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MARKETING OF ADVENTURE TRAVELS,

DESTINATION SOUTH-AMERICA

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TIIVISTELMÄ

Seikkailumatkojen markkinointi, kohteena Etelä-Amerikka

Tämän opinnäytetyön päätavoite oli hahmottaa uusia markkinoinnin asetelmia Etelä-Amerikan seikkailumatkoille. Seikkailumatkailu on nopeasti kasvava turismin alue, mutta sille omistettu markkinointi on harvoin erikoistettu yrityksen johdon toimesta. Muuttuva seikkailumatkailun markkina-alue kuitenkin vaatii mukautettua markkinointitoimintaa. Tämä tutkimus analysoi kahta nuorta seikkailumatkatoimistoa ja niiden tämänhetkisiä markkinoinnin käsityksiä.

Tutkimuksen teoreettinen osio jaettiin kolmeen osaan: matkailualan markkinaympäristö, kuluttajat kyseisessä ympäristössä ja markkinoinnin johtamisen osa-alueet. Nämä kolme osaa esittävät nykypäivän faktoja tutkimuksen pääelementeistä. Teoreettista tiedonantoa toimivasta markkinoinnista seurasi tutkimus siitä, kuinka todelliset yritykset käsittävät nämä markkinointi konseptit seikkailumatkoja ajatellen.

Empiirinen osa perustuu vastaaja yhtiöistä, kahdesta matkatoimistosta kerättyyn informaatioon. Toinen yhtiöistä sijaitsee Baskimaassa, Espanjassa, ja toinen Suomen Espoossa. Kvalitatiivinen kysely koottiin yhtiöiden päättäjille tiedonkeruuksi analyysiin.

Päätelmät ja suositukset kappaleessa kuvataan tutkimuksen positiiviset ja negatiiviset tulokset. Markkinoinnin suunnittelu tehdään molemmissa matkatoimistoissa melko pelkistetysti, ja se kohdistuu isoon asiakasryhmään samanaikaisesti. Tutkimus kuitenkin osoitti, ettei seikkailumatkojen markkina-alue ole enää yhtä yksikantainen kuin ennen. Tämän takia matkan tarjoajien tulisi segmentoida asiakkaansa tehokkaampaa markkinointia ajatellen.

ABSTRACT

Marketing of Adventure Travels, Destination South-America

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The main purpose of this thesis was to search for new marketing implementations for adventure travels to South-America. Adventure tourism is a rapidly growing sector in the industry, but is not commonly applying special marketing methods by the management. However, the transforming adventure travel market is calling for adapted marketing activities. This research was completed by analyzing two young adventure travel companies and their current marketing applications.

The theoretical section of this study was divided into three parts: the market environment in tourism, consumers in that environment, and marketing applications. These three parts introduce facts about the current situations, and the main elements of the research. With the theoretical knowledge of how marketing is generally done, this thesis carried on to evaluating how real companies understand these marketing concepts.

The empirical part was written based on the information collected from the participating companies, two different travel agencies. The other company is located in Basque Country, Spain, and the other in Espoo, Finland. A qualitative questionnaire was structured for the company managements to gather information for the analysis.

In the conclusions and recommendations chapter, the positive and negative findings of the research are described. Marketing planning is done quite moderately in both travel agencies, and is based on reaching a big consumer market simultaneously. However, the research revealed that the diversifying adventure travel market is no longer as definitely structured, as before. Hence, the travel providers need to segment its consumers for more effective marketing.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The distinctive growth of travel industry has mounted into new directions within the tourist market. The entire concept of traveling has changed and consequently the applications of marketing need revision and adaptation. Adventure traveling is one of the young and growing sectors in tourism. The growing number of adventure travel providers has increased competition; however, the applied marketing methods are merely following the principles of regular travel marketing. Travel industry is expected to become the largest industry economically in an international level. Evolving factors in the modern and globalizing world, easiness to travel and wealthier life-styles all cause the industry's current expansion, including the segment of adventure traveling. Ultimately, the possibilities are so abundant, that the adventure travel market itself is developing even newer dimensions. Experimenting by an escapade is no longer a matter of back bagger spirited travelers, but varieties of new segments are consuming adventure journeys. This transformation entitles for a systematic analysis on effective marketing strategies, adapted from traditional service marketing concepts.

This thesis commences with a theoretical part that presents the market of travel industry (focusing on tourism in Finland, and the destination country), the consumers, and approaches to marketing management. The key elements of the marketing implementations are the seven P's of service marketing mix, and the methods of controlling them effectively. This study is designed to serve best small to medium sized travel businesses, thus a very multifaceted and departmental marketing activities will not be introduced. However, this research will carry on with very applicable methods to any kind of travel business. The empirical part follows the theory, and will describe real case scenarios in adventure travel business. The participants in data gathering are travel agencies operating in different markets. The research method is following qualitative norms, and the results and conclusions will be based on the answers from questionnaires.

2 NATURE OF TOURIST INDUSTRY

Since the modern tourism was born in the early post-war years, the nature of travel industry has completely changed. In the sixties the global travel arrivals were about 80 million, whilst in 1995, the arrivals were over 500 million with the total income of 299 billion Euros. (Albanese & Boedeker 2002, 8.) Traveling counts as an important socio-economic division and is the largest export industry in the world. In a time-span of about 50 years (1950 to 2004), the travel industry has augmented 6,5 % annually and the travel arrivals are now over 800 million. An arrival is defined as person's entrance to a region, thus people can form many arrivals during one journey. The estimates forecast a growth of 4% a year until the year 2020, which would mean 1,6 billion arrivals in the world. (Matkailun Edistämis Keskus 2006, 14-15). The travel industry is therefore expected to become the most economically important industry. According to the estimates of the UN World Tourism Organization, the incomes from travel-business imports are already higher than in the car-, oil-, and steal industries together.

Travel demand has also reformed within years. The cheap Spanish resorts and travel packages have shifted to more independent traveling, whilst the desired destinations have been combined with geographical extremes. (Albanese & Boedeker 2002, 8). Travel and tourism industry is a large concept that takes into account many functions of business, service providers, and public-sector agencies. However, travel is not only a matter of tourism, but also of business tours and other movement. Many functions of travel and tourism (such as transportation, lodging, hospitality, agencies and destination planners) overlap, creating interactivities of businesses. (Oelkers 2007, 14). International traveling is many times less active than domestic one, but this is expected to change fast. Europe is still listed as the top continent in traveling, but it is slowly losing this position. For the expansion of tourism, the travel industry now provides about 6-8 % of all employment in the world. (Matkailun Edistämis Keskus 2006, 15).

In travel industry the management of companies and organizations must understand the multi dimensional nature of travel and the interactive relation ship of those dimensions. Travel and tourism involve so many areas of interest and phenomena that many regions of science are studying the causality between them (i.e. sociologists, geologists, biologists, politicians etc.). Especially from travel marketers point of view the linkage among all determinants is important. Mainly because of this breadth of travel industry United Nations in 1979 introduced a definition for an international traveler to simplify measurements in travel business sector. Today's tourism statistics are based on the definition in question, and it is better explained in chapter three. (Albanese & Boedeker 2002, 15-16). Figure 1 shows a commonly used interpretation on international tourism by Leiper (1979) and Travis (1989). It describes the interactive components of departure and destination zones in travel business. The actual tourist industry is not limited to the activities involving tourist movement, but it is important to view the different activities in destination-, departure-, and the whole market areas. (Vuoristo 2003, 19.)
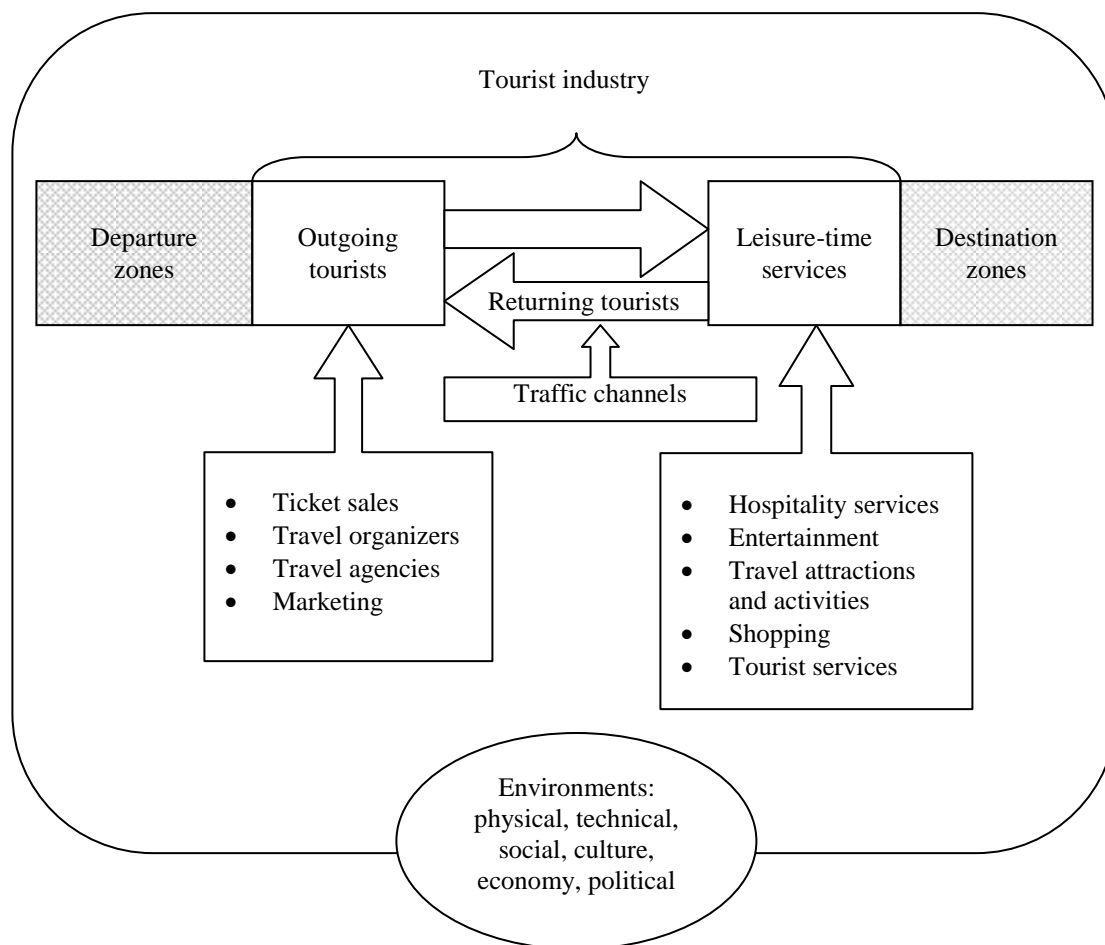
Figure 1. Model of regional systems in travel by Leiper and Travis. (Vuoristo 2003, 19)

The economic future of Europe has caused speculation and although the forecasts do not always seem positive, tourism stands as one of the strongest industries. The European Parliament received a report from the EU commission on 2003 about the development of tourism. The document Basic Guidelines for a sustainable European tourism stated the economic importance of tourism in the future, and the commission expected 700 million visitors until the year 2020. A new aspect for the sector will be the growing number of visitors from the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) that will become economically more important. For these nations, Europe is attractive in terms of architecture and cultural history. (Matkailun Edistämis Keskus 2006, 12.)

2.1 Tourism in Finland

The international growth of travel and tourist industry has also taken affect in Finland and in 2005, it reached a market value of € 6,7 billion. This growth was mainly heightened due to the increase of disposable income, thus the expenditure in leisure activities was improved. New developments in the transportation sector have also influenced this effect. (Euromonitor International 2006). The growth of the industry has not only brought an increasing number of foreigners visiting the country, but also the national tourism is now more active. Churches, castles, and fortifications are the most popular attractions, and foreigners are showing most interest towards the areas of Helsinki, Tampere, Turku, and Lapland. The most active visitors out of Finland are Germans, Swedes, and Russians. The company investments to popular attractions are also growing notably, especially by ski resorts and leisure centers. (Santasalo 2006). However, the development in the industry has not been effortless, and many aspects still cause problems in marketing Finland for tourists. Country location, price – quality relationship and unfamiliarity within other countries are current examples of problematic causes. Long before joining European Union, there have been intentions to increase product development and effective marketing of Finland, but certain obstacles still exist for the companies to face. Some of these difficulties are formed by cultural, political and historical issues. The elements that attract tourists in Finland are based on nature and the authentic and genuine culture. Lapland is a popular zone for visitors and in 2004, 227 172 international tourists experienced Lapland in Finland. Rovaniemi is the most popular northern city and Christmas time the most active season of tourism. Many initiatives have been made for developing Finland's northern zones with parks and specialities, but obstructions have risen time and again. The limitation in extending Finnish theme parks is that they cannot rely on only international visitors, but must design its services for active domestic tourism as well. (Rouhiainen 2006, 11-12, 22-24.)

