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Beliaeva Daria

**MARKET ENTRY TO THE FINNISH ADVENTURE TRAVEL
MARKET: CASE RAFT-TOUR KARELIA**

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Karjalankatu 3
FIN 80200 JOENSUU
FINLAND
Tel. 358-013-260-600

Author
Beliaeva Daria

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Abstract

This thesis paper is describing the entry strategy to the Finnish Adventure Travel Market for Raft-Tour Karelia company which wants to expand internationally.

The entry mode strategy will be built through the evaluation of the potential market in terms of business environment and competition level in the industry. The business environment analysis includes such factors as political, economic and social-cultural.

The entry strategy will include segmentation, targeting and position of potential customers. According to the target groups identification, relevant marketing tactics will be offered to the company as well the best entry mode will be recommended.

The entry strategy will include list of potential tourism companies in Finland that Raft-tour Karelia can partner with, website development recommendations and relevant digital marketing activities.

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Appendix 1 Raft-tour Karelia Service line

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Russia is the fourth popular place for leisure trips with overnight stay in the destination country for Finnish tourists. (Statistics Finland 2018). The purpose of traveling varies from visiting friends and relatives to culture exploring trips.

The focus of this thesis paper is on the analysis of adventure travel market in Russia for Finns. Adventure travel is a type of tourism involving travel to remote or exotic locations in order to take part in physically challenging outdoor activities. (Slide Share 2018)

1.2 The aim of the study

The thesis research is conducted for Raft-tour Karelia Company located in Petrozavodsk, Russia which is planning to enter Finnish market and offer its adventure travel services in particular rafting trips. The paper is intended to evaluate the business environment of the potential target market and its attractiveness for the company. The main customers groups will be identified and competition the industry will be evaluated. According to the customer segmentation analysis, the proper digital marketing tactics will be suggested for each group as well as the best entry-mode strategy will be offered to the company. The strategy will represent the guideline for creation an effective approach for attracting and working with potential customers considering company's budget for the project. The report doesn't include the implementation of the strategy.

The research questions can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Is business environment in Finland attractive for the case company to start operations?
- 2) What are the adventure tourism market trends in Finland?
- 3) Who are the main customer groups in the market?
- 4) Which are the best strategy and marketing tactics for entering Finland?

1.3 Raft-tour Karelia

Raft-tour Karelia has been the leading rafting tours provider in Karelia region of Russian since 2002. The office of the company located in Petrozavodsk. Raft-tour Karelia is the small enterprise with the 9 full-time employees working all around the year. Nevertheless, the number of workers increases until around 50 during the high season. Summer is the only possible time for rafting and the company hires rafting-guides who accompany tourists during their trips.

The main infrastructure of Raft-tour Karelia is located 30 km away from Petrozavodsk. It includes the cottage for rent, sauna and warehouse with equipment. Usually, this is the starting point of all the rafting trips. Tourists firstly arriving to the house, getting the proper clothing and leaving the personal items here and then going to the start point of the chosen river.

Rafting is not the only service company offers. There are many excursions available around Karelia region such as Kivach Waterfall or Kizhi Island. Most of the tourists are going to the excursion straight after the rafting tours so they can combine adventure travel with cultural travel. Moreover, during the autumn and winter time company provides the cottage for rent and some skiing and sledging equipment upon request. (Raft-tour Karelia 2018)

Company is using customer-oriented approach in sales as it only suggests the trips according to the customer requirements such as tour length, difficulty of the river and equipment choice. Nevertheless, the company takes into account the professional skills of the potential customers and this is the main criteria for trip proposition. Safety is the number one rule of the Raft-tour operations. Company will not sell the trip if the tourists' preparation level doesn't match the river' requirements. There only certified rafting guides are allowed to work. Currently, the customer groups can be divided by families, corporate clients and middle-age individuals. The last category is the largest one. Territorially, 55% of tourists come from Moscow, 35% from Saint Petersburg and 10% come from other cities of Russia. The number of tourists per spring-summer season varies from 900 to 1100. (Antonkova 2018)

1.4 Methodology

The research approach contains gathering both primary and secondary data.

The secondary data refers to an already existing statistics and information about the market and trends in the adventure tourism industry. Also, the theoretical background of adventure travel will be represented for better understanding of company's services packages and its promotion. The secondary data will be gathered from governmental statistics and journals.

The primary data will be represented in the ways of face-to-face interviews with experts of tourism sector about consumer buying behaviour, market opportunities, competition in the industry and potential risks.

1.5 Outline of the report

The thesis consists of six parts, which are business environment analysis, adventure travel, rafting in Finland, entry strategy, digital marketing strategy and conclusions.

The business environment in Finland is overviewed in terms of political, economic and socio-cultural factors. The adventure travel chapter represents the potential customers consumer behaviour. Rafting in Finland refers to how this hobby and tourism activity is already represented in the market.

The entry strategy and digital marketing strategy sections consist of the relevant tactics company can apply to attract the potential customers groups. The strategy will be made taking into account company's budget limitations.

The final chapter summarizes the findings of the study and gives recommendations for future actions.

2 BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT IN FINLAND

2.1 Overview of business environment

The Finnish operating environment is stable and predictable. Finland is a member in European Union. Finland is the only Nordic country with Euro and has a low corporate tax rate, only 20 %. Therefore, many foreign companies have established operations in Finland for the long-term and enjoy high return on investment. (Invest in Finland 2018)

In 2018, economic growth is expected to slow but remain robust, partly thanks to increased exports amid improvements in Finnish cost competitiveness. The economy will also benefit from loose monetary policy and high business confidence, which should support fixed investment. However, the government's ongoing fiscal consolidation will constrain public consumption's contribution to growth this year. FocusEconomics panelists expect an economic expansion of 2.4% in 2018, which is unchanged from last month's forecast, and 2.1% in 2019. (Focus Economics 2018)

Business environment varies a lot depending on business industry and next evaluation consists of such factors as political, social-cultural and economic factors that are relevant to the company while entering Adventure Travel Market in Finland.

