of the Republic of Iceland was held at þingvellir, the original location of the national parliament, on July 17, 1944. The Icelandic bishop at the time, Sigurgeir Sigurðsson, likened the nation's struggle to the local rough weather: “[T]here may be strong and tough winds that tried to break people down, but the Icelandic spirit and ideology prevailed, and the nation's inherited right to freedom and independence was once again restored” (Þjóðhátíðarnefnd 1945, pp. 155–158 in Whitehead, 2018, p.152).

Since the movement for independence, nationalism, and legacy have played a significant role in governmental policy in Iceland (Whitehead, 2018, p.147). Icelanders refer to the early years of settlement and society described in the sagas as the “Golden Age” (Whitehead, 2018, p.147). The descendants of these early immigrants, who are easily traceable in contemporary Icelandic society, “are a source of great national pride” (Whitehead, 2018, p.147). The sagas provide a sense of identity and cultural heritage for Icelanders. The Golden Age was seen as a time of heroic deeds and adventure that laid the foundation for modern society. The continuity of their ancestry also reinforces their sense of belonging and connection to their past.

Iceland is a country that, in the early to mid-20th century, pulled itself up by its bootstraps. “It was to develop from being one of the poorest nations in Europe to a thriving, western nation-state with contemporary governmental ideologies and industry,” as noted by Sigrur Matthasdóttir (2004, p. 115). The creation and maintenance of the Icelandic Naming Committee, Icelandic Language Institute, and the Icelandic Language Committee were among the significant efforts made during this time, especially after Iceland attained independence, to “protect and maintain Icelandic heritage and culture” (Whitehead, 2018, p.147). These institutions were established to preserve the Icelandic language, considered a cornerstone of Icelandic identity, and to prevent the influx of foreign words that could threaten its purity. As a result, Iceland has perceivably been able to maintain its unique cultural heritage and linguistic identity in the face of globalization.

In later years, Iceland worked to build a strong, proud, and culturally rich nation as part of its plan to draw tourists and develop its tourism industry. Long into the late 20th century, Iceland's distinct history, accessibility to nature, and well-preserved past drew tourists. However, the turn of the 21st century and the Great Financial Crisis (GFC) of 2008 caused a turn in ideology and focus when it came to tourism.

4.2 The GFC of 2008 & the New Icelandic Focus

The tourism sector in Iceland has changed significantly in recent years. In order to satisfy the needs of visitors and generate employment opportunities, private enterprise and individual initiatives were encouraged in cultural institutions and heritage sites. However, the 2008 financial crisis shifted attention to supporting the nation's economic recovery by utilizing goods and services produced locally (Whitehead, 2018, p.148). To become “more Icelandic,” people were encouraged to support “breaking the chains of pessimism and self-restraint” and purchase goods made in their community (Sgeir Ingvarsson 2011, n.p.). The local romantic ideal of the self-sufficient farmer coexisting in harmony with the land was reinforced due to the economic collapse (Whitehead, 2018, p. 150), which was interpreted as a sign of the nation's suffering (Sigurjón B. Hafsteinsson, 2010, p. 266).

Additionally, the increased news reports on Iceland combined with the losing value of the Icelandic currency resulted in a stark increase in tourist activity (Eirikur Bergmann 2014, p. 165). Local

media discussions on tourism increased significantly, increasing the value and importance placed on tourism in the national economy. Ideas around what Iceland should promote as making them an interesting and unique destination for tourism increased as well. Nature began to be seen as a part of Iceland's heritage, a part of the Icelander's national identity, and a great economic asset (Whitehead, 2018, p.163).

According to Whitehead (2018), Icelandic identity has long been associated with nature, as she states, "the image of Icelanders as having a special, almost primeval connection to their country is not new" (p. 152). The GFC of 2008, however, turned this relationship into a marketable asset, and the link to nature started to be more strongly emphasized in heritage marketing to draw more visitors. Today, Iceland's "untamed nature and cultural heritage" are important selling points for travelers (Whitehead, 2018, p.163). Additionally, local businesses and tour operators began marketing an approachable, distinctive, and authentic tourist experience of Icelandic life since the GFC of 2008. The reappearance of those romanticized views of a simpler and more traditional way of past Icelandic life began to reemerge. Whitehead (2018) lays out this marketing strategy in wonderful detail;

Visit Iceland has introduced a new service for visiting travellers: 'Meet Guðmundur,' a human search engine where men named 'Guðmundur' answer questions posed about Iceland. This is a way of personalizing the travel experience and a way to demonstrate what a small, yet helpful group of local inhabitants exist in Iceland. One of the in-flight adverts on Icelandair emphasizes this notion, stating that all Icelanders, including important political figures, are registered in the phonebook. This could be interpreted as demonstrating a certain familiarity and trust between Icelanders, a remnant of the old farming society and culture (p.151).

In this way, Iceland tourists can "experience a metropolitan capital city, with the beating heart of a small-town" (Whitehead, 2018, p.163). Visitors can experience "wild, untamed nature and modern comforts, history as well as modernity" (Whitehead, 2018, p.163). This idealized past and closeness with nature have helped create an avenue for Icelandic businesses, heritage sites, tour companies, and brands to create something where visitors *feel* and perceive they are experiencing something authentic. As was mentioned earlier, one aspect of cultural authenticity is tourists feeling as though they are seeing or experiencing "life as it was" (Graburn, 1976).

Icelandic businesses or brands that portray a relationship with nature and a re-emergence of a romanticized past *could be* considered, in fact, authentic. If the anxieties created by the GFC of 2008 and

the rise of tourism in the 2010s helped create an internal focus on more “traditional” values, such as spending more time with family, creating and buying local products, and a heightened reverence and urge for nature preservation - then it would seem those same ideals felt by locals would also be felt by tourists. Therefore, it is not surprising that tourists are drawn to Icelandic businesses and brands embodying these values and thus consider those who highlight them as authentic Icelandic brands.

4.3 The New Icelandic “Experience”

Reflecting back on Morris, Collingwood, and Stefánsson at the turn of the 20th century, their work also promoted *experiencing* Iceland rather than merely visually admiring its landscapes from a distance. As Aldred (2015) points out, their work,

constructed a world that generated excitement and stimulation about the North because of the subject-centered approach that they offered, propelling new discoveries as it invented and reinvented the idea of the North (p.24).

In particular, Collingwood and Stefánsson wanted to “translate the landscape of the sagas from the ground up” (Aldred, 2015, p. 24) and give the viewer a sense of the surrounding environment in relation to the saga's story. This would seem to qualify it as a pioneering effort in tourist-oriented experiential storytelling. Their approach was to create a physical and immersive experience allowing visitors to feel like they were part of the story rather than just observing it, that they were *in* a place, not just at it.

As the first Icelandic settlers did hundreds of years ago, Collingwood and Stefánsson's immersive storytelling experience allowed visitors to breathe the same air, touch the same rocky terrain, and hear the same waves crash. Many Icelandic tourists today strive to have a similar experience. Tourists go to a place, as was previously mentioned, to experience a particular culture or heritage. As we have discussed, people travel to different places to have authentic experiences in other cultures. There are numerous definitions for authenticity, as we have discovered in our previous discussions. However, the most important factor influencing tourists' choices of destinations and activities is their perception of authenticity. The “real other” that the tourist is seeking is determined by perceptions of authenticity as well as the actual physical authenticity of the location (Wickens, 2017, p.269). As noted by Bueno et al. (2018),

[i]t is therefore proposed that not only the authenticity of the artifacts, physical attractions, and objects, nor the isolated social environment, nor the actions and characteristics of individuals (be they the local population or tourists) alone are important - they all need one another to exist and form the 'whole' of experience.

The totality of a tourist destination's components determines how authentic it is. Do the experiences of tourists reflect those of the community? Does this company adhere to community values? Do locals partake in this activity as well? It consists of the visual, physical, and emotional experiences as well as all of the expectations for what those will be like and how closely those expectations match the experience (Petr, 2002).

Perhaps Iceland's yearning to recapture traditional family values, increase national pride in domestic products and heritage, and focus on sharing those things and their unique nature with the world *is* an authentic Icelandic experience. If it is the experience of the people who live in the host country, is it not the desired experience of those visitors who want an authentic local experience? Therefore, Iceland's emphasis on preserving its cultural heritage and promoting sustainable tourism can allow visitors to immerse themselves in the local culture and appreciate the country's natural beauty while supporting the local economy. This aligns with the growing trend among travelers seeking meaningful experiences beyond typical tourist attractions.

4.4. What This Means for Examining Fischersund

In both *Chapter 3* and this chapter, the intricacies and nuances of authenticity in tourism and then, specifically, tourism in Iceland have been investigated. The findings from the exploration of authenticity in tourism have significant implications for evaluating the perceived authenticity of Fischersund as a tourism destination. The case of Icelandic tourism illustrates how authenticity is marketed and perceived in heritage tourism.

Iceland's identity has long been associated with nature, and this connection has been emphasized in heritage marketing since the GFC of 2008 (Whitehead, 2018) - will Fischersund's brand align with this? Icelandic businesses and tour operators also promote an approachable, distinctive, and authentic tourist experience of Icelandic life (Whitehead, 2018) - will Fischersund's brand align with this?

Moreover, suppose the anxieties triggered by the GFC of 2008 and the subsequent rise of tourism have indeed led to an overall re-emergence of traditional values, such as family time, local product consumption, and nature preservation, among Icelandic locals (as explored in the previous sections) (Whitehead, 2018). Will the Fischersund brand also incorporate these values, thus helping it to be perceived as an authentic Icelandic brand? Asking these questions and evaluating the alignment of the brand against questions such as these is how this research investigated and measured the perceived authenticity of Fischersund as both a brand and tourist experience.

5. FISCHERSUND

This case study argues that Fischersund is more than just a perfumery; it is a created “authentic” Icelandic storytelling experience that communicates directly with the senses, accesses nostalgic feelings, and creates a sense of culture and place. The physical Fischersund branded perfumery and boutique is a space and place that exists at the intersection of a shop, an experience, and a cultural heritage venue. It is at once a well-designed art gallery, an Icelandic family-run business, a cultural museum, and a shop where the scent of Iceland (as interpreted by the owners) can be purchased to take home with you. Fischersund was designed and created with great care and attention to detail, all of which contribute to telling its brand story. Visitors can expect to immerse themselves in both the brand and the history and culture of Fischersund *and* Iceland through interactive exhibits and guided tours.

The brand is known for its signature scent “experience” (Gaitens, 2023), which combines scent, sound, and “bespoke schnapps” to create a harmonious and nostalgic journey for the senses (Ministry of Scent, n.d.). The Fischersund fragrances that create this sensory experience are inspired by the Icelandic landscape and the family’s memories, intertwined to create a curated brand experience. Additionally, Fischersund offers workshops where customers can create their own personalized fragrance, called “private scent consultations” (Fischersund, n.d.), as well as private scented tours. Upon entering the space, very few people assume it is simply a shop (Jonas, 2023). As Jonas states, most people have either already heard of Fischersund and are anticipating the scent and sensory experience, or if they just happened upon the store while exploring downtown Reykjavík, they “step in and usually think, ‘what is this?’” after they hear the soft music and see the interesting art, like the moss-covered plastic chair seemingly floating on a wall (see *Appendix C, Fig. 6*, on page 95).

5.1 A Family Business

Fischersund (n.d.) describes itself as a “unique family-run perfumery” that specializes in creating artisan fragrances using high-quality Icelandic oils. The brand is run by siblings Jónsi, Lilja, Sigurrós, and Inga Birgis, who work together “seamlessly” to make music, perfumes, photographs, digital art, fine art, and graphic art designs (Jonas, 2023). The entire family has a “job” within the company and is involved on a daily basis (Jonas, 2023). The store itself is run by the three sisters, Lilja, Inga, and Sigurrós, with the whole family chipping in to make it what it is. Their carpenter father crafted the beams and floors that provide the room’s darkened interior. Their mother, a skilled seamstress, helped put some pieces together, like the embroidery on the various seat cushions (Halbert, 2022). The brother, Jónsi, helped create the “dripping and crackling soundscapes” (Maine, 2018) and finally found a place where he could officially release his scents, which had previously only been a hobby. Along with selling fragrances, Fischersund also markets scented candles, soaps, lotions, and other goods, all of which are made in Iceland by the

Fischersund team, family, and a small group of local Icelandic artisans. The role of each family member and the other Icelandic persons who are involved with the brand can be seen in *Appendix A* on page 92.

The family's involvement behind Fischersund throughout the store's creation and management is significant. The engagement of the entire family in the creation of the store gives it a personal touch that customers appreciate (Maine, 2018). It also beckons a nostalgic mood, perhaps making people picture a time when families were closer and there was seemingly more “warmth, security, and love” (Stern, 1992, p.16). All visitors to Fischersund are told that it is a family business - it is something that is always mentioned, that it is a “family-run perfumery and art collective” (Jonas, 2023).

Fischersund's story is intriguing because of the family's diverse hobbies and interests that inspired the brand's creation and the direction of the space and experience. The siblings Lilja, Inga, and Sigurrós each bring their own unique talents to the business, with Lilja as a photographer and visual artist, Inga as a designer, and Sigurrós creating natural cosmetics and managing the store (Messina, 2019). This diverse range of skills and passions has helped create an interesting space: part store, art gallery, and sensory experience.

5.1.a. Sigur Rós

One cannot mention Fischersund and not reference its tie to another famous Icelandic cultural product: that of the band Sigur Rós. The band's frontman, Jónsi, is the fourth sibling of the Fischersund bunch. As Jónsi explains, the world of scent and music tie together well. As Chan (2021) in *Rolling Stone* magazine explains,

Jónsi is best known for his musicianship, but the singer and instrumentalist has also been serving as the official Fischersund “perfumer” for the better part of a decade. The artist says it's been a welcome creative outlet for him to explore. ‘Music, I have been doing for over 30 years, so it comes very naturally to me, whereas perfumery, I have only been doing for 10 years, and is one of the hardest and most complicated things I have ever done,’ [...] “But working in the realm of the invisible is extremely fascinating to me. Both are very hard to describe but still move you in some way’.

Jonas (2023) also mentioned that the tie to the band is usually well known, and if it is not, it is mentioned - as it is seen as an extension of the family's artistry and the “art collective,” the brand also wants to be known as. She states,

Jónsi is so proud of his sisters that it's, like, he doesn't want to take their shine away. They've been the ones working on the ground getting everything going, so he doesn't want the band's popularity

to overshadow that; he is still equally proud and equally involved in it. He comes to meetings, is involved with all of the scent creations, and is one of the visionaries. None of the sisters or people working here shy away from that, either. We always chat with people if they mention it and let them know they're in the right place because we're all fans of him and the band. We're all so proud.

The link between Fischersund and Sigur Rós can be seen by their similar descriptions by media and their links to the nature of Iceland. The band's music has been used in films such as Eurovision Song Contest: The Story of Fire Saga (2020) and Planet Earth II: Islands (2016) for its ethereal qualities and references to nature and Iceland (Sigur Rós, n.d.; Chapman, n.d.). As Chapman (n.d.) points out, most media "cannot help but compare their atmospheric music to the natural icons of their homeland; the heavenly ice caps or Hadean volcanic eruptions." Words used to describe the band, such as ethereal, immersive, and atmospheric, are similar to the descriptions used for Fischersund, as will be explored later in this study.

The band Sigur Rós has always seen themselves as producing music that *they* are inspired by and enjoy instead of catering to the masses. As Chapman (n.d.) writes,

Their tenure as one of Iceland's most important musical ambassadors has seen Sigur Rós continue to redefine and challenge not only the ambient/dream-pop/post-rock genre but, more importantly, their own contribution to it. Their sound is widely seen to be dynamic, experimental, and loyal to the lead singer Jónsi's 1999 mission statement: We are simply gonna change music forever and the way people think about music. And don't think we can't do it; we will.

The band's personal interpretation of music and Iceland and how it presents this to its fans is very much in line with how Fischersund views its relationship with Iceland and its products. This will also be touched on and explored later in this research as it is one of the key strategies that sets Fischersund apart from other perfumeries and tourist-based retailers.

5.2 A Sensory and Nature-Filled Experience

As the siblings put it, the store "is a rest station in the maze that is modern life with all of its distractions and aggressions...where people can come and rest in their senses" (n.d). Whether it is the subtle but delicious scents, the slow and calming tones that seem to emanate from moss-covered walls, or the very purposefully calm and quiet demeanor of the sales associates - Fischersund begs you to stay a bit, stop the rushing, and explore. The space is a place where people come and linger; there is a "hang out" vibe to it (Jonas, 2023).

The perfumery is located at their flagship shop in downtown Reykjavik, where visitors can also experience tailor-made music and ethereal visual arts. If one peruses their website or makes it to their physical store, it is clear that the brand is tied to the earth, with imagery and art direction featuring rocks, moss, mist, twigs, and black sand. As their resident storyteller, Rachel Jonas, states, this Icelandic family has distinct memories of growing up surrounded by the wild Icelandic nature, and it exudes out of each scent. They want to share those memories with others; memories of stealing rhubarb from neighbors' gardens in the Summer or newly paved roads expanding into their childhood home of Mosfellsbær (Fischersund, n.d.). As the brother Jónsi notes, every Icelander can recognize particular notes of the scent *Útilykt*, which is inspired by the harsh cold winds and nature of Iceland in winter (Chan 2021). The scents help ground you in your location, Iceland.

It is the nature of Iceland the Fischersund siblings love to “play” with because, as they see it, Iceland has an aura of place about it. Jonas (2023) points out how Iceland is “such a dramatic landscape, especially for tourists.” While California might also have jagged mountains, crazy winds, snow, and the ocean - as she puts it, “it’s just different here. This visceral, dramatic place is totally different from others, and we like to play with that and what that means in scent and the senses.”

The physical shop serves as a gateway for visitors to engage with the Fischersund story in a meaningful way, fully and bodily. It also serves as a cultural storyteller; it is a place where visitors can learn more about Icelandic heritage, culture, family life, and memories. Hand-crafted scent-making, Icelandic artistry and nature, and emotional connection are the core of the brand's values. This research examines the way in which storytelling techniques are used in each of these and contributes to Fischersund's seemingly successful acceptance from tourists as an authentic Icelandic brand.

6. BRAND STORYTELLING

Storytelling has become an essential tool for successful branding as it promises customers the satisfaction of their needs and an entirely new experience (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010, p.42). According to Hermann Wala, an interesting story can help a brand stand out, gain attention, offer emotionally added value, and provide material for word-of-mouth (Wala, 2015, p.168). Stories are persuasive because they are effortlessly stored in our episodic memory and are easily recalled when we reencounter the product (Wala, 2015, p.170).

When it comes to branding, well-managed brands have a story consistent with their core values (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010, p.46). Such stories offer experiences and brand identification possibilities, making the brand emotionally charged, interesting, and attractive to customers (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010, p.47). Meda Mucundorfeanu argues that brands often use storytelling to highlight and transform a specific element at the brand's core, such as the product's shape, family tradition, or reference to historical events (Mucundorfeanu, 2017, pp.35-39).

The power of storytelling lies in its ability to evoke sympathy and gain the customers' attention, leading to a higher chance of being chosen than the competition (Mucundorfeanu, 2017, p.33). However, it is crucial that such narratives are not used for image-boosting at any cost, and ethical factors must always be considered (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010, p.52).

6.1. Brand Communications & Storytelling

Branding and storytelling are two of the most crucial components of contemporary marketing. As mentioned, stories allow people to relate to one another, the world around them, and themselves. "Products and brands frequently play both central and peripheral roles" within a person's world and the stories that make up that world, according to research (Woodside & Miller, 2008, p.97). Products and brands are deeply ingrained in daily life, from the face wash one uses in the morning to the clothes one wears to work and the vehicle one drives home. Brands are more than just logos; they express the experiences and values a business provides to its clients.

Businesses like Fischersund use various storytelling techniques to build powerful brands. Brand storytelling is a popular technique that entails developing a story closely related to the brand and its values (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010). Companies can use storytelling as a potent tool to emotionally connect with their audience, arouse favorable emotions, and forge enduring bonds with consumers. More so than ever before in our contemporary society.

Before today's new media and technology, brand communication was considered a bit of a one-trick pony. Brand owners and advertising agencies would create the brand "image," and mass advertising was used to project that image into consumers' minds as "passive recipients" of the brand message (Baker, 2013, p.12). Today, brands "are created by *interactions* of multiple parties, institutions,

publics, and social forces” (O’Guinn and Muniz 2010: 133, Ind et al. 2012) and very much include the ideas, thoughts, and actions of the end consumer. Today’s brands come from a more, as Baker (2013) states, “co-creative” place. As a result, storytelling is crucial because, as was mentioned, the power of stories lies in their capacity to unite individuals, foster a sense of community, and encourage shared perspectives and experiences (Aaker & Aaker, 2016, p.54).

As consumers seek out brands with which they can connect on a deeper level, the relationship between branding and storytelling has grown significantly in recent years. Today, many businesses use storytelling in their brand communications to build strong, enduring brands. In today’s world of information overload, brands are seen as an essential part of our social, cultural, and consumer experiences, giving us a sense of direction and faith (Baker, 2013). Brands typically use storytelling for persuasion, building trust with their audience, and creating an aura of authenticity. Various tactics could be employed when businesses consider incorporating storytelling into their brand. The Fischersund brand has incorporated three strong storytelling tactics. The exploration of these three tactics forms the bulk of the research in this thesis and will be broken down thoroughly in *Chapters 7, 8, and 9*.

6.2 Fischersund: A Storytelling Brand

From the beginning, the owners of Fischersund have positioned themselves as "storytellers." Many brand and store websites include a section where consumers can discover more about it, usually the “About” or “About Us” tab. However, when exploring Fischersund’s website, one can learn more about the brand by clicking the "Our *Story*" tab. When customers enter the physical store, their employees—aptly referred to as Fischersund "storytellers" (Fischersund, n.d.; Jonas, 2023) —take visitors on a sensory and atmospheric tour through branded stories and poems. Instead of simple descriptions, the scents are accompanied by their individually branded scent poems (*Appendix B*, page 93), which is explored in the following section, *Section 4.3*.

Fischersund’s intentions as a storytelling experience can be seen in every inch of the branded space with the aid of thoughtfully planned sensory and experientially designed elements. The shop's interior is simple, refined, and carefully curated in everything that can be seen and experienced within the shop's walls. Every detail of the shop has been created with great care and thought. The interior holds minimal and straightforward furnishings and plain black walls only lightly adorned with fixtures and art, allowing the scents to take center stage and the imagination to fill in the blanks. Images of the Fischersund interior can be seen in *Appendix C* on pages 94 - 97. Jonas (2023) explains, “Black is a wonderful color to display art; it is cleansing as well.” Products on wooden tables and shelves emphasize natural and organic materials; nothing is overwhelming, overdesigned, or distracting. The overall atmosphere of the shop is calm and inviting, creating a sense of tranquility that encourages customers to browse and explore. The music is just audible enough to be noticed; it is noticeably slow, with deep tones

that immediately seem juxtaposed with the outside world's noise. The candles are kept under glass dome cloches while a small jar of testing strips accompanies each perfume, keeping the scents from overwhelming. The interior is dark and warm; it creates a sense of security and tranquility.