The growth of buying bower and leisure time in Finland has encouraged regions and private companies to constantly develop the activity services for visitors. The variety

of programs and high quality networks of hospitality services are also a proof of increasing competition. The activity programs of tourism have been categorized by UNWTO and include water- and beach activities, winter activities, nature related activities, social life and contests, and culture; arts and crafts. Examples of activity programs in Finland are also theme parks like Särkänniemi, Linnanmäki and Heureka. The possibility to do activities that are normally not available is important to travelers, and in Finland the activities in nature are the increasingly popular. Sleigh rides with reindeers and dogs and motor sleds together with fishing programs are trendy doings for tourists. The four seasons are an opportunity in terms of activity tourism, and for instance birds in the spring time fascinate tourists. Modern offerings in Finland are fantasy or fairy story travel packages that are designed according to a theme from the very beginning to the end of the trip. The most important aspect in this kind of experimental travelling is to expose the consumer to every element possible: smell, taste, sounds and feelings with visually impressive atmosphere. There are also potential surroundings for new experiments in traditional Finnish farms. (Asunta & all 2003, 239-241.)

Suomen Matkailuliitto was founded in 1887 and since then it has taken the major responsibility to market and develop Finnish tourism both internationally and domestically. Matkailun Edistämis Keskus (Finnish Tourism Board) on the other hand has within years become a Government financed organization, thus the development and marketing of Finnish tourism has become more appreciated. Nowadays many public organisations, such as Finnvera, Helsinki-Finland Congress Bureau, several cities, town unions and ministries participate in financially supporting such activities. (Rouhiainen 2006, 199-201). Finnish Tourism Board conducted a research together with other international associations on future insights of tourism in Europe and Finland and published a report; Matkailu 2020, faktaa ja fiktiota (Travels 2020, Facts and Fiction). The report takes into account the new global mega-trends arising in the upcoming years; economic, political, technological and environmental changes influencing tourism among other industries. This sort of study may become a good tool for marketers who look for new directions in their strategies. The documented forecast

lists transformations to space travelling, under-water hotels, highly automated services and brand-based travelling (i.e. chains of Coca-Cola hotels). In Finnish terms, most of them are not relevant for the tourist industry, but other changes in overall market structure are important to consider. For instance, the fact that Europe's population most likely will decline and become more ethnic whilst the global population is augmenting is remarkable knowledge for travel marketers. According to the report, the know-how in service sectors becomes a fast growing employer, while cultural and experimental travelling boosts. (Matkailun Edistämis Keskus 2006, 29, 14.)

2.2 Adventure-tourism

Individualism is a growing phenomenon in many levels of tourism, and the concept of mass tourism is slowly fading away. When an individual is seeking experimental traveling, the importance of commodities and pampering services decreases, and the physical and mental practices become desired objectives. If usual travel services and activities are not attractive anymore, a person may drift away to search for activities that can be experienced with all senses, and provide moments that are more memorable. (Asunta Brännare-Sorsa, Kairamo & Matero 2003, 251). Adventure traveling offers experiments that include activities associated with different levels of excitement and survival. Although the word adventure describes the travel experience misleadingly, the purpose of the practice is to build a sensation of risk in relatively extreme places. The voluntary nature of this type of traveling makes the traveler to challenge his/her own physical and emotional limits, by being the active participant in an extreme environment. (Verhelä & Lackman 2003, 178-179). The changes from original self-organized adventure traveling to an expanding retail market have enforced adventure travels to become a major sector in tourist industry. For the rapid commercial growth of this sector, the necessary attention for marketing, development, and management of adventure tourism has been quite little. Through the development of adventure travel, the demand has been modified by offering adventure packages of

different levels, and evidently, the industry will evolve to even more touristy edge in the future. (Buckley 2006, 5-7.)

War and hunger are no longer as inevitable parts of peoples' life as in the past. Changes in life-styles and values cause ever more adventure seekers traveling around, providing new business opportunities in several ways. Firstly, the principles of an adventurous experience are based on a rush of adrenaline, excitement and the natural environment. This reduces the necessity of high-cost hotel and resort structure of usual holiday packages, and opens more possibilities for start-up- and small businesses. Secondly, the geographic concentration in adventure traveling is focused on less developed countries like Chile, Peru, and Argentina in Americas, which can offer tremendous resources for extreme traveling. This direction of adventure tourism offers many opportunities for marketing different and new destinations. (Ahtola 2002, 7). New methods of creating successful adventure packages are numerous and competitive in the globalizing market, but certain concerns build barriers for the innovation. For example, the line between fear and horror is fine, and the extreme travel experience is not enjoyable if the consumers' are put over their limit. On the contrary, a right balance of safe fear and daring may create a tremendous feeling of satisfaction for the traveler. Defining these limits and capabilities in the consumer segments can be difficult, and in addition raises matters of safety to a significant level. Different types of adventure travels are divided into traditional-, challenging-, and refreshing adventure traveling, and within these the programs may include survival games, physical activities (climbing, rafting, skydiving etc.) or even role games. In basic terms, the components of an adventurous trip include environment, activities, completing tasks, motivation, feeling of risk, and experience. In the basis of this, the evolving adventure tourism offers many dimensions for effective marketing. (Verhelä & Lackman 2003, 179-180.)

Research states that the potential global adventure travelers are about 60 million. Recently the share of adventure travelers from all tourists in the world has been about one percent (five million), and the number is growing by 20 % every year. (Latikka

2002). The growth rate of eco- and adventure tourism has been over twice as rapid as the growth of regular tourism. It is evident that the development of environmental concerns has driven companies and regions to offer alternatives for regular tourism. This emphasis has also driven personal motivations of consumers to favor physical and healthier activities during vacations. (Reims 2002, 7). Due to the youth of adventure travel in tourism, the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) has opened discussion on more detailed definition of this segment, which is often associated with ecotourism and similar activities. In a joint research with Michigan State University ATTA seeks to give more perspective and recognition for the industry considering different areas of interest. (Koumelis, T. 2005.)

2.2.1   Adventure-tourism in Finland

The concept of adventure travel was not familiar in Finland until 1990's, but an increasing number of tourists are showing interest in nature related-, or incentive traveling within different zones of the country. The most adventure activities are associated with snow, and although there are no extreme landscapes in Finland, there are an increasing number of adventure tourists entering the country. Winter is the season that attracts the majority of adventure tourists to Finland, because of the exotic snow image of Finland. This can also be remarked in the travel-marketing sector. Many travel providers now offer adventurous experiences, in addition to the original winter activities, and ultimately this shift has moved the market to an increasing competition. (Santasalo, 2006.)

Taking advantage of the long summer nights, the possibilities of spending time with adventurous activities are plenty. Although the conditions in canoeing, sailing, or hiking are not very intense, they fit well for experimenting in the nature. The waterways, lakes, and rivers are almost limitless and the coast is convenient for many types of commotions. Inlands of Finland also offer forests for camping and routes for cycling or horseback riding. Evidently, fresh air and clean nature has a high value in Finnish adventure-tourism, as well as the peaceful scenery for most travelers. During

the winter, the activity element is snow. Ski resorts are situated overall the country, Arctic Lapland being the most attractive zone for adventurers. Cross-country tracks are properly marked during long distances, and leisure centers are offering reindeer and snowmobile safaris in addition to regular snowboarding, skiing, and sleeping in ice hotels. (www.visitfinland.com). Finnish adventure travelers count to only hundreds, but the number is increasing and predicted to be thousands within the next few years. The number of providers is also rising; most of the current adventure travel organizers have not been operating until the mid nineties. (Latikka 2002.)

2.2.2 South-America as an adventure destination

The steady growth of tourism in South-America reached a number of 18,2 million arrivals in 2005. In addition to the most popular countries, for example Venezuela has shown remarkable growth in this sector. In South-America, the natural disasters have a high influence on tourism, thus they may momentarily decrease the flow of visitors. (UNWTO, 2007). With its special shape and situation, South-America is a continent of many geographical opposites. The variety of wildlife, deserts, rain forests, lakes, rivers, and mountains is extremely rich, and topographically the continent has three sections: South-American cordillera by the pacific shore, the interior lowlands in the middle and the continental shield in the east. The climate and vegetation is also divided into every extreme, because of the continent's parallel and wide position. (The Columbia Electronic Encyclopaedia. 2007). Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay are the most active places of tourism in South-America, and especially Brazil offers tremendous possibilities for adventure traveling for its nature and tropical climate. Despite the economic growth in most of the South-American countries, some conditions are still very moderate for western tourists. This in a way supports the enhancement of adventure traveling, as tourists seek experimenting the wildlife and nature of these regions, rather than the resorts or cities. (Vuoristo 2003, 412, 421). Not only are the possibilities for adventure in South-America great, but also for exploring the wildlife simultaneously. The species of animals are just as prosperous as the landscape, providing a colorful

range of parrots, mammals, tarantulas, and lizards. This feature especially attracts tourists of different interests. In Brazil, both the population and the terrain are the largest, whereas Chile is a long country with a lot of amending coastline. (Turnkey Software Projects. 2007.). The internal problems within South-America are linked to economic, social and environmental issues, but the small size of population and amazing natural highlights offer tremendous potential in tourism. Popular sites, such as Andean mountains, Amazon River and the largest rain forest on Earth, bring all kinds of travelers to the countries. (National Geography Society). The year 2002 was designated as the International Year of Ecotourism by the United Nations. As a result, the World Tourism Organization (presently UNWTO) organized regional conferences around the world to exchange experiences, and consider economic and social issues at hand for sustainable development in this sector, including in South-America. The 25 countries that participated in the conference got a reviewing of the development and planning, as well as the cost-benefit structure of the strategies for the present and future eco-tourism. (World Tourism Organization, 2001.)

2.3   Marketing a destination

Countries can and should be marketed by national travel- and tourism authorities. There are several examples of how this has been done successfully. The strategies of marketing a particular destination varies depending on the maturity of the travel market niche, and on several factors related to market environment. (Riege & Perry 2000, 1290-1291). The importance of the destination country's image is higher than believed before, and the consumers' attitudes towards the country have a strong influence on traveling habits. Believes and knowledge, as well as feelings and emotions play an important role in what the final perception of the country is, and for managers of travel businesses understanding these elements of their consumers is knowledge of high value. (White 2004, 309-310). The attractiveness of a country also varies depending on the time and season. The movement to, and from regions cause a competitive situation, as nations try to enhance incoming tourism. For instance, destinations thats best attraction is nature,

must adapt to seasonal changes, and develop their strategies accordingly. New incentives can change the traveling trends fast, and therefore affect countries' profitability. Transformation in many sectors, like price-levels, political situations, or cultural visions may turn the international tourist flows effectively. Being reactive to these kinds of motions is crucial in effective destination marketing if a company or a country wants to maintain competitiveness. It is also important to recognize the complexity of travel decisions: previous experiences, recommendations, amount of information, travel organizers reliability, country's image, and regional pull factors all affect the final choice of destination. The pull factors of a country are related to nature, culture of constructed elements. Sun, water, sand, snow, ice, climate, plants, and animals are the incentives in the entire globe for travelers, and usually the tourist seeks opposite and exotic features away from the home country. Lately cultural traveling has become more popular. The new experiences gained from this type of traveling are its main attractiveness, but also creates conflicts in some areas. Commercialization of authentic and rare cultural zones is feared, but on the other hand, the openness and familiarization towards new cultures become higher. (Asunta & all 2003, 236-238). In the context of marketing a country or a region, the attractiveness for hospitality services should be evaluated. The following general questions help to give direction into what is needed for potential marketing:

- How important tourism can be for region's economy?
- How the travel market can be segmented and made flexible for changing trends, lifestyles, needs, and preferences?
- What investments and strategies should be done by the regions to become competitive?
- How can the region become involved in tourism and gain a position in it. Which are the risks and opportunities?
- Which Medias are effective in attracting and maintaining tourists?
- How should the travel movement be organized and controlled?

Sometimes a term destination product is used, to connect its marketing concepts to any product strategies. It consists of all travel related offerings provided by the area. The marketing strategies must be based on correct images of the destination product, thus contradiction between marketing activities and country's real features do not bring good results. Just as in any marketing, the phases of constructing a marketing mix, objectives, and strategies can be applied into marketing a destination. Such methods of managing effective marketing are explained in detail in chapter 4. (Vuoristo 2003, 46-50.)