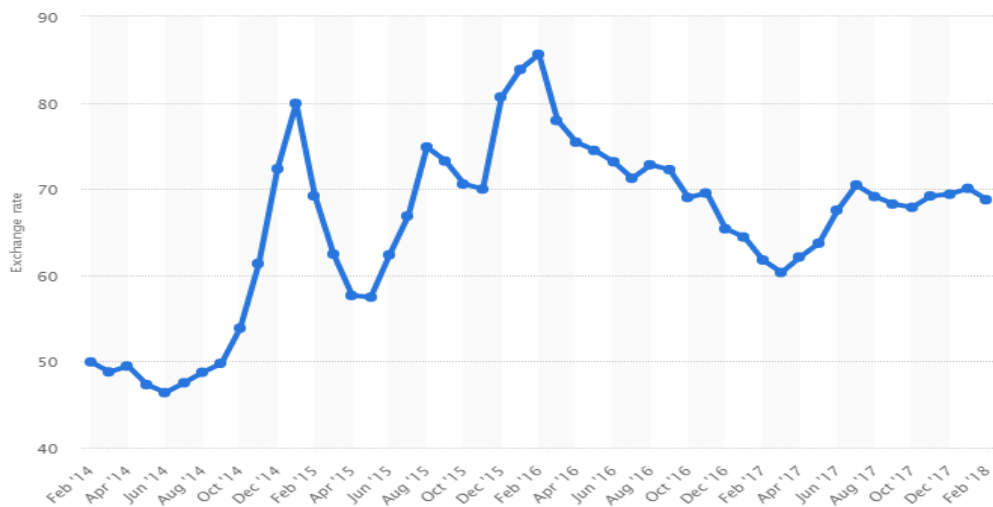
2.2 Political, legal and economic environment

Political and legal environment for Raft-tour Karelia are not a crucial one due to the fact that company doesn't plan to open the branch in Finland. Thus, all legal issues such as taxes and working permit are not applicable for Raft-tour Karelia.

The sanctions introduced by European Union against Russia are also nor related to this case as there is no export of goods operations takes place. Moreover, the marketing strategy will mostly focus on digital tactics. Nevertheless, the only concern for the company may become the visa regime between the countries. The process of getting visa for Finns takes 2 weeks at average and the costs varies depending on the length of the trip. The complication of the visa procedures and additional costs can affect potential customers

decision making regarding buying the tour.

Economic environment plays significant role in evaluation of market attractiveness. First, the Raft-Tour Karelia case will be dealing with currency difference between Finland and Russia. The currency rate is the subject to change during the year and it means that the price of the services will be changing as well. Table 1 shows the currency rate fluctuations from 2014 until 2018.



Graph 1. Euro (EUR) to Russian Ruble (RUB) monthly exchange rate from February 2014 to February 2018 (Statista 2018)

The company will need to make the price for the trips adapted to the Euro to avoid potential customers misunderstanding.

Nevertheless, the currency rate works beneficially for Finnish tourists as the costs of living and average monthly salary are very different in two countries. As an example, the average monthly net salary in Finland is 2,249.96 Euro when in Russia this number is 513.43 Euro. Therefore, the price 130 euro for the one-week trip with the food included will be more than affordable for working fin. (Numbeo 2018)

Moreover, there are 19 companies offering rafting trips and located in different regions in Finland. (TripAdvisor 2018) thus the demand for such services exists in the market. Nevertheless, most of the providers offers max one day long trips, so Raft-tour Karelia

can be differentiated from the also by the length type of the tour.

2.3 Social-cultural Environment

The language is one of the most important social factors company needs to consider while designing Digital Marketing Strategy and organizing communications with potential customers and partners in Finland. The company needs to translate the website to Finnish and/or English language thus to hire the Finnish/English speaking person to answer the customers questions and preparing proper marketing materials.

Safety is one of the main factor Finnish tourists base its travel decisions. (Statista 2018) Company needs to obtain the international rafting safety certificates to proof the its reliability.

Regarding the potential interest in the offered services, traveling is the second popular hobby of Finns. (Graph 1) Moreover, participating in sport and camping take the highest positions within the country, which can be considered as an attractive factor for offered services.