Nature, Icelandic folklore, and the family's memories and experiences all inspire the scents, and the basis of the stories told within its walls. The only real decoration in the store is natural elements like moss, sea grass, and Icelandic plants that have been captured in their ever-so-slightly withering state forever in resin. The storyteller and scent poems invite the readers in on the childhood memories of the four siblings. Icelandic folklore weaves its way into the brand narrative, showing up in illustrations and art for sale, traditional Icelandic herbs used in some of the scents, and references to old Icelandic medicinal texts found illustrated on blankets and kerchiefs.

Lilja Birgisdóttir, the brand ambassador for Fischersund, explains that fine art has always played a significant role in the family's history. This has also helped the brand understand the importance and power of storytelling, how it captures attention, helps others understand messaging, and creates a sense of relatability. Their artistic backgrounds spurred them to “approach each visual element not just as something for the eye, but complete with a concept and a story” (Ministry of Scent, n.d.). The family members' various artistic backgrounds and personal experiences, combined with other various "skill sets," has enabled the brand to “go deeper with [their] storytelling” (Ministry of Scent, n.d.). Scent no. 54, inspired by the siblings' memories of their father returning from his work as a carpenter, was turned into a scent with multiple olfactory notes adored by the family and visitors alike.

Interestingly, Fischersund is a brand that relies on word-of-mouth and social media only, with no traditional marketing in its mix (Gaitens, 2023). The storytelling brand seems to rely on the story others create about it. This is not completely out of the left field. Word-of-mouth marketing and storytelling are intertwined, as the earliest forms of information were passed this way; its “roots go back to the earliest days of the human race” (Smith, 2015, p.224). Whether it was “prehistoric cave drawings” and “sitting around a campfire” to eventually “books, photographs, and films” (Stogner, 2011, p.189), humans have wanted to share their experiences orally and visually with others. Storytelling was originally an “oral practice” (Smith, 2015, p.224). As Jeffers (2004) notes, "the roots of the story lie in the audience," suggesting that the audience plays a crucial role in the storytelling process. It is fitting, then, that a brand so focused on storytelling would also rely on the power of storytelling to trickle out and inspire its consumers and, ultimately, encourage them to buy the product(s).

By mainly focusing on storytelling, the senses, and creating an emotional connection, Fischersund thus creates memorable experiences that customers *want* to discuss (Wala, 2015, p. 168). The brand believes in its ability to create a memorable and authentic experience that will be shared. The specific types of experience and storytelling that the Fischersund brand creates will be explored throughout this

research and hopefully show that it lends itself toward word-of-mouth marketing, testimonials, and recommendations.

6.3 The Scent Poems

In Fischersund, the atmosphere invites sensations, feelings, and conversation to be exchanged and consumed *together*. The storyteller asks questions of visitors to the shop and can bring different groups of visitors together while asking these questions, involving them in the brand, telling them about the history of the family and company, and reading the scent poems. The scent poem readings aim to enhance the olfactory experience and evoke emotions in the visitors by creating moods of nostalgia and a sense of shared community of your personal human experience through memories. As the poems are read, the storyteller slowly reads each line and allows the memories and inspirations of the Fischersund siblings to permeate the room. Visitors tend to close their eyes, sometimes connecting their own past memories or relating to the new ones they might be experiencing here in the store or on their trip to Iceland. As Jonas (2023) describes,

Lilja and I are in charge of the ‘storytelling’ aspect of it, so I feel like that’s one of the things we really love. We spend all this time creating one scent, and there are like 60-80 different things in one scent and that scent becomes a new thing when you put it on you, and when I put it on me, and in the same way when you experience a scent experience, it becomes this new thing, *our* emotions and *our* memories become reflected... but in a different way with *each* person that comes in.

While the scent poems may incorporate scents that seem unfamiliar to tourists and visitors to Iceland, such as beached whale, rhubarb, or arctic pine and Sitka spruce - the scents can also serve more of a grounding purpose. Like Lilja laughingly said, “[t]here’s not actually whale in it... [t]hat line is to get you located on the beach” (Gaitens, 2023).

The scents and the poems accompanying them are more of a story the family of Fischersund is telling. It is the family’s stories and memories of childhood, family, and Iceland (Jonas, 2023; Gaitens, 2023; Pantechncn, n.d.). The stories are more to be appreciated as art, just as poetry should be. Whether someone relates to the specific scent or memory is seemingly inconsequential to the family. When asked if the team is aiming to try and have visitors think of their childhood memories or their trip to Iceland, Jonas (2023) stated,

I don’t know that we really care. I know that sounds really weird
But I know instinctively and through working with smell that
there is going to be connecting layers in there. Like, maybe

rhubarb isn't part of it, but orange is. Sometimes people will cry and say, 'Oh, this No.54, this oil varnish, it reminds me of my.....' or people will have very interesting parallels to the scents that are their own, and I think that is kind of the magic of it.

So, while creating relatable scents and stories for their consumers may not be the *initial* aim, Fischersund is aware of the power of the senses, specifically scent, and how it relates to storytelling. According to Díaz (2012), it is crucial to highlight the significant role of olfactory marketing, as humans can remember 35% of what they smell. Furthermore, Bushdid et al. (2014) research demonstrated that the human nose could discern over a trillion olfactory stimuli, making it one of the most sensitive and emotional senses. The ability of the nose to associate specific odors with particular situations has been affirmed by studies in neuromarketing, which suggest that 75% of our emotions are linked to odors (Jiménez-Marín et al., 2016).

It is a personal and emotional relationship that Fischerund creates with its multisensory storytelling environment; it is an environment that involves all of the senses at the same time while enveloping visitors in its brand story. Fischersund is a brand that simultaneously immerses people in the culture and history of Fischersund *and* Iceland. This emotional and sensorial immersion stands apart from other retailers. In typical retail stores, products are simply on display, waiting for consumers to create the interaction based on specific stimuli such as product colors or typeface used (Brakus et al., 2009, p.53). This is merely brand *involvement*, “characterized by *mild* affect” (Brakus et al., 2009, p.53). Fischersund's storytelling, however, helps create a sense of brand *attachment*, which “refers to a *strong emotional bond*, or *hot* affect, between a consumer and a brand [...] as evidenced by its three dimensions—affection, passion, and connection” (Brakus et al., 2009, p.53).

By incorporating storytelling into all aspects of their retail elements, they are able to connect with their audience on this deeper level of affection, passion, and connection and create a more meaningful experience than those visitors of more “typical” retailers. As the Fischersund team puts it, their “ultimate goal... is to design the right environment to foster the element of connection that is created by shared human experience through scent” (Gaitens, 2023). That connection is created through their branded storytelling tactics investigated in *Chapters 7, 8, and 9*. First, however, what exactly is it that makes storytelling so effective? This is where the exploration begins.

6.4 Power of Storytelling

Everyone enjoys a good story (Woodside, 2010, p.531). There are many different ways that stories have been used to transmit information throughout history and across cultures. As Brockington et al. point out, “[w]e are all storytellers. From the bards and troubadours of the Middle Ages to the most recent Hollywood blockbuster, humans are exceptionally attracted to telling and listening to stories” (p.1).

What is it about stories, though, that makes them so potent - that draws people in to listen, that makes people remember them? Studies on storytelling are prevalent in the social sciences. The topic has been examined in many disciplines, from the social sciences such as anthropology, psychology, and neuroscience, the humanities such as museology and folklore, and in branding and marketing academia as well as consumer behavior (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010; Sitzia, 2023; Egeler, 2021; Woodside & Miller, 2008).

Physiologically and biologically, stories hold tremendous power. In the field of neuroscience, several conclusions have been made regarding storytelling: stories activate various areas of the brain, including speech, empathy, and pain; they trigger emotional responses through the release of hormones; they plant ideas in the minds of listeners, synchronizing the brains of the narrator and the listener (Sammer, 2015, pp. 29-34). Storytelling is also an effective aid to memory, making sense of the world, and strengthening emotional connections (Aaker & Aaker, 2016, p.53). A former CEO of Saatchi & Saatchi, one of the world's leading advertising firms, stated, "stories represent the decisive connection tool between people" (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010, p.45). Stories are not just mere forms of entertainment or communication. They have been proven to hold significant power over the human brain, impacting various areas and triggering emotional responses (Sammer, 2015, pp. 29-34). Psychologist Melanie C. Green from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill "discovered that for people who experienced a similar situation or something related to the situation described in a story, the immersion in the story is greater than for those who did not live through such an experience and therefore find it harder to relate to it" (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010, p.52).

Cognitive psychologists have found that people remember stories 22 times better than pure facts (Sammer, 2015, p. 27). Several studies have shown that putting facts and information into the form of a story can significantly improve retention. For instance, Chip Heath, a Stanford professor, gave students data on crime statistics and asked them to discuss whether crime is a significant problem. While only 10% of the speakers incorporated the data into a story, 63% of the students recalled those stories, compared to only 5% who remembered statistics (Heath & Heath, 2007, pp. 42-44). Additionally, researchers at the University of California, Irvine, demonstrated that stories with elevated emotional arousal enhanced long-term memory retention. (Cahill & McGaugh, 1995, p. 416). These findings highlight the effectiveness of storytelling in improving the retention of information. Because stories are more likely to be remembered and have an emotional aspect tied to them, they foster and encourage social communication (Aaker & Aaker, 2016, p.53). People are likelier to share, retell and talk about a story because it is far more relatable than simply reciting facts. Stories, as opposed to lectures, inspire people to take action, nurture interpersonal connections between people, and inspire brand and product loyalty (Aaker & Aaker, 2016, p.54). In this way, brands use storytelling to connect with consumers emotionally.

Emotional storytelling in branding, or creating a “feel-good” story that creates positive and relatable emotions about a brand and incorporates the senses, can help make it more memorable (Brockington et al., 2021; Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010). It can also help the information and story about the brand be more persuasive, as in more easily accepted and trusted (Sammer, 2015, pp. 5-6). Instead of just listing their products' advantages or practical functions, brands can use the power of storytelling to help them create unique and compelling ways to communicate the information, aura, values, and beliefs of their products or services (Wala, 2015, p. 170). In branding, stories are more relatable than the short recital of facts (Aaker & Aaker, 2016). The power of stories lies in their capacity to unite individuals, foster a sense of community, and encourage shared perspectives and experiences (Aaker & Aaker, 2016, p.54). As will be further discussed shortly, by incorporating storytelling into their branding strategy, brands can establish an emotional connection with their audience, differentiate themselves from competitors, and create a more memorable and engaging brand experience for their customers.

People are naturally drawn to stories because they arouse emotions, provide context and meaning, and enable the listener to experience the story in a particular way (Aaker & Aaker, 2016, p.53). In the case of this research, consumers of a specific brand, Fischersund, are the target audience of the storytelling. By examining how storytelling is used in the brand communications of the Icelandic brand Fischersund, we will see how brands use storytelling to be more persuasive, gain greater consumer trust, and create an aura of authenticity.

6.5 Fischersund’s Storytelling Tactics

Storytelling is at the heart of everything Fischersund presents. However, a wide range of strategies and channels are covered by the term “storytelling” in brand communications by businesses. This research investigates how the Fischersund brand uses three specific storytelling tactics to set itself apart from other retailers in Iceland: a strong signature brand story, nostalgic storytelling, and experiential storytelling. This study will examine these three approaches to learn how they have affected consumer perceptions of the Fischersund brand. By analyzing the impact of these storytelling methods on consumer perception, this study aimed to gain insights into the effectiveness of different storytelling techniques in building brand identity and how each has contributed to building a strong Icelandic brand with an aura of authenticity.

6.5.a. A Signature Brand Story

A signature brand story is an intriguing, genuine, and engaging narrative that communicates a strategic message that facilitates a company’s growth by clarifying or enhancing its brand, customer relationships, values, goals, and business strategy (Aaker & Aaker, 2016, p. 49). A signature story must be captivating to attract the target audience, providing a solid reason for them to pay attention and perceive the story. To capture the interest and attention of the intended audience member, it must be

thought-provoking, intriguing, informative, or entertaining (Aaker & Aaker, 2016, p. 49). In essence, a signature story acts as a valuable strategic asset for the brand that, over time, inspires, guides, and enables growth both internally and externally (Aaker & Aaker, 2016, p. 49).

6.5.b. Nostalgic Storytelling

Nostalgic storytelling in branding is a powerful approach that aims to evoke emotions and establish connections with consumers by reminiscing. According to studies by Unger, McConocha, & Faier, J. A. (1991), nostalgia is an emotion or mood that results from thinking about things, people, or experiences connected to a “bygone era.” It can affect consumer preferences for possessions that elicit nostalgia (Sierra & McQuitty, 2007, p.100). Additionally, people who value the past are more likely to buy items they used to own as adults, showing that attitudes toward the past can influence purchasing decisions (Sierra & McQuitty, 2007, p.100).

As nostalgia fosters a sense of authenticity, gives legitimacy to our way of life, and affects consumer behavior, nostalgia is pervasive in contemporary culture (Sierra & McQuitty, 2007, p.107). Historical nostalgia allows consumers to identify with a bygone era that exemplifies perceived desirable qualities and values (Stern, 1992, p.14, p.15). This empathetic engagement in historical nostalgia stories can create positive beliefs about the current personal relevance of the product or brand, often affiliated with interpretive or affective claims (Stern, 1992, p.16). When it comes to emotion-driven messages, empathetic responses to advertisements tend to happen more frequently (Stern, 1992, p.16). As a result, advertising tactics that employ nostalgic storytelling seek to arouse consumer empathy with a made-up past and evoke an imaginative adventure that appeals to their emotions, potentially influencing their opinions and purchasing decisions (Stern, 1992, p.16).

6.5.c. Experiential Storytelling

Experiential storytelling is potent in branding and brand storytelling because it influences consumers' perceptions of authenticity. Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) contend that the traditional information processing model of consumer behavior, which emphasizes rational decision-making and choice, may overlook significant consumer phenomena involving subjective experiences and emotional responses. This experiential view, first proposed by Holbrook and Hirschman in 1982, sees consumption as a subjective state of consciousness with symbolic meanings, hedonistic reactions, and aesthetic standards. "Experiential learning is a process by which a learner constructs knowledge, skills, and value from direct experiences," writes Gross and Rutland (2017) in support of this (p.1).

According to Pine & Gilmore (2014), businesses worldwide have recently intentionally shifted towards providing more experiential goods and services after realizing the economic value of interacting with customers in unique ways. For example, take the American-based electronic store Best Buy, which incorporates a well-trained “Geek Squad” team to tackle any and all issues with their products, both in the

store and at one's home. Their role is to create a helpful and guiding *experience* for Best Buy consumers by acting as technological “geeks” and being there to help with any problems, even after purchase (Pine & Gilmore, 2014, p.25). This allows the Best Buy brand to live beyond just the product and turns it into the Best Buy *experience*.

Since consumers now evaluate offerings based on whether they feel they are authentic, Pine and Gilmore (2014) emphasize the significance of authenticity in this “experience economy.” Pine and Gilmore (2014) emphasize that managing customer perceptions of authenticity is essential for businesses to avoid being perceived by consumers as fake or unauthentic. “But companies also need to get good at managing the customer perception of the authenticity of their offerings, their locations, and their company,” they write, “[o]r else they risk invalidating themselves in the eyes of customers as fake, contrived, disingenuous, or phony” (Pine & Gilmore, 2014, p.28).

Furthermore, both directly and indirectly through associations with brand personalities, brand experience significantly impacts consumer satisfaction and loyalty (Brakus et al., 2009). Beyond its practical advantages, experiential marketing, and storytelling, according to Cleff (2014), can affect a brand's essence. Businesses must use experiential storytelling to build brand experiences that connect with customers, reflect their self-image, and elicit emotions to increase brand authenticity and foster steadfast customer loyalty as consumers seek out authentic experiences more and more. Experiential learning is “a process by which a learner constructs knowledge, skills, and value from direct experiences,” according to Gross and Rutland (2017, p.1). Companies can develop compelling and authentic brand narratives that resonate with consumers by incorporating experiential elements into their storytelling.

The following chapter, *Chapter 7*, focuses on using signature brand stories in persuasive storytelling and building trust. By examining the impact of Fischersund's signature brand story on consumer perceptions, insights can be gained into the effectiveness of this storytelling technique in building brand identity, creating emotional connections with customers, and establishing a sense of authenticity.

7. SIGNATURE BRAND STORIES

Customers will form an emotional connection with a brand if its words and actions are consistent, laying the groundwork for a long-lasting relationship and a perception of authenticity (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010, p.28). Brands create positive experiences and steadily boost customer trust due to their ability to persuade through their storytelling in the form of a signature brand story and create an emotionally relatable brand persona. Building this trust is essential to developing an authentic brand—one that expresses its identity and then acts in accordance with that identity.

7.1 Brand Personas

The distinctive signature story of a brand is closely related to its brand personas, which serve as the relatable and approachable “human” side of the story, acting as the main character in the brand's narratives. Brand personas are the human-like representation of a brand's character and personality, and they play a crucial role in brand storytelling and signature brand stories. Brands, brand stories, and brand personas become part of consumers' lives. Escalas (2004) noted that consumers could use them to construct and cultivate their self-concept and relationship with the brand.

In particular, persona-based storytelling is fundamental to persuasiveness, narrative, and brands and is closely linked to the theories and research surrounding self-brand connections. According to Herskovitz & Crystal (2010), persona-based storytelling is absolutely essential to branding. By creating a compelling brand persona that is well-defined, recognizable, memorable, and appealing to their audience, brands can forge an emotional connection with their consumers (p.26). The brand persona serves as a point of reference that the audience can relate to and recognize, regardless of the particular story or message being conveyed. Strong brand personas exhibit human-like qualities such as bravery, decisiveness, determination, work ethic, honesty, flexibility, responsibility, and curiosity (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010, pp.24-28).

For example, the importance of brand personas in brand storytelling is evident in the case of Volkswagen. According to Herskovitz and Crystal (2010), Volkswagen's brand persona of the “People's Car” was a central element of its brand storytelling strategy (p.26). It positioned the brand as an accessible, reliable, and trustworthy option for the masses. This brand persona was consistently depicted in various stories and messages conveyed by Volkswagen, emphasizing honesty, responsibility, and friendliness, resonating with consumers, forming a strong emotional connection with the brand, and making the consumer feel they would be considered “smart” for purchasing a Volkswagen product (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010, pp.24-28).

As exemplified by Volkswagen, the concept of persona-based storytelling is fundamental to persuasiveness, narrative, and brands and is closely linked to the theories and research surrounding self-brand connections. Persona-based storytelling is essential to branding. It creates a compelling brand

persona that is well-defined, recognizable, memorable, and appealing to the target audience, forging an emotional connection and enhancing the brand's authenticity (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010).

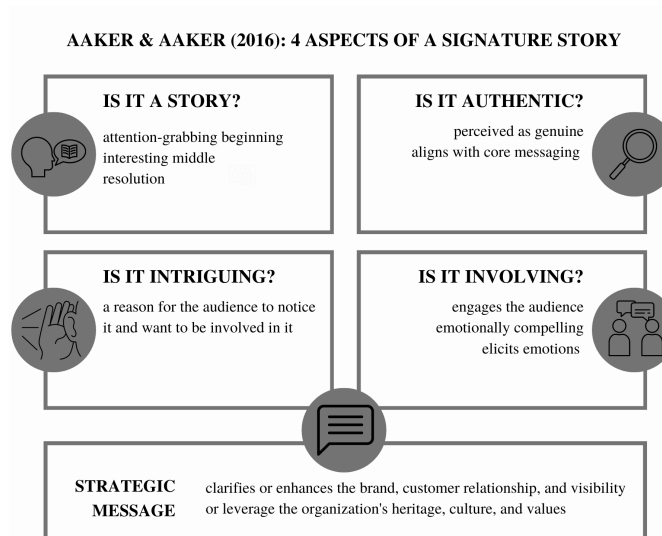
Think of the brand persona as a distinct individual, and ask yourself if you would want that person as a friend. A friend can persuade someone much easier than a random stranger, as there is a sense of genuineness and emotional investment in a friendship. Similarly, relatable brand personas that can address implicit needs and attitudes help form strong “self-brand connections,” as argued by Escalas (2004), which are the link between a consumer and the brand persona (p.168). The ability of a brand persona to be relatable and trustworthy enhances its perception of authenticity, deepening the emotional connection between the brand and its consumers.

Brand personas are critical building blocks of brand storytelling and signature brand stories. They serve as the relatable and human-like representation of a brand's character and personality. Persona-based storytelling, exemplified by the Volkswagen story, is essential in crafting brand narratives that resonate with consumers and create lasting emotional bonds with the brand (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010).

7.2 A Deeper Look at Signature Brand Stories

Aaker and Aaker (2016) define a signature story as “an intriguing, authentic, involving narrative with a strategic message that enables a firm to grow by clarifying or enhancing its brand, customer relationships, organization, and/or business strategy” (p. 49). There are four qualifications for a brand to have a successful signature story, according to Aaker and Aaker (2016), which include asking the following (p.60): Is it a story? Is it intriguing? Is it authentic? Is it involving?” These qualifications can be seen below:

Fig. 1: Chart showing Aaker & Aaker’s (2016) breakdown of the four aspects of creating a successful signature story and the overall message that these four aspects should help the brand with its overall strategic message.



For it to be considered a *story* at all, it “should have a narrative with a beginning that captures our attention... a middle that creates interest... and a resolution’ (p.60). A list of facts or features does not count. This story must be *intriguing*, and there should be a reason for the audience to notice and process it. According to Aaker and Aaker (2016), the story should be thought-provoking, novel, provocative, engaging, informative, newsworthy, or entertaining.

Authenticity is also essential for the story to be perceived as genuine, and, as was stated, there must be “substance” behind it (p.50). The word “authenticity,” used by these researchers, “means that the story audience does not perceive the story to be phony, contrived or a transparent selling effort and that there is substance behind it” (Aaker & Aaker, 2016, p.50). The authors note that the story *can* be fictional, but it should not try and push a mission or belief that it is unbelievable or obviously motivated by sales goals. The presence of substance confirms and supports the message, while the absence of substance ultimately tarnishes the brand and undercuts the story's authenticity (Aaker & Aaker, 2016).

Lastly, a story that engages the audience and typically prompts a cognitive, emotional, or behavioral response is *involving* (Aaker & Aaker, 2016). An emotionally compelling story can elicit emotions related to sympathetic characters or surprise. The audience may be persuaded behaviorally to consider different brands when making their next purchase or to tell others about the experience.