3   TRAVEL CONSUMERS

A traveler is a term that covers a wide range of person's movement. Traveling involves any amount of time away from one's home region, motivated by business, refreshment, hobbies, studies, shopping, friends etc. Rarely there is only one reason for traveling, thus the motives of travel consumers are extremely numerous. (Asunta & All 2003, 231). International traveling is all about moving beyond one's own comfort zone; physical and cultural borders. The interest to explore new areas of the world originates from openness to learn and discover unseen regions, lifestyles, and cultures. The distribution of the world's population is changing, while it is growing rapidly, and these formations lay an impact on tourism. Firstly, there are and will be new traveling nations, as developing countries become wealthier. This means new challenges for marketers, as the cultures in the structure of travel industry will change. Eventually the overall constitution within travelers will be more tolerant towards different nationalities, thus the needs, wants and motivations for traveling are also transforming. (Oelkers 2002, 81). The rapidly increasing and diversifying tourist industry has encouraged marketers to study travel consumers more profoundly, among others, their consumption patterns, and characteristics. To understand better behavioral factors of travel consumers, it is necessary to apply a psychological point of view to the marketing concepts. For instance, a very different environment and culture often influences the traveler. He/she

may be experiencing activities for the first time, thus every individual will evidently perceive the purchase in a unique manner. However complicated, this aspect contributes both opportunities and threats for travel companies. (Crouch, Perdue, Timmermans & Uysal 2004, 1-2). The motives for traveling are influenced by the well-being of an individual, combined with several aspects in both destination and departure countries. The willingness and ability to travel are dependent on the destination country's push factors, together with current political and economical situations. The influences on travel consumers' behavior are both external (origins, culture etc.) and internal (motivational and psychological) thus travel consumer segments can be grouped by looking at consumer characteristics and behavior. (Vuoristo 2003, 36-37.)

3.1 Adventure-travelers

The difficulty of defining adventure tourism and its segments rises from the fact that the sensation of adventure is created within the traveler, not by the travel provider. For this, it may be reasonable to approach the analysis of consumer segments from the adventurous activity point of view, rather than profoundly investigating the consumers. The purpose of segmenting in terms of marketing is to meet strategically the needs and wants of consumers with the right product features. When basing the segmentation on the activities, the consumer groups are separated by their behavior, activity preferences, and visitation patterns. This helps to get an insight of what appeals to different types of adventure tourists. (Schneider & all 2006, 3.)

3.2 Consumer segments

The development of a travel product is only possible by focusing on a certain group of consumers within a large market. These segments are categorized by criteria like demographics, and then researched by the company for accurate knowledge of what are the segments' main characteristics, needs, and wants. Generally, the travel consumers

are divided into three larger groups: Getaway/Family Travelers, Adventurous/Educational Travelers, and Gambler/Fun Travelers. Marketers tend to divide these groups into even smaller assemblies to compete better within the market, and provide services that are ever more detailed to consumers. For instance, adventure travel segment could be further parted by characteristics like consumers' interests, residence, or lifestyle. As in any marketing, the idea is to focus on the right niche of the market that can be specified by its level of expenditure and expectations. It is worth to realize that the customers are an important part of the company's image, thus by selecting a target segment the marketers also send a message to all consumers. (Oelkers 2007, 90, 161). In service marketing, the comprehension of segments also facilitates the relation shipbuilding with customers. Knowing how the consumers tend to behave will help to modify a more personal communication process. The ability to complete personalized services however depends on the size of the company and customer base. If a company may have more than one consumer segments to focus on, it can define which segments are the most profitable ones, thus the marketing activities can also be divided accordingly. (Zeithaml & Bitner 2003, 164-169.)

Often travel marketers categorize international travelers by three groups: psychocentric-, allocentric-, and midcentric travelers. A psychocentric traveler is quite moderate in his/her planning, and wants recommendations from other people before making decisions about the trip. He/she also prefers safe and familiar airlines, hotels and cuisine, and avoids facing the other culture by staying with the group most of the time. The chosen destination usually follows a traditional line. Allocentric traveler is an active tour planner that seeks adventure, experiences, and new people in his/her journeys. An allocentric person is highly interested in new countries and activities, and is not dependent on organizers or planned services. Most tourists fit between these two types of travelers, and are placed in the so-called midcentric assembly. In general, terms, psychocentric travelers are not appreciated by others, but in marketing and business terms, all kinds of tourists are needed. (Asunta & All 2003, 234). Focus and targeting are key words in today's marketing, while the term mass marketing is used less and less. Composing the segments requires special planning and imagination because only the

relevant similarities must be underlined within each consumer group, and at the same time separated clearly from other segments. (Lovelock & Wright 2002, 76-79). Demographic factors are clear indicators in defining consumer segments. They include age, gender, marital status, race, religion, and language. Geographic segmentation is used when dividing consumers according to their location: country, nation, county or state. Certain characteristics of personality and lifestyle build a group of psychographic segments, whereas attitudes, level of knowledge and responsiveness to service form behavioral segments. (Zeithaml & Bitner 2003, 164-169). Different activities may also be used as segmenting criteria; for example a middle-aged single women with a certain education, own house and a long holiday season can form a segment. Due to these indicators of analyzing consumers, the identification of segments and market research is done easier. Segment characteristics help in defining the consumer buying behavior, but are not applicable in understanding the psychological and motivational affecters within a segment. These are further discussed in next chapters. (Vuoristo 2003, 37–38.)

3.3 Consumer buying behavior

The fluctuating interests in tourist industry force marketers to carry out in depth researches on consumer buying behavior. The behavioral factors may be influenced and controlled by right marketing tools, thus strategically managing the consumer segments is a core objective that any company should have. A company that knows how the customer will respond to the marketing stimuli, the prices and promotions, has a great advantage over competitors. In figure 3, the model of buyer behavior is explained like a filtering phenomenon from the marketing stimuli to the eventual response towards the product. After the stimuli, and before the final choices and actions are done, the buying decision is influenced in the "Buyer's black box." These influences include buyer's characteristics and the decision process. Marketers should interpret how the different stimuli are turned into the final response via the black box.

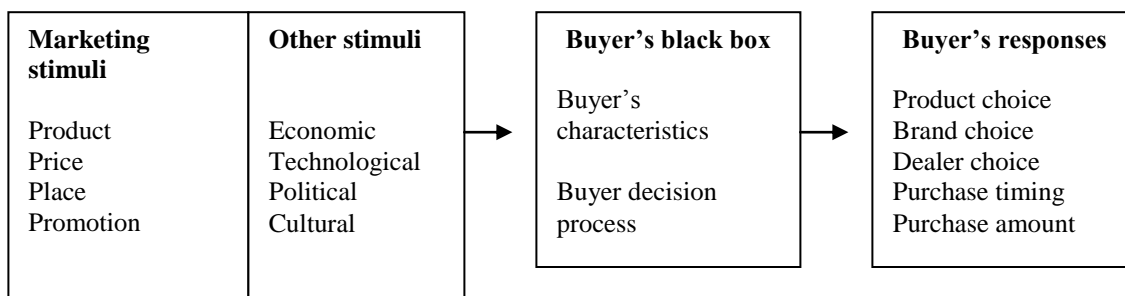| **Marketing stimuli**	**Other stimuli**	**Buyer's black box**	**Buyer's responses**
Product Price Place Promotion	Economic Technological Political Cultural	Buyer's characteristics Buyer decision process	Product choice Brand choice Dealer choice Purchase timing Purchase amount

Figure 2. Model of buyer behavior

(Kotler, Bowen & Makers 1999, 180-181)

It is especially interesting to examine why a planned consumption of a consumer turns out to be different. What kind of impulses and drivers direct us to decide against the original plan is a question that many marketers intend to understand. The relationship between unplanned behavior and uncompleted plans is also a measurement that gets marketers attention but has not been applied in traditional behaviorist studies. In travel marketing, where the consumer faces numerous situations of consumption during the purchase, this concept of behavior is important. (March 2005, 112-113). When analyzing buying behavior in service sectors, marketers must recognize the importance of moods and emotions of the consumer. The perception of the service is fully influenced by these two factors, and therefore may change the behavioral patterns. Emotions are steadier and more intense than moods. Not only moods and emotions of consumers and employees have an impact on service encounters, but also those of by-standers and other customers may affect the total atmosphere. In tourist industry, the buying is not always done individually. This means that the final purchasing decision may be done or influenced by more than one person. As a marketer, the mix of attitudes, objectives, needs, and motives bring complexity to the research on buying behavior. Understanding the decision-making authorities in group buying helps to give right marketing stimuli for them, and more effectively reach the client. (Zeithaml & Bitner 2003, 42-44, 54-55.)

Some principles that build difference between regular consumer behavior and tourist behavior can be defined. Firstly, the expectations before the actual experience itself (prepurchase stage) may build up weeks, months or even years ahead, creating a risk component to the overall satisfaction. Secondly, the travelling to and from the destination is an inevitable part of the experience, and influence how the real stay is finally percieved. In addition, just as the anticipation before travelling starts early, the recollection after the travel experience is usually very long. Unlike in investing considerably in an expensive good, like a car, travel experiences do not come with a manual or guarantee to get all money's worth. (Pearce 2005, 12,14.)

Buying process

The buying process for service products is more complicated than for goods. Consumers tend to be more particular during the process of purchasing services, mainly because of the special characteristics of services (described in chapter 4.2.1). The figure 2 describes the three stages of the buying process: prepurchase stage, service encounter stage and the postpurchase stage. These stages are divided into common steps of consumer activities during the entire process: awareness of the need, evaluating alternative service suppliers, searching information, requesting service from the chosen supplier, service delivery, and evaluating the service performance and future intentions.
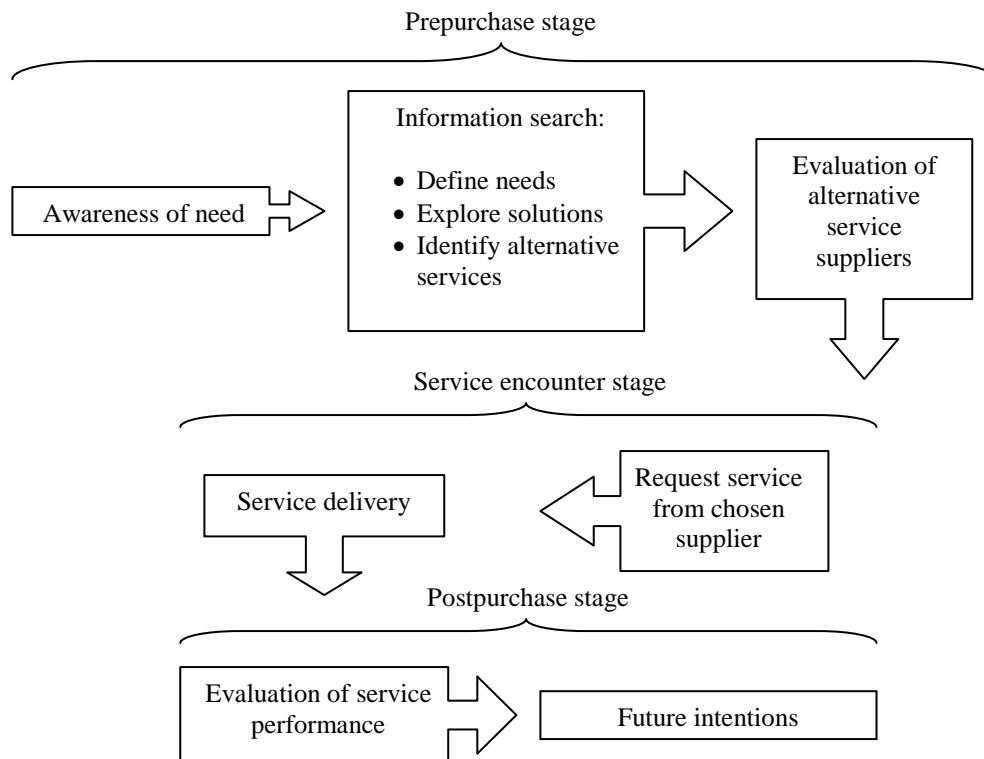
Figure 3. Buying process (Lovelock & Wright 2002, 88)

The first stage of the process is the one that can influence the outcome the most. After acknowledging the need for the service, the consumer may select a familiar service provider, depending on previous experiences and the nature of the purchase. Individual needs and expectations have a high influence on the decisions during the prepurchase stage, and determine how the information search develops. Defining the consumer's needs, exploring solutions, and identifying alternative services lead to assessing of alternative service providers. Marketers should understand this stage well, because consumers are the most reactive to information, such as advertising at this time.

The service encounter stage comes after selecting the service supplier. This is the moment of being in contact with the company and customer service, thus, it is important to meet the customer's service expectations since the beginning to support his/her selection before delivering the service. (Lovelock & Wright 2002, 88-90). Personal factors, like mood and attitudes of the people being involved in the service encounter

may affect the entire transaction and final behavior of the customer. The client's way of absorbing information before, during, and after the purchase can also be influenced strongly by these situational causes. This is why marketers should try to give a positive impact to the client's emotions and pay attention to the quality of service employees. (Zeithaml & Bitner 2003, 43-44). The final stage includes the activities of the postpurchase. These steps are important for a company that wants to maintain customers and have them to come back in the future. After the purchase, the client will evaluate the total experience with the service, and compare it with the expectations in the beginning. This is why marketers must be aware of the level of satisfaction of the clients and continuously ask for feedback from the consumers. (Lovelock & Wright 2002, 90-91).

