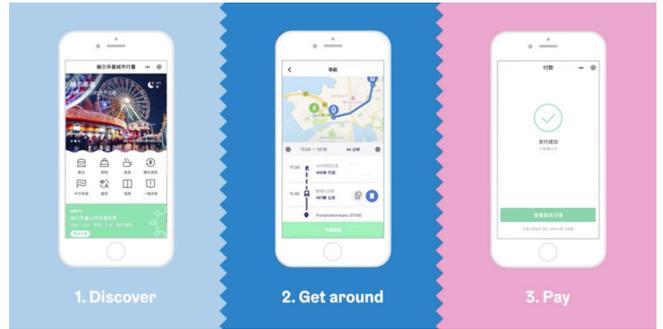
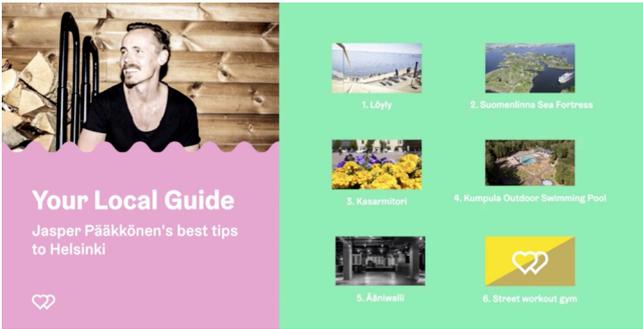


Best Use of Social Media



WeChat MyHelsinki

City of Helsinki / Helsinki Marketing

Helsinki has become increasingly popular amongst Asian tourists in recent years. The registered overnight stays from China have more than doubled in past 5 years. The flight connections between Helsinki and China are excellent with over 40 weekly direct flights, but many of the Chinese travellers flying to Helsinki continue directly to other European cities with transfer flights. To enable a better travel experience for the increasing number of Chinese visitors and to attract the transfer passengers for a stopover stay in Helsinki, the team wanted to create an easy-to-use, comprehensive travel service in a digital environment familiar to the users. Designed especially for Chinese visitors, the WeChat MyHelsinki mini programme combines preferred personal recommendations, mobility planning and purchase options for travellers. The new service has been jointly developed by the Chinese internet service giant Tencent, Helsinki Marketing and MaaS Global. The MyHelsinki mini programme is a scalable solution for more balanced tourism in cities. The “live like a local” features make it easy for the curious Chinese traveller to discover neighbourhoods beyond the most obvious tourist hot spots and offer access to the local service providers off the beaten path.

Helsinki has become a perfect testbed for solutions that can later be scaled-up for the world’s megacities. Helsinki is a global pioneer in providing access to public data and utilising it. The mini programme utilises Helsinki’s open API and data about places, events and public transport and uses this data in its recommendations. Open data enables more in-depth recommendations and tailored services to be offered to Chinese visitors. In addition, providing the open data databases in Chinese the data can be used through API by any third party, including Chinese OTA’s and user generated content platforms. The mini programmes are web-based apps that enable purchases within the WeChat service. The app does not have to be downloaded separately, as it is included within WeChat, an all-in-one application with over a billion users. Of more than a billion internet users in China, 97.5 percent use a mobile device for browsing, and 35 percent of the 26.5 hours a week spent online are spent on WeChat. Within last year, WeChat mini programmes

have taken off: they represent 20-30% of total traffic in WeChat. Therefore, the new mini programme offers the opportunity to serve Chinese consumers using their preferred digital services throughout their visit. Destination websites are of little importance when Chinese visitors search for information using their favourite mobile apps. China is changing fast, and during the following 10 years, the country’s outbound tourism is estimated to grow to 400 million overseas trips by Chinese residents, accounting to nearly a quarter of global tourism. This cohort will spend over 453 billion USD overseas over the next 5 years. China’s urban, digitally savvy young generation are an emerging force not only driving market trends but changing their country and the world.

In the first stage, the team focused on building a deep understanding of the needs and pain points of the target users and created a culture probe kit for documenting and interviewing them. Based on the research insights, they designed a one-stop service concept and held quick validations sessions with the users to finalise the details. Chinese tourists travelling to Helsinki are able to use the MyHelsinki WeChat mini programme to review local recommendations about the best restaurants, shopping, events and sights in town, plan how they will get from their hotel to the attraction of their choice, and pay for transportation – all within one mobile service. The MyHelsinki WeChat mini programme was built to cover the visitor needs and desires – discovering authentic activities, sights, and restaurants, choosing personalized ways of transportation to get to different locations, and paying for transportation digitally as they go. The content of the service leverage both the up-to-date open databases owned and maintained by the city, and the mobility services API created by MaaS Global.

The users have given very positive feedback on how approachable the whole service package is, and the authenticity of the listed content. Some other travel destinations in Finland have begun creating their own mini programmes, and since the technology supports links between them, users will in the future have seamless experience viewing content and using the services across a network of programmes. ●