A signature story will have a strategic message that clarifies or enhances the brand, customer relationship, and visibility or leverage the organization's heritage, culture, and values. In addition, it can help articulate the current business strategy and the organization's future vision, with a story arc for how to get there (Aaker & Aaker, 2016).

Instead of tactical stories, which are used to accomplish short-term communication goals, signature stories gain credibility, traction, and influence over time (Aaker & Aaker, 2016). An engaging, genuine, and involving story with a clear message qualifies as a signature story. In conclusion, any brand that wants to clarify or improve its brand and customer relationships must develop a signature story that satisfies the criteria of being intriguing, authentic, involving, and having a strategic message. According to Aaker and Aaker (2016), a story is more than just a collection of facts; it is a compelling narrative that elicits a reaction from the audience, whether cognitive, emotional, or behavioral. Using an engaging and genuine story, a brand can increase its visibility, image, personality, relevance, and value proposition, among other things.

7.3 Fischersund’s Storytelling: Brand Persona

To gauge the success of Fischersund’s signature brand story, we will first determine the brand persona Fischersund seems to be creating. This persona will be based on their use of particular vocabulary, their descriptions of products, art direction, physical and digital imagery, and articles written about the brand.

As previously mentioned, the brand persona's emotional connection is based on its ability to address implicit needs and attitudes, heightening its sense of brand authenticity.

After this brand persona is established, the research will address the four questions, or criteria, laid forth by Aaker and Aaker (2016) on creating a memorable experience and see how well the Fischersund brand and brand persona align with these. First, does the overall Fischersund brand tell a story? Is that story intriguing? Is it authentic? Lastly, is the Fischersund story involving? As Aaker and Aaker (2016) point out, a story is more than just a collection of facts; it is a compelling narrative that elicits a reaction from the audience, whether it be cognitive, emotional, or behavioral. In the following sections, this study will see how well Fischersund holds up to all these things.

7.3.a. Fischersund: Their Brand Persona

To try and capture the essence of Fischersund's brand persona, this study looked at several things: the words and descriptions used by the brand, the basic description of overall imagery and art direction used, the words used by press and media, and the words used by consumers (or brand engagers) via Fischersund Instagram. Using a co-word analysis technique, the textual data was investigated to find similarities and trends in word usage across all the previously mentioned communication channels. Co-word analysis is a content analysis method that involves studying the co-occurrence of keywords in textual data to identify relationships and interactions between research topics and emerging trends. It measures the strength of the association between keywords. It has been widely used in analyzing extensive data from sources like social media and media corpus, according to Gómez-Suárez & Martínez-Ruiz (2016). Should the brand persona be cohesive, genuine, and resonate with consumers, it can be assumed that most of the words will be aligned across all of these platforms.

Figure no. 2, on the following page, is a compilation of the words and descriptions used. In this chart, each of the channels of communication that were investigated can be seen on the far left side. A larger version of this chart can be viewed as Appendixes F on pages. The right column includes words or descriptions pulled directly from the channel sources. With this information, an assessment of an overall persona or personality created by Fischersund could be formed. For a word or description to make it onto the list, each had to be counted thrice for each communication channel by three or more different sources within those channels. Certain words were used many times and are mentioned in the chart below. For example, the word “nature” and its variations are mentioned 28 times, “history” and its variations are used 16 times, and “family” and its variations are used at least ten times by the press and media.

Fig.2: Chart showing channels of communication by brand, media, and customers on the left side, with the vocabulary used on the right. A larger version of this table can be seen in Appendix E on page 99.

BRAND PERSONA INVESTIGATION: WORDS, DESCRIPTIONS	
USED BY BRAND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sensory, senses, music, scent • experience • rest • space, place • artist, artistic, design • atmosphere, ethereal • natural, nature • family, history, past • hand made, crafted, signature, • environment, sustainably packaged • cleansing • Iceland
DESCRIPTION OF IMAGES & ART DIRECTION OF BRAND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • artist, artistic, design • moody, atmospheric, environment, ethereal, dark • natural, nature, outdoors • moss, stone, wood, smoke • hand made, crafted, craft • Icelandic • modern twist, unique
USED BY PRESS & MEDIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fragrance, aroma, scent, smell • artisanal, handmade, hand crafted, crafted, artistic • natural, organic, wild harvested • "nature" and its variations are used 28 times • historical, past, chronicles • "history" and its variations are used 16 times • "family" or related words appear 10 times • "experiential" or similar variations were used 5 times • "sensory" or its variations are used 5 times
USED IN ENGAGEMENT ON INSTAGRAM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explore, experience, visit • memories, remember, souvenir • enchanting, beautiful, dreamy, magic, sublime, beauty • treasure, love • aesthetic, artist, artistic, art, design • journey, transportive, discover, escape • raw, real, fresh

Based on the words and descriptions used by the brand, the basic description of overall imagery and art direction used, the words used by press and media, and the words used by customers and engagement on social media, Fischersund's brand persona can be perceived as an authentic, sensory, and artistic brand that is deeply connected to nature and history. The brand portrays itself as a space for rest and cleansing, where customers can have a slow-paced and memorable experience that transports them to Iceland's raw and natural beauty. The brand is also committed to using hand-crafted techniques to create signature scents that are sustainably packaged. This commitment to craftsmanship and sustainability adds to the brand's perception of authenticity and reinforces the idea that the brand is grounded in tradition and history. In addition, the 100% natural fragrances are created using only Icelandic-based oils and scents, which they source by working with an Icelandic distiller. As Lilja told the Ministry of Scent (n.d.),

What makes these oils so unique is the fact that everything she distilled grows wild in Iceland and is watered by the clean water

of Icelandic nature. It's been said that she sent her oils to evaluators in Grass, France — the go-to location for global ingredient sourcing — for examination and was told her oils were the cleanest oils they had ever seen. She is also really experimental and always up for trying to distill something truly unique.

One of the sisters, Inga, oversees all of the packaging design and, with the family, is always striving to find new sources for packaging that is sustainable and eco-friendly (Jonas, 2023; Fischersund, n.d.). These touchpoints showcase how the brand stays true to its values and goals of creating authentically Icelandic, sustainable, and naturally based products.

Overall, Fischersund's brand persona is cohesive and resonates with customers. The words and imagery used across all four channels align and reinforce the brand's commitment to sensory experiences, nature, and craftsmanship. Using the information collected, Fischersund's brand persona could be described with more detail and with the following human traits and personalities:

Authentic: Fischersund is a family business; it uses traditional hand-made techniques and tells stories based on memories, which gives the brand an authentic and trustworthy persona.

Artistic: The brand's use of artistic and moody imagery and the emphasis on design and craftsmanship suggests a creative and artistic persona.

Natural: Fischersund's deep connection to nature and the outdoors reinforces its natural and organic persona.

Nostalgic: The brand's use of words like “past,” “history,” and “chronicles,” as well as its emphasis on family and tradition, suggests a historical and nostalgic persona.

Sensory: The brand's focus on sensory experiences, such as scent and music, reinforces its persona as a brand that values and prioritizes the senses.

Sophisticated: Fischersund's commitment to sustainability, craftsmanship, artistic creation, and unique experiences adds to its sophisticated and refined persona.

Adventurous: The brand's use of words like “journey,” “transportive,” and “escape” suggests an adventurous and exploratory persona. Fischersund is a brand that emphasizes discovery.

These human characteristics correlate well with the earlier idea of Fischersund's brand persona being perceived as an authentic, sensory, and artistic brand that is deeply connected to nature and history. This perception is reinforced by Fischersund's cohesive and resonant brand tactics, which align with this persona. On top of this, these characteristics help solidify Fischersund as an *Icelandic* brand with these human characteristics. As Kilduff & Núñez-Tabales (2016) point out, “[e]very place (country, region, city, neighborhood, etc.) has an image that develops in the minds of consumers by means of media, education,

travel, immigrants, purchase of exported goods, etc. (p.87). After the Great Financial Crisis of 2008, Icelandic businesses were encouraged to value tourism and place a heavier emphasis on creating things that were more ‘Icelandic.’ Whitehead (2018) describes how “[i]n all areas of consumption, Icelanders were encouraged to consume locally-produced goods and services because the only way upwards was for Iceland to become ‘more Icelandic’ (p.148). According to Inga R. Sigurðardóttir (2008), as found in Whitehead’s (2018) research,

it seemed that true happiness was now to be found in giving and purchasing items which were practical and long-lasting, not cheap and pleasingly impractical. The article concludes that Icelanders will choose locally-produced goods, which are worth much more than ‘mass-produced junk’ from abroad (p.150).

As for both the brand and the country being perceived as having “adventurous” qualities, this ties into the clichés of the island nation. As Whitehead (2018) writes,

One of the main clichés in the Icelandic tourist industry is describing it as the ‘land of ice and fire.’ The insinuation here is that Iceland’s entire culture and heritage can be summarized in one stereotype as a land of extremes, whether that be weather, nature, people, or history. (p.146)

The use of words such as “natural,” “history,” “family,” and “adventurous” is tied to notions of authentic “Icelandic”-ness, as was explained in *Chapter 4*.

Fischersund's ability to relate to its consumers through this persona can be seen as largely driven by its commitment to sustainability, craftsmanship, and unique experiences. Fischersund appeals to consumers’ yearning for brand authenticity and their desire for ethical consumption by emphasizing natural materials and traditional hand-made techniques. The brand’s focus on sensory experiences like scent, touch, and music also taps into consumers’ desire for immersive and emotionally rewarding experiences. Fischersund’s historical, familial, and nostalgic persona also speaks to consumers’ attitudes toward tradition and heritage, creating a sense of familiarity and connection; also allowing tourists to Iceland to engage with and experience a more “authentic” side of Iceland they might otherwise not. Finally, the brand’s adventurous spirit and emphasis on discovery invite consumers to let down their guard and explore everything previously mentioned. When creating the space, the family wanted to keep all of the historical elements like the old wooden beams, the lofted area above, and the stone-entombed basement below. Jonas (2023) states that

we liked having the loft and the basement. We liked having all of these little ‘secret’ spots. It highlights that feeling of discovery. It is like,

you have looked for this little black house, and then you come in and discover a little bit, and then keep discovering along the way. It gives you a chance to immerse yourself a bit more.

Fischersund’s brand persona can address consumers’ implicit needs and attitudes (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010) by offering a unique and authentic experience that aligns with their values and desires. This ability to connect with consumers on a deeper emotional level enhances Fischersund's sense of brand authenticity and strengthens its relationship with its target audience. Their strong brand persona lends itself to a strong signature brand story.

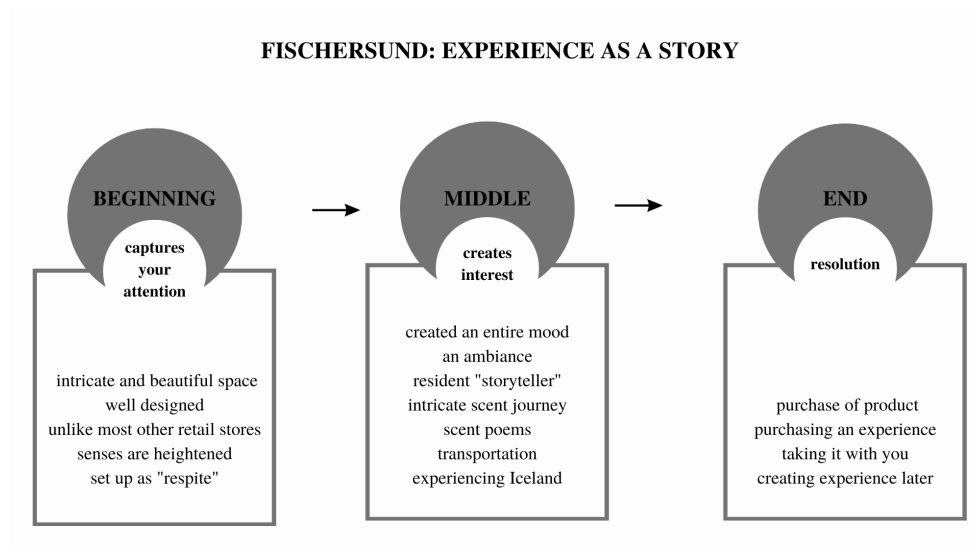
7.4 Fischersund’s Storytelling: Their Signature Brand Story

Fischersund’s signature brand story was assessed by measuring it alongside Aaker and Aaker’s (2016) four qualifications: Is it a story? Is it intriguing? Is it authentic? Is it involving? (p.60).

7.4.a. Fischersund: It is a Story

For the Fischersund experience to be considered a *story* at all, it “should have a narrative with a beginning that captures our attention... a middle that creates interest... and a resolution” (Aaker & Aaker, 2016, p.60). So, how does a retail store create such a story? The Fischersund experience as a story can be seen through a consumer journey through its retail environment. This journey can be seen in the chart below.

Fig.3: Chart showing Fischersund’s brand experience story flow based on Aaker & Aaker (2016).



As was laid out earlier in a description of the space Fischersund created, the environment is completely designed around the senses. The beginning of this story that *captures your attention* is the

intricate and beautiful space that was created by the Fischersund siblings. Halbert (2022) points out that the siblings “see the shop less as a retail environment and more as a place in which to pause and take respite.” It immediately sparks interest because it is so very unlike most other retail stores in Iceland. Your senses are heightened because it is a shop that does not look like a shop and, in a way, does not act like one either. What is it that is so different?

At the very beginning of this study, it was mentioned that Fischersund is a space and place that exists at the intersection of a shop, an experience, a well-designed art gallery, and a cultural museum. It is a story being told, and whether that story resonates with the visitor and whether the products created are liked by the visitor is not the most important factor to the family. When asked if the brand and family were trying to evoke specific emotions or thoughts in their visitors, Jonas said the entire brand was focused on letting things occur naturally, stating,

It is all just natural. We are not trying to do anything other than kind of tell our *own* story and then see how that can be connective to everyone else. We almost never think about ‘how is this going to be received.’ Instead, we almost always think about ‘what do *we* want to say.’ What do *we* want to express.

Frame magazine (2019) also picked up on this seemingly strange point of view for a retailer; Fischersund seems just to happen to sell products, but it is not their overall goal. The magazine (2019) noted,

[Fischersund] isn’t an echo chamber that validates and serves what its customers already like, with nearly algorithmic precision — like many luxury retailers seem to be doing today. No. Instead, the sons and daughters of Birgir are masters at pushing visitors outside the borders of their own taste, to save them from their judgmental selves and help them relax and accept new favourites.

Jonas (2023) backed this up by reiterating how Fischersund should be seen as an art collective first, then a perfumery and shop. She said,

The whole thing is, we never really think about, ‘Oh, this is gonna sell’ or, ‘We should make this 'cause it is gonna sell.’ We are not like, “Oh, these blankets are going to sell.” We are more like, “Oh, I really want to make a blanket. That would be amazing.” Like, if we want a blanket, what is a blanket *we* would like? Around town, you see all these blankets, but the wool is a little scratchier. They are beautiful, but everyone in this family has mentioned wanting something a bit softer. So, they made their *own*, for themselves. Inga always says, ‘What do we want? What do *WE* want?’

whenever we brainstorm. ‘What would *WE* want the bottle to look like, the packaging, the incense holder, what would *we* want it to look like.’”

So, it always starts with them... and then just goes out into the world.

This is the beginning of the Fischersund story upon entering. The shop that is not only a shop. The art gallery that is not only an art gallery. A perfumery that is not only about the perfume.

Lilja, Fischersund’s creative brand ambassador, was interviewed by *The Line of Best Fit* magazine in 2018, where she set the tone for the middle part of the Fischersund story. The part of the story that creates interest inside the walls of the Fischersund shop is that it has created an entire mood, an ambiance. It is within this mood that the stage is set for the shop’s “storyteller” to take you on an intricate scent journey by reading the “scent poems” (*Appendix B*, page 93) accompanying the fragrances. Lilja describes the beginning of the Fischersund experience story as well as the lead-up to the middle very well, stating,

Fischer is all about the senses. It's really important for us. So when you enter the store, you come in, what greets you is this smell of perfume and it is made with Icelandic medicine oils, so a lot of woody oils, Icelandic pine for example. The idea is that when you come in, the smell grounds you. And then when you go further, you hear the music and there's some weird sounds everywhere. (Maine, 2018)

This “weirdness” is something the brand strives for and also makes it seem more Icelandic. Fischersund hopes that their visitors' experience in the space is “a little bit weird, a little bit moving, emotional, connecting...and hopefully challenging, and inspiring” (Jonas, 2023). That experience in the store is likened to how many visitors describe their experience in Iceland - a bit “weird” (Jonas, 2023). Many tourists are shown interesting and “weird” facts about Iceland and its people, some before they have even landed on the island. Whitehead (2018) points out in her research on Icelandic nationalism, heritage, and tourism, that Icelanders’ anxieties about losing touch with their “unique cultural heritage” created massive anxieties. Whitehead points out these anxieties manifested in stories such as how,

in 2014, when the international media reported that a new road was delayed because campaigners feared that it would disturb elves living in its path (Kirby 2013). The work could only continue after a local woman talked to the elves, who agreed that the elven chapel could be moved away from the roadworks. This is by no means a unique instance, as Pétur Matthíasson confirmed in his interview with a BBC reporter, stating that while he did not believe

in elves, ‘we have to respect that belief’ (Kirby 2013, n.p.). In the same article, Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir, Senior Lecturer in Folklore at the University of Iceland said: ‘You can’t live in this landscape and not believe in a force greater than you’ (Kirby 2013, n.p.). (p.154)

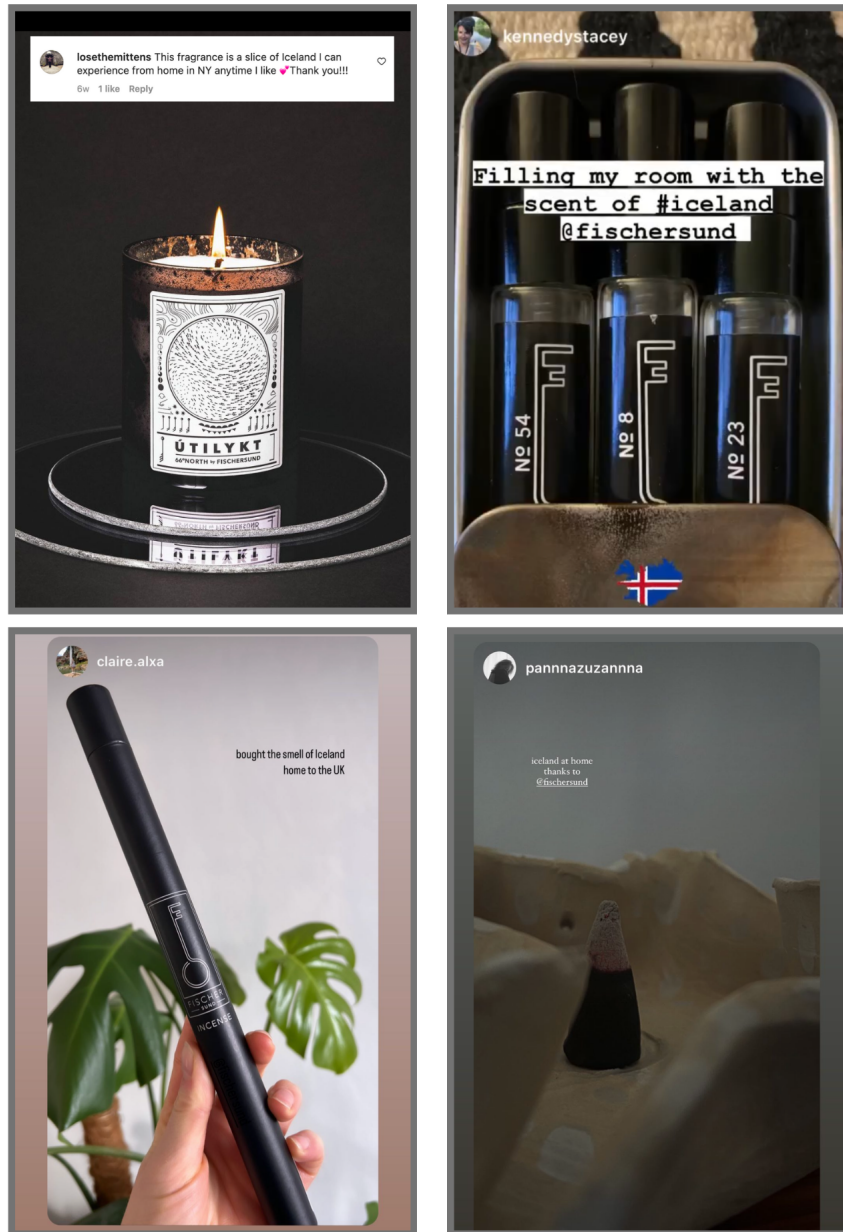
These anxieties materialized in interesting ways, which tourists found fascinating and tourist-based companies in Iceland used them as a cultural selling point. Having a “weird” experience in Fischersund simply aligns with an overall sense of wanting “weird” experiences in Iceland.

This focus on the senses and creation of a specific type of “Fischersund mood” makes the middle part of the story come alive and remain forever interesting. As Jónsi describes, “[s]cent is tied to so many emotions and memories [in general]. One ingredient can transport you instantly” (Chan, 2021). In the middle part of the Fischersund story, visitors to the shop can experience this transportation with the help of the storyteller and feel that they are experiencing Iceland. Even if a tourist never leaves the city center, they can still close their eyes and be transported to the countryside and feel as though they are experiencing Icelandic nature. This is one of the main goals of Fischersund - to try and capture the essence of Iceland’s nature. Jónsi states that the entire family finds “it really exciting and very challenging to incorporate these scent memories of the Icelandic outdoors – the smell of the crisp cold on your skin and clothes, fresh cut grass and the brisk sea and snow. Icelanders know this scent by heart, yet it’s hard to explain” (Chan, 2021).

The resolution of the experience story for a typical retail shop is the purchase of a product. This is not entirely different for Fischersund. What is different, though, is that many visitors to Fischersund feel that they are taking a piece of the *entire experience* home with them when they purchase a scent at Fischersund. Instead of simply purchasing a perfume, soap, or incense that smells nice, Fischersund customers are purchasing a piece of an Icelandic experience. Customers can take home a piece of the experience they had inside the Fischersund shop and hope that their new scent can help transport them and wrap them in the beauty of Icelandic nature far after they have left the island. On the following page, in *Figure 4*, are a few examples that showcase real Fischersund customers and how they share their Fischersund experience after they have left the space through social media:

Fig.4: Individuals post and share their personal uses of Fischersund products noting that the scents remind them of Iceland itself.

CUSTOMERS "EXPERIENCING ICELAND" AT HOME



These consumers reference how these products and their scents help them create a specific feeling and memory of Iceland.