In travel business, the buying process has few additional elements to consider. Firstly, the advance of the process is dependent on the traveler's profile (age, education, income, attitudes, and experiences), knowledge of the services in the destination (depending on the source of information), resources in the destination (pull factors) and the characteristics of the journey (distance, duration, possible risks in the destination). (Vuoristo 2003, 44-45). In marketing, this process also carries a term consumer decision-making process. Depending on the purchased good or service, this chain of events can be measured differently. For instance, during the evaluation of alternatives stage, the level of involvement becomes an important element. Simply put, this means the magnitude of the product in the consumer's perception; the risk, value, and benefit the purchase will involve. A high involvement product can be a house, car, or something else of high value, whereas low involvement products are not bought with long periods of calculations and thinking. In addition, the evaluation between different brands and choices is swayed by personal believes and attitudes. If a person views a situation by what others will think, he/she may end up buying a product that will seem better in the boss's eyes than in those of the friends'. For marketers these implications are important to understand for providing efficient information for the consumers. In the case of travel purchases, it is often seen as a relatively high involvement product. Consumers actively seek knowledge about alternatives in the face of these decisions. The information about the positive outcomes of the purchase are therefore advertised more intensively, thus the

promotional decisions can be merely built depending on the nature of the product. (Jobber 2004, 71-73.)

Motivational factors

The internal and motivational characteristics of every individual have a high impact on consumer behavior. When analyzing motivational features the marketers use grouping to classify certain needs and wants. Motivation is a driver within each person that aims to reach a desired objective, and makes the person behave in a certain way. On the other hand, need is a force in each individual that makes him/her want to gain something that appears to be missing. The travel marketers' aim is to create motivation and a sensation of need, thus make the consumers want to travel. In the case of extreme travel experiences, it is good to look at the motivational study of Maslow. In his theory, the hierarchy of needs is demonstrated as a pyramid (see figure 4) that relates with person's needs, drives and goals. When an individual is able to step up from the material needs of surviving, he/she may start searching for spiritual and emotional growth or experiences. (Vuoristo 2003, 38-39; Jobber & Fahy 2003, 60.)

5. Self actualization
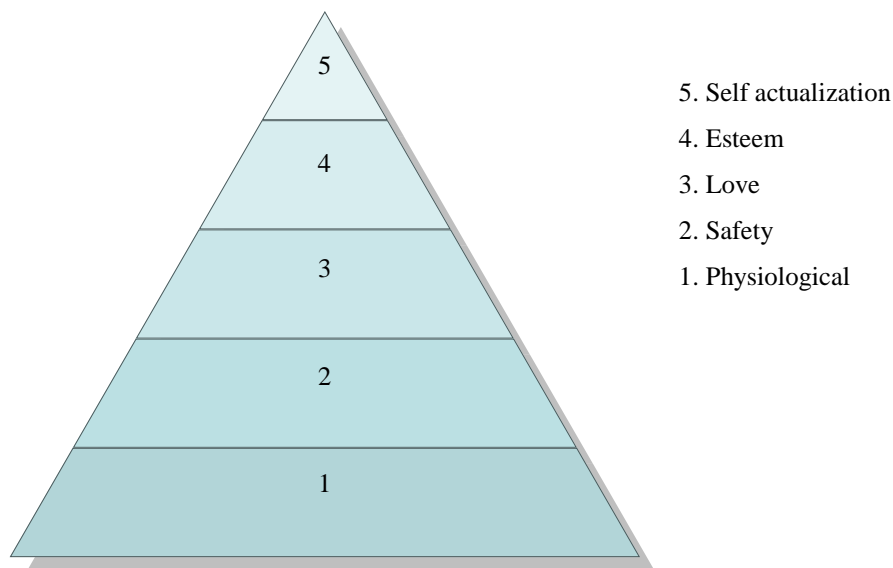4. Esteem
3. Love
2. Safety
1. Physiological

Figure 4. The Maslow's pyramid for hierarchy of needs (Jobber & Fahy 2003, 60)

The pyramid is divided by five motivational indicators that are increasingly taken into account in today's marketing:

Physiological: The basic needs that a person has to fulfill for surviving, such as hunger and thirst.

Safety: Being protected from unpredictable occurrences in life, like illnesses or accidents.

Love: Feeling of being belonged within the close people and intending to be accepted and important to them.

Esteem: Reputation driver; trying to gain a high position within a society in relation to other people.

Self-actualization: Acknowledging one's own limits and capabilities to achieve a higher self-fulfillment in a personal level.

(Jobber & Fahy 2003, 60)

It is risky to see the travelers of a segment as all the same. The diversity of personalities is so wide that determining one formula to understand consumers completely would be impossible. Specifying motivational drivers in travel consumers is therefore very challenging. A purpose for traveling can be indicated easily enough, but what are the underlying forces that make people travel the way they do is hard to state clearly. Despite this contradiction, motivation plays an initial role in travel-consumer behavior, thus it is an essential part of effective market segmentation. The combination of private needs and wants of a person are numerous, and are linked to the personal motivations. (Pearce 2005, 50-51.)

4 MARKETING MANAGEMENT

In travel industry, the sold product is a service. The marketing management in travel industry requires effective planning and control that are reinforced by clear objectives. The objectives must be compared with the results, and the control of this process kept continuous. The changes in the industry and overall trends have a strong influence on the methods of marketing, thus they should be researched on a regular basis. (Albanese & Boedeker 2002, 11). Modern marketing approaches suggest that an innovative marketing concept should be applied also in the hospitality and tourism sector. By orientating to experimental marketing, a travel provider can effectively develop their offerings. The changing consumer structure in travel market forces marketers to adapt their strategies to more customer-, rather than destination based marketing. Selling experiences, not the traditional features-benefits concept can become a crucial tool in reaching the feelings of experimental consumers. This implication should be considered also in the marketing management process. (Williams 2006, 482-485.)

4.1 Analysis, planning, implementation, and control

The reason for strategic marketing planning is primarily the need for the company to function systematically, and according to the defined plans to gain a competitive edge or reach goals. The nature of travel marketing requires clear objectives and results to be analyzed as the external changes are frequent in the market, industry, and trends. Before any marketing functions can be generated, a full analysis of the company's situation must be run. This means evaluating the internal strengths and weaknesses of the business, and the external opportunities and threats that exist in the market environment (SWOT analysis). Analyzing company's current situation has to be done frequently enough to be able to develop the business to the desired direction. Macro environment of the company include demographic-economic, technological, political-legal, and social-cultural forces that have to be examined regularly, whereas microenvironment forces

have to do with customers, competitors, distributors, and suppliers. The goal is to find new opportunities in the market, and recognize the strengths that the company possesses. On the other hand, the aim is to reduce or eliminate the internal weaknesses and classify the external threats in order to be prepared for them. All these four modules are important to view in both current and future notions, as the changes in the market environment are often frequent. Analysis in marketing management is an ongoing process and it is involved in all steps of planning, implementation, and control. (Kotler 2003, 103-104.)

Figure 5 clarifies the process of planning, implementing, and controlling in strategic marketing management. Depending on the size and structure of the company, this process embraces a number of activities within the three parts. As seen in the figure, the processes are continuous, thus during the controlling phase the company needs to take corrective actions and move on to either re-implementing strategies or re-evaluating the planning. (Kotler 2003, 91.)
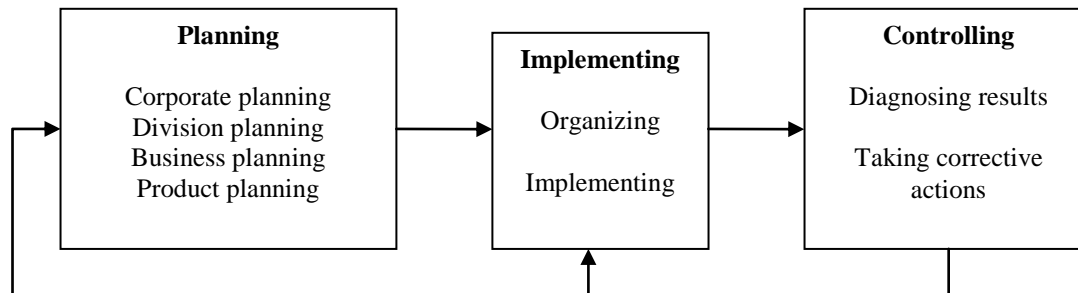
Figure 5. The Strategic-planning, implementation, and control processes. (Kotler 2003, 91)

The planning in travel marketing is a similar process than in any service marketing. The planning is done in terms of every business unit, product, and division the company operates in. As a simple rule, the management of the company should think of the following questions in a corporate level: Where are we now? How did we get there? Where are we heading? Where would we like to be? How do we get there? And are we on course? Although these questions are not difficult, it may be complicated to see the

unified answers within the company. Businesses are always run by variety of people, personalities and opinions, thus the process of planning is influenced by company's internal politics. The strategic planning should always be supported by a specific framework and a documented marketing plan. (Fahy & Jobber 2003, 274; Kotler 2003, 90.)

It is suggested that in service marketing the development of product design is proceeded with a help of structural framework, defined by the company. The innovative evolution of services is not always originated from the management of the company, but should be a result of research from the market: customer feedback and other external factors. The special characteristics of services, such as the intangibility also limits the creation of new services; the development system must be objective (not subjective), precise, fact (not opinion) driven and it should be methodological, not philosophical. (Bitner & Zeithaml 2003, 222.)

The challenging part in marketing management is to implement the well structured plan properly. Difficulties arise from the multifaceted nature of businesses, thus all areas of the business must be organized effectively to fit the implementation. In addition, the overall objectives are the ones to give precise direction to this stage. For instance, if a company is desired to become a market leader in online reservations, it should measure all business functions accordingly. This may include changes in the IT-sector or service employment, which suggests good preparations for such. (Kotler 2003, 109-110). Whatever practices are necessary, it is essential to have the marketing department as a key player in the procedure. Doing the right things and doing them right is about putting good plans into fast action, and by completing this more effectively than competitors may be a secret to a true competitive advantage. (Jobber & Fahy 2003, 288.)

Control is the final part of the process. The magnitude of control relies on the fact that it answers the management's question "Are we on course." It is up to the company to decide what control system they pursue, however it has to be regular in both short- and long-term basis. The evaluation in the control phase reaches the segments from costs,

sales, and profits to changes in competition, new technologies, and other influences from the market. Reviewing these components by marketing management means adjusting the comprehension of the company's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This correlation with the other dimensions of the planning keeps the circle closed and the process going. (Jobber & Fahy 2003, 289.)

Marketing for tourism requires special implementations from the management. The industry is unique in structure; the service product has several components, and the tourism itself is a demand force. In the process of marketing management, it is essential to learn the current market and the nature of the industry. This means carrying out company's SWOT analysis, research on demand and supply determinants, and strategic planning to the development of a marketing mix. In this research, the criteria for a good marketing mix are introduced in more detail. (Lickorish & Jenkins 1997, 135.)

4.2 Marketing mix decisions

From the complete understanding of the target customers, a company can move on to developing a marketing mix designed to fit the company's goals. The fact that a strong competitive advantage can be created and maintained by effectively balancing the marketing mix in only one of the benefits of focusing on the matter. Managing the mix means making decisions on all the marketing tools, driven from the need to be superior to the competition and satisfy the customer even better. This chapter introduces the theory of seven P's of marketing mix, as many argue over the four marketing mix elements being insufficient in service marketing. As the research topic is related to tourist marketing, it is important to include the additional three P's into the mix. The original four components are product, place, price, and promotion and in the service marketing the People, Physical evidence and Process are added. In order to have an effective marketing strategy, it is crucial to have all these seven elements organized to a balanced marketing mix. (Jobber 2004, 16, 19-22.)

4.2.1   Product

In travel business, the offered product is a service. By applying the service concepts of any marketing, the nature of a travel product can be understood. Firstly, it is divided into a double perception, the destination (e.g. resort or country) and the provided satisfaction during the stay in that destination. The latter may be formed by relaxation on the beach, educational periods, cultural experiences or any other purpose. This duality of the travel product forces companies to co-operate well with the public and private sectors in the destinations in order to avoid failure in delivering the product as planned. (Lickorish & Jenkins 1997, 138-139.)

The four characteristics that service marketers must be familiar with are intangibility, heterogeneity, perishability and inseparability of the service product. Intangibility means that the product cannot be felt, seen, smelled, or tasted, like tangible products. This feature emphasizes the fact that the purchased product is only an experience or benefit (such as a night in a hotel room, or a flight in an airplane), and the only physical prove about the purchase eventually is the receipt. The inseparability of a service brings both opportunities and problems to marketers. This feature initiates the fact that for delivering the product, both the customer and personnel must be present during the whole transaction. The importance of customer orientation and contacts becomes crucial in this matter, thus the customer cannot enjoy a travel experience if the personnel is hostile. In addition, customers are all part of the product, as their behavior influence directly the experience of co-customers. Another challenging issue arising from the service characteristics is the variability. Services are always very different depending on the place, time, situation, and the provider. Because the services are both consumed and produced at the same time, the influences of the environment become highly important. Due to this inconsistency, the experiences in service sector may be either very disappointing or satisfying. The fourth service feature is perishability. This can be an unbeneficial factor to travel companies, as the unsold units cannot be sold during higher demand. For example, the number of seats in an airplane is fixed, and the empty seats of a flight may not be stored for the use of next customers. Companies are increasingly

starting to charge at reserving rooms or tables to avoid the loss of money by un-shown customers. (Kotler & all 1999, 42-44.)