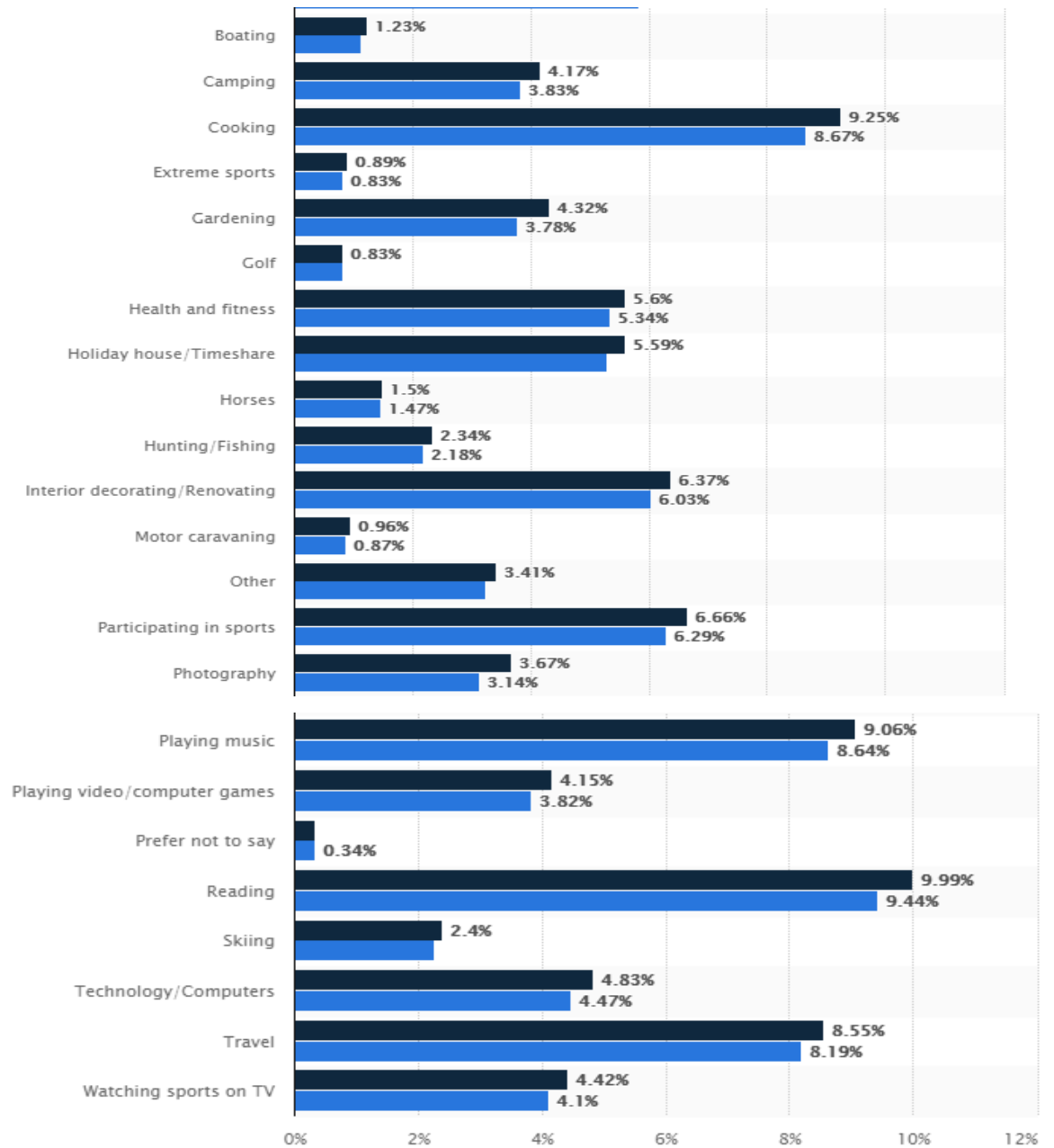


Chart 1. Distribution of hobbies and interests in Finland in 2016-2017 (Statista 2018)

3 ADVENTURE TRAVEL

Adventure travel generally consists of three components: an element of risk, high level of physical exertion, and use of specialized skills. (Buckley 2006) According to this definition, rafting is one of the adventure tourism market services.

3.1 Adventure travel categories

Adventure travel is one of the tourism niche that can be divided by 2 categories soft and hard travel. The soft adventures are characterised by low levels of real risk requiring minimal commitment and beginning skills and sometime even no previous experience. Hard adventures are connected with high level of risk requiring intense commitment and advanced skills (Hill 1995)

Rafting as an adventure travel service can be presented in the both categories due to the wide range of trips with different difficulty levels. Some of them do not require any previous experience and even any swimming skills but some relate to the death risks.

3.2 Adventure tourists' consumer behavior

Adventure tourists can be considered as a people who want to take risks and challenge themselves physically and mentally while participating in the new and stimulating experiences. (Swarbrooke 2003)

The decision-making process on buying the travel especially adventure trip will be very different than the process on buying some tangible product because there are more complicated motivational factors involved.

The most popular adventure travel motives are escapism, personal identity and authenticity of the place. The escapism relates to the need of travelers to escape from the life routine and to create fully different environment around themselves. The personal identity is connected with self-image and self-discovering of the travelers. (Terblanche 2012)

For example, facing the challenges that adventure tours offer the travelers can increase their self-esteem. The authenticity of the place refers to the cultural and social characteristics of the destination that traveler considered as unique one and want to experience. Usually, not just single motivation factor affects the purchase decision but the complex of them.

Moreover, decision making process of adventure tour often involves some uncontrollable risk such as weather conditions that sometimes neither the traveler or tour provider can predict especially if the trip is bought in advance. This factor can potentially become the post-purchase dissatisfaction reason. (Terblanche 2012)

4 RAFTING IN FINLAND

4.1 History

Rafting started its history in Finland in the beginning of the 20th century and that time people were using only wooden boats. The rubber boats came to the country in the end of 1980's and since that time rafting were introduced as a commercial touristic activity. (Lahdenkorpi 2014)

Rafting also popular as a professional sport in the country. The first national rafting competition took place in 1990 however only in 2009 the Finnish team have participated in the International Rafting World Championship in Bosnia. Currently, International Rafting Federation organized a lot of workshops and training programs in the rivers of Finland. (International rafting 2015)

4.2 Finnish Canoeing and Paddling Federation

Suomen Melonta ja Soutuliitto Ry is the Finnish Rafting and Paddling federation based in Helsinki. The aim of the organization is to promote and to develop the water sports such as rowing, rafting, kayaking and paddling in the country. Suomen Melonta ja Soutuliitto Ry is the member of the Finnish Olympic Committee and International Canoe Federation (ICF). (Suomen Melonta 2015)

The Suomen Melonta ja Soutuliitto Ry has its associate representatives in different Regions in Finland. All of them provide training courses including all equipment and infrastructure for both children and adults. Nowadays, there are about 10.000 participants in the federation's kayaking and canoeing sport clubs in Finland. The costs of clubs' membership, average age of members, clubs' activities and schedule are demonstrated on the example of Joensuun Kauhojat.

Joensuun Kauhojat is a kayaking and paddling club located in Joensuu and focuses on recreational, touring and white-water kayaking.

Currently, there are 170 members in the club in total. The age and occupation of them are represented in the Chart 2.

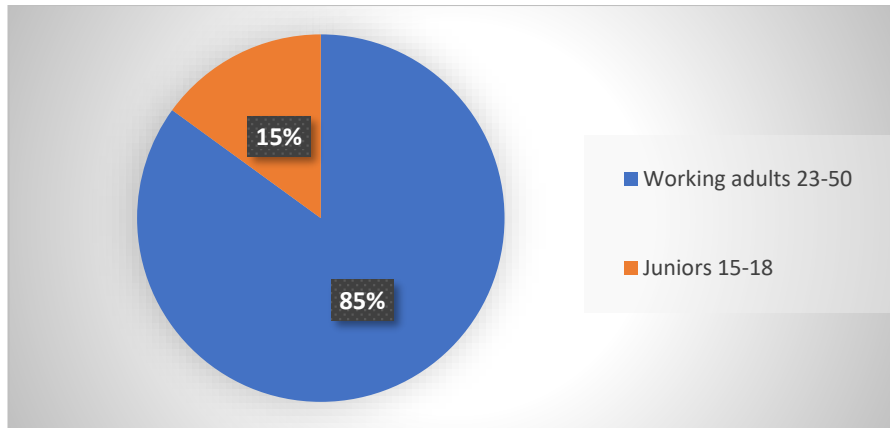


Chart 2. Members of Joensuu Paddling Club by age and occupation (Hiltunen 2018)

The club's equipment such as kayaks and special water clothing are only available for free for the members. The membership prices are more than affordable, and they are demonstrated in the Table 1.