7.4.b. Fischersund: It is Intriguing

According to Pine & Gilmore (1998), a story must be intriguing, and there should be a reason for the audience to notice and process it. According to Aaker and Aaker (2016), the story should be

thought-provoking, novel, provocative, engaging, informative, newsworthy, or entertaining. The Fischersund story is intriguing.

Fischersund's story is intriguing because it challenges the typical luxury retail experience. As previously noted, the brand “isn't an echo chamber that validates and serves what its customers already like, with nearly algorithmic precision,” but rather, the store aims to help visitors “relax and accept new favorites.” This concept is reflected in the store’s design, which features a moss-strewn space inspired by old Icelandic haunted houses and a “perfume organ” where visitors can sample the store’s unique scents and all of the varying olfactory notes that make up the range of nature-inspired perfumes (Halbert, 2022).

The Fischersund story is intriguing because of its connection to nature and ability to transport visitors to a different world. As Sindri, an Icelandic musician and part of the Fischersund team (and family!), explains, “We wanted to create a mood and tell a story through our field recordings that would take people out of their day-to-day lives to somewhere completely different” (Chan, 2021). This connection to nature and the store's emphasis on creating a unique sensory experience helps to set Fischersund apart from other luxury retailers. It provides a compelling reason for customers to notice and process the store's story. Overall, Fischersund’s intriguing story is a testament to the power of creativity and the importance of taking risks to create something truly exceptional.

7.4.c. Fischersund: It is Authentic

Fischersund, a family-owned scent retailer, has succeeded in creating an authentic brand based on the fact that what the brand says it strives to do, it actually does. One of the key factors contributing to this perception of authenticity is the entire family’s creative involvement in the business. Sister Lilja, the company’s creative ambassador, emphasizes the importance of every individual’s role in the company, including the father who makes the incense, the mother who takes care of packing, and the brother who experiments with scent composition and the three sisters who take care of the branding and shop maintenance. From top to bottom, as was outlined in *Chapter 3: An Overview of Fischersund*, the family is a daily part of the brand.

The use of Icelandic ingredients and references to historic Icelandic culture is another important aspect of Fischersund’s authentic brand story. The company's tea blends, made from Icelandic herbs picked by the family, are a perfect example of this. The herbs that are featured in many of the scents and products are mentioned by the brand as having been used in ancient remedies recorded in the *Icelandic Way of Living* book from 1924 (Maine, 2018). Fischersund's fragrances are incorporated into a range of products, including hard shampoos, scented candles, natural deodorants, and tea blends, demonstrating the brand's commitment to using native ingredients.

Fischersund's authentic brand story is further reinforced by their respect for and memories of their own Icelandic culture and history. The family’s use of their personal memories as an Icelandic family and

all Icelandic ingredients is a testament to their appreciation for their country's history and traditions experienced through the lens of their own family. As Downs (2023) notes, "Fischersund, alchemizing the sense-memories of life in Iceland into fragrances that incorporate native ingredients." Family memories of Christmas in Iceland inspired them to create their now annual holiday candle, as Lilja describes to *Visir.is* (2022),

Our Christmas candle that we make with Rammagerðinn has become a tradition during the holidays and it is made based on the Christmas traditions that mom and dad remember, a soft scent of tangerines with cinnamon, spruce and candy. Then we added the holy oils of frankincense and myrrh, resulting in a festive and soft fragrance.

This respect for Icelandic culture and history also extends beyond their own personal experiences, as seen in the brand's event celebrating the 250th anniversary of the first foreign scientific expedition to Iceland, which offered customers an opportunity to experience Icelandic history and culture through scent the brand curated based on historical references (Karlsson, 2022). Karlsson's article points to Fischersund's event description on its Facebook page, which states,

[P]ut yourself in the shoes of Solander and his fellow travelers.. and travel back to old Iceland [...] Imagine walking into an Icelandic turf town in 1772. You have to duck under a thick pile of driftwood before stepping onto the well-compacted dirt floor. Against you comes smoke from burning birch branches in the fireplace on the floor.

Fischersund pulls from its own personal memories of Iceland but also draws upon vicarious memories of Iceland's "golden age." After the Great Financial Crisis of 2008, many Icelanders and Icelandic brands felt a pull towards these nostalgic feelings of a more simple time in Iceland's past - in line with "the re-emergence of the local romantic image of the self-sufficient farmer living off – and in harmony with – the land" (Whitehead, 2018, p.150).

Overall, Fischersund strives to create an authentic brand story by combining the family's creative involvement in the business with their use of native Icelandic ingredients and respect for their personal Icelandic culture and history. The family's commitment to showcasing traditional Icelandic culture through their products and events has helped Fischersund's perception as an authentic brand.

7.4.d. Fischersund: It is Involving

Fischersund is an involving story for several reasons, including the unique and artful approach to scent, the intentional design of the retail space, and the personal touch offered to customers. The store's

immersive experience has turned it into a point of pilgrimage for locals and visitors alike (Halbert, 2022), with displays that are visually stunning and interactive, encouraging customers to touch, smell, and experience the products in a way that is not typically found in traditional retail environments - as was explored in *Section 7.4.a*. According to Downs (2023), the store doubles as a “sensory museum,” where ambient music plays as visitors can sip “homemade schnapps” and browse whimsical and detailed installations that focus on nature. Family members also created this music, specifically constructed and composed to compliment the scents. Jónsi and fellow Sigur Rós bandmembers (and family members through marriage), Kjartan Holm and Sindri, are constantly working together on experimental new sounds and musical pieces to accompany any new fragrances that are created (Maine, 2018).

Fischersund also offers personalized consultations and workshops where customers can learn about perfumery and create their own scents. This strategy has helped the store build a loyal and engaged community of customers who appreciate its authenticity and personal touch. These private consultations and workshops allow visitors a slower and more in-depth look at each of the scents, the process incorporated by the family, and a longer tour of the space. This approach creates a deeper level of involvement for customers, allowing them to connect with the brand and its story (Aaker & Aaker, 2016).

As previously mentioned in *Chapter 6, section 6.3*, the scents are accompanied by their scent poems. These scent poems are based on the siblings' memories, trying to capture a specific feeling they have experienced and then telling that story to those that enter Fischersund. This is something that sets Fischersund apart from other perfumeries as well. As Jonas (2023) points out,

It’s not just solely about the perfume. It’s about the entire experience. And we start our perfume-making process from memories. I mean, some more people are doing it *now* I guess. However, we’ve *always* had the focus of creating these little rituals around each of our scents. Scent in general, really. And I think that’s always been a little bit different. We’re trying to add visual, musical, *and* scented elements to the experience. That *we* created. And even taste, we’re trying to work in our schnapps, so there’s this whole... really trying to feel.... sensory. It’s not just about perfume here. That’s it. It’s not just perfume.

7.4.e. Fischersund: It has a Strategic Message

Fischersund's strategic story is built on the foundation of creating a personal and memory-based Icelandic experience and sharing that personal experience with visitors of the brand and the country. Through their strategic storytelling, Fischersund invites visitors to participate in and become involved in a sensory experience that embodies the brand's dedication to being an artistic, nostalgic, and relaxing

environment. Their strategy as Icelandic family storytellers helps give visitors a personal connection to a country and culture they are exploring.

By employing signature stories, Fischersund can clarify and enhance its brand, support customer relationships, and communicate the organization's heritage, culture, and values. Aaker and Aaker (2016) assert that through a signature story, a brand can also articulate its current strategy and future vision, giving the business a storyline to follow and consumers to understand (p.51). In this way, Fischersund's strategy serves as a powerful tool for building brand equity and fostering a sense of community among its customers.

Aaker & Aaker's (2016) concept of signature stories emphasizes the importance of authenticity and substance in building brand identity and emotional connections with customers. Authenticity means that the story must not come across as phony or contrived but instead must reflect the brand's genuine values and identity (Aaker & Aaker, 2016, p.50). The Fischersund signature story does appear to have substance in that the story they tell about family, Icelandic heritage, and culture is based on the family's *real* (or genuine and authentic) experiences and beliefs. These beliefs are the basis for the brand and are meaningful to its owners, employees, and its customers. When these elements are present, signature stories can gain traction and influence over time, leading to greater brand awareness, loyalty, and differentiation in the marketplace (Aaker & Aaker, 2016, p.51).

8. NOSTALGIC STORYTELLING

Nostalgia has been a topic of interest for many scholars and philosophers throughout history, as will be reflected in this section. It has been described as both a pathology and a regret for a time that has passed. According to Kessous and Roux (2013), the medical world has described nostalgia as an actual “bad” feeling, “the pathology of subjects physically away from their countries” (p.51). When one breaks down the word's origin, this makes sense. The term "nostos" means return, while “algos” means pain (Kessous & Roux, 2013, p.51). The great philosophers of the 18th century, Rousseau and Kant, presented nostalgia as a regret for a past *time* rather than a place one cannot get to (Kessous & Roux, 2013, p.51).

Although its origins of use date back to the seventeenth century, nostalgia has recently gained attention within the marketing academic community (Muehling & Sprott, 2004). Holbrook and Schindler (1991) defined nostalgia in this field as a preference towards objects that were popular, fashionable, or widely circulated when one was younger. This research focuses on nostalgia in relation to, and use in, marketing and branding. Though it does tie in with some of the nuances of the various definitions used in other disciplines, it is essential to remember that the focus is on more of a consumer, brand, and product interaction.

Scholars have offered a variety of definitions of nostalgia in marketing, ranging from mood to emotion. For example, Holbrook and Schindler (1991) defined nostalgia as a preference for more prevalent things when one was younger, while Belk (1990) described it as a mood. Stern (1992) defined nostalgia as a feeling, whereas Baker and Kennedy (1994) described it as a desire. Finally, Holak and Havlena (1998) defined nostalgia as an emotion. These definitions emphasize nostalgia’s individualized nature and the various ways it can be felt. While nostalgia can be both a positive and a negative emotion depending on the field in which it is studied, it is considered to evoke fairly positive ones in the world of marketing.

When used in marketing, the term “nostalgia” refers to a positive preference for things (or experiences) from the past that can be the result of individual memories or a historical or communal nostalgia that was not personally experienced by the individual (also known as “vicarious nostalgia”) (Muehling & Sprott, 2004, p.26). It is crucial to understand that nostalgia differs from autobiographical memory because it is frequently seen as an *idealized* memory of the past (Muehling & Sprott, 2004, p.26). Selective and generally positive, nostalgic memories can evoke a range of emotions, including warmth, joy, gratitude, affection, and innocence (Holak & Havlena, 1998).

A complex and multifaceted concept, nostalgia has drawn much attention from marketing academics (Holbrook & Schindler, 1991; Belk, 1990; Stern, 1992; Baker & Kennedy, 1994; Holak & Havlena, 1998; Kessous & Roux, 2013). Nostalgic feelings and memories in marketing and branding are typically positive. Given that it can help define one's sense of self and elicit emotional responses in

consumers, understanding the effects of nostalgia is important for marketing and advertising leaders if they want to employ this strategy.

8.1 Nostalgia & Brand Storytelling

Nostalgia is an emotional reaction to the past that can be communicated through various means, such as storytelling (Grainge, 2002, p.459). As this research has pointed out, storytelling is a potent tool for assisting people in making sense of their lives and creating their identities. According to Holstein and Gubrium (2000), storytelling is a fundamental tool for making sense of events or experiences by giving them order and meaning (Holyfield et al., 2013, p.458). It has been said that nostalgic narratives, or stories, both construct experiences and reconfigure the past in light of the present and the future. They are social and cognitive in nature, forming collective identities and aiding in the formation of collective memories through the emotional content they contain (forgot the citation).

Researchers Holyfield et al. (2013) found that, through emotionality, repeated performance, and ritual, there is an affective embrace of a perceived shared heritage and perceived authentic experiences (p.457) (reuse/reference in Fischersund's nostalgia). The use of storytelling mixed with nostalgia encourages and grows this emotional response and perceived shared heritage and authentic experience. Additionally, Davis (2002) contends that nostalgic narratives not only reshape the past concerning the present and the future but also produce experiences that call for people to react to and engage with them. In this way, nostalgia is not simply a reflection of the past but is actively constructed through social and cultural practices (Grainge, 2002, p.458).

Shortly, in *Section 8.4*, this research will explore how Fischersund uses nostalgia in its storytelling and how this use of nostalgia helps create affective responses, as well as a perceived shared heritage and authentic experience. By engaging with the storytelling mediums Fischersund has created, individuals are being helped to create a distinct but important nostalgia for a community and sense of place - even if it is not a community or place they were born into. Fischersund's nostalgia helps create a new community based upon the perceived heritage of an old one. The brand has created a nostalgia for a past that others can experience and feel as though they can be a part of, whether they have any Icelandic heritage or not.

8.2 Nostalgia in Marketing & Branding

In the world of marketing and branding, nostalgia has been defined in various ways, such as a mood, preference, state, desire, and emotion that consumers have towards objects, people, places, or things from their past (Kessous & Roux, 2013, p.50). In recent years, nostalgia has gained significant attention in brand communication to create a sense of credibility, authenticity, durability, quality, and this emotional bonding with consumers. Brands have been seen to return to older forms of packaging and advertisements, thus endearing themselves to consumers and capturing their attention. According to

Kessous and Roux (2013), “[c]apitalizing on the emotions it arouses among consumers, nostalgia gives brands a sense of credibility, authenticity, durability, and quality, as well as emotional bonding” (p.50).

The positive attitudes towards products and the sense of warmth that nostalgic communication uses create authenticity. The messages help give “legitimacy” to a specific way of living (Baker & Kennedy, 1994). This is because nostalgia often involves memories of a time perceived as being more innocent or simpler than the present. Perhaps a time when people made things by hand or businesses were run by families - much like Fischersund. This positive perception of the past can affect consumer behavior by creating a preference for more authentic or genuine products, such as vintage or retro items (Kasinitz & Hillyard, 1995). Even if the item itself is not from the era, it communicates an overall nostalgic story about the same attitudes and feelings of that era.

8.3 Fischersund’s Use of Nostalgia

Tourists frequently want to learn about and experience cultures that are different from their own, as noted by Wickens (2017), and sometimes this can lead to feelings of longing for the past or nostalgia for a certain way of living, either by your own culture or a different one (Ryan, 1997; Wickens, 2002; Wickens, 2011). By analyzing the Fischersund brand, this research concentrates on how nostalgia is used in its storytelling. Fischersund's storytelling uses nostalgia as a way to create an emotional connection with both locals and tourists. Fischersund’s storytelling of a family’s personal experience with Iceland helps make tourists feel like they are experiencing a culture that is authentic and rooted in tradition. Jonas (2023) noted how locals can pick up on and directly relate to the olfactory cues in each of the scents, but for the tourist, it is just a bit of a different experience. A local’s nostalgia is personal, while the tourists’ experience is vicarious, which will be dissected further in section 6.3.b.

As was previously explored, the term “nostalgia,” when used in marketing, refers to a *favorable* preference for things (or experiences) from the past that can be the result of personal memories or a historical or communal nostalgia that was not personally experienced by the individual (also known as “vicarious nostalgia”). This technique can be especially effective in attracting tourists seeking an escape from their own fast-paced, modern lives and looking for a sense of connection to something deeper and more meaningful (Boym, 2011).

The following sections outline the two specific features of nostalgia which are used by the Fischersund brand in its storytelling. Both personal and vicarious nostalgia are employed as the brand seeks to share personal memories and feelings of Iceland through the stories of the owners, as well as encourage visitors to create their own new memories of their trip and experience of the country. By tapping into this desire for nostalgia, Fischersunds creates a unique and memorable experience for visitors who are searching for an “authentic Icelandic experience.”

8.3.a. Fischersund's Personal Nostalgia

One of the first scents created by Fischersund, No. 54, was created based on the siblings' memories of their father's scent returning home from work. Another more recent scent, No.101, is based on their recollection of various scents surrounding Summer nights spent in the backyards of downtown Reykjavík (which is known by its postal code, 101). With the scent, the siblings hoped to bottle "the ethereal, fresh green scent of the herbaceous backyards of Reykjavík" (Fischersund, n.d.).

The siblings find it fascinating and enthralling to create both scents that local Icelanders relate to and identify with and also scents that can be experienced by non-Icelandic natives and help them better understand the country. The *Útilykt* fragrance was the result of a partnership with the Icelandic outdoor apparel company 66 North. The fragrance attempts to capture the chilly, abrasive Icelandic air. As Jónsi says,

We found it really exciting and very challenging to incorporate these scent memories of the Icelandic outdoors – the smell of the crisp cold on your skin and clothes, fresh-cut grass and the brisk sea and snow. Icelanders know this scent by heart, yet it's hard to explain (Chan, 2021).

The aromas bring back memories of a simpler and more enjoyable time for these siblings, whether it is childhood in general, a special trip to the Icelandic countryside, or summer nights spent with friends. These are all personal nostalgic memories the siblings base their scents around. These personal nostalgic memories, in turn, become the stories they tell their visitors.

The process of telling each scent's story includes explaining why certain notes were used in particular scents. However, how might the many foreign customers to the shop interpret and take that in if the scents are based on the Icelandic siblings' own sentimental memories?

8.3.b. Fischersund's Vicarious Nostalgia

Just over a dozen articles on Fischersund were investigated for this study, and the word "history" and its variations were used sixteen times. Consumer awareness of Fischersund's heavy reliance on a collective, historical, and familial past is evident. The brand is focused on showcasing its own personal nostalgia and how those memories have helped them create everything from art to scent to music. The brand invites visitors to try and see things vicariously through their nostalgic memories of Iceland.

This approach has helped Fischersund establish a loyal customer base and attract tourists looking for an authentic cultural experience. The eyes are closed, and the scent poems are read slowly and deliberately, allowing each line to sink in as the scent is spritzed into the air and enters the nose. The stories are told without the expectation that visitors relate to them. They are simply tools of expression used by the family. As Jonas (2023) pointed out, Fischersund's aim is

not making something easy, an easy product to sell.
We're making it for a really interesting experience. One that
pushes these edges between what is science and nature,
what you like and what you don't like. We're always trying to
work with what are the edges of those things.

Perhaps try and visualize the situation using the scent poem from the No. 101 perfume provided below (Fischersund, n.d.). Consider how the mind might be transported by hearing soft music and smelling the scent in the background while hearing a story read out loud,

Weathered garden chairs stacked against the wall
A flower pot filled with rain and cigarette butts
sits on the uprooted pavement now swallowed by chervil
Echoes of a nearby party
Fingers digging up sorrel and dandelions
Freshly fallen snow
On a forgotten trampoline
Black currants fall from bare branches, one by one

Even if someone did not grow up in one of Reykjavík's backyards, they might share the same memories of spending warm and sunny summer nights outside talking into the night with friends. Or, perhaps this story will entice them to wander around Reykjavík's 101 neighborhood. Holyfield et al. (2013) remind us that an affective embrace of a perceived authentic experience can be achieved through emotionality, repeated performance, and ritual (p.457). This suggests that individuals can create a sense of connection and shared experience even if they have not directly experienced the same thing. People can still feel a sense of belonging and shared heritage by engaging in emotional and ritualistic practices.

Fischersund's aim is to elicit memories, create an emotional tie, and thus encourage positive relationships and feelings of a shared community. Fischersund evokes feelings that are typically associated with nostalgia, such as "warmth, joy, gratitude, affection, and innocence," through scent, experience, and memory (Holak & Havlena, 1998). This approach has been found to be effective in marketing and advertising, as it taps into consumers' emotions and can lead to increased brand loyalty. As we've seen, a favorable view of the past can influence consumer behavior by instilling a preference for goods that are more genuine or authentic (Kasinitz & Hillyard, 1995). All of Fischersund's products are handcrafted in Iceland by a family, and the narratives and designs are infused with their own sentimental memories and feelings. These things evoke a simpler time and also align with the sentimental ideas and feelings that the Icelandic nation experienced in the wake of the Great Financial Crisis (Whitehead, 2018).

The brand Fischersund uses nostalgia to successfully evoke an emotional and experiential element in its storytelling, resonating with customers outside of its shop in the heart of Reykjavik. The business successfully combines real and imagined nostalgia to produce distinctive scents that evoke childhood experiences, excursions into Iceland's countryside, or summer nights spent with friends. Foreign visitors experience a sense of welcome into the heart of personal past memories of Iceland thanks to the storytelling process interwoven throughout the brand experience. Through its use of both personal and vicarious nostalgia, Fischersund has developed an aspect of its storytelling which, as was stated by Kessous and Roux (2013), helps give the brand a “sense of credibility, authenticity, durability, and quality, as well as emotional bonding” (p.50).

9 EXPERIENTIAL STORYTELLING: CREATING A MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE

Experiential storytelling is a powerful tool for creating an immersive, engaging brand experience that resonates with consumers, as will be explored in the following sections. By leveraging the five senses and incorporating experiential marketing techniques, companies like Fischersund can create a memorable and impactful brand experience that conveys a compelling story and creates an emotional connection with their target audience. Through sensory experiences, businesses can engage customers in a way that goes beyond traditional advertising and marketing strategies; by doing so, brands can connect with their target audiences meaningfully, leaving a lasting impression.

Fischersund's approach to experiential storytelling begins with creating experiences that capture the essence of the brand and communicate it in a way that resonates with customers and involves them physically. This involves the use of multiple sensory elements in their physical branded space, such as sight, sound, smell, touch, and sometimes taste, to create a fully immersive experience. For example, Fischersund uses their specially branded music to create a certain mood and incorporate natural elements like Icelandic seagrass and Arctic moss used as decoration to help ground the visitor to their current location, Iceland.

In addition to using sensory experiences, Fischersund also employs experiential marketing techniques to engage customers and create a sense of community and interactivity. This includes the participatory retail space and other audience engagement forms, such as branded visuals and sounds used in social media. By doing so, Fischersund creates experiences that are not only memorable but also shareable. In this chapter, this research will explore the concept of creating memorable experiences as laid out by Pine and Gilmore (1998) and how Fischersund has utilized this approach to deliver a well-crafted brand experience. This chapter will also cover the rise of experiential marketing and the experience economy to justify its importance in today's brand strategy mix. By using the frameworks set forth by Pine & Gilmore (1998), this research will help show how the Fischersund brand could be evaluated and will take a subjective but insightful look at how it measures up. First, however, it is important to explore a brand experience.

9.1 Brand Experience

The concept of brand experience is defined as the sensations, emotions, thoughts, and actions consumers experience in response to “brand-related stimuli” (Brakus et al., 2009, p.52). This can include things like the brand's overall design and identity, logo, packaging, advertising, and even the physical environment in which the brand is sold. An experience one has with a product or brand can be direct when there is physical contact with the product or indirect when it is presented virtually or in an advertisement. Consumers have different brand experiences based on how we interact with them. Shopping and service experiences are more direct experiences and occur when consumers interact with the physical environment, the actual product (also called “product experience”), and the store employees.