4.2.2 Place

The place in the marketing mix defines the availability of the product. This element in travel product and services must be well structured and planned. The place factor in the marketing mix engage management of correct distribution and sales channels for ensuring proper amount of availability for the consumer. The nature of travel services drive companies to sell preferably through indirect channels, like agencies and intermediaries to ensure wider markets. A good availability also means providing a pleasant buying and consuming experience during the purchase. (Albanese & Boedeker 2002, 149-150; Vahlsten 2003, 15). Decisions on channel structure should primarily be based on evaluation of possible members getting involved. Reputation, profit, and cooperativeness of the potential intermediaries are just as reflective to the total outcome of success that those of the core provider. The right location of the intermediaries is especially significant in travel marketing, and eventually the suitable contract and relationship are developed depending on the business features. Channel arrangements must be analyzed in a continuous manner, as changes in market; consumers and trends are constant. For example, new technologies open doors to newly modified channel structure with faster contacts and sales. Internet as a sales point is an increasing tool because it reduces channel costs considerably and attracts many consumers with faster and easier purchase. However, internet should not become the single channel in just any case; often multi-channel structure takes into account a variety of consumer segments thus increases sales and profit. (Kotler & all 1999, 483.)

4.2.3   Price

Pricing decisions also have an important role in the marketing mix and are directly connected to many functions of running the business successfully. Competition and image of the products become relevant factors when planning pricing, thus compound calculations are always essential in a pricing strategy. Price of the product should always be considered from the customer's point of view, although the final price determinants are both internal and external. The analysis of the external factors includes a complete research of the marketplace and understanding of its economic and political situation, buying power, competitors, and demand. Internal determinants on the other hand are the image objectives the company has set, costs, and profits. Sometimes it is necessary to look deeply into all business processes to get an insight of the most costly activities in comparison to the value they give to the customer. Minimizing the complicated areas helps companies to create a price range that suits best for the provider and the end-user. After internal research, the company can follow certain pricing principles, taking into account the life cycle of the product and the number of the distribution channels. In all actions, the consumers must be kept in mind, as they are the ones reacting to every little change in price. (Pesonen, Mönkkönen & Hokkanen 2000, 59-60). Price is the only marketing mix element that does not create costs, but profit for the company. The pricing decisions can be either strategic or tactic. Strategic pricing is done from the base of long-term visions of the company, and is tied to the overall goals for the future. In these terms, the management has set policies and a certain price level that the decisions are always based on. In order to be competitive in the market, the strategic pricing decisions need tactic pricing to support higher sales. The changes in the business environment force companies to temporarily lower prices, even if it does not generate much profit for the moment. On the contrary, sometimes the situation allows companies to lift up prices to a very profitable level. (Albanese & Boedeker 2002, 162-173.)

In travel marketing, the direct distribution allows companies to price the product according to the last moment demand (e.g. last minute plane tickets sold with very low price). Indirect distribution means selling the travel product through one or more

channels, like travel agencies or resellers, which are entitled to commissions and shares in sales, thus changing the price is not an option. (Boxberg, Komppula, Korhonen & Mutka 2001, 135). For the reasons mentioned above, it is good to practice yield management in travel business. This means using a system or software to keep track of the demand fluctuations, cancellations, over bookings and general flow of orders, which then helps companies to avoid sudden losses and pricing mistakes. Another measure in pricing is the elasticity of demand; the demand is directly influenced by the price of the product and the other service providers in the area. Figure 6 illustrates the price elasticity and inelasticity of demand with two curves. Having the relationship between demand and price figured out helps to understand why pricing decisions are so important. In figure A, the price change from P1 to P2 causes a small change in demand, from Q1 to Q2, when in figure B, the same price jump (P'1 to P'2) has a dramatic drop in demand (Q'1 to Q'2). The less elastic is the demand, the more profitable it is for the company to raise prices. Product quality and uniqueness are examples of factors influencing the price sensitivity of the consumers. This is to say that the fewer substitutes there are available for the product, the more possible it is to raise prices and maintain profitable demand. (Oelkers 2007, 214-215; Kotler & all 1999, 414-415.)
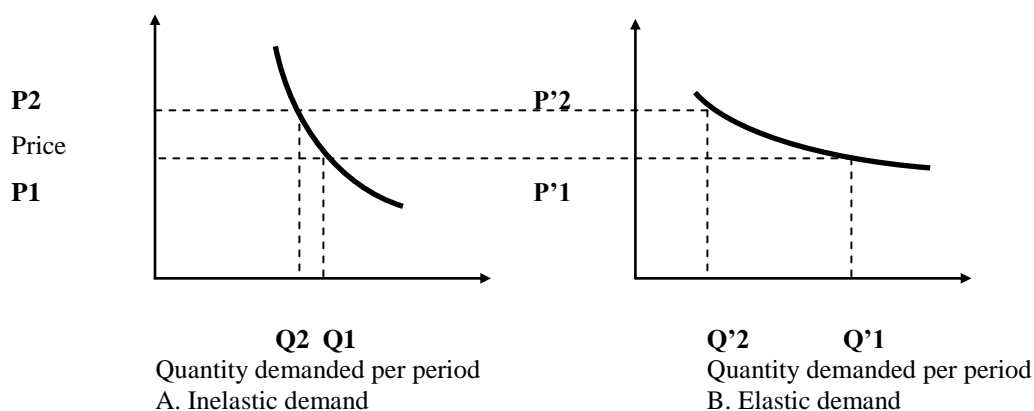
Figure 6. Inelastic and elastic demand (Kotler & all 1999, 415)

4.2.4   Promotion

Promotion means reaching the potential customers by communicating with them through various channels. If the marketing mix is balanced well in terms of product, place, price, and people the marketer is able to create an effective promotion plan that generates profit. The four most common promotional tools are advertising, publicity, sales promotion, and personal selling. (Oelkers 2007, 233-234). In order to manage the promotional part of marketing well, the companies should create a promotion mix that consist of right amount of promotional tools. Perhaps the most familiar component of the promotion mix is advertising, which is the non-personal form of promoting goods, ideas, or services through a sponsor. Publicity means building good relations with all stakeholders of the company, and through positive actions gaining a favorable image. For a short-time promotion or delivery of knowledge and incentives, companies use sales promotions. In a narrower perspective marketers apply personal selling, which is presenting product features in a face-to-face manner.

In the industries of hospitality, firms use more resources on advertising and sales promotion, however in corporate marketing the personal selling is favored. In any case, the market and consumers must be understood well, as setting up a beneficial promotion needs careful planning, knowledge and talent. (Kotler & all 1999, 489-490, 506). An important phase in promotion is the delivery of a right image of the promoted product to the consumers. As the complete marketing mix should be built in relation to all components of the mix, so should promotion follow the same line with the other four functions. The consumers of hospitality are often intimidated of the intangibility of the offered products, thus with the help of promotion and constant communication this feature can be minimized. Promotional tools are also planned to influence the consumer buying behavior, and often the images, words, and sounds are directed to appeal emotions. After all, consumers of travel industry are mostly personality driven and seeking for experiences.

Integrated promotion mix means that all the active promotional tools work in synergy, and that all the promotional messages delivered to the end-user follow the same protocol. Doing so, companies avoid misleading messages through all different channels. For example, the usage of same colors, logos, fonts, or persons gives the benefit of recognition from the customer's point of view. In the figure 7, the triangle of integrated promotion is illustrated. Marketing communication is a planned process, but there are other, often unwanted channels through which messages are delivered. This can be for example word of mouth.

Planned messaging
(What company says)

Messages as a result of actions
(What company does)
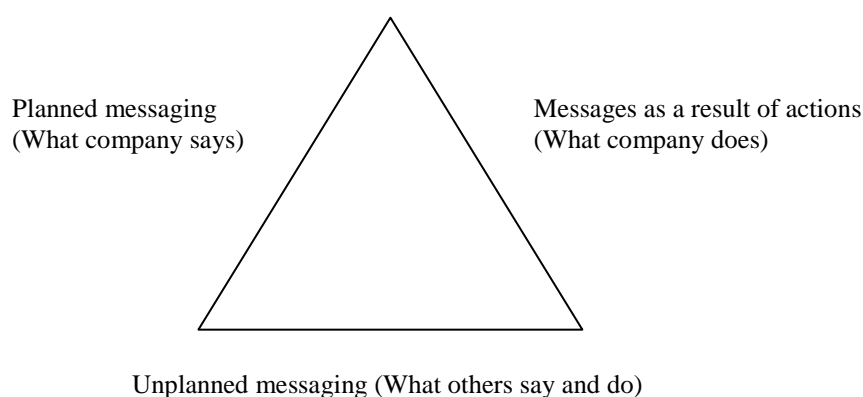
Unplanned messaging (What others say and do)

Figure 7. A triangle of integrated promotion (Albanese & Boedeker 2002, 182)

As seen in the figure, the combination of all parts of communication, the planned and unplanned actions form the true message that is perceived by consumers. Due to the problems arising from delivering contradictory messages, companies have recently started to pay more attention to unplanned communication. Openness to outer parties of the company and public relation activities are methods of controlling and co-coordinating unplanned messaging. (Albanese & Boedeker 2002, 179-183). Small and medium sized businesses of tourist industry have the benefit of relying a relative amount of promotion on word of mouth. If the company has devoted its marketing strategy to a high number of recommendations, it can proactively manage the image it wants to send to the consumers. (Stokes & Lomax 2002, 349.)

4.2.5   People

People is the fifth P in marketing mix, and a very important value-adding element in service marketing. As mentioned earlier, in travel business the product is consumed and produced at the same time, which makes the matters of personnel highly relevant. For the same reason, the needs of each consumer must be recognized in an individual level. Three functions in customer orientation of people are the training, personal selling, and customer service. Training of the service employees should be seen as a crucial phase in marketing. This means introducing new personnel into the company's policies and culture in the very early stages of employment, and keeping up continuous training throughout seasons (Continuing Professional Development, CPD). The feeling of belonging is important to all employees, and encouragement to such a sentiment may become an important asset for the company's internal structure. The training is a dual process with off-the-job and on-the-job activities. The former is seen as education, formation or conferences, and the latter as training at the actual work place, and in working positions.

Personal selling creates a lot of contact with the customer, and is present in the promotional tools. In service marketing, personal selling is an everyday concept, and in travel business, this rules to all the agents and clerks working for the company. The different channels through which the travel product is sold are also part of this chain. There are different types of personal selling, and the methods of each employee are different. This has an influence on the buyer's decisions, which fact advices to look into each seller's performance. Often incentives are given to employees for motivation to be more customer-, and individual oriented. In customer service, companies relate with their clients through offering additional support. Retaining an existing consumer is more important to a company than gaining new ones, thus handling customer relations, complaints and feedback should be done in a correct manner. The fact that people buy from the people they like can be related to the customer service sector. Having a professional and understanding person open to any questions or problems regarding the product means plenty to a paying customer. (Marketing Teacher Ltd. 2007.)

Before any external marketing can be successful, the internal marketing must function well. The purpose of internal marketing is to create a beneficial level of motivation and good atmosphere among all business assets. This helps in building a good image for outside customers, and improves many functions of the company. Especially in travel marketing, where the distribution is sometimes spread over foreign boundaries and multiple locations, it is vital to know the personnel. (Asunta & All 2003, 35). Interpersonal relationships may be the key to a competitive edge in today's service sectors. The entire marketing culture of the company should be linked to the service quality mentality, and the commitment integrated with the service contact personnel. (Luk 1997, 13-19.)

4.2.6   Physical evidence

In service marketing the physical evidence of marketing mix is linked to the intangibility of the product. To make the service more tangible the marketers try to have a wide range of physical evidence to support the purchase and make the customers more confident in their buying decision. Such additional offerings include procures, business cards, small gifts and accessories. As importantly, the actual atmosphere and appearance of the facilities are part of this component of the mix. How consumers' perceive the quality of the service and company can be strongly influenced by these physical attributes. From the external point of view, the company should evaluate the physical portions of the building, exterior design, landscape, parking and surrounding environment. These attributes of the physical evidence are called Servicescape, and are considered crucial in consumers' perception of the service.

It is said, that the layout of the facilities; the décor, music and smell influence the consumer considerably, and even affect the final satisfaction from the purchase. The image of the company can also be delivered better with the help of physical details, as well messages about the purpose, and intentions in marketing terms. For service marketers this element of the mix offers many opportunities in supporting the company goal and objectives. (Zeithmal & Bitner 2003, 25.)

