

# **Developing Accessible Tourism in Lappeenranta: Package tour for Russian tourists**

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Elizaveta Aleksandrova

## Abstract

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Title of the thesis <b>Developing Accessible Tourism in Lappeenranta: Package tour for Russian tourists</b>		
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Abstract <p>The objective of the thesis is to develop accessible tourism for Russians disabled people in Lappeenranta through creating a service in cooperation with the Russian tour operator Alla Tours. This service is a package tour which contains a special program.</p> <p>