Joensuun Kauhojat usually organizes different training and events 3 times per week. The trainings take place in Joensuu and events include white-water kayaking trips to the different rivers of North Karelia. The days of the trainings varies, and the schedule is updating every week on the club's official website. (Hiltunen 2018) Nevertheless, club's members can train by themselves any time they want as they have access to the equipment.

Table 1. Joensuun Kauhojat membership fees (Joensuun Kauhojat 2018)

Membership fees		
Adult	JMS26	26 €
Junior (under 18 years at the beginning of current year)	JMJ12	12 €
Support member	KJM200	200 €
Joining		
Joining fee (for the adult new members)	LM25	25 €
Fees for using the kayaks		
Adult, the whole year	AKM36	36 €
Adult, after August 1 st	AKM18	18 €
Junior, the whole year	JKM22	22 €
Junior, after August 1 st	JKM11	11 €
Kayak/canoe storage		
The whole year, rows 1-4	VP60	60 €
The whole year, row 5 and above	VP40	40 €
Winter only (no membership required)	VPT40	40 €
Shed keys		
Deposit for a key	AP30	30 €
Returning the access right	AK10	10 €
Beginner's kayaking courses		
Adult	PKA80	80 €
Junior (15-18 years)	PKJ40	40 €
Other fees		
Introduction (about 2,5-3 hours, per person)	TM30	30 €

4.3 Safety standards

Finnish Rafting providers must comply with the national and international safety standards of Rafting which are determined by Finnish Rafting and Paddling Association and International Rafting Federation. Companies providing rafting services in Finland pay a lot of attention to the qualification of the rafting guides as the safety of people on the route depends on them only. (Suomen Melonta 2015)

To become a rafting guide in Finland a person needs to be at least 18 years old and have a training in the special guide license organization such as Suomen Melonta Ry. Before participating in the training, the future guide must pass swimming skills examination. The training consists of theoretical and practical studies and the duration is 60 hours in total. The first license can be valid only for the river with rapids of first, second or third categories and can be updated to higher categories only after certain amount of guiding experience. (Lahdenkorpi 2014) There are six categories of rapids in total in rafting. (Western river 2018)

4.4 Rafting as an adventure travel service

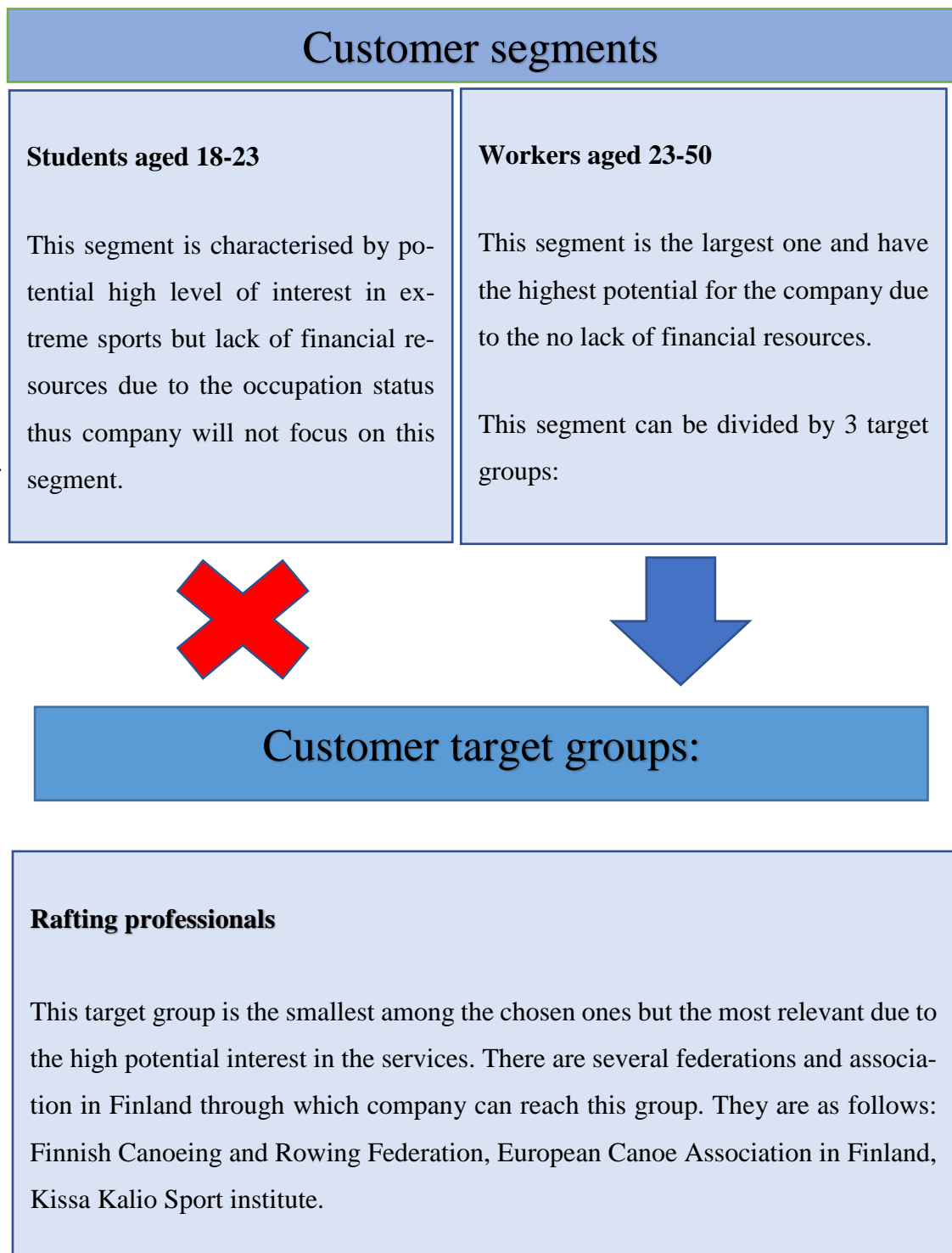
Rafting season starts in May and usually finishes in the beginning of September in Finland depending on weather conditions. Most of the companies that provide white-water rafting trips in summer not only focus on this service but offer many adventure travels all around the year such as snowmobile safaris. (Trip Advisor 2018)