4.2.7 Process

Process in this content means all activities that the consumer goes through together with the service provider to complete the purchase. Depending on the nature of the service, the complexity of the entire delivery varies along industries, and the models of controlling the process are numerous. Whatever protocol the company chooses to follow, the most important factor is the customer's perception. This is to say that consumers tend to evaluate the company's performance depending on the service delivery process. The problem is, that what is a logical and routine order for the company, may most likely seem irrational to the client. The attention must therefore be paid to all mechanisms, activities, procedures, and operations that are involved from the first customer contact to the post-purchase actions. (Zeithmal & Bitner 2003, 25). In manufacturing goods, the marketers rarely focus on the different steps of producing the product, but in the case of services, the consumer is obliged to be involved in all of those steps. The longer the course of actions is, the more thought has to be put into the steps. For instance, in gas stations the simplicity of service delivery makes it relatively easy to manage the process, in comparison to providing travel packages through an agency. As mentioned in the People chapter of the marketing mix, the fact that the client is always present in the service production with personnel makes it challenging companies to maintain a good service quality. (Lovelock & Wright 2002, 14, 32-33.)

5 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this study is originated from the increasing need to re-evaluate many traditional marketing concepts in tourism due to the numerous new segments, and travel methods in tourist industry. One of these new branches is adventure tourism. As the consumers are more freely moving around, and fulfilling their desires by experimenting and spending money on that, it is necessary for marketers to adapt those changes to their marketing strategies. The changes take effect in the entire market environment and influence one another, thus this study is not based on only internal marketing functions of a travel company, but also the transformation in the industry and consumer's position in this evolution. This thesis is about exploring the original methods of marketing in the face of the growing adventure travel sector, and is limited to study South-America as the marketed adventure destination. Case companies and their current marketing activities are analyzed for further insight on the topic, and for recognizing the problem areas in their functions. The service marketing tools, seven P's of marketing should be used effectively in marketing, and controlled constantly by the management. This fact should be implemented also when marketing an adventure travel product, and as the product itself is not equal to any travel product; the whole management process should be re-assessed accordingly. This thesis is also meant to study the consumer's role in adventure travel marketing, as the consumer characteristics are not expected to be equivalent to any tourist. Then, linking all these necessary elements, the intention is to find remedial directions for the management in marketing adventure travels to South-America.
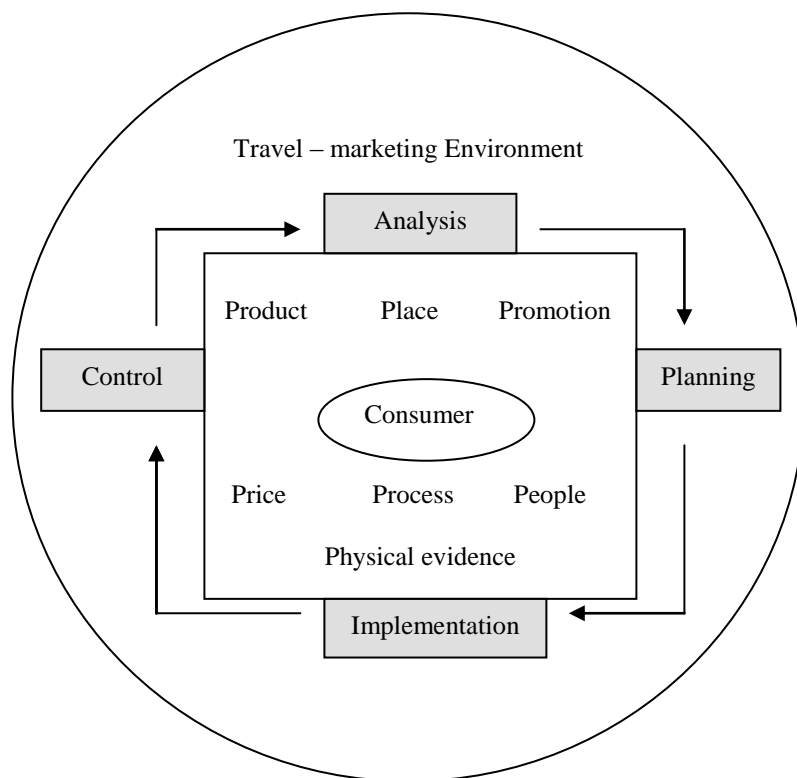
Figure 8. Conceptual framework: Competitive tools and consumer behavior in travel marketing management. (Adapted from Kotler & Armstrong 1996, 45.)

The conceptual framework (see figure 8) has been created on the basis of all theoretical concepts included in this study, and with the purpose of uniting the empirical part to its implications. It is adapted from a marketing book by Kotler & Armstrong to serve this study better. Marketing in travel business, despite the destination or departure countries, implies to traditional service marketing, taking into account all seven P's of marketing tools: product, place, promotion, price, people, process, and physical evidence. The consumer is always in the center of the components, as all marketing activities should focus on the consumer; their characteristics, behavior and consuming habits. This thesis includes a whole chapter about the elements of understanding consumers, also their buying process and behavior. The stages of purchasing are explained in detail, because for marketers it is important to learn the influence of all steps to the final outcome. It is

also impossible to build a positive relation ship with clients, if the customers are not the key factors in the business.

The square parts of the conceptual framework describe the managerial aspects of any marketing. It is not just important to pay attention to an effective mix of tools to reach objectives, but to also keep evaluating the process of marketing management; the outcome of actions, projects and plans. The marketing management process part suggests that the analysis, planning, implementation, and control of the management are continuous around the actual tools in question. The important perceptions of each part of the process are explained in one of the main chapters. Around all the business functions, including the marketing department there is a vast environment of the entire travel market. Planning and managing effective marketing in tourist industry means taking into account numerous dimensions that the travel industry holds. In this matter, the destination image, cultural, political, socio-cultural, and many other factors must be considered in an international level, not to mention the complexity of the different parts of the travel industry. In this study, the three main divisions are explained starting from the description of the industry, then the central element consumer and finally the managerial factors, as the former cannot be understood properly without first learning the importance of the consumer.

6   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1 Qualitative research

This research is a qualitative research, as the data gathering was done with a small sample size, and with an open questionnaire. The collected information is not numeric or standardized, and the study is not based on statistics. The nature of this study, and for its subtle topics, the most convenient method was to conduct face-to-face interviews with

the persons in charge and receive in-depth information on the topic. Hence, a qualitative research method was chosen over a quantitative method. The results are based on expressions, and their meanings received from the respondents. In a qualitative research, the process of analyzing the results needs a continuous overview that takes place already during the data gathering. This makes the analysis challenging and requires constant observation from the researcher. The two approaches to qualitative research are deductive and inductive. This study uses the deductive approach, as it is supported by already existing theories, and the outcome of the research has been partially predicted prior to the study. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2003, 378, 388-389.)

6.2 Data gathering

For the data collection, a semi-structured interview was constructed. It was completed by grouping the important topics under main headings, and then sub-developing those themes to few questions under each main heading. The questions are directly linked to the areas of this thesis. The aim of the questionnaire was to build up open discussion about the issues and encourage the interviewee to share freely point of views with me. Hence, widening the topics of the interview whilst discussing. By doing so, the real picture of the situation will be easier to see, and provide me with more detailed answers. Some areas of the questionnaire were harder to handle, because both of the companies are small or medium sized, but the data gathering was completed with clear results.

The theory behind marketing management, tourist industry, and consumers was relatively easy to gather from different literature, web-books, and articles. Although reliable information sources on travel marketing were more challenging to find (for the rapidly changing market structure), the basic marketing elements have been merged with the modern concepts of tourist industry in this study. The primary notion, that the segment of adventure travelers has not been studied a lot, mainly for its youth, became an outstanding fact during the data gathering; definitions and figures can be found, but insightful analyzes applicable to marketing are still very few. It seems that the

development of differentiating travel consumer segments more drastically is in the beginning of its evolution. From variety of the sources, it became evident that too often there are problems of classifying travel consumers into groups. After all, efficient segmentation is a crucial tool in marketing, and separating adventure travel consumers from, for instance, eco-tourism is important.

The information collection for the empiric part of this study began by systematically measuring the topics handled in the theory. The importance of each title was evaluated by also concerning the assessment of availability from the representatives of the companies. This means that some questions were left more open for modifications depending on the nature of the company. After the open questionnaire was structured, it was documented and sent to the representative of the Finnish company in Espoo for comments. The main discussion happened on the phone. The questions had been translated into Spanish, as the person in charge is originally Bolivian. The questions are attached in English and Spanish in the appendices.

During the search of the second company for analysis I came across some difficulties, as I preferred to conduct it by being present, thus too far distances were off the limits. This was also for the scarcity of adventure providers in Finland or the lack of interest towards my proposals to participate. Simultaneously I was searching for an internship to complete the work practice period for my studies, and eventually got a position in a travel agency in the north of Spain. It turned out to be a fortunate placement in terms of this study, as the English manager, my supervisor was willing to participate in the analysis. This interview took place at the agency in San Sebastian. The company suited perfectly for the research, as it organized real adventure travels to South-America, but in a different form than the Finnish company. The difference in the company structures and operations has become an important factor in my analysis, as well as the international point of view adjoined.

6.3 Validity and reliability

Credibility of a research is a significant verification of whether the study has been completed appropriately. Therefore, a study should be both valid and reliable. Validity of a research evaluates the eminence of the findings in terms of what they really tell about the study. It measures the relation ship between circumstances, case scenarios, research methods, and the results along the study. Many factors during the research process may influence the results, and then make them unusable. Such aspects must be recognized and diminished for assuring credibility. Reliability takes into account the timing of the study, generalization of the results, and the data transparency. In other words, a research results should not be affected by the occasion of the data gathering or be dependent on who is the researcher, and the data analysis should be logical. This chapter reviews the validity and reliability of this research. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2003, 100-102.)

The questions discussed with the interviewee of the companies are directly constructed from the topics of the study and are the same for all representatives. The companies are not linked to each other, and they are operating in different markets. Intentionally the contacts were made very personal for better insight and understanding of the current marketing activities of the companies. However, the background and experiences of the respondents made the information more compellingly valid, thus the timing of the interview did not affect the results. The analysis was done individually in all cases and considering the main topics as separate functions of the company, however linking them later for the big picture. The empirical part of this study is based on the perspectives of the different writers and sources introduced in the entire theory part, and applying them to the information gathered from the companies. For the above mentioned notions, this thesis is valid and reliable.

7 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

7.1 Introduction and background of the companies

The case companies were chosen for their special characteristics in adventure travel business. For a better understanding of the companies' current situation in marketing activities, this chapter introduces the respondents and their backgrounds as well.

Descubretuviaje.com is a specially structured travel agency, that is co-functioning with its sister company, Viajes ODA in San Sebastian, Spain. Both of the agencies are young, and Descubretuviaje.com has been operating for less than a year. The design of this company provides travel plans unlike any other agency in the region, and is based on numerous international contacts, experience, and knowledge. With these principles, Descubretuviaje.com can offer an unlimited adaptation of travel packages, built to the liking of the customer. Therefore, instead of selling ready made packages in a certain price, the agency plans and personalizes the destination, route, timing and outline of the journey to a consumer, who does not even necessarily know where he or she wants to go to. Although the service contacts are high in the company, the prices are very competitive in the agency's market.

Isidro José Sánchez Álvarez, the owner of the agency has been, since 14 years of age, involved in several sales and marketing positions of different products. He has not completed many years of studies in marketing, but has plenty of intuition, and experience in the field. Isidro's background stands in regular resort travel businesses in various companies (since 1986), but little by little he started to form a philosophy of different type of travelling. This idea gives the clients a possibility to travel with their own rules, methods and interests, with only a vague support from the agency. After years of learning and travelling with 6 other companies, Mr. Álvarez contracted with Grupo Oda, and now runs two offices in San Sebastian.

Mrs. Claire Mortimer (English) is the manager of Descubretuviaje.com. She has contributed to the adventure tourism since 1989, amongst other areas of tourism, and ended up working with Isidro in 1996. In England, Claire organized authentic adventure trips with the first over-landing agency of the country (founded in 1964), that offered very different travel experiences compared to today's adventure travels. The trips consisted of about 15-week duration in rather extreme destinations and countries, with primitive living-conditions while camping and exploring the unseen places. Basically, the business worked by filling a truck with the participating travelers and planning the routes and schedules quite vaguely before the actual trips. This type of adventure traveling offered a more genuine experience that is not possible with today's regulations, legal systems, and evolution of tourism. Marketing has always been a part of all areas of work as well as the maintenance of customer relations. After working in different companies in Spain, received an offer from Grupo Oda thanks to her experience, knowledge and international network created during the years.

Adventure & New Horizons is another young adventure travel provider. It started its operations in 2002, and has been founded for offering real adventurous experiments in Latin America. The person behind the business is Efrain Calderon Prada from Bolivia who has been living in Finland for seven years. The company is located in Espoo. Before launching this business in Finland, Efrain worked in the travel industry (I.A.T.A) for 18 years and ran his own travel agency in Colombia. The offered experiences for Finnish people are based on his knowledge of South-America and developed relations from his ethnic background.