The consumption experience is the product's actual use, which sometimes takes place in the store, sometimes outside, but often at home (Brakus et al., 2009, p.53). Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) state that the consumption experience is where consumers tap into the more “hedonic” side of their feelings, imagination, and fun. Brand experience is a complex concept that can be understood through various disciplines, including marketing, psychology, and even cognitive science. For the purposes of this project, though, we will be diving into the word “experience” and how it relates to the brand of Fischersund and the environment in which that brand lives.

9.2 Experiential Marketing

A relatively new marketing strategy called experiential marketing strongly emphasizes giving customers an emotional experience that goes above and beyond the practical advantages of a product. Experiential marketing recognizes that consumers are also emotionally driven and strive to have enjoyable experiences, unlike traditional marketing, which concentrates on rational decision-making (Cleff, 2014). Brakus et al. (2009) support the assertion by Cleff that experiential brand marketing directly appeals to the senses and emotions. They define brand experience as “subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognitions) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments” (p. 53). By providing sensory, affective, cognitive, and behavioral experiences, experiential marketing seeks to make a lasting impression on consumers.

Three significant developments over the past few years led to the shift toward experiential marketing, as laid out by Chu et al. (2013). First, the overexposure of advertising by conventional communication channels forces marketers to alter their strategies for grabbing consumers' attention and communicating with them. Second, market saturation has sparked fierce international competition, which is being fueled by the phenomenon that the advantages of functional products are becoming interchangeable. Since “goods and services have become commoditized, the customer experiences that companies create will matter most,” according to Pine and Gilmore (1998). Thirdly, hedonistic lifestyles and pursuing pleasurable experiences are becoming more common among consumers.

Branding is significantly impacted by experiential marketing because a brand is made up of more than just practical advantages. The essence of the brand can be influenced by brand experience creation. Consumers are anticipated to have a positive and enjoyable experience thanks to the experiential marketing strategy, which enables marketers to impact consumers through experiences emotionally. Furthermore, offering a pleasant experience rich in sensory stimulation is anticipated to set a brand apart from its numerous rivals more effectively than traditional marketing (Cleff, 2014).

One of the pioneers of the compelling notion that consumption also has an experiential component was Holbrook and Hirschman (1982). They recognized brand-new consumer behaviors that

“seek fun, amusement, and fantasy.” Experiential marketing recognizes that consumers are also emotionally driven and strive to have enjoyable experiences, in contrast to traditional marketing, which sees consumers as rational decision-makers. Experiences replace functional values with sensory, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and relational values (Schmitt, 1999).

A novel marketing strategy called experiential marketing strongly emphasizes giving customers a positive and memorable experience. It recognizes that customers have emotional motivations and pursue pleasurable experiences. Compared to traditional marketing, experiential marketing offers sensory, affective, cognitive, behavioral, and relational stimuli that help brands stand out from the crowd. Since experiential marketing recognizes that a brand can influence the brand's essence in addition to its functional benefits, it has a significant impact on branding.

9.3 The Experience Economy & The Tourist Gaze

Why, then, are experiential marketing and storytelling so successful today? In 1998, Pine & Gilmore debuted their book, *Welcome to the Experience Economy*, about the changing focus of our economy, or the “progression of economic value.” After the industrial revolution, the Western global economy initially prioritized goods. Over time, the focus shifted to the service received while purchasing those goods. But as the twenty-first century turned, it was all about the experience. Economics had “typically lumped experiences in with services, but experiences are a distinct economic offering, as different from services as services are from goods,” according to Pine and Gilmore (1998). This view of experiences as a separate economic offering has led to the development of the experience economy, where businesses focus on creating unique and memorable experiences for their customers.

The experience economy has been shown to be particularly effective in attracting and retaining customers and increasing profitability for businesses. The most important thing for businesses to understand about this change is how to stand out from the competition by concentrating on how the customer is experiencing the brand. It goes much deeper than simply entertaining customers by putting on a horse-and-pony show for them. People want to feel a more profound, intimate, and *authentic* connection—something they will remember—as they become more accustomed to an experience economy in all facets of consumption. Pine and Gilmore (1998) noted that “experiences are memorable, goods are tangible, services are intangible, and commodities are fungible.”

Consumers are no longer satisfied with simply purchasing goods and services. They crave experiences that are unique and memorable. To remain competitive, businesses must adapt by incorporating experiential elements into their offerings. It is the memorable experience that tourists and consumers alike seek, and they want these memorable experiences to feel genuine and authentic.

The work by Larsen and Urry (2011), which emphasizes the multi-sensory nature of tourist experiences, demonstrates the connection between the experience economy and tourism. In fact, Urry’s

1990 book *The Tourist Gaze* is regarded as one of the “most discussed and cited tourism Books” (p.1110). However, this work was highly critiqued for reducing tourism to only visual experiences and completely omitting the rest of the senses. Since then, “the important ‘performance turn’ within tourist studies suggests that the doings of tourism are physical or corporeal and not merely visual, and it is necessary to regard ‘performing’ rather than ‘gazing’ as the dominant tourist research paradigm” (Larsen & Urry, 2011, p.1110). This shift in perspective has led to a more holistic approach to tourism research, which includes examining tourists’ bodily experiences and embodied performances. This approach also acknowledges the importance of sensory engagement in tourism experiences beyond sightseeing. The visitor becomes a physical component of the experience by participating rather than simply watching; their senses other than sight are engaged.

The Tourist Gaze is worth mentioning, as well as the updates to Urry’s work. It shows that around the same time as the growth of the experiential economy, changes in the concepts of tourism studies and growth in what it means to be a tourist *experiencing* a culture versus just gazing at it were also occurring. The experience economy has certainly trickled into most aspects of consumption. In our modern world, individuals yearn to sense and experience things, not just look at them or buy them.

9.4 Creating a Memorable Experience

So, if these new lines of thought are all about sensing, feeling, and being a part of an experience - how does a business or brand make that experience memorable? As Pine and Gilmore (1988) pointed out, creating these experiences is not simply about entertaining consumers; it is about creating a personal connection and something that is memorable (p.97).

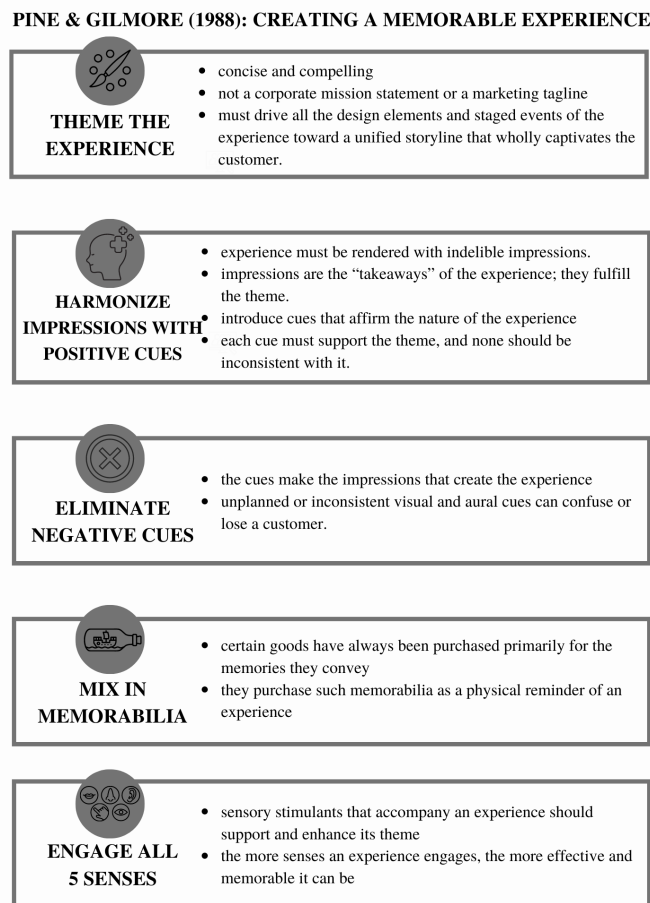
Being memorable is crucial for a brand or business. According to Cleff’s 2014 research, sensing had by far the highest impact on brand awareness, brand image, and brand equity out of the consumer activities related to a brand (sense, feel, think, act, and relate). Therefore, it is important for brands to focus on creating sensory experiences for their customers to enhance their overall perception of the brand. This can include anything from the visual appeal of packaging to the scent of a store. In turn, this allows consumers to feel a more authentic connection to the brand.

It is the memory of the experience that creates greater positive brand recall. But how does a brand create such a memorable experience? Pine and Gilmore’s (1988) *Welcome to the Experience Economy* has an entire section on the subject of “Designing Memorable Experiences.” This approach can provide valuable insight into customer satisfaction and loyalty. By focusing on designing memorable experiences, companies can create stronger connections with their customers and stand out in a crowded market. The principles mentioned in this research are part of the core concepts discussed in *The Experience Economy*. The book provides insights into how businesses can create and stage experiences that will leave a lasting impression on their customers. The chapter “The Elements of an Experience” explores the five

components that contribute to a memorable experience, including theming, positive cues, engaging all the senses, and the use of memorabilia. The book provides a wealth of examples and case studies to illustrate how businesses can apply these principles to create unique and engaging experiences for their customers (Pine & Gilmore, 1998).

This study analyzes the Fischersund experience through this prism to determine how the brand develops a successful and memorable brand experience. The five main experience-design principles that Pine and Gilmore (1998) outlined in their thorough study on producing memorable experiences in an experience economy are shown in the chart on the chart below:

Fig.5: A chart showcasing Pine & Gilmore’s (1998) five main experience design principles. According to the authors, this helps pinpoint the elements that go into creating a successful, memorable experience.



The Experience Economy’s guiding principles strongly emphasize the value of giving customers an unforgettable experience. Companies should consider the sensory stimuli that go along with the experience in addition to theming it and using encouraging cues. A more immersive and powerful experience can be created by appealing to all five senses, such as through the use of sounds, textures, and

aromas. Additionally, businesses can make sure that all elements of the experience are in sync and work together to leave a lasting impression on the customer by weaving a cohesive narrative through the use of a compelling theme. Last but not least, by including memorabilia that symbolizes the experience, clients can bring a tangible reminder of the experience home with them, strengthening the memory. (Pine & Gilmore, 1998).

9.5 Fischersund the Memorable Experience

As Pine and Gilmore (1998) state, their approach to experience design provides a framework for companies seeking to create memorable experiences. Companies can use the guidelines offered by the authors as a guide to develop captivating, memorable, and engaging experiences. Pine & Gilmore's strategy offers insightful information about the significance of themes, impressions, cues, memorabilia, and sensory stimulation in creating memorable experiences (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). Experiential marketing acknowledges that consumers are rational decision-makers and emotionally driven and aim to achieve pleasurable experiences (Cleff, 2014). Additionally, experiential marketing has a significant impact on branding, according to Cleff (2014), as the creation of brand experiences can change the essence of the brand. Consumers look for "fantasies, feelings, and fun" in their purchases, so businesses are compelled to provide them with experiences that will amuse, stimulate, and emotionally impact them (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982, p. 132; Schmitt, 1999). According to Pine and Gilmore's (1998) theory, memorable experiences are greatly influenced by audience members' connection with the event or performances created by a brand. By using these principles, this research will conduct a subjective but firm look at Fischersund and how it has created a unique experience that engages all the senses and uses memorabilia to enhance the customer's experience.

9.5.a. Fischersund has a Theme

The first principle outlined by Pine and Gilmore is to theme the experience. An experience's foundation is its theme, which also acts as the unifying principle for all of the design components and staged operations, activities, and events. According to the authors, an effective theme should direct all of the design elements toward a unified narrative that captivates the audience. It should be brief and compelling. The theme is not required to be explicitly stated, but it must saturate every aspect of the brand experience. This includes the products sold, the environment, and any sensory stimulants present (Pine & Gilmore, 1998).

The theme of Fischersund is perfectly described by the brand on the website in its "Our Story" section. As the site (Fischersund, n.d.) states, "Fischersund is a family-run perfumery and art collective that harnesses the creative expression of [the] siblings." In the interview, Jonas (2023) stated that the brand is an art collective first and a shop second - "that is for sure a big part of it." This is not their mission statement; it is simply a straightforward message of who the brand is, the "concise and

compelling” statement that helps “drive all of the design elements” and “experience” along a “unified storyline” (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). The theme also incorporates elements of Iceland, as the family itself is Icelandic. As they state, their “creative expression” and products are “inspired by the clean, unique nature of Iceland” (Fischersund, n.d.).

This theme comes to life for Fischersund in a number of ways. First, the brand is always sure to highlight the involvement of the family in its marketing and to anyone visiting the store (Jonas, 2023). The family’s memories and experiences are the launch pad for everything the brand does (Jonas, 2023). Secondly, as an art collective first and shop second, the brand creates a story that is a part of art, creation, and expression instead of simply creating products they feel are going to sell. An art collective focus also drives the family to focus on brand experience and expression rather than just brand products. As Jonas (2023) states,

That is what we are always trying to do. That is why it’s more art collective than just shop. We’re not making something easy, an easy product to sell. We are making it a really interesting *experience*. One that pushes these edges between what is science and nature, what you like what you don’t like. We’re always trying to work with what are the edges of those things.

An art collective asks visitors to be open to more abstract thinking. Even the packaging and naming of the product align with this part of the Fischersund theme. Most of the Fischersund fragrances are given numbers, not names, to allow visitors to come in with a more open mind and their own interpretation (Jonas, 2023). Jonas (2023) notes,

In terms of the abstract thing, that’s why we have numbers on our scents - because it’s more abstract. You don’t immediately know what it is when you see “54” or “8”.

She continues by drawing on another aspect of Fischersund that ties its theme more to an art collective than a traditional retail shop,

We don’t want this to be easy, either. It’s like art. It’s not supposed to be easy. It can be beautiful and powerful and all that, but it’s also supposed to be different and interesting and make you question things. (Jonas, 2023)

Lastly, the brand follows its theme in knowing it is their personal expression that they are putting out into the world. This is seen in the specific lines of the scent poems, such as “Berry colored tongue and head resting on a pillow of moss” or “Stolen rhubarb from a neighbours garden, peeled, slathered in honey and chewed on” (Fischersund, n.d.). This brand is using its personal experience of Iceland and creating an

experience of that interpretation that allows visitors to investigate, discover, explore, and project their abstract perceptions onto it to create *their* own personal Icelandic experience.

9.5.b. Fischersund uses Positive Cues

The second principle is to harmonize consumer impressions with positive cues. The takeaways from an experience are called impressions, and these impressions help consumers recognize the theme. Companies must introduce cues that confirm the nature of the experience to the customer in order to convey the desired impressions. The theme must be supported by each cue, and none of them should contradict it. Negative cues may cause the customer to become lost or confused, undermining the experience's effectiveness. On the other hand, carefully thought-out cues can aid in leaving a lasting impression that the customer will remember (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). Verisimilitude, as Stern (1992) defines it, is the “key” to helping consumer imagination and is conveyed through “faithfully depicted details” such as setting cues and consumption products (p.16). Cues, in this sense, include the props and details that go into making the “theme,” such as architecture, interior design, and decoration (Havlena and Holak 1991).

Fischersund’s branded space in Reykjavík uses positive cues to help harmonize consumer impressions. Images of Fischersund can be seen in *Appendix C* on pages 94-97, which displays interior shots of the branded space. To keep this well organized and easier to follow, the researcher uses elements laid out in the theme to investigate how the brand’s cues align with these three elements of its theme: family-run perfumery, an art collective & creative expression, and the clean, unique nature of Iceland.

Fig. 8 in *Appendix C* on page 96 showcases Jónsi’s scent organ - which was created by Jónsi himself from an actual musical organ and now rests permanently in the space. The moss on the walls seen in *Figures 11* and *14*, in *Appendix C* on pages 96 and 97, was the moss originally created and used by Jónsi as acoustic panels when the space was used as his music studio before it was turned into Fischersund. These impressions help visually cue the family tie, as well as the family’s creative expression in music.

The first glimpses of the interior can be seen in *Figures 3-6* in *Appendix C* on pages 94 and 95. A visitor immediately sees black walls, which are “so good” for displaying art (Jonas, 2023), as well as the abstract lawn chair covered in moss and resin-encased plants. There are shelves that display natural elements as if they were works of art, as seen in *Figures 5* and *7* in *Appendix C* on page 95. Even the moss used on the wall and covering the chair (that has been sawed in half and placed on either side of the entry wall) are impressions. These impressions visually cue this brand’s theme of being an art collective and a space of creative expression.

Finally, there are several impressions that cue Fischersund’s theme of clean and unique Icelandic nature. The moss-covered walls and moss-covered plastic chair cue creative expression and family ties

but even help cue that nature is in every part of the brand's experience. In *Figure 12* in *Appendix C* on page 97, it can be seen how natural elements found in historical Icelandic medicinal text (Maine, 2018) and updated by a sibling's modern interpretive drawing of its recipes are used in multiple products such as handkerchiefs and in wrapping paper of its candles. The resin-encased plants that hang on the wall also help display products, as seen in *Figure 10* in *Appendix C* on page 96. These are all plants found in the Icelandic wild. All of these impressions cue the brand relationship and inspiration of Iceland's clean and unique nature.

9.5.c. Fischersund uses Memorabilia

According to Pine and Gilmore (1998), certain products have always been chosen primarily for the memories they evoke. As a tangible reminder of the experience, people might buy any number of souvenirs from a theme park, concert, or trip they made - this is memorabilia. Pine & Gilmore (1998) contend that businesses can take advantage of this by incorporating such memorabilia into their experiences, as this will help to forge deeper emotional bonds with their clients. This strategy can also lead to increased customer loyalty and repeat business, as individuals will associate positive emotions with the brand and want to relive the experience. However, it is important for businesses to ensure that the quality of the memorabilia matches the overall experience, as low-quality souvenirs can negatively impact customer perception (Pine & Gilmore, 1998).

Fischersund's main role as a perfumery means that the bulk of its products includes scent-based products such as perfume, candles, and incense. However, they also create a range of souvenir-type products as well, such as handkerchiefs, shampoo, tea, blankets, and music on vinyl that accompanies the scents. Visiting the Fischersund store is considered by most visitors as an experience, as established by Jonas (2023) and mentioned in *section 9.5.a.*, therefore, their products could also be considered memorabilia. These products could be seen as a means for the memorable experience of Fischersund to be taken home with them. As Ballengee-Morris (2002) noted, souvenirs are imbued with symbolic meaning. Visual forms such as postcards, rocks, feathers, pottery, and t-shirts are sold at stores to represent people, places, or cultures. The goods and packaging can "illustrate these representations" (Ballengee-Morris, 2002, p. 233). The visual forms sold can represent people, places, or cultures (Smith, 2022); in this case, the symbolic representation of their visit to a perceived "authentic Icelandic experience."

Moor (2003) notes that souvenirs and mementos have the capacity to domesticate experience and make it portable, facilitating the movement of bodies and objects from one context to another. Similarly, they promote a remembering of the event and the brand (Ballengee-Morris, 2002, p. 234), consistent with the experiential approach to marketing. In fact, Pine and Gilmore (1999) argue that memorabilia can "socialize" the experience and transmit parts of it to others. This aligns with Fischersund's reliance on

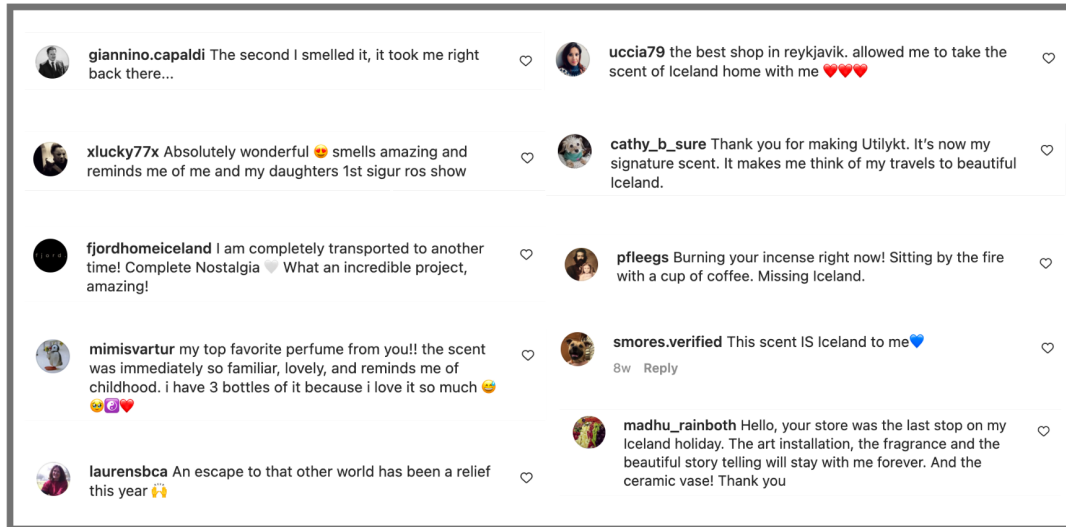
word-of-mouth marketing; friends and family can have a separate experience with the brand through their interaction with someone's brand scent or souvenir they brought home.

Fischersund's use of music, along with their products, which is "portable" and 'affect-laden,' further augments this capacity (Moor, 2003, p.51). As Moor (2003) notes, "the branded artifacts are considered as form of memorabilia" and have the capacity to "domesticate" experience and make it portable by incorporating it within the individual life-narrative (p. 49). These branded "artifacts" of the Fischersund experience could be considered as a form of memorabilia, with the capacity of souvenirs and mementos to "domesticate experience" and make it portable, facilitating the movement of bodies and objects from one context to another by "miniaturizing the original site" (Stewart, 1993, p.49) and moving history into private time (p.138). At Fischersund, customers can bring home the shop's marketed "Icelandic" smells into their own homes, far from the country where they encountered them. Along with these smells, if the customer were to incorporate the same music played, they might be able to use these souvenirs to help transport them back to the experience they had in the shop long after they have left.

Let us briefly look at a few examples of how Fischersund's tourist consumers and brand engagers relate and communicate with the brand on Instagram, seen on the following page:

Fig. 6: A chart showcasing a few examples of tourist consumers' engagement with the Fischersund brand's Instagram and their comments on how the products affect them outside of the shop experience.

FISCHERSUND INSTAGRAM: CLIENT ENGAGEMENT EXAMPLES



As can be seen with a few examples, it is clear that consumers who have purchased products can interact with the brand outside of the Fischersund shop. Some of this “memorabilia” has reminded consumers of their childhood, their trip to Iceland, or their first Sigur Rós concert. Fischersund helps consumers hold onto their experience of the shop, yes, but it also helps them hold onto their experience with the country of Iceland itself. As well the memorabilia can even be seen to stir nostalgic memories of childhood and previous joyful experiences at home, just as the store hopes to do in person; as user *@mimisvartur* states, it “reminds me of childhood.”