There are 19 companies organizing rafting in Finland and are located in different parts of the country. The most popular routes are Kouvolan Langinkoski, Kymijoki River in Kotka, Kymijoki in Kouvola, Ounasjoki in Rovaniemi, Ruunajoki in Lieksa. (GoFinland 2018)

5 ENTRY STRATEGY

5.1 Customer segmentation and targeting

The segmentation and targeting analysis of potential customers are represented in the Figure 1.



Corporate Clients

This target group includes companies which organize different kind of activities for their employees to build a team spirit in a work place.

There are many tourism agencies in Finland that specialise in organization of corporate trips for companies such as TimeTravel Ltd, RusTravel Oy, Scandi Classics. All of them provide corporate trips to Russia with different activities but there are no rafting services offered yet. Raft-tour Karelia can negotiate about potential partnership cooperation with them.

Independent Travelers

This target group refers to working people who goes to vacation once/twice a year and tends to choose different places to visit and experiences to try.

To reach this target group company may need to partner with active holidays providers in Finland or tour providers that focuses on different trips to Russia specifically.

Figure 1. Customer segmentation and targeting analysis

5.2 Competitive analysis

Two kinds of competitors can be identified for Raft-tour Karelia on the adventure travel market: direct and indirect.

5.2.1 Direct competitors

Direct competitors are the rafting providers operating in Karelia Region of Russia and offering the same range of services. Sixteen of these companies have been identified. (TripAdvisor 2018)

Nevertheless, only one company, Karjala Park, also focuses on international tourists' segment. Company has the website translated to English and partners with big Russian agencies organizing different trip for foreign customers.

However, non-of the providers focuses specifically on Finland, thus the competition level for Raft-tour Karelia is low.

5.2.2 Indirect competitors

Indirect competitors are businesses that offer slightly different products and services but target the same group of customers with the goal of satisfying the same need. (Small Business BC 2018) In case of Raft-tour Karelia, as an indirect competitor can be considered the local companies operating in Finland.

Nineteen companies in Finland offering adventure travels including rafting, kayaking and canoeing services. (Trip Advisor 2018) Nevertheless, their trips are mostly limited to max one-day while Raft-Tour is offering the trips up to 10 days length.

Moreover, the price of the services offered by Finnish companies and Raft-tour Karelia significantly varies. As an example, Ruka-Palvelu offers 3,5 hours trip on the River Kitak with the price of 80 Euro/per person including equipment and guiding on the river. (Ruka-palvelu 2018) The 4 hours trip offered by Raft-Tour Karelia on Shuya River costs 20 Euro with the same package, but also food is included.

Regarding the long-term trips, the local provider East Gate Travel offers exactly the same trip as Raft-tour Karelia does on the territory of Russian Karelia. (Table 2) Nevertheless, the price difference and some additional services including to the trip can beneficially differentiate Raft-tour Karelia from this competitor. Moreover, the length of the trip of

Raft-tour Karelia is 2 days longer than the one that Finnish competitor offers. It can seem as an insignificant difference however they can affect the full perception of the trip. The number of kilometers per day will be less thus tourists will have more time to enjoy the nature views, to experience “wild sauna” in the forest, to have more breaks in the water and thus to avoid tiredness.

However, from the finish customers sight the trust to local providers, Finnish speaking guiding and transfer from Finland to the start point of the trip can favor East Gate Travel as a more attractive choice.

Table 2. Rafting trip comparison of Russian and Finnish provider (East Gate Travel & Raft-tour Karelia 2018)

	Raft-Tour Karelia	East Gate Travel
Route:	Suojoki – Lower shuya	Suojoki – Lower shuya
Duration:	7 days	5 days
Length:	70 km	70 km
Including:	equipment, food, guiding services, wild sauna in the forest, transfer from Petrozavodsk	equipment, food, guiding services, transfer from Joensuu
Language:	English	Finnish
Price:	130 Euro	178 Euro

5.3 Entry mode

Three target groups were identified through the segmentation analysis based on the age, occupation and potential interest in the services. All target groups require different marketing approaches.

Regarding the Rafting professionals, company can reach this target group by contacting the associations with email, placing the advertising in their Facebook pages or even website forums by itself as it doesn't require any budget.

Nevertheless, for reaching the largest target groups such as corporate clients and independent travelers just digital marketing activities are not enough.

5.3.1 Potential Partnerships

After consideration of several ways how company can reach the potential groups the Partnering and strategic alliances entry mode was chosen.

Strategic alliances are an agreement between two or more independent companies to cooperate in the manufacturing, development, or sale of products and services or other business objectives. In case of Raft-tour Karelia, Non-Equity type of Strategic Alliance mode will be applied. A non-equity strategic alliance is created when two or more companies sign a contractual relationship to pool their resources and capabilities together. (Corporate Finance Institute 2018).

Raft-tour Karelia doesn't possess enough budget or cultural background that would be enough for independent marketing campaign through the traditional medias and telemarketing.

Strategical Alliances Partners represent two categories of tourism providers in Finland.

First category will help Raft-tour Karelia to reach its corporate clients target group and it includes tourism companies located in Finland that specialize in organization of corporate trips around the world and to Russia specifically.