7.2 Consumers

Consumer analysis generates a large part of this study, and is given a major role in successful marketing. The research needed a real example of how the client is viewed by the management in terms of adventure travels. The interview was therefore structured so that the acquaintance of the customer base was easy to be described without ambiguity.

Basically, the interview inquired who and how are the typical customers and which level of segmenting the company has maneuvered over their market.

According to all respondents, their adventure clients are most commonly middle aged, from 35 to 55 years old. As the long distance journeys tend to be very costly, the clients are often professionals, and specific seasons bring more representatives of certain academic sectors, such as nurses or teachers. Young customers are fewer in consuming adventure trips of long duration and distance, and they tend to be more demanding. Numerous couples are interested in adventure packages, but when it comes to singles, the most clients are women. In addition, if a bigger group is participating an adventure trip, it is merely formed by female travelers. Because of the variety of different types of adventures, the scale of customer characteristics (physical and psychological) is also very diverse.

Whilst the nature of adventure traveling is changing radically, the necessity of being "brave" or a physically fit traveler is getting smaller. Back in time the adventure travels were associated with real exploits and risks, thus in today's agencies the sold packages are often partially vacations. This also increases the willingness for individual experimenting and adventuring, meaning traveling and organizing adventures independently. Interestingly, the manager of the Descubretuviaje.com mentioned another aspect on this matter: the most notable facet of a typical adventure traveler is the level of education or intelligence. Certainly, the economical status has a lot to do with the possibility to travel, but the truly interested and repetitive consumers are mainly quite intellectual and well read, and have done traveling before. Nowadays the profession, marital status, gender, or age are not such strong dividers among adventure travelers, and adventure travels now attract very different travelers.

During the interview, I asked whether some level of segmenting is being practiced by the companies. Descubretuviaje.com and Adventure & New Horizons are new businesses, and many factors are still unstructured in the consumer segments and marketing decisions. One contemplation is the neighbourhood that the agency operates

in, and the other, the entire domestic market that should to be reached. According to Isidro, for the youth of the company, the main idea is now to reach the travelers of Basque country. There is no specific age or gender that the marketing is directed to, and little by little the client zone can be expanded to the rest of the country. The company has the advantage of being the one and only of the kind at the moment, so the clientele can also be very wide. In the case of Adventure & New Horizons, the company is also open for all segments.

The consumers of an adventure journey are in most cases affected by the long distance and paper work involving the process. Visas, legal obligations, vaccinations, medical issues often become as a surprise to travelers. Additional costs during the trip and conditions in the destination can be disappointing sometimes. Often the cultural image may be very different prior to the trip, and the traveler is taken back for the touristy development in supposedly authentic regions. For these reasons, it is important to inform the client as well as possible before the trip. Just as the typical customer for adventure travel is changing, the motivations for this type of traveling are more complex. The main reason is not any more the rush of adrenaline and feeling of survival, but also curiosity, need to disconnect from the stressful society, and avoid the touristy spots.

7.3 Marketing applications

Both of the participating companies are not structured for having a marketing department. The applications used are very much done by the management, and therefore the occupations make it impossible to carefully design plans. For Descubretuviaje.com, the main idea is to reach all the potential (experienced) travelers of the region, thus the marketing as well is based more on the value of the experience than the image or special activities. The marketing of the adventure travels will be expanded, not so much for the methods, but for the geographical expansion. In Adventure & New Horizons, the marketing has been adapted to the customers' characteristics, thus presenting the product attractively depending on the viewer.

7.3.1   Product

The sold and analyzed product of the companies in this case is an adventure travel experience or package to South-America. These agencies also provide other products (destinations and travel methods); South-America could be seen as just one of the adventure destinations among others. In this research, it is purposefully intended to separate as an individual product of the line to emphasize the importance of unique product features of one destination. South-America is introduced in this study by its features for adventure traveling to clarify the product features of the intact service. The characteristics of this dimension of the product cannot be manipulated, and the management can control only the service package; what is included to the price and how are the service offerings in the destination.

Descubretuviaje.com has established its functions so that it operates directly with the international agents in destinations. This means that the activities depend on their offerings, and are wide, as the agents are plenty. Now the co-operation in South-America is done with Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, and Venezuela. The adventure trips vary from luxury adaptations to real adventure or eco-camps. Trekking Parks, cruises to Antarctica, spending over a week in the Amazon and getting to know refugees with a guide are popular activities. The wildlife and nature are truly unbelievable in these areas. As of Adventure & New Horizons, the background of the travel organizer is the main key of making this product valuable. The knowledge of the regions and personal relation ships in South-America build the foundation for the business. In addition to Efrain's home country, Bolivia, the agency organizes trips to Ecuador and Peru.

The policy of Descubretuviaje.com is not to sell just anything to everyone, but to see thoroughly which destination and options are the most suitable ones for a particular customer. Often the clients initially inform about their travel experiences to the sales person. Selling these specially adapted packages, the most appreciated service is that the client has a freedom to choose and build his/her experience with the help of

professionals. Therefore, an understanding and experiences sales person is already an additional service. According to Efrain, the importance of the culture in the destination country is a key element in selling adventure trips. Finnish travelers seek high cross-cultural contacts during their adventure travels. Both of the companies emphasize the sometimes difficult conditions in the foreign countries. These conditions all become part of the product itself.

7.3.2   Place

Place in the marketing mix defines strategies of getting the sold service to the customer. It is important to give some thought to it in this research for many reasons; one of them being availability. No matter how good the service is, it would not provide much success if it was sold in a wrong place or through inefficient channels. Knowing that both companies are small and quite young, this part of the interview was significant. Therefore, the interview questions on this topic were relatively detailed.

Although Descubretuviaje.com is not a usual travel agency, and modifies all trips to the liking of the client, it is still using internet as a promotional tool and for making reservations. The capacity to do this completely is difficult in this kind of business, but internet is a good method for reaching all kinds of clients. Perhaps the most benefit at the moment is the information given in the web site, so that customers can see what the company really offers. Then the agency works mainly for the local people around the area, being present in their everyday life. The co-operation is done not only with the agencies in the destination countries, but also with national companies, that Grupo ODA has established relations with. In addition, the cooperation with travel-related companies is very important, for economic air-fares, promotional reasons, and such. In Adventure & New Horizons, internet is also the most utilized tool. Co-operation with other companies has been very moderate, but mainly the agency is selling locally in Helsinki area.

7.3.3 Price

The pricing strategies in both Descubretuviaje.com and adventure & New Horizons are based on a quite low-priced image. The owner and the manager of the agency do the pricing decisions, although a set of complex and external factors define the final price. Competition is not influencing the prices much in Descubretuviaje.com, as direct competitors do not exist in the area, but in the other company, the competition has a high influence. What makes the pricing challenging are the multiple functions involved in the travel business, such as the flight operators, hotels, tour operators etc. The network of activities among all these contributors gives very little room for the agencies to control their prices entirely. Plenty of effort is put to organize economic but convenient flights for the clients without gaining much profit from doing so. Managing the hotel deals is more beneficial, but requires good contacts within many destinations. According to the management of Descubretuviaje.com, there will never be much discounted offers, as the company already functions with very low pricing.

7.3.4 Promotion

Isidro explained that the intention to reach out to the market out of town has led the publicity to take place in newspapers, magazines, radio, and even television. This all is done quite modestly, merely in a local level, and with a lot of co-operation with other companies, like hotels for instance. This is for cutting costs and increasing the number of channels. For example, a local TV made an interview with the English supervisor of the company, who discussed the tourism in Yemen after the car-bomb in the summer 2007. Claire has been living in Yemen and knows a lot about the topic, and the local channel was interested in such an inter-cultural interview. In the interim the company gained positive publicity. In addition the knowledge of the company is spreading in San Sebastian and the neighborhood it self. Word of mouth and especially designed posters in the display window are good techniques for developing the image here. The former promotional method is also used by Adventure & New Horizons, meaning that the

satisfied customers are an effective promotional tool. In both agencies, the internet is a very active component of advertising, and Efrain is doing it via search engines. Descubretuviaje.com's web-site is under rapid development and considered the most effective marketing tool in the near future. This means being easily available to all interested consumers. Both of the agencies also practise after sales promotions, and keep in touch with their customers. Isidro´s experience in marketing on the other hand helps strategically be active in trade fairs, promotions, advertising and public relations. One future implementation will be a discount card for regular customers, and similar approaches to maintain clients and build up relation ships. Efrain is also participating trade fairs actively in an international level, and is doing small publicity through travel magazines Lattu and Polku.

Both informants said that in terms of adventure travel, there is not much seasonality in marketing, as the destination countries vary a lot, and therefore the conditions in the country itself. Certainly in the future, there will be more careful planning for the timing of promotions, but as the trips are often sold much in advance, there is no point in defining a special season for them. More than that, the special adventure deals designed for a certain group (like singles) or for a certain time, are advertised more aggressively for the period. However, prior to the common holiday seasons, like Christmas and the Easter week the promotions tend to be universally more active and therefore influence the company's actions as well.

Descubretuviaje.com promotes its destination alternatives by organizing hour-long lectures almost weekly. The sessions are open to everyone, and occasionally there is a professional guest presenting. The lessons are held in the agency's facilities with a wide projector screen and other special effects. Also, the agency is doing cooperation with a travel bookshop. When a client is purchasing or planning a trip, he/she is suggested to buy a book of the destination, and the same works another way around: the shopkeeper recommends and promotes Descubretuviaje.com. Similar arrangement could be done with a travel equipment shop. Competitors do not use these types of promotional methods. Another idea for the future is to give away special weekend packages, more

personal modifications during the trips, and such. It is to say, that the regular customers will definitely gain by traveling through Descubretuviaje.com.

7.3.5 People, physical evidence, and process

The additional three P's for service marketing formed a separate discussion during the interview, and it seemed that these service characteristics were not familiar to the management of the companies. Therefore, I wanted to evaluate the companies' activities that could be recognized relevant for these attributes.

Descubretuviaje.com emphasized that during the communication with clients, the most important factor is listening to their needs. As the company adapts the entire trip on the wants of the clients, the process of relating with their needs is longer than in normal travel agencies. The idea is to build trust and at the same time give the customer a feeling of freedom in their decisions. In terms of physical evidence, the development of special services has already been at hand, and there are currently small gift promotions active. Basically, these types of services are organized by the agency individually, for the complexity to cooperate with the international agencies. Adventure & New Horizons also put emphasis on the communication process with the clients, and views adventure traveling as a very personal experience. Its intention is to be available at all times to any necessity or concern of a customer, and build trust by individual treatment. The idea is to meet personally with the client before and during the purchase. The purchase is followed by a request for feedback and ongoing communication about other travel deals.

Physical evidence of the received service during the purchasing process are business cards of the companies (with personal server's name printed), a large selection of brochures, a professional looking documentation of the purchase and travel plan, and in the case of Descubretuviaje.com, the specially selected and designed facilities. Most financial effort has been put into the choice of location for the agency, which is both

located in a corner of a central block. This site supplies a good possibility to display posters and other information for people who pass by.

As regards of people in the marketing mix, I asked about the training and requirements of the personnel working directly with the clients. The respondents stated that in Descubretuviaje.com the most important experience when selling adventure travels is a detailed knowledge of the destination, package, and everything included. This is the major concern because of the risks involved: the tour activities, and very different culture and travel conditions. Somehow, the sales person should be able to adapt to the clients situation effectively, what level of adventure he/she really needs, and what is his/her previous experience in the field. However, the company does not require any special training for this aspect, and the methods are taught whilst on the job. Efrain's answer was surprisingly similar to this question, and he really highlighted the importance of knowledge and experience of the personnel. According to him, selling adventure travels is not the same than selling any regular trips. In addition, he requires very good service skills of the workers.

8   CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Looking at the objectives of this study, the expected outcome of the research was to find areas of marketing that should be re-developed for adventure travel marketing. The case companies embody both an agency that is only focused on adventure travels and an agency also designed for other types of tourism. However, both of the companies are new in the adventure business, and their marketing activities are to a small or medium extent. As there are no particular marketing departments involved, those activities are done moderately and in the basis of previous knowledge or experience of marketing. The resources in both companies are therefore quite limited for extensive market researches or high-cost promotions. This also limits my research to study only one type of a

company, but nevertheless, this business size is currently the most common one in the case regions. A research of a longer time span on the topic could give more impending on what is the modern development in adventure travel marketing. It can be noticed that my participating companies use some marketing elements introduced also in the theoretical part of this study, but the initiative to balance, control and develop regularly the marketing activities has been almost non-existent. The knowledge about the product itself, the travel and destination factors, and the good service elements stand in a strong foundation, but the understanding of their role as part of the marketing mix is missing. Often the marketing activities in small and young travel companies are merely planned spontaneously, depending on financial situations or convenience. However, in service companies, the importance of marketing is becoming ever more important, thus, the marketing focus should not be directed elsewhere as the business develops.