The use of memorabilia is also consistent with the concept of nostalgia marketing, which aims to evoke consumers’ sentimental and romantically-charged longing for the past, home, and comfort (Badot & Filser, 2007; Hartmann & Brunk, 2019). In fact, Le Goff (1992) references those who sell memorabilia as “nostalgia merchants” (p.128). As customers buy and collect these memorabilia, they serve as memory enhancers of personal experiences with a place (Adams, 1995). The experience of nostalgia can be triggered by tangible stimuli (Davis, 1979), such as possessions, or intangible cues, such as olfactory and musical stimuli (Sierra & McQuitty, 2007, p. 99). Fischersund’s memorabilia covers both of these aspects.

Fischersund's incorporation of memorabilia aligns with the experiential storytelling approach, where customers are engaged in a sensory experience that creates a lasting memory and connection with the brand. Consumers associate positive emotions with the Fischersund brand and do indeed want to relive the experience of both Fischersund and its home country. The shop’s memorabilia supports the

brand's efforts to create a memorable event. Next, the engagement of all of the senses is explored, and how this is incorporated into making a memorable experience.

9.5.d. Fischersund Engages All of the Senses

The final principle is to be sure to engage all five senses. An experience's accompanying sensory stimuli should support and advance its central theme. This means that the experience should be visually appealing and engage the other senses, such as touch, taste, smell, and sound, to create a fully immersive and memorable experience for the participant. By doing so, the central theme of the experience can be reinforced and leave a lasting impression on the participant. An experience can be more powerful and memorable if it appeals to more senses. In order to create the most immersive and memorable experience possible, businesses should aim to involve all five senses whenever possible (Pine & Gilmore, 1998).

It should be fairly clear by now that Fischersund uses all five of the senses. It is a sensory-focused retail *experience*. It is the visual cues that first clue the visitor into the space not being “just a shop,” as Jonas (2023) iterates,

I really think most people have either already heard of it - the Fischersund ‘experience’ - or they stumble in and they’re like, ‘Woah, what is this?’ They walk in and see a plastic chair on the wall [laugh]...Most people realize it’s a shop, sure, but then they realize it is also an experience.

The moss on the walls and the plants dripping with resin dew beg to be touched (and can be!); they feel like the Icelandic outdoors has frozen in time. Certain events incorporate Icelandic-based tastes, such as the annual holiday party with its “fragrant Christmas mulled wine” and poetry reading (Jóhannesson, 2022). The brand is even working on creating its own branded schnapps (Jonas, 2023). As a perfumery, the Fischersund experience is certainly centered around the smell. Through the sampling of perfumes, oils, shampoos, candles, and incense, the store invites your olfactory sensations to come alive. Fischersund has taken great care in its incorporation of sound as well, using its branded music to accompany its scents and even selling these sounds in the form of vinyl so visitors can take these sounds with them when they leave.

The use of the five senses in storytelling is an effective way to engage and captivate an audience. As Smith (2015) notes that “as many sensory experiences as possible (within reason) should be used to tell the destination's story” (p. 228-229), and it is clear Fischersund uses four regularly, and will soon cover all five should their schnapps become a full-time product. Using sound, vision, smell, taste, and touch, Fischersund creates a multisensory experience that immerses the audience in the story. As Smith (2015) points out, smell is particularly powerful in evoking memory. It can be used to help tell a story or create a mood, and this brand uses its role as an Icelandic perfumery to the utmost potential. Ultimately,

by incorporating the senses into storytelling, storytellers can create a more memorable and engaging experience for their audience.

9.6 Experiencing Fischersund

As we have explored, experiential marketing is a relatively new marketing strategy that focuses on providing customers with emotional experiences beyond a product's practical benefits. This approach recognizes that consumers are also emotionally driven and seek enjoyable experiences. According to Brakus et al. (2009), brand experience is the “subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognitions) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments” (p. 53). In order to leave a lasting impression on customers, experiential marketing offers sensory, affective, cognitive, and behavioral experiences.

According to these experiential marketing tenets, Fischersund aims to give customers a memorable brand experience by designing a store that encourages physicality and exploration. These two things are uncommon in most traditional retail settings. This serves as a reminder of the changes Larsen and Urry (2011) made to their understanding of the “tourist gaze.” It entails seeing and moving through environments, cities, and sights with the body, aesthetic sensibility, daydreaming, and mental movement (a.k.a transportation, which we now know is a part of the Fischersund strategy). Tourists frequently reach out to touch, stroke, walk on, or climb up buildings and other objects (Hetherington, 2003). For sights to be considered “cherished objects” of the tourist gaze, they frequently need the appropriate “soundscapes” and “smellscapes” (Larsen & Urry, 2011, p.1115). Thus, tourism is a multisensory experience that involves not only visual perception but also the other senses. The sounds and smells of a place can greatly enhance the tourist experience and make it more memorable. Fischersund is clearly aware of this and has successfully put this into practice, as was explored previously in *sections 9.5.a.* and *9.5.b.*

The use of sound, interwoven with smell specifically, is a significant part of the Fischersund brand experience. The shop regularly produces accompanying music and sound for its scents. Many visitors (Jonas, 2023) will automatically associate the brand with the brother Jónsi’s band, Sigur Rós, as mentioned in *Chapter 1, section 5.1.a.* So, the brand might already be associated with sound. But, on a deeper level, Jónsi and his siblings are keenly aware of the power of music and its link to scent. As Lilja points out in *The Line of Best Fit* magazine (Maine, 2018),

Both of these senses [music and scent] are really intangible and they both have a strong connection with memory. When you have real oils, every oil has its own note or character so that's why it has a nice connection with the musical note... the perfume note. You can almost imagine him [Jónsi] playing the perfume organ.

As music has been linked to the capacity to encourage emotional release (Pratt, 1990, p.37), as well as a sense of healing and encouragement for physicality (Hodges, 2005, p.111), Fischersund thus creates a multisensory experience that engages customers on a deeper emotional level by doing this. This unique approach sets the shop apart from its competitors and creates a memorable and immersive experience for customers. By combining music and sound with their products, Fischersund's shop provides a holistic experience that stimulates multiple senses and enhances the overall shopping experience. It is also through the incorporation of music and scent together that Fischersund creates a distinct nostalgia for the community and the beauty of Icelandic nature and contributes to the maintenance of myths about the past (Eyerman and Jamison 1998, p.34).

According to Moor (2003), music can be used to translate a branded experience from one context to another, making the consumer's body and routine movements a potential branded space. In the case of Fischersund, the family uses branded vinyl records to complement the scents with the soundscapes and compositions of Jónsi, along with fellow Icelanders, musicians, bandmates, and family members through marriage, Sindri and Kjartan Holm. The branded sounds created do not just rely on the average musical note either - many incorporate Icelandic nature sounds, pushing a Fischersund theme. For example, this experimental nature sound was used in their collaborative scent with 66°North, Útilykt. This creative process is described in Rolling Stone magazine (Chan, 2021),

Jónsi and the Fischersund musical team [family, Sindri, Kjartan] traveling to five sites in Iceland chosen by 66°North for their unique landscapes — and soundscapes. The team captured field recordings of each site, then overlaid the recordings with original scores.

As Sindri further explains in the magazine (Chan, 2021),

We wanted to create a mood and tell a story through our field recordings that would take people out of their day-to-day lives to somewhere completely different [...] field recordings of only the environment and incorporated that into the music [...] So when you listen to the vinyl; it's like you are transported to where it's just you, alone in nature.

These musical and sound creations put on vinyl create a branded experience that clients can take *with* them. Customers might anticipate purchasing one of the candles, incense, or perfume from the shop and taking it home with them. However, as Moor (2003) notes, the notion that they may *also* take the sounds they heard home with them enables the Fischersund brand *experience* to more fully follow them back to their home as well.

Fischersund's brand experience storytelling strategy exemplifies how a company can develop a resonating and effective multi-sensory experiential marketing plan. Fischersund aims to leave a lasting impression on customers by offering them sensory, affective, cognitive, and behavioral experiences. Fischersund creates a multisensory experience that engages customers on a deeper emotional level through the use of visuals, especially sound and scent. This helps to maintain the overall brand identity and creates a distinct sense of nostalgia and authenticity. Fischersund also uses music and scent to give customers a branded experience they can take home with them, thus giving the brand life beyond the shop's walls. Fischersund's approach to experiential storytelling is a powerful way for it to differentiate itself in the Icelandic tourist market. By creating experiences that engage the senses, connect with customers on an emotional level, and create lasting memories, brands can build strong brand loyalty, increase their aura of authenticity, and create long-term relationships with their customers (Brakus et al., 2009; Cleff, 2014; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Pine & Gilmore, 1998).

10. FISCHERSUND: AN AUTHENTIC ICELAND BRAND

This thesis has explored the role of storytelling in branding, specifically focusing on Fischersund, a perfumery and retail shop in downtown Reykjavik, Iceland. The research has investigated how the use of storytelling in brand communication impacts the success of Fischersund as a perceived authentic Icelandic brand by tourists visiting the country. The findings of this study shed light on three specific storytelling techniques used by Fischersund - the use of a signature brand story, nostalgic storytelling, and creating a memorable experience through experiential storytelling - and their impact on establishing Fischersund as an authentic Icelandic brand.

10.1 Fischersund's Signature Brand Story

The use of a signature brand story has been a key element in Fischersund's branding strategy. It is clear that Fischersund strives to create an authentic brand story that resonates with customers and aligns with their values. The brand portrays itself as an authentic, sensory, and artistic brand that is deeply connected to nature and history, with a commitment to craftsmanship and working with family. The brand's story is intriguing because it challenges the typical retail experience and aims to create a unique sensory experience for visitors.

Fischersund's strategic storytelling involves showcasing traditional Icelandic culture, inviting visitors to participate in a sensory experience, and creating a personal connection to the country and its culture. The use of signature brand stories allows Fischersund to clarify and enhance its brand, support customer relationships, and communicate its heritage, culture, and values. It also helps articulate the brand's current strategy and future vision, giving the business a storyline to follow and consumers to understand. Fischersund's brand story serves as a powerful tool for building brand equity and fostering a sense of community among its customers.

Furthermore, Fischersund's commitment to creating an authentic brand persona is reflected in its consistent use of words, descriptions, imagery, and art direction across different channels such as press, media, social media, and customer engagement. This cohesiveness in brand tactics reinforces the perception of authenticity and resonates with customers. The brand's emphasis on nature, craftsmanship, and storytelling also aligns with tourist consumers' attitudes toward tradition and heritage, providing a sense of authenticity but also connection.

Overall, Fischersund's brand story is intriguing, creative, and unique, which sets it apart from other luxury retailers and allows customers to experience a different side of Iceland. The brand's commitment to being an authentic, sensory, and artistic brand is evident in its strategic storytelling.

10.2 Fischersund's Nostalgic Storytelling

Fischersund uses nostalgia in its brand storytelling to elicit strong feelings from both locals and visitors. The siblings who own Fischersund base their brand's story upon their personal sentimental memories, which are reflected in the different facets of their products, including scents, music, and

artwork. By tapping into their own nostalgia and sharing it with their audience, Fischersund aims to share a heritage and authentic experience for tourists, even if they do not have Icelandic heritage.

In hopes of stirring up warm, joyful, supportive, and affectionate feelings in the audience and giving their products a sense of authenticity and legitimacy, Fischersund uses nostalgia in their storytelling. Fischersund's storytelling appears to incorporate ideas of the past and uses cultural and heritage references and influences of the past - a time that some may feel was more innocent or simpler than the present, which is frequently associated with nostalgia. Even if the products are not from that period, this favorable perception of the past can affect consumer behavior by creating a preference for more genuine or authentic products.

Additionally, Fischersund appears to appeal to both Icelanders and foreign tourists with their use of nostalgia in their storytelling. Because it is based on similar memories and experiences, locals find the nostalgia relatable and personal. Through the stories and memories shared by the siblings who run Fischersund, tourists are able to vicariously experience a culture that is real and firmly rooted in tradition. Therefore, tourists may also perceive authenticity because local Icelanders are also drawn to the brand.

Overall, Fischersund uses personal and vicarious nostalgia in their storytelling to forge an emotional bond, arouse pleasant feelings, and promote a sense of shared history and authenticity for their brand. In order to develop a distinctive and compelling brand narrative that appeals to tourists, Fischersund aims to draw on its own nostalgic memories and share them with its audience.

10.3 Fischersund's Experiential Storytelling

An effective strategy Fischersund employs to create memorable brand experiences for its tourist customers is experiential storytelling. Fischersund creates memorable and impactful brand experiences that tell compelling stories and inspire emotional connections with their target audience by utilizing the five senses and incorporating experiential marketing strategies. Fischersund creates experiences that embody the brand's essence and convey it in a way that physically involves the audience as part of their approach to experiential storytelling. The brand makes full use of multiple sensory elements in its physical branded space, such as sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste, to create a fully immersive experience. For example, Fischersund uses specially branded music and natural elements like Icelandic seagrass and Arctic moss as decoration to help visitors feel grounded in the country they are visiting, Iceland.

Fischersund's theme is clearly communicated as a “family-run perfumery and art collective” that “harnesses the creative expression” of the Icelandic siblings (Fischersund, n.d.). All of the design components are motivated by this clear and engaging theme, which also gives the narrative its sense of unity. Since the family is Icelandic and their artistic expression and products are inspired by Icelandic nature, Fischersund's theme also incorporates elements of Iceland. Their visual displays, which include

moss-covered furniture, resin-encased plants, and black walls, all hint at the idea that the shop is, first and foremost, an art collective and a place for creative expression - shop second. The brand's appeal is reinforced by the incorporation of natural components found in vintage Icelandic medical texts, contemporary interpretive drawings, and resin-encased plants as displays.

Their products serve more as souvenirs and mementos of the Fischersund experience, such as the handkerchiefs and wrapping paper with Icelandic natural elements, consistent with the experiential marketing approach. This fits with Moor's (2003) theory that experiences can be domesticated and made portable by being moved around from one context to another. Overall, Fischersund's method of experiential storytelling, which incorporates sensory experiences, a unifying theme, and distinctive design elements, results in a brand experience that leaves a strong and memorable impression on its clients, fostering a deep connection.

Through these storytelling approaches, Fischersund has been able to create a brand image that embodies the essence of Iceland, connects with visitors on an emotional level, and enhances the perceived authenticity of the brand. This research contributes to the existing literature on storytelling in branding. It offers valuable insights for retailers closely linked to tourism, particularly in destinations such as Iceland.

The implications of this study go beyond Fischersund as a case study, which will be explored in the following chapter, *Chapter 11*. The findings of this research can be applied to other retail and tourist-focused brands in Iceland and other destinations seeking to create authentic experiences for their visitors. The storytelling tactics highlighted in this study can serve as a framework for creating unique and memorable brand experiences that evoke a sense of authenticity and emotional connection with the destination. By understanding the effectiveness of storytelling in branding and tourism, businesses can create compelling narratives that resonate with visitors and differentiate themselves from competitors.

In conclusion, Fischersund serves as a prime example of a perceived authentic Icelandic brand that effectively utilizes storytelling in its branding strategy.

11. FURTHER RESEARCH

There are many opportunities for additional research on the subject of brand storytelling strategies used to construct a perceived authentic brand. In particular, further research on the subject could be conducted with the Fischersund brand. The following research avenues could be investigated based on this study's findings:

Consumer perception study: Conduct a study on consumer perception of Fischersund's branding communication to understand their brand narrative's effectiveness in creating feelings and perceptions of authenticity. Surveys or focus groups with individuals who have interacted with the brand could be used to collect quantifiable data and consumer insights. This research could provide significant insight into the components and tactics that contribute to a brand's perceived authenticity by examining the effect of storytelling on consumer perceptions of authenticity.

Content analysis: Conduct a content analysis of Fischersund's social media presence to understand how they use storytelling as part of their advertising strategy. This could offer information regarding how to utilize social media to develop a compelling brand narrative and how it stacks up against other delivery methods like in-store or word-of-mouth marketing. Additionally, by examining how storytelling is generally used on social media and how it affects consumers' perceptions of authenticity, this research could provide other tourism brands with invaluable guidance on how to use it.

Comparative case study: To evaluate the efficiency of storytelling in branding, compare Fischersund directly with another brand that also makes use of storytelling as a key component of its branding communication. This could offer a more comprehensive viewpoint on the role of storytelling in branding communication and identify best practices that other brands in the tourism market could adopt. This study may help other brands create authentic brand narratives that are in line with their particular cultural context and target market by offering performance analysis data.

Cross-cultural analysis: Conduct a cross-cultural analysis of the use of storytelling in branding communication in different countries to identify similarities and differences in the strategies used. This could offer insights into the effective application of storytelling in different cultural settings, such as place-based storytelling that honors the heritage and nation of the brand. This type of study could provide deeper insight into how cultural influences affect brand storytelling strategies and help tourist-heavy companies develop genuine narratives that appeal to a variety of audiences.

The literature on branding, tourism marketing, and cross-cultural communication may benefit from additional research on brand storytelling techniques used to build a perceived authentic brand. The research avenues mentioned above may offer insightful information for other brands in the tourism sector looking to build authentic brand identities that reflect the culture and nation they are based in and connect with their target audience.

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APPENDIX A
FISCHERSUND: FAMILY, TITLES, ROLES, ETC.

IMMEDIATE FAMILY



Brother: Jónsi - perfumer, musician

Sister: Lilja - creative ambassador, brand ambassador, artist, photographer

Sister: Sigurrós - resident artist, production manager

Sister: Inga - art direction

Dog: Atlas - morale booster

Father: Birgir - construction, incense maker, assists in packaging production

Mother: Guðrún - spiritual and emotional support, assists in displays

EMPLOYEES

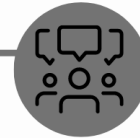


Ólöf - chief of operations

Erla - social media, marketing manager, production operative

Rachel - store manager, storyteller

ARTISTIC BOARD



The immediate family

Sindri - Icelandic musician, family through marriage/partnership

Kjartan Holm - Icelandic musician, family through marriage/partnership

DISTILLER



Hraundís - only trained distiller in Iceland, pioneer in her work, an educated aromatherapist and forester

APPENDIX B
FISCHERSUND: SCENT POEMS



No. 23

Smoke in the air and tarred telephone poles, tall freshly mowed grass, and tobacco leaves. Dead flowers bow to the ground. In the breeze, the feminine fountain pine tickles the top of your skull. A beached whale is about to explode.



No. 8

Brand new sneakers, crushing fresh flower stalks against hot asphalt. Mouth full of lemon candy and fingers sticky with motor oil. Stolen rhubarb from a neighbours garden, peeled, slathered in honey and chewed on. Orange cake crumble in the pocket of freshly washed clothes. Arctic wind blowing through hair in a damp pine forest.



No. 54

Fresh coat of varnish on a wooden shed. Uprooted moss, wet dirt and vetiver roots. Burnt car tires on hot asphalt and dry patchouli. Heavy slow-drying oil painting. Icelandic alpine fir, footsteps in frozen grass and salt liquorice. Dirty leather, animalistic musk and ammonia.



No. 101

Weathered garden chairs stacked against the wall. A flower pot filled with rain and cigarette butts sits on the uprooted pavement now swallowed by chervil. Echoes of a nearby party. Fingers digging up sorrel and dandelions. Freshly fallen snow On a forgotten trampoline. Black currants fall from bare branches, one by one



Flotholt

The first-ever Sigur Rós x Fischersund limited edition scent. This new cult scent was created by Jónsi and the Fischersund team in celebration of the Sigur Rós World Tour. FLOTHOLT features a blend of amber, bergamot, birch tar, fresh air, seaweed, dirt, grass, and vetiver.



Útylikt

Headwind in every direction. Drifting snow creeping undercoat collars. Snow beads on wooly mittens. Berry colored tongue and head resting on a pillow of moss. Lawnmower in a distant garden. An undressed Christmas tree blowing down the sidewalk in the sea breeze. Frosted windows, weather forecast, and the car heater on full blast.

APPENDIX C
FISCHERSUND: EXTERIOR & INTERIOR IMAGES



Fig. 1: Fischersund Street, seen with cobblestones & adjacent to another historic building. Located in the old part of town.



Fig. 2: Fischersund, the shop. Located in a 19th century building that has been refurbished but retains old world charm.



Fig. 3: Fischersund interior shot, entryway.



Fig. 4: Fischersund interior shot, entryway leading into main area of shop. Dark interior details with traditional looking details. Clean, crisp, and nothing distracting.



Fig. 5: Fischersund interior shot, into the main boutique area. Vinyl's of "Sounds of Fischersund" for sale. Minimal decor, products on display, elements of nature used to enhance space and messaging.



Fig. 6: Fischersund interior shot, current art installation representing the newest scent, no.101. Chair covered in moss, weeds, dandelions, a cigarette butt... elements used in the scent.



Fig. 7: Fischersund interior shot, product on display with curated elements of nature - both land and sea - used as minimal décor.

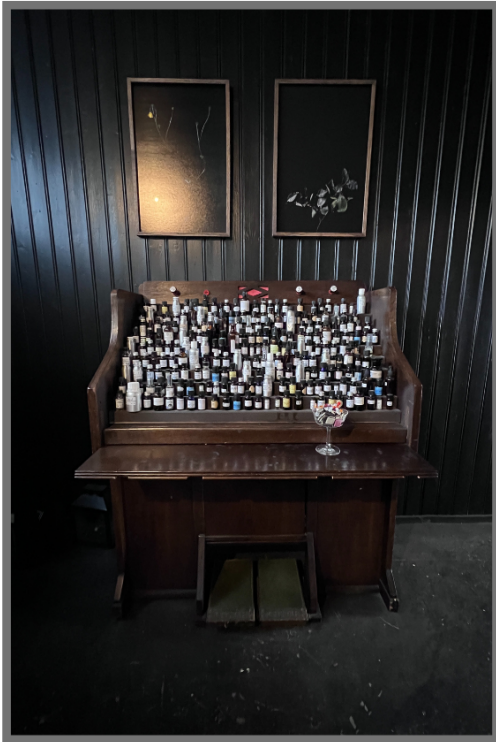


Fig. 8: Fischersund interior shot, the "perfumer's organ", which in this case has been fashioned by Jónsi using an actually organ (a nice detail tying together relationship of music & scent) in the brand.



Fig. 9: Fischersund interior shot, the scent bar. Shop invites you to choose three smaller versions of perfumes to take with you and put in a small, handmade tin.



Fig. 10: Fischersund interior shot, no.101 perfume on display with local artist ceramic work and accompanying "scent poem" bandana.



Fig. 11: Fischersund interior shot, products on display showcasing handmade tins of solid perfume, satchels, scent poem bandanas and a moss-covered shop wall in the background.



Fig. 12: Fischersund interior shot, row of "scent poem" bandanas that match each of the brand's scents.



Fig. 13: Fischersund interior shot, looking back towards entryway area, one can see a ladder leading to a loft, giving a nostalgic nod to the past.