Second category of potential partners includes tourism companies that focuses on active holidays to Russia for individual customers, that's how Raft-tour Karelia can reach independent travelers target group.

Both categories must be focusing specifically on international active holidays because the companies that focuses on travels abroad usually sell the tours including visa assistance as a full package and that makes the booking process easier.

Also, both categories have already established customer base and well-organized marketing strategy, so the Raft-tour Karelia will save money and time on reaching its two target groups in Finland.

The potential partners in travel industry can cooperate using different methods: monthly commission for being placed on their website without any regards to how much the tours were booked, and second option is the commission from sales. Sales Commission providers takes the highest priority for Raft-tour Karelia as the company needs to pay the only if the rafting trips were booked. The amount of sales commission will be negotiated in advance.

However, Raft-tour Karelia must be aware of tax-system because if the company will operate through the partners that are based in Finland they will automatically sells the trip not on the original price but the price including taxes. Currently, the value added tax in Finland is 24 per cent. Considering this fact, Raft-tour Karelia cannot use price as a competitive advantage factor.

5.3.2 Partnership for attracting Corporate clients

Partnerships include tourism companies located in Finland that specialize in organization of corporate trips around the world and to Russia specifically.

Kaleva Travel

Kaleva Travel is the largest Finnish business travel agency that offers full range of services in business travel such as meetings event and leisure travel. Company possesses wide range of trips to over 250 destinations including Russia. The customers of the Kaleva Travel are differences size companies, governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations. The company specializes on both: active holidays and sight-seeing tours. (Kaleva Travel 2018)

Seikkailu Oy

Seikkailu Oy is the Finnish event and tourism provider that specializes in corporate team-building trips both local and international. Currently company has the partnership with the different team-building services around the world. Rafting trips can be suitable for the company service line as it is a natural team building activity as everyone from the owner and managers to the newest employees must contribute equally to paddling for a successful run through any rapid. (Seikkailu 2018)

Travel Specialist Group

Travel Specialist Group was founded in 1992 and is located in Helsinki. Company offer different kind of business travels including also additional services such as transportation and visa support. Active holidays around the world is one of the Travel Specialist Group niches thus Raft-tour Karelia has a potential for partnership. (Travel Specialist Group 2018)

5.3.3 Partnerships for attracting Individual Travelers

Potential partners include tourism companies that focuses on active holidays to Russia for individual customers.

Scandi Classics Oy

Scandi Classics is the independent Finnish tour operator that currently offers 10 different trips to Russia for individual customers. Company provides various cultural programs in Saint Petersburg and active winter holidays in Komi. Scandi Classics sells the tours including the visa assistance. (Scandi Classics 2018)

Rus Travel Oy Ltd

Rus Travel is the Finnish travel agency and at the same time visa application center. The company operates in the market since 2002 and offers trips to Russia for business and individual travelers. Currently, Rus Travel sells the trips only to Moscow and Saint Petersburg but may be interested in the expansion of the trips to Russian Karelia. (Rus Travel 2018)

Ruka Kuusamo

Ruka Kuusamo is the touristic association that sells tours in Finland and also in Russian Karelia. Ruuka platform collects different tour providers and operates on the base of partnerships. Currently, tours to Russia include snowmobile and hunting safaris, fishing trips and culture excursions. Considering the specific of Ruuka's trips to Russia, rafting in Russian Karelia can be a great option for the company. Nevertheless, the company doesn't provide visa assistant. Therefore, the tour package depends on the particular operator that organizes the trip. In this case, Raft-tour Karelia must provide the guidance for getting visa for potential customers. (Ruka Kuusamo 2018)

Matka Prima Futurist

Matka Prima Futurist is the tour provider located in Helsinki and focuses on the travels to Russia, Ukraine, Belorussia and Mongolia. Currently, company offers the trips to different Russian regions, mostly connected with culture exploration. Nevertheless, company customize the trip according the tourists wants. Therefore, Raft-tour Karelia can become of the option for the Matka Prima if the customers will request some active recreational activity in Russia. (Matka Prima 2018)

6 DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY

Raft-tour Karelia is planning to reach rafting professional target groups in Finland by itself using the direct emails to relevant associations, social media ads and presenting on special forums.

Finnish Canoeing and Rowing Federation, European Canoe Association in Finland and Kisa Kalio Sport institute have an official websites and Facebook pages.

Nevertheless, before contacting any of the them Raft-tour Karelia needs to have the website adapted on Finnish users in terms of language, content and customer support services.

According to the opinion of the cross-border tourism expert, company can introduce digital marketing strategy not only for reaching rafting professionals but also as an independent marketing effort to reach other potential interested groups in Finland mentioned above such as individual travelers and even corporate segment. Direct booking from the company webpage will have such benefits as no value added tax. Thus, the price of the services will be attractive for customers and secondly no sales commission needed to be paid to partners. (Miettinen 2018)

Company needs to create the special landing page in Finnish language which can be optimized in Google with such keywords as Rafting in Russia, Rafting in North Karelia, active holidays in Russia and etc.

This marketing strategy requires Finnish speaking specialist who will be responsible for these activities and the Digital Marketing guidance for this specialist will be represented further.

The most popular search engine in Finland is Google that count 96.48 per cent of total internet users in the country. (Stat Counter 2018) Therefore, Raft-tour Karelia should build its digital marketing campaign in Finnish language landing page according the Google main principles.

6.1 Google Algorithms

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the practice of increasing the quantity and quality of traffic to your website through organic search engine results. But comparing to other search engine marketing techniques, search engine optimization (SEO) doesn't involve any sort of paid activities such as keyword buying and only focuses on getting organic traffic. (Grappone 2011)

Since the search engine optimization strategy will be built directly for Google engine here are the its main algorithms that Finnish speaking specialist of Raft-tour Karelia needs to consider.