The basic idea behind my recommendations to adventure travel providers is to begin by thinking what is sold and to whom. The simplicity of the question hides a whole network of modules, as the theory of this study indicates. After acknowledging the real product features, and the potential customers, the company should build a continuous management strategy based on a balanced service marketing mix. The most problematic areas in both of the companies have to do with the consumer segments. Merely the entering customers are seen as individuals, which is very good in building a service relation ship, but whilst searching for new customers, the market should not be seen as one. In Descubretuviaje.com, the marketing stands in a unique foundation, as the agency offers personalized adventure travels, and has no direct competition in the area. This gives more wide opportunities in reaching specific segments, and leaves out the problems brought by high competition. Adventure & New Horizons operate in a very different market in Finland, and this is taken into account in my recommendations. South-America is viewed differently by different cultures, and the level of expenditure, motivation and possibilities vary between Finland and Spain for instance. Hence, research on the market is absolutely necessary before constructing the marketing strategy.

The product in this case includes everything that the adventurous journey holds from the beginning to the end. We have been shown in the theory, and research findings that adventure travels to South-America interest some consumers more than others. The process of purchasing and consuming the product is extremely large, and for this reason, the consumer buying behavior should be analyzed by the companies. This cannot be done properly if the consumers are not segmented in some level; however, the research shows quite few intentions for segmenting. Customers receive very good service and personal contacts, but reaching out to new consumers of certain characteristics is lacking. It is understandable that small agencies try to reach the entire market, but the marketing methods can also be directed and modified with moderately low effort. For instance, internet is not an effective promotional tool for all ages and genders, even if the message is viewed by many. Internet is still intimidating especially to older generations, and can be considered untrustworthy. As the interviewees said, many adventure travelers are middle-aged professionals, thus the methods of reaching this group could be other than internet. With a small budget, by printing for instance flyers or attractive posters, the agencies could advertise through or inside neighborhood companies and businesses that have workers of certain industry.

Another determinant on adventure sales is the seasonality. This means in both the departure zone and South-America. After differentiating the most active segments in the market, the agency should evaluate their common possibilities for traveling, and desires for the season. As I mentioned before, the sold product involves everything during the journey, also the conditions in the South-American destination. Therefore, the product is not the same at all times of the year. Defining these differences and applying them to the consumers' wants will give structure to the marketing methods. The importance of marketing a particular destination has been noticed by travel marketers, and consequently this signifies similar approaches from adventure travel companies. After all, the circumstances in South-America are the ingredients of the atmosphere and culture, that is, the product.

The conclusion of my recommendations, with the support of the gathered theory, is based on the premise of a balanced marketing mix. Even though a travel agency has no funds for keeping a constant marketing management active, it can apply the introduced marketing concepts in certain level. I would strongly suggest for the company to look at the seven P's explained in the marketing mix part, and document the company's current actions of each element. If an entire marketing plan is not constructed, the balanced marketing mix will give course to an implementation and control. Firstly, the product and its features have been commented earlier in this chapter, and consequently there is not often room for radical product development in this case. Knowing the product entirely (which both of the companies seemingly do), should be the beginning for evaluating the other P's in the mix. Then understanding who the product can be sold to (defining the consumers and segments), the proper sales channels can be established. For the size of my participating agencies, their major sales happen locally and through internet. What can be done there is to modify those two channels to attract the desired segments. Physical evidence comes into question with this matter, and especially Descubretuviaje.com has put plenty of resources on the Place of its sales. Nevertheless, the web site still needs special attention for becoming more effective. Pricing decisions are done by the management of the companies, but do not leave much room for changes, as so many factors influence the price. Conversely, though, as the adventure travel packages can be modified, I would consider altering the offerings to also higher cost deals of less demand. This can be possible in the near future, when the customer segments are more instituted. Little by little the company can then found the final and desired image, which is directly linked to the generated price, and the value received by customers. Competition will become more intense, and in Descubretuviaje.com, pricing strategies may be forced to be changed. Both of the companies are really putting effort into caring about the customers in a personal level, and want to share their experience and knowledge of South-America as an adventure destination. Hence, the process, and people part of service marketing are in a sufficient shape in these agencies. This is a very good basis for building a loyal clientele, and should be a key to taking a step further in marketing. Instead of just advertising the entire experience and journey in the destination, the agency should analyze and group the consumers according to what

especially within the destination is attractive to them. This evaluation is a long-term analysis that should take place for future implications. Anyhow, the three additional service P's can be enhanced by knowing the customers better, especially the process part that tends to be very long in travel sales. This study introduces the motivational factors influencing consumer buying behavior, and in the case of adventure travel, this is an important cause. If the company knows what is the motive for the adventure travel (culture, nature, activities etc.), it can group the customers accordingly. This would give direction to segmenting and better marketing. Single women are mentioned to be active adventurers, which is an interesting concept from marketing point of view. This fact speaks of individualism of mature women, and indicates a special motivational driver. A further insight of what these clients prefer, and what are their consumption habits, would help in marketing development.

In my recommendations, I highlight the importance of segmenting the consumers for more effective adventure marketing. Promotional decisions can then be done more successfully. Even if the market and customer base is small, the promoting by segments can be done properly. Internet can still be the most utilized tool in Adventure & New Horizons, and Descubretuviaje.com, but I would restructure the advertising in the sites to reach specific segments. Also, the interesting country lectures kept in Descubetuviaje.com could be advertised more according to which segment is the most interested one towards a certain region. Hence the segmenting (or at least grouping) of the customers is the primary action, followed by an analysis of the segments. Apparently, one group of the South-America exploiters are in this case middle aged single women. This can become an important segment in the future by the growth of individualism and equality. Descubretuviaje.com already advertises its travel packages to singles in its web-site. This can be applied to adventure travel marketing to the South-American destinations: if the company can figure out what attracts this segment, it can promote such offerings correctly in the right place and at the right time. A small market research could be conducted for gaining such understanding. This could involve a modest questionnaire constructed for certain consumer group in the region. My intention is to point out the motivational and psychological drivers of adventure travelers. The

problem is that as adventure traveling is becoming more common among different demographics and characteristics, it will be harder to specify the motivations of the customer. However, this can be done more easily if the consumers are segmented. The respondents said adventure traveling is a personal experience, and generates from the willing to experiment, even in a spiritual level. Knowing this, the marketing should also base on such profound elements, thus knowing your consumer segments means distinguishing the right method of reaching them.

What raises challenge to these companies is the nature of the tourist market. Although it is expanding rapidly, it is also reforming to new dimensions constantly. This calls for recurrent analysis of the market situation, especially in the adventure tourism sector. My study defines a principle set of instructions on planning, implementing, and controlling the marketing activities in the company. The strategy must always begin by defining objectives. The present objectives of the participating companies are not clearly defined, but have to do with steady growth, as the agencies are young. I would recommend evaluating the objectives also in a unit level, such as in terms of adventure travels. Then, as importantly, the agency should analyze its position in the market by structuring a SWOT analysis, and this way move on to planning of the marketing activities. After implementing the strategy, such as the recommended segmentation of marketing, it must be kept updated according to external and internal changes. This means controlling the strategic implementation of the plan, and this way keeping it favorable for the company.

This research gives beneficial recommendations and information for adventure travel providers of any size. Although the research findings are collected from small and medium sized businesses, the applications can be done in larger scale by bigger agencies. Currently these type of agencies are quite few and small, but in the future this ought to change. The fact that in the future the travel agencies may specialize much more, indicates that there will be differentiation among adventure travel agencies, and larger separation from regular traveling. For this reason, it is extremely important to specialize marketing for adventure travels. Another aspect are the travel marketing possibilities of the future. Cultures and borders are changing, whilst traveling increases.

Looking profoundly into the destination image and marketing can become the modern application needed for competitive advantage.

Segmenting of adventure consumers has been the major concept in the outcome of this research. The changing and growth of the travel market is providing many new aspects to be studied in the field, and the topic on my thesis should be studied more profoundly. I see a quantitative research on adventure consumer behavior as an interesting concept for future studies. It would open the topic from the consumers' point of view on a large scale, for instance by analyzing different segments in adventure tourism. This would also instruct in reaching potential customers, and maintaining the existing ones.

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Interview questions for the companies

1. How long have you been involved / working in the adventure travel business?

2. What is your background in the industry; how did you get started, interested and end up with this company?

TRAVEL CONSUMERS:

3. Consumer segments
   a. How are the most typical customers interested in adventure traveling; gender, age, marital status, profession? Are there some recognizable characteristics that these clients normally have?
   b. Is there a group of consumers who the marketing and promotions of adventures are mostly directed to?

4. Consumer behavior
   a. What kind of activities does your agency offer in their adventure trips to South-America, and which ones are the most popular ones? What do you think are the principle motivations for adventure traveling?

5. Doubts and problems of clients
   a. How do the consumers behave in front of risks and new situations during the adventurous experience? What are the most common surprises for the clients and complaints encountered (before and after sales)?

6. Cultural factors effecting the marketing and sales of adventure travels
   a. Free comments on this topic

PRODUCT:

7. South-America as an adventure destination

    What are you main South-American destinations? Comments about the culture, atmosphere and circumstances in those areas in terms of adventure travels. Experiences and difficulties from clients and organizers?

8. Additional services

    What is the development of the (additional) services / special promotions offered to the regular clients since starting with the adventure travel sales (in home location or in the destination)? What type of additional services the clients appreciate most during the entire process of consumption (before, during and after sale)?

PLACE:

9. Sales methods and channels

    What are your sales channels? Is internet used as one? Do you do co-operation with other companies? Do you see internet as a good sales channel for adventure travels?

PRICE:

10. Pricing decisions and activities

    a. How is the price of the adventure trips defined and by whom? What factors mostly influence the changes in prices? Is competition intensifying the pricing decisions or factors in the destination countries environment?

PROMOTION:

11. Marketing activities, promotions, communication, and relationship with clients
    a. Currently, what type of marketing does the agency practice? Advertising and promotion methods? What are the principle policies in communicating and relating with the clients, before and after sales?
    b. Do you practice more promotion and publicity in certain seasons and reasons?
    c. Is your marketing based more on the destination image and feeling or on the adventurous activities during the trip?
    d. Are there any plans for further developing the marketing sector of adventure travels in this agency?

PEOPLE, PHYSICAL EVIDENCE AND PROCESS:

12. Personnel, agency's physical structure, sales process
    a. What type of training is needed from your agency's part for the personnel included in (adventure) travel sales and services? Is there special emphasis put on client friendliness and treatment during the training and selection of personnel?
    b. Tangible elements of the agency
    c. Aspects of the sales process

Preguntas de la entrevista para las companias

1. Cuanto tiempo ha ejercido el negocio de aventuras en turismo?

2. Que historia tiene en el mercado? Como empezó a organizar los viajes de aventura?

CONSUMIDORES

3. Segmentos de los clientes
   a. Como son sus clientes más típicos; edad, sexo, profesión, estado matrimonial? Comentarios de las caracteristicas de los clientes "aventureros".
   b. Existe un grupo o tipo de clients a que se centra el "marketing" o promociones? Por ejemplo los jovenes, chicos, deportistas…?

4. Comportamiento de los clients
   a. Que tipos de actividades ofrecen en la destinación y cuales son las más populares? Cuales cree que son los motivos principales para realizar una aventura?

5. Problemas o dudas de los clientes
   a. Cómo actuan los clientes enfrente de riesgos y aventuras, de qué aspectos se queja antes y después del viaje? Hay problemas especificos en este sentido?

6. Aspectos culturales, clientes finlandeses
   a. Comentarios libres de los finlandeses y aventuras.

PRODUCTO

7. Suramérica como una destinación de aventuras

   a. Cuales son sus destinos de viaje en Suramérica? Comentarios de la cultura, naturaleza o lo que sea en la destinación (en los terminos de aventuras). Circunstancias por allá y dificultades para los clientes finlandeses?

8. Servicios añadidos

   a. Han aumentado sus servicios a los clientes durante sus operaciónes como una agencia para viajes de aventura (en la destinación o en Finlandia)? Que tipos de servicios los clientes más apprecian?

PLAZA

9. Canales y metodos de venta

   a. Cuales son sus canales de venta? Internet? Realiza colaboración con otras compañias? Es internet lo mejor metodo de distribución para viajes de aventura?

PRECIO

10. Deciciones y fijación de los precios

   a. Quién es responsable de la fijación de los precios (el puesto)? Que factores más influien en los precios de aventuras? Hay mucha competición que afecta los precios, o fijan sus precios en virtud de otros factores?

PROMOCIÓN

11. Actividades de marketing, comunicación y relaciones con clientes, promociones
    a. En este momento, qué tipo de marketing practica? Publicidad? Como mantiene la relación con los clientes, antes y después de venta?
    b. Tiene promociónes especificas en algunas épocas? Su marketing esta basada en las actividades especiales o más en la imagen y emociones de la aventura?

PERSONAL, PROCESOS Y EVIDENCIA FÍSICA

12. El personal, formación
    a. Como es la formación del personal incluído en sus operaciónes? Hay formación especial para trabajar con viajes de aventura? Que importancia tiene el servicio al cliente durante la formación y elección del personal?
    b. Elementos tangibles de la agencia
    c. Los aspectos del processo de venta