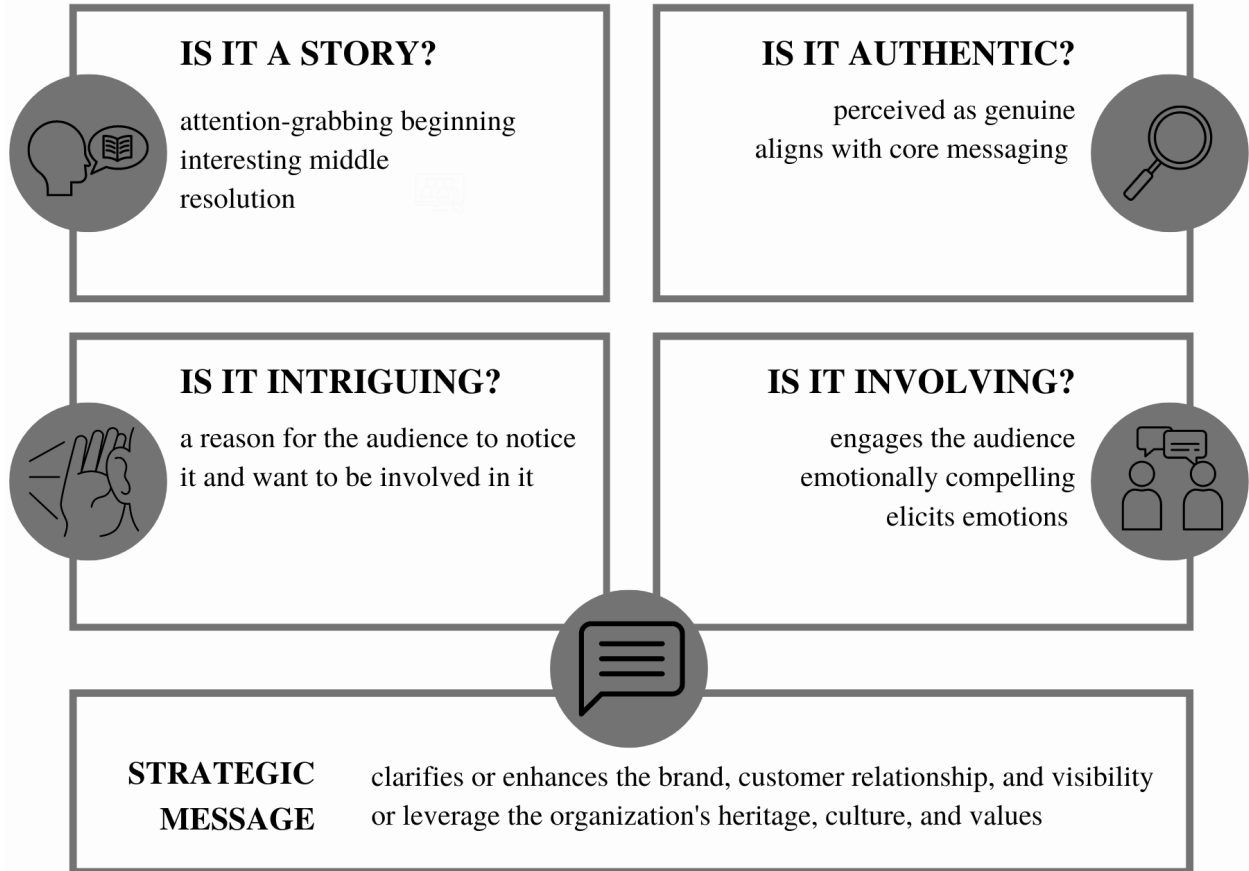
Fig. 14: Fischersund interior shot, candle products on display with full view of a main shop wall covered in moss.



Fig. 15: Fischersund product shot. Scent no.8 which comes in eco-friendly packaging and wrapped in its accompanying "scent poem" and illustrations inspired by 19th century Icelandic herbal remedies.

APPENDIX D

AAKER & AAKER (2016): 4 ASPECTS OF A SIGNATURE STORY



APPENDIX E

BRAND PERSONA INVESTIGATION: WORDS, DESCRIPTIONS

<p>USED BY BRAND</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sensory, senses, music, scent • experience • rest • space, place • artist, artistic, design • atmosphere, ethereal • natural, nature • family, history, past • hand made, crafted, signature, • environment, sustainably packaged • cleansing • Iceland
<p>DESCRIPTION OF IMAGES & ART DIRECTION OF BRAND</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • artist, artistic, design • moody, atmospheric, environment, ethereal, dark • natural, nature, outdoors • moss, stone, wood, smoke • hand made, crafted, craft • Icelandic • modern twist, unique
<p>USED BY PRESS & MEDIA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fragrance, aroma, scent, smell • artisanal, handmade, hand crafted, crafted, artistic • natural, organic, wild harvested • "nature" and its variations are used 28 times • historical, past, chronicles • "history" and its variations are used 16 times • "family" or related words appear 10 times • "experiential" or similar variations were used 5 times • "sensory" or its variations are used 5 times
<p>USED IN ENGAGEMENT ON INSTAGRAM</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explore, experience, visit • memories, remember, souvenir • enchanting, beautiful, dreamy, magic, sublime, beauty • treasure, love • aesthetic, artist, artistic, art, design • journey, transportive, discover, escape • raw, real, fresh

APPENDIX F
SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW
TRANSCRIPTION

Interviewer: Kate Scott Stewart

Interviewee: Rachel Jonas

Date of Interview: April 13th, 2023

Interviewer: I know it is a family business. I personally knew it before coming here, but you can also see it on the website and through a few interviews in the media. Do other visitors usually know that right away?

Interviewee: No, not normally. I would say, normally, people don't know it's a family business unless they, like you, saw it online or somewhere else, but we always tell everyone. It's a thing we always say, a 'family-run perfumery and art collective.'

Interviewer: So you think of it more as an art collective first?

Interviewee: Yea.

Interviewer: And a shop second?

Interviewee: Yes, definitely.

Interviewer: Would you say visitors to the store are usually tourists, in general? Or locals?

Interviewee: Well, there are more tourists than there are locals, so it gets a little disproportionate to try and break it down that way - If that makes sense? There's no clear line. We have a lot of locals who come in, and a lot of very loyal local people that are here a lot. AND, we always have people coming in - like everyone in the neighborhood knows about us..... but.. Of course we have a lot of tourists, I mean, I would say the majority of people that come in are tourists because that is the majority of people who are downtown shopping.

Interviewer: Do you think the location has something to do with it?

Interviewee: Well, the location is a little bit different, because it's hidden - which was kind of the whole point. We didn't want it to be on the main road, we don't want it to be overrun with people, we want it to feel like something a little hidden. Originally when they started it, Jónsi had wanted a key, and for it to be locked. Originally, he just wanted a house that you had to know about it and you would have to unlock with a key every time you wanted to come in. But that wouldn't really work for a store we decided, at least not very well. But still, it's this very quiet little street. It's still a discovery.

Interviewer: So, the key used in the logo is...?

Interviewee: You come in and kind of "unlock the senses". But, it also has to do with Jónsi's key idea. Layered meanings.

Interviewer: Do people come in thinking it's a shop and leave thinking it's something different?

Interviewee: I think almost no one comes in thinking it's just a shop. I really think most people have either heard of it - the experience - or they stumble in and they're like, "Woah, what is this?" They walk

in and see a plastic chair on the wall, haha...I think most people realize it's a shop, sure, but that it's also an experience

Interviewer: Do both tourists and locals spend the same amount of time in the store?

Interviewee: I kinda think so, yes. I don't think there's a difference. It's kind of that "hang" kind of feeling here.

Interviewer: Do you think there's a difference in behavior between those who had heard of you, versus someone who popped their head down the alleyway and "discovered" you, so to speak?

Interviewee: I think there's always going to be an excitement from someone who has been looking for it, the anticipatory excitement of coming and going through the whole experience. I would say that the people who happen to smell something and decide to come in, or stumble upon us, they generally have the same sort of "amazed" look to them. And if you still take them through the scent experience, they are maybe less blown away than those who were anticipating and excited for it... but, but they're still enjoying it. There isn't a huge disparity.

Interviewer: The brand isn't really keen to sell fragrances you simply think the *audience* wants and you know will sell, but instead, I read you try to push visitors outside of the borders of their own tastes?

Interviewee: That's what we are always trying to do. That is why it's more art collective than just perfumery. We're not making something easy, an easy product to sell. We're making it for a really interesting experience, and one that pushes these edges between what is science and nature, what you like what you don't like. We're always trying to work with what are the edges of those things.

Interviewer: And how do you think this affects the perception of Fischersund?

Interviewee: Huh, maybe it makes us not mainstream?

Interviewer: Do people come in thinking it's a shop and leave thinking it's something different?

Interviewee: I think almost no one comes in thinking it's just a shop. I really think most people have either heard of it - the experience - or they stumble in, and they're like, "Woah, what is this?" They walk in and see a plastic chair on the wall, haha...I think most people realize it's a shop, sure, but that it's also an experience.

Interviewer: How do visitors hear about Fischersund?

Interviewee: Various media, different magazines, Sigur Rós, and word of mouth.

Interviewer: Do you let them know about the band?

Interviewee: Totally! I feel like it's a good part... it's just a part of the family... part of the art collective. It's just an extension. Jónsi is so proud of his sisters that it's like he doesn't want to take their shine away from this. They've been working on the ground getting everything going, so he doesn't want his popularity to like overshadow that, but he is still equally proud and as equally involved in it. He comes to meetings, he's involved with all of the scent creations, and is definitely one of the visionaries. None of the sisters or people working here shy away from that, either. If they mention it, we always chat with people and let them know they're in the right place because we're all fans of him and the band. We're all so proud.

Interviewer: How important is storytelling in general?

Interviewee: It is the heart of everything

Interviewer: How do you land on a final story?

Interviewee: We just talk about different impactful events, or memories, taken from childhood or this sense of... “that feeling”... Like with [scent] 101... “that *feeling* of the summer.” I don’t want “this feeling” to end. So what is that? How do we describe it? And how do we build a scent and whole visual and musical experience around that feeling, that story? The emotion and the story are connected. The sense of smell is the only sense that bypasses the thalamus. The thalamus is the part of the brain that filters and orders things, but our sense of smell is directly connected to memories and emotions. You encode smell into whatever memory you have of that moment. So, that is kind of what we’re getting at.

Interviewer: What about someone who is just a tourist? How do you think their memories are melded together with that? Are you wanting them to think of some of their childhood memories? Or on their memories of their experience here in Iceland?

Interviewee: Ha, I don’t know that we really care? I know that sounds really weird, but I don’t personally, at least. I think Lilja and everyone else feel the same way. But I, and the family, know instinctively and through working with smell...that there’s going to be connecting layers in there. Like, maybe rhubarb isn’t part of it, but orange is. Sometimes people will cry and say, ‘Oh, this No.54, this oil varnish, it reminds me of my.....’ or people will have very interesting parallels to the scents that are their own, and I think that is kind of the magic of it.

Lilja and I are in charge of the ‘storytelling’ aspect of it, so I feel like that’s one of the things we really love. We spend all this time creating one scent and there’s like 60-80 different things in one scent, and that scent becomes a new thing when you put it on you. When I put it on me, and in the same way when you experience a scent experience, it becomes this new thing, our emotions and our memories become reflected, but in a different way with each person that comes in.

AND, there’s Iceland; Iceland is just this dramatic landscape, especially for tourists. And even locals. It has this hold where it becomes so dramatic in their memories. When they come in and they’re like, “Oh Utilykt, it smells... it smells like my time here,” “Oh, 54, smells like the Westfjords to me,” “or 101, it smells so green but so strange.” It’s like Iceland is really fun to play with because it’s automatically going to be really strange to people who do not live here. It’s going to be like the northern lights. The crazy wind and snow and ocean. I mean, you have all of that in California, right? But it’s totally different here. And so I think *that’s* the thing. It’s a very visceral place to play with those things and to play on the edges of all of it.

Where are we connected, and where are we different? Where is it offensive, and where is it warm, like a hug? You know, it’s all that stuff. And Iceland is a bit like that. We always say that Iceland is like your best love or it’s trying to kill you. There’s no in-between. It’s not easy. It’s never easy. We don’t want this to be easy, either. It’s like art. It’s not supposed to be easy. It can be beautiful and powerful and all that, but it’s also supposed to be different and interesting and make you question things.

Interviewer: Are you trying to evoke certain specific emotions over others from the visitors here?

Interviewee: It's natural. We're not really *trying* to do anything other than kind of tell our *own* story, and then see how that... How can *that* be connective to everyone else? We almost never think about 'how is this going to be received.' We almost always think about 'what do *we* want to say.' What do *we* want to express?

Interviewer: What type of experience do you hope visitors are having here?

Interviewee: I hope it's a little bit weird...a little bit moving, emotional, connecting...challenging...inspiring.

In terms of the abstract thing, that's why we have numbers on our scents because it's more abstract. So, you don't immediately know what it is when you see "54" or "8".

Interviewer: Do you think that is different for someone who is Icelandic versus a tourist?

Interviewee: Definitely, if they are Icelandic, they connect to the whole thing. People who are foreign come in, and they connect to their *own* idea and their *own* experience through *our* lens... but yes, it's different.

Interviewer: Why was this building in particular where you put the store versus finding another space? And keeping its minimal aesthetic?

Interviewee: Yes, the location was purposeful, but also, Jónsi moved to California so it happened to be convenient. AND, the house has a lot of memories to the family and we wanted to keep it. AND, we wanted a stand-alone house, as you walk into another world, a home. We didn't want to rent next to another company. We kind of wanted a little black box, hahaha, and this happened to be perfect.

The design is totally Jónsi and Inga's personal style. If you go to Jónsi's place in California, it looks like Fischersund - just with a California interpretation. And the black, well, black is a good place to hang art. It's cleansing too.

Interviewer: Was it purposeful to keep all of the historical references in the home, like the ladder up to the loft and the wooden beams?

Interviewee: Yea, yea! And the moss are the old soundboards Jónsi had made for his studio. We didn't build the house and we really didn't change that much of the interior. We liked having the loft and the basement, having all of these little 'secret' spots. It highlights that feeling of discovery; it's like... you've looked for this little black house, and then you come in, discover, and keep discovering along the way. It gives you a chance to immerse yourself a bit more.

Interviewer: Is everyone pretty much involved on a daily basis?

Interviewee: Yes

Interviewer: Do you think a lot of other modern Icelandic families are like that?

Interviewee: I am not sure.... All I can say is, they are a *VERY*... I don't know any other family that works together as much as they do, as seamlessly as they do, without *any* drama. They work together every day. They have family dinners every Wednesday night. They are *very* connected. They couldn't be

more immersed in each other's lives, and it's *very* undramatic. It's hard to believe. So, I don't think it's that normal in general. Maybe it is *more* normal in Iceland, but I don't know.

Interviewer: Do you think it being a true family business makes it stand out?

Interviewee: I hope so. Yea. But, we are also very small. So there are others of course who do it... but here, it is a *theme*. The *entire* family.... is in it. Husbands, boyfriends.... It's all connected.

Interviewer: What sets Fischersund apart from other perfumeries?

Interviewee: Maybe that it's not just solely a perfumery? That it's not just solely about the perfume, it's about the experience? And we start our perfume-making process from memories. I mean, some more people are doing it now... But we've always had the focus of creating these little rituals around each scent. Scent in general. And I think that's always been a little bit different. We're trying to have visual *and* musical *and* scented elements in the experience. And even taste, we're trying to work on our schnapps, so there's this whole thing happening... really trying to feel.... sensory. It's not just perfume. That's it. It's not just perfume.

Interviewer: What sets Fischersund apart from other retail stores in Reykjavík specifically?

Interviewee: The whole thing is, we never really think about, 'Oh this is gonna sell', 'We should make this cause it's gonna sell'. We're not like, "Oh, these blankets are going to sell", we're more like, "Oh I really want to make a blanket, that would be amazing" like, we want a blanket, what's a blanket we would like? Like around town you see all these blankets, but the wool is a little scratchier. They're beautiful, but everyone in this family wanted something a bit softer. So they made their own for themselves. Inga always says, 'what do we want. What do WE want' whenever we brainstorm. What would WE want the bottle to look like, the packaging, the incense holder, what would we want it to look like" so, it always starts with them... and then just goes out into the world.

Like art. It all just starts from a sense of what we want to put out there in the world. Not what are people going to buy. That makes us different than the normal retail store I guess.

Interviewer: Now that you can purchase the product online, do you think those customers will miss something about the brand?

Interviewee: We're always thinking about the experience - like if someone else sells for us, how can we make it a bit more true to our own story. As for online, we don't think too much about that separation.... It's like science and nature. It's really great that people all over the world can buy it and do they get the *same* experience? No. I mean, they get the poem and the elements are there. It's just different. It's not a bad thing. We're always trying to hone in on those things, like the packaging, etc., figuring out how to have a bigger impact, making the brand more powerful

I do think a lot of people who have bought it online have either bought it before or visited here. If not, they usually start out with the discovery set to see and explore the brand first.

APPENDIX G
TRAVEL + LEISURE magazine

This Fragrance Brand Puts Iceland in a Bottle

At Jónsi's family business, the Sigur Rós singer is also the lead perfumer.

Maggie Downs, January 1, 2023

For Jónsi Birgisson and his three sisters, growing up in the Icelandic town of [Mosfellsbær](#) meant boundless freedom: playing among wet evergreens, running along empty roads . Sometimes, they would swipe a neighbor's rhubarb, cut off the stalks, and dip them in honey to eat like candy.

Decades later, Birgisson is known worldwide as simply Jónsi — the solo artist and lead singer of Sigur Rós. He's also the lead perfumer behind [Fischersund](#), alchemizing the sense-memories of [life in Iceland](#) into fragrances that incorporate native ingredients like birch tar and Arctic thyme. Mosfellsbær is the setting for Fischersund's No. 8, bursting with rhubarb and pine.

The brand is a family affair, dreamed up over the dinner table by the creative siblings — Jónsi, Lilja, Inga, and Sigurrós — and their partners, who are artists, too. “We’re separate,” Lilja explains, “but we move as a whole.”

The Fischersund flagship sits on the quiet [Reykjavík](#) street it's named after, inside a 19th-century wooden house that was once Jónsi's recording studio. The retail space, which also stocks incense, tea, art, and homewares, doubles as a sort of sensory museum — where ambient music plays as visitors sip homemade schnapps and browse whimsical installations like a collection of “fictional flowers,” a collaboration with the all-women writer's collective [Svikaskáld](#) (Impostor Poets). As Lilja puts it, “What's beautiful about music, and scent, is that you hear, or breathe it in, and you're transported.”

A version of this story first appeared in the December 2022/January 2023 issue of Travel + Leisure under the headline "Scents of Place."

APPENDIX H
VISIR.IS
December 21, 2022

***translated to English via Google Translate, originally in Icelandic*

Fischersund has released a new fragrance, Fischersund no. 101. The scent contains the green and ethereal smell that reminds of the backyards of Reykjavík. Along with the fragrance, a song, a video piece and a photo series will be released.

"We always strive to create a holistic world in our perfumery, but we are [an artist-run company](#) where each one of us has a uniqueness," explains Lilja Birgisdóttir, a photographer and artist, but Fischersund is also supported by her sibling, the musician and visual artist Jónsi, a visual and video artist.

Inga, Sindri Már Sigfússon and Kjartan Holm are musicians and are responsible for creating the sound world of Fischersund", says Lilja.

The grassy backyards of the city center the inspiration.

"It's a 'green' scent based on the experience of walking downtown in the summertime and seeing all the backyards growing and smelling them coming at you. There is so much gray and sleet in Iceland except for these two months a year when the sun shines 24 hours a day and the gardens come alive. The main notes in Fischersundi no. 101 is sedge, dog sorrel, grass, gorse, and poplar. Chervil and yarrow are even species that people hate to have in their gardens, but these are amazing herbs with a great aroma and healing power.

There is so much beauty in our overgrown, warm, and overgrown backyards, and the scent is wafting through them, of life in the city."

"We released a [vinyl record](#) alongside the fragrance. On one side of the album is the song Bakgðar and on the other side is an audio recording from a backyard. The song is written by Jónsa, Sin Fang, and Kjartani Holm and published by INNI Music. As a family, we all took part in making the song and worked on all the artistic footage together with the Fischersund team Rachel Jonas and Erla Franklin."

"The symbol of the fragrance is the plastic chair that can be seen in almost every backyard and is one of the few that survives the Icelandic weather. We designed plastic chair sculptures that can be seen in our store in Fischersund.

With all our perfumes, we compose a perfume poem to better connect with its fragrance world:

Weathered garden chairs stacked against the wall
A flower pot filled with rain and cigarette butts
sits on the uprooted pavement now swallowed by chervil
Echoes of a nearby party
Fingers digging up sorrel and dandelions
Freshly fallen snow

On a forgotten trampoline
Black currants fall from bare branches, one by one

An Aroma Experience awaits visitors. Fischersund's store in the stone village offers guests and pedestrians fragrance experiences that can be [booked through](#) their website or on-site.

"We start by offering guests homemade schnapps or tea with medicinal herbs, and then we introduce guests to the aroma of adventure," says Lilja. "It's a whole world, full of history, emotions and experiences. We try to leave everyone with a little inspiration in their hearts."

"We work a lot with the aroma of memory and this strong connection between the sense of smell and memory. The sense of smell is such an important part of our lives and greatly impacts our well-being. You don't look into your nose much, but the sense of smell is our oldest sense and is directly connected to our memories and emotions. And there lies the point of contact that we find so exciting, as we work a lot with the scent of memory in our fragrances. "

"We start by offering guests homemade schnapps or tea with medicinal herbs, and then we introduce guests to the aroma of adventure."

The Christmas candle has become a tradition. The last days until Christmas are busy, but a new fragrance is not the only thing from Fischersund's workshop for this Christmas.

"Our Christmas candle that we make with Rammagerðinn has become a tradition during the holidays and it is made based on the Christmas traditions that mom and dad remember, a soft scent of tangerines with cinnamon, spruce and candy. Then we added the holy oils of frankincense and myrrh, resulting in a festive and soft fragrance.

Tomorrow, Thursday, December 22, Fischersund and the poetry group Svikaskáld invite you to a fragrant Christmas mulled wine and a poetry reading on the occasion of Advent.

"The stone village is small and cute, but only three houses exist. Fischersund 3, where we are and a small guest house, and then diagonally across from us is the beautiful Gröndalshús, where Svekaskáld hangs out. We are huge fans and have always wanted to do something with them. We worked together on the exhibition Hliðarheimur Plantna, which is open to everyone. The Imposter Poets will read from the texts of the samples for the guests, and Sindri will conjure up delicious Christmas mulled wine."

Visitors can therefore visit both houses and stroll between them with the Christmas mulled wine from 16-18.