Pigeon algorithm is integrating the local search results on the example of Google maps. It means that the distance between the person who search, and the location of the company affects the company's ranking. Google will always show the nearest products and services that the person was searching for. For example, the Finnish language page of Raft-tour Karelia can set Joensuu as an address of the company but mention further that this is the nearest Finnish city the tourists can get to the route from. (Conversion Hub 2018)

Hummingbird algorithm focuses on content relevancy and intends to help Google better understand user queries. Hummingbird doesn't take into account only the certain keywords that user entered but it aims to evaluate the whole content of website. Content which is deemed to answer these queries, rather than content which simply tries to rank for a specific keyword, is likely to be looked on more favorably by the search engine in this instance. (Parson 2018) This algorithm refers to the complicity of the website. The specialist of Raft-tour Karelia needs to pay attention not only to specific keywords such as Rafting in Russia or Rafting in Raft-tour Karelia and insert them to the text all the time but to create the whole content and description of the tours relevant, logic and understandable for Finnish speaking reader. (Conversion Hub 2018)

Penguin algorithm focuses on links used by and to website. Google takes into account several linking factors. Firstly, the quality of sources which lead to website and its domain authority. And secondly, the content of these sources that should be relevant to the industry of business. If one of theses condition is missing, Google will rank website lower on purpose. For example, Raft-tour Karelia can negotiate with some Finnish travel or sport

e-journals to place the link to the company website. These e-sources must be well-known, credible, and have a travel, holidays or sport thematic. The specialist can check the domain authority of any internet source in the MozBar website. Regarding the potential sources in Finland, they are as follow: Rantapallo, Vau forum, Tiede. (Conversion Hub 2018)

Also, there are internal links in the website, these are simplest links between the categories inside the landing page. They are considered as the content simplification for user.

Google ranks the websites with mobile-friendly version above ones that don't have it. In the future company can create the mobile friendly Finnish web-page but only after some sales will be made and when the demand of the services will be clear. Before sales there is no need to invest to mobile friendly version.

However, only Google knows exactly what is included in each algorithm and company doesn't publish this information because Google aims to deliver the best quality search results for users and to avoid placing only best optimized websites on the first search engine results page. (Conversion Hub 2018)

Nevertheless, there are main Google Algorithms that Raft-tour Karelia can use preparing its search engine optimization strategy. These factors with its significance in percentage are described in the Chart 3.

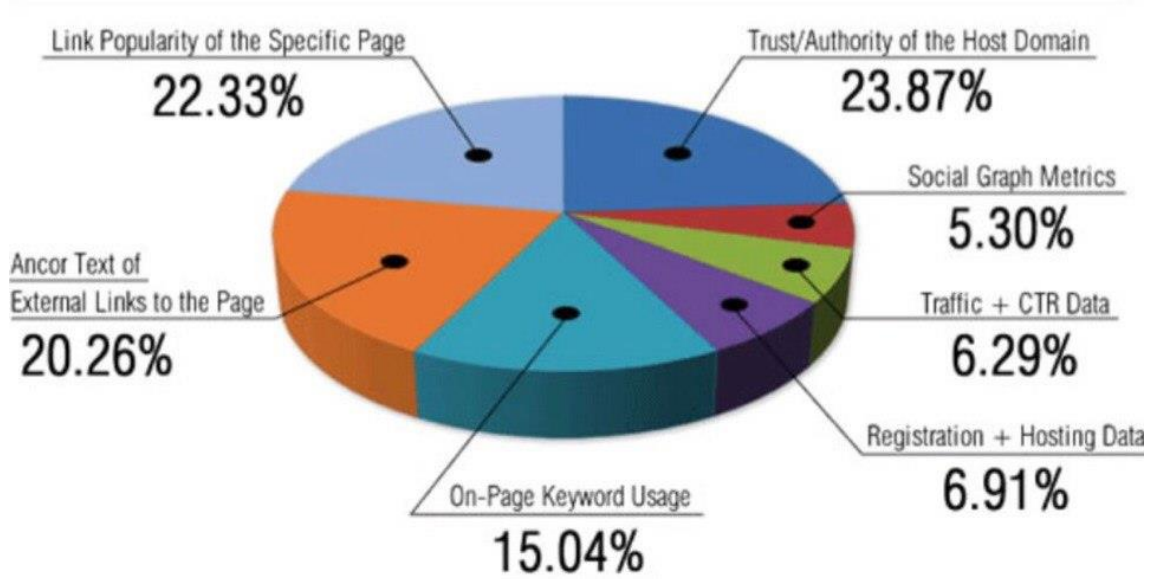
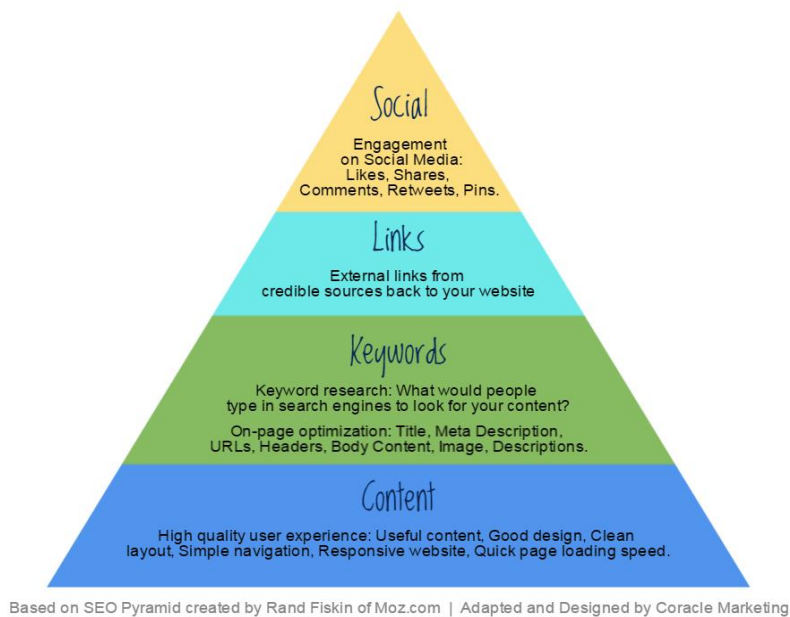


Chart 3. Components of Google Ranking Algorithms.

6.2 Search Engine Optimization strategy

Successful search engine optimization strategy includes four main components such as Social Engagement, Links building, Keyword Research and Quality Content. All of the are described in the Graph 3.



Graph 2. SEO Pyramid (Fishkin 2015)

Social Engagement is the simplest part of Search Engine Optimization that is based on social media presence of the company. Search Engine ranking depends on how active the company is in the different forums and medias, how many people like and comment its posts and content. Raft-tour Karelia can publish its ad in such Facebook groups as Aktiiviloma Suomessa, Avokanoottiyhdistys (Finnish Open Canoe Association), Rafting Team Finland, VisitKarelia, Rafting Team Kuusamo, Wild Hikes Finland.

Links building component relates to the number of external resources that contains the link to your website. The potential sources where Raft-tour Karelia can place their link were mentioned in the previous chapter.

Keyword research is one of the most important, valuable and high return activities in the search marketing field. The main goal of Raft-tour Karelia website is get the visits and attention of its target market. Well-done keyword analysis can bring the most relevant traffic to the company's content. (MOZ 2015)

To choose the most effective keywords Finnish speaking specialist needs to evaluate the competition in the area as well as the searching frequency. Nowadays there are many online tools that allow to make this analysis online for example SEO quake, Google AdWords and Google Analytics. All of them are available in Finnish language.

The interesting written content of the website is also very important for search engine optimization. The user-friendly navigation as well as the speed of page loading affects website ranking significantly.

7 OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The operational recommendations refer to the ability of the company to communicate with potential customers and partners. The communication must take place in Finnish language as it will provoke more trust and respect to the foreign provider. (Miettinen 2018) Therefore, company needs to hire Finnish speaking professional in Petrozavodsk. Fortunately, to find the one in Russian Karelia is not a problem.

The new employee's responsibilities are:

- Contacting potential partners and negotiate about cooperation and commission. The list of the companies is provided.
- Preparing the content for website landing page in Finnish language
- Make the analysis of the most suitable keywords in Google
- Leading the social media presence of the company in relevant Finnish forums and social medias
- Answering potential customers inquires and consulting them regarding the services

Moreover, company needs to obtain international certificates that prove that the Raft-tour Karelia infrastructure, guiding services, and equipment are accomplished with international standards. It will affect the first impression of potential partners and customers. For this purpose, company needs to contact International Rafting Federation that is responsible for certification awards for individual guides as well as for organizations.

8 CONCLUSION

All in all, the thesis paper answers the research questions mentioned in the chapter one. Finland can be considered as an attractive market for Raft-tour Karelia expansion due to the high interest in such adventure travel service as rafting as well as due to the potential customers' financial resources and willingness to spend them on new travel experiences.

As an entry mode to the market, the Strategic Alliances and Digital Marketing Strategy were chosen. Through the Strategic Alliances company will reach its Corporate clients and Individual Travelers Target groups. Regarding the Digital Marketing strategy, it will focus on targeting rafting professional and other interested groups by optimizing the Raft-tour Karelia Finnish language page in the most popular search engine in Finland and also by organizing company's presence on rafting forums and relevant groups in social medias. Both approaches require Finnish speaking professional to be hired.

Nevertheless, only after implementation of the strategy Raft-tour Karelia can evaluate the demand and return on investment of both entry tactics Partnerships and Digital Marketing strategy. Then, company can focus on the most profitable approach.

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Service line of Raft-tour Karelia

Company provides rafting trips on the south and north rivers of Karelia Region and they are as follow: Lower Shuya, Higher Shuya, Uksa, Keret and White Sea, Suna, Pistajoky and Tumcha.

The difficulty of the river depends on the streams categories starting from 1 to 5. The length of the trips varies from 2 hours to 9 days. There are three types of boats available for tourists: rafts, kayaks and catamarans.

Examples of the most popular trips of Raft-tour Karelia are demonstrated in the Table 3.

Table 3. Tours' examples of Raft-tour Karelia

Name of the tour:	Description:
<p>1-day rafting trip on Shuya river (beginners, advanced)</p>	<p>Length: 8 hours</p> <p>Program:</p> <p>- Transfer from Petrozavodsk to the Raft-Tour Infrastructure. – Choosing the appropriate equipment for each tourist such as life jacket and helmets – Transfer to the starting point of the river – Rafting for 8 km including 3 streams which are 1-2 difficulty category – Finishing rout at the point of Raft-tour Infrastructure – Sauna – Dinner -Transfer to Petrozavodsk</p> <p>Price: 1500 RUB/person</p>

<p>3 days rafting trip on Shuya River (beginners, advanced)</p>	<p>Length: 3 days / 2 nights</p> <p>Program:</p> <p>1 day - Transfer from Petrozavodsk to the Raft-Tour Infrastructure – Breakfast – Choosing the appropriate equipment for each tourist such as life jacket and helmets – Transfer to the starting point of the river – Rafting for 10 km including 2 streams which are 1-2 difficulty category – Camping in the forest, dinner preparation in the wild environment</p> <p>2 day – Breakfast – Riding the main Stream called Big Tolli which is 2-3 category depending on the water level – Lunch/Dinner – Wild sauna in the forest – Night on the same camping place</p> <p>3 day – Rafting for 8 km including 2 streams 1-2 difficulty category – Finishing route at the point of Raft-tour Infrastructure – Sauna – Dinner -Transfer to Petrozavodsk</p> <p>Price: 4500RUB/person</p>
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<p>5 days tour on Higher Shuya, North Karelia (advanced only)</p>	<p>Length: 5 days/4 nights</p> <p>Program: program is the same as in mentioned above tour but there are 4 nights travelers spend in the forest during the route. The category of the most difficult stream is 4. The length of the route in total is 67 km. This tour is suitable for only advanced rafting travelers.</p> <p>Price: 9000 RUB / person</p>
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Some of the tours start directly on the river such as Keret and White Sea. This trip is differing from other as there is rafting on the White Sea included to the route and the camping night on the White Sea island. The length is 9 days and price of this one is 15.000 RUB.

In addition to each tour, there is excursions part upon request after the rafting trip. Tourists can stay overnight in the cottage and spend next couple of days exploring the cultural monuments of Karelia region. The price of the rafting trip excursions package is negotiable.