"We recommend a visit to the city center before Christmas."

APPENDIX I THE REYKJAVÍK GRAPEVINE

How It's Made: The Sense of Wonder in Fischersund No. 23

Josie Gaitens
March 2, 2023

Dead flowers and marine life might not sound like your average perfume description, but then again, Fischersund's flagship fragrance isn't exactly your standard eau de toilette.

"No. 23 is our first scent, and it's inspired by old Reykjavík," Lilja Birgisdóttir tells us, as she sprays it onto our outstretched arms with a flourish. "In particular, our father. Before he stopped working he was a metalsmith. He took over his father's business and he was often near here, at the slippur [shipyard], fixing ships."

As she speaks, Fischersund No. 23 wafts up to meet our nostrils, enveloping us in its scent. It is at once woody and fresh, with bright evergreen top notes layered over a smokey base. Lilja instructs us to close our eyes as she reads us the accompanying poem and suddenly we are whisked away into a perfumed flight of fancy.

A famous nose

While many readers outside of Iceland will have probably never heard of [Fischersund](#), most will be more familiar with the name of the nose behind it. Jónsi, Lilja's brother, is perhaps better known as the singer and frontman of Sigur Rós than a perfumier, but as Lilja explains, both activities have their origins in creativity.

"Jónsi is self taught in perfumery like he's self taught in music — he learned to play instruments by himself. But that's why I love his approach to perfumery, because it's so his, it's so personal. It's so honest and raw and emotional," she says.

Starting with a dream

So, how exactly is a perfume like Fischersund No. 23 made? Well, in true creative fashion, the first step starts with a dream or memory, one that Lilja says is always "connected to Iceland, or family."

While the first three perfumes that Fischersund produced (No. 23, No. 54 and No. 28) were all developed by Jónsi, more recently his and Lilja's other sisters, Ingibjörg and Sigurrós, have become involved in the designing and scent blending process.

"Now we are all doing it together," Lilja says. "So we're all self-taught noses today! It's more of a dialogue."

Regardless of who is the original source of the dream or concept behind the perfume, the next step is always the same: trying to identify the elements of the scent within the memory. In the case of No. 23, these are predominately aniseed, black pepper, grass, tobacco and smoke.

“There’s not actually whale in it,” laughs Lilja, referring to the poem that accompanies the perfume. “That line is to get you located on the beach. Of course there is the ocean so there is some seaweed and sea salt, and when we were kids my father smoked a pipe. That’s my favourite scent — so nostalgic and warm.”

Finding the blend

After the individual scents have been identified and isolated, then comes the difficult process of blending them and finding the right balance of low, high and mid notes — much like in a song. The process takes a long time, with almost endless trials — and errors — as Lilja explains.

“It’s very scientific. Everything is weighed, and we write everything down,” she says.

This is for good reason, as Jónsi learned this the hard way. Lilja continues: “Sometimes when he was just doing stuff, he made something amazing — and then he hadn’t written anything down.” Although Lilja assures us that nothing astounding was “lost forever,” nowadays the family take a more thorough approach to their blending experiments.

While the various oils used to create the perfumes aren’t all exclusively Icelandic, some are only created as the result of hard labour on behalf of the Fischersund team. These days, youngest sister Sigurrós is largely responsible for blending all the scents for the perfumes and candles. “She’s the artisan of the family,” Lilja states, proudly.

Getting the word out

Finally, when the recipe for the perfume is finalised, the family are ready to share it with the world. But that too is a process, involving trusted testers and thoughtful packaging and marketing.

“In the workshop, we all try it together,” says Lilja. “We have a conversation about it, and people start taking it home, trying it on their family and friends.”

Once the scent is endorsed by this lucky crew, it is time to return to the original inspiration behind the perfume in order to create unique artwork inspired by the memories and elements it embodies. Inga and Lilja, as visual artists, are both deeply involved in this part of the perfume’s creation. Kjartan, Jónsi and Sindri have also created music to complement the Fischersund fragrances. The ultimate goal here is to design the right environment to foster the element of connection that is created by shared human experience through scent.

Sense of wonder

But in the overwhelming fast-paced era of Tik Tok and relentless PR machinery, Fischersund’s lack of high-key business and marketing know-how can also work in their favour. “What I love is that there’s this natural word of mouth about us,” says Lilja.

Fischersund’s store manager Rachel agrees: “We kind of love it,” she says, of both the brand and its location’s semi-hidden nature. “You don’t have so much of that these days. Everything’s so accessible to everyone. All information — you can just look on your phone and Google it. We’re missing this sense of wonder.”

Stepping into Fischersund's store, that sense of wonder that Rachel calls to mind is immediately instilled in you. From Jónsi's fascinating 'scent organ' (a literal antique organ with the keys replaced with row upon row of tiny bottles of scents and oils) to the ever-changing scent-themed exhibitions hosted in the building's basement, the whole house is the embodiment of the values and intentionality the family wants to bring to the world with their products. And while the Reykjavík Grapevine's budget doesn't quite stretch for scented pages, we encourage you to get your hands on a bottle of Fischersund No. 23 if you can, so that you too can immerse yourself in the delightful wonderment it brings.

APPENDIX J
THE FINANCIAL TIMES

Cult Shop: the scents of Sigur Rós

Mosha Lundström Halbert

January 9, 2022

Walk down Fischersund, an alleyway in Reykjavik's old town, and you'll come across a small black corrugated iron building with an inconspicuous antique key symbol hanging above the door. Formerly the recording studio of Icelandic musician and Sigur Rós frontman Jónsi Birgisson, the place has lately been transformed by him and his three younger sisters, Inga, Lilja and Rosa, into a sensorial perfume shop and exhibition space. The family-run boutique is named Fischersund after its location.

"We have really similar aesthetics and are drawn to the same things," says Lilja, an artist and photographer who is also the company's creative ambassador. Inga handles art direction, and Rosa (for whom Jónsi's band was named) is the resident artisan and production manager. "We dreamt of doing something together and fell in love with our brother's first perfume."

After 10 years of studying the world of essential oils and aroma molecules, Jónsi is the brand's self-taught nose. His experimental approach to scent composition is comparable to his avant-garde musical process, both resulting in peculiar notes and enveloping overtures. His first and bestselling fragrance, No 23, references smoke in the air, tarred telephone poles, mowed grass, a beached whale and tobacco leaves with notes of black pepper and Icelandic Sitka spruce (£126). No 8 riffs on "brand new sneakers, mouth[s] full of lemon candy and fingers sticky with motor oil and stolen rhubarb from a neighbour's garden, peeled, slathered in honey and chewed on".

"He can create symphonies with scents," says Lilja. "I'm still learning new things every day," says Jónsi. "You'll make hundreds of bad blends until you are barely happy with something. I call it the bottomless pit of disappointments. But with each new blend you will learn something and slowly become obsessed with this endeavour." And how do you translate Iceland's essence in a bottle? "Wind smacking your face. All the oxygen," he says. "I guess it's just the brutal outdoors."

The siblings see the shop less as a retail environment and more as a place in which to pause and take respite. They enlisted interior designer Eleni Podara to conjure a theatrical moss-strewn space inspired by old Icelandic haunted houses. Guests follow a lit pathway past a "perfume organ" (Jónsi's blending table, built out of the remnants of an old organ) to a room stocked with Fischersund's scents.

The range, which is handmade in Iceland, offers candles, incense sticks and four fragrances including Utilykt, a collaboration with the Icelandic clothing brand 66°North that has notes of freshly cut grass and sea air (£126). Fischersund also provides skincare formulated by herbalist Polly Ambermoon, combining wild Arctic and traditional Chinese herbs with organic botanical oils. Plastic packaging is verboten, with products encased in black glass bottles, hand-burnished tin and recycled paper.

The soundtrack, *Sounds of Fischersund*, also by Jónsi, is available to buy too. “Both scents and sounds are abstractions. They go straight to the heart,” says Lilja.

The basement level of the building is home to a small museum whose current exhibition reimagines works by Icelandic authors such as Andri Snær Magnason and Jónas Hallgrímsson in scent, using Arctic thyme, seaweed and moss. The store also hosts regular art shows and events.

Fischersund ships globally and is now available at London’s Pantechicon, but the immersive experience of visiting the shop has turned it into a point of pilgrimage for locals and visitors alike. “I love that this is a family business,” says Jónsi. “Everyone is involved at some point. My father makes incense, my sister makes candles, me perfuming, my mother embroidering the cushions – photographing and designing everything ourselves.”

APPENDIX K 66 NORTH WEBSITE

66°North and Fischersund designed a fragrance inspired by the scent of the Icelandic outdoors. This fascinating collaboration was revealed during the Design March festival, on the 19th - 23rd May 2021.

“Headwind in every direction
Drifting snow creeping undercoat collars
Snow beads on woolly mittens
Berry-colored tongue and head resting on a pillow of moss
Lawnmower in a distant garden
An undressed Christmas tree blowing down the sidewalk in the sea breeze
Frosted windows, weather forecast, and the car heater on full blast.”

Fischersund x 66°North is an interdisciplinary design project with the aim of creating a fragrance for 66°North, as well as a unique world of experience around the fragrance, as part of the project is a musical composition by Jónsi from Sigurrós, Sindri, and Kjartan Holm. Jónsi is one of the founding partners of Fischersund, a company that specializes in experience and perception. Jónsi and his sisters, Lilja, Ingibjörg, and Sigurrós established Fischersund together in 2017, making the phrase "family business" certainly apt.

"This collaboration is in fact a story of Iceland and Icelandic nature told through music and fragrance. The idea was to capture the fresh scent people notice when they come inside after a good time spent outdoors, a scent that is difficult to define exactly, but everyone is familiar with".

The fragrance is handmade in Iceland and made from Icelandic medicinal herbs and oils, which makes it a pure fragrance product, free of all unwanted additives. As previously mentioned, the inspiration comes from Icelandic nature and the scent of the Icelandic outdoors; the wind, the sea, the snow, freshly cut grass, and being outside. All played a major part in the inspiration when the design teams from 66°North and Fischersund worked on developing the fragrance.

66°North and Fischersund both emphasize strong storytelling in their work. This collaboration is in fact a story of Iceland and Icelandic nature told through music and fragrance. The idea was to capture the fresh scent people notice when they come inside after a good time spent outdoors, a scent that is difficult to define exactly, but everyone is familiar with.

"Creating a fragrance is a long process", says Lilja. "We start with the conceptual work. What story do we want to tell? We go back to our own scent-memories a lot, which we often have in common, and create a concept out of that. Then the development comes next. We decide what notes we want in the fragrance, what elements we find first and what remains. Then Jónsi takes over and creates recipes, and we choose one to develop further".

"Before the final fragrance is ready, we have tossed the recipe back and forth between us, changing and improving, spraying it on everyone around us, going in endless circles until, finally, everything clicks."

"Music and fragrance are both really abstract things. If you read the description of a fragrance or a music composition, you still have no idea of what it's really like – you have to experience it."

APPENDIX L
ROLLING STONE MAGAZINE

Jónsi Talks Hitting the ‘Nose’ and ‘Notes’ of His New Musical Fragrance Collaboration

The new perfume will be accompanied by an original musical composition written by the singer, which seeks to capture 'the great Icelandic outdoors'

Tim Chan

October 7, 2021

SIGUR RÓS FRONTMAN Jónsi has teamed up with Icelandic outerwear brand [66°North](#) on a special fragrance collaboration, that brings together sight, scent and sound.

Dubbed “Útilykt,” which loosely translates to “the smell of the outdoors,” the unisex fragrance is a collaboration with Fischersund, the Reykjavik artisan perfumery co-founded by Jónsi. As part of the release, the perfume will be accompanied by an original musical composition written by the singer, which seeks to capture what he says is the “melodic escape that envelopes you into the great Icelandic outdoors.” Both the fragrance and the limited-edition vinyl are available for purchase on the [66°North website](#).

Jónsi is best known for his musicianship, but the singer and instrumentalist has also been serving as the official Fischersund “perfumer” for the better part of a decade. The artist says it’s been a welcome creative outlet for him to explore. “Music, I have been doing for over 30 years so it comes very naturally to me, whereas perfumery, I have only been doing for 10 years and is one of the hardest and most complicated things I have ever done,” he tells Rolling Stone. “But working in the realm of the invisible is extremely fascinating to me. Both are very hard to describe but still move you in some way.”

The new Útilykt fragrance draws inspiration from nature, with a delicate scent that recalls the wind, sea, snow and fresh grass. Handmade in Iceland from indigenous medicinal herbs and oils, the scent is meant to at once evoke long summer nights and cold winter mornings, while bringing together nostalgic notes from those that grew up on the Nordic island.

“Scent is tied to so many emotions and memories,” Jónsi says. “One ingredient can transport you instantly. We found it really exciting and very challenging to incorporate these scent memories of the Icelandic outdoors – the smell of the crisp cold on your skin and clothes, fresh cut grass and the brisk sea and snow. Icelanders know this scent by heart, yet it’s hard to explain.”

All the ingredients used in the fragrance are sustainably-sourced and produced — something that has long been core to the values of Fischersund and 66°North.

The accompanying soundtrack to the campaign is also a nod to the Icelandic outdoors, with Jónsi and the Fischersund musical team traveling to five sites in Iceland chosen by 66°North for their unique landscapes — and soundscapes. The team captured field recordings of each site, then overlaid the recordings with original scores.

“We wanted to create a mood and tell a story through our field recordings that would take people out of their day-to-day lives to somewhere completely different,” says Sindri, an Icelandic musician and part of the Fischersund team. “It’s such a weird time in the world and to still be able to create something beautiful tied to unbridled nature is what really spoke to us.”

The “weird time” in the world — namely Iceland suddenly being closed off to tourists during the coronavirus pandemic — meant the team was about to work freely and without interruption. “All of a sudden, the most popular sightseeing places in Iceland were empty, so we took advantage of that when working on this collaboration,” Sindri says. “We used the opportunity to do field recordings of only the environment and incorporated that into the music. So when you listen to the vinyl it’s like you are transported to where it’s just you, alone in nature.”

The resulting composition is captured in a limited-edition 7” handmade vinyl, available exclusively on the [66°North site](#). The caption on the accompanying album cover is a reference to the place and time the field-recording in the piece was taken.

As for Jónsi, the artist says he’s working on new music of his own too, first on a companion piece to an exhibition he’s doing in New York at the Tanya Bonakdar Gallery. His next solo album, meantime, will be “more textural and sculptural,” and Jónsi tells Rolling Stone that it will be in the “similar world” of the sound and scent explorations he’s been doing with the fragrance launch, and at the gallery.

APPENDIX M
PENTECHNICON MAGAZINE

MEET FISCHERSUND, ICELAND'S EXPERIMENTAL PERFUMERY

Ahead of our Fischersund pop up and special installation, we sat down with Lilja Birgisdottir, co-founder of the Reykjavik-based scent maker

Fischersund is a family-run Icelandic perfumery based in their experimental apothecary in downtown Reykjavik. Inspired by Icelandic nature, their scents are made with wild herbs and oils harvested from its countryside using the most environmentally friendly solutions available. A family business, the team is led by the nose and passions of Jónsi, the front man of acclaimed post-rock band Sigur Rós.

Fischersund will be popping up with a special installation in Edit, 9-20 November, to celebrate the global launch of their new No. 101 fragrance, which is inspired by the backyards of Reykjavik. Here, co-founder Lilja Birgisdottir tells us more about the new scents and the brand's inspirations, as well as his favourite things about Iceland.

“The moment when we are all in the same headspace, excited about an idea and lose track of time brainstorming about the world we want to create together around a particular scent gives us so much joy”

What interests you most about Pantechnicon?

The store is an incredible curation of Nordic and Japanese design of everything you didn't know you needed. It's a store, exhibition space, restaurant and a bar. When you come in you enter a world of an experience where all the senses are nurtured. It's something truly unique and meets a need in the retail landscape.

What is your greatest source of inspiration?

The people around us are our greatest inspiration. It's always so much fun and super inspiring to watch what our friends and family create as they obsess over every detail. And, of course, the unpredictable Icelandic weather and nature has a great influence in everything we do.

How long does it take for you to produce one perfume scent from scratch? And what's the process?

Creating a scent is an all-consuming process. It takes time, patience and you really have to be humble. We always start with an idea that triggers something in all of us. Then we begin by sourcing oils and materials and figuring out the heart of the scent. After that it's a game of trying out different things, starting over and trying again until you have something you can build upon. Our latest scent was exceptionally challenging because Jónsi was on tour with Sigur Rós so we couldn't meet as often as we needed. We had to send formulas back and forth amongst family members that met him on tour with testers to try.

What aspect of creating perfume gives you the most joy, and what is the most challenging?

The moment when we are all in the same headspace, excited about an idea and lose track of time brainstorming about the world we want to create together around a particular scent gives us so much joy.

It's sometimes challenging to make a scent, so it's an incredible experience to have that first spray, as well as to see how it develops after it has lived on your skin for a couple of hours.

What are your three favourite scents?

When we were kids our father smoked a pipe so that is a favourite scent for sure. It's so nostalgic and warm to us. We also love birch-tar as it has such a dark character and brings depth and a story to a perfume. Bergamot is also a favourite because of its ability to elevate all scents with its bright presence.

If you had a friend visiting, you in Iceland for the day where would you take them? What would you do?

We would take them to Hveragerði, a small town 30 min outside of Reykjavík, and we would hike to a hot spring in a thermal river in Reykjadalur where we would take a relaxing dip in the hot springs. Afterward, we would walk around Hveragerði and visit their many greenhouses and go for a pizza and beer at Ölverk brewery.

What's your favourite restaurant in Iceland?

Hosiló is a hidden gem in downtown Reykjavík. They change their menu each week and only use seasonal products.

Where do you go for your morning coffee?

We love going to Café Ó-lé which is a small coffee place closed to the Fischersund store in Reykjavík where Tom makes us exceptionally good coffee.

What are your favourite traditions at Christmas?

At the beginning of December, the supermarkets stock mountains of clementines that they sell in small wooden cases. When you buy the first case, you know that Christmas is here. The day before Christmas, it's tradition to meet up with friends and family to eat skate fish that has been fermented and drink Brennivín. That day everything and everyone smells horrible – but in a very Christmasy way!

What's on your Christmas list this year?

Some alone time with a glass of red wine and a good book.

APPENDIX N MORGUNBLADID

Travel back to the year 1772 in Grjótathorpin

August 25, 2022

***translated to English by Google Translate, originally in Icelandic*

Ilmgerðin and multi-arts center Fischersund is today hosting an event in collaboration with the Swedish embassy where the so-called "fragrance key" to Icelandic homes will be premiered.

It is an event on the occasion of the 250th anniversary of the first foreign scientific expedition to Iceland, when in 1772, the Swedish naturalist Daniel Solander came with other scientists to explore Iceland. They documented many things about Icelandic nature, culture, customs, dress and housekeeping, which was published in the book Letters from Iceland by Uno von Troil.

Fischersund offers the opportunity to "put yourself in the shoes of Solander and his fellow travelers" and travel back to old Iceland in the scent key of the aforementioned.

"Imagine walking into an Icelandic turf town in 1772. You have to duck under a thick pile of driftwood before stepping onto the well-compacted dirt floor. Against you comes smoke from burning birch branches in the fireplace on the floor," says the [description of the event on](#) Facebook.

The Swedish ambassador seemed excited about the event, but he shared Viðkipti Moggan's detailed coverage from this week in a tweet today, where he also talked about the event.

At Fischersund in Reykjavík, there is a small and cozy house that houses the store of the same name. The shop, which celebrates its fifth anniversary this year, is a family project where the four siblings, Jón Þór, better known as Jónsi in Sigur Rós, Ingibjörg, Lilja and Sigurrós Elín, design and sell the various fragrances and products that are all made from ingredients Icelandic nature.

Jónsi and Sigurrós mostly take care of the design and production of the fragrances, while the middle sisters, Inga and Lilja, are the shop's artistic team.

Their men, the musicians and composers Sindri Már Sigfússon and Kjartan Holm, are also an important part of the project as they compose the shop's music in collaboration with Jónsa. The parents are also actively involved, as the father, Birgir, works the tin and makes incense, and the mother, Guðrún, takes care of the packing and is their spiritual support. It is therefore a project where all hands are on deck, according to Lilja.

"Ilmlykyll" premieres tomorrow

There is a lot going on in the store at the moment, but they recently opened a warehouse in the United States due to high demand in that country, and an LP with the store's music will be released in mid-September.

Tomorrow there will be a special event in the shop in collaboration with the Swedish Embassy where the so-called "scented key to Icelandic homes" will be premiered, on the occasion of the 250th anniversary of Daniel Solander's scientific expedition to this country in 1772.

A journalist was well received when he arrived at a garden in Fischersund, and despite the fact that the building is not large in size, it was bustling with life. Tourists could be seen being led through a sort of fragrance experience in the shop, where each smell was given a pictorial description. It didn't take long until the middle sister, Lilja, had led a journalist down the same path.

A scent inspired by childhood memories

"Smoke in the air and tarred telephone poles." Aniseed and black pepper accompany freshly cut grass and tobacco leaves. Dead flowers bow. In the breeze, the feminine linden pine tickles the mind," is the description of Fischersund's most popular fragrance based on Jóns' memories of the harbor in Reykjavík where his father, Birgir, worked repairing ships.

Before that was a lighter smell, inspired by the siblings' childhood memories of their upbringing in Mosfellsbær.

We continued with a fragrance that was designed in collaboration with 66°Norður: Útilykt.

"We Icelanders are terribly busy with the weather, we are always looking at the weather forecast and talking about the weather, and we have so many words to explain this small difference in all the weather levels we have.

We even have a word to describe the smell of your clothes and hair when you've been outside for a long time," says Lilja, adding that the family created this scent together. "We have so many shared memories of being out in nature."

A warehouse abroad, but the family spirit is not going away

When asked, Lilja says that the shop is doing well. A new scent will be introduced this fall, but so far there has been about one scent per year.

"It's just going really well. Icelanders have received us very well, as well as foreign tourists and people from abroad," says Lilja, who has long operated an online store and delivered to many parts of the world.

"There is a lot of interest, especially from the United States, so we are going to focus more on that market."

They have already made a contract with Ísafold, who so pleasantly wants to be run by Kjartan's childhood friends. "So we are working with Icelanders in the United States," says Lilja and laughs. It is clear that even though they are now out of the pens, the family atmosphere is not going away.

Number of queries

"It's all very organic," says Sindri, adding that the sound world is too, but they traveled around the country last year recording ambient sounds and establishing a music-friendly form.

"We made drums, for example, by throwing stones and hitting moss. Let's make a beat out of it."

The Svilirs say the project originated due to a number of inquiries from the shop's customers, who were unable to buy the vinyl but want to be able to enjoy the songs alongside the products. Now people all over the world can enjoy the songs.

"And we," says Kjartan and laughs. "We don't have any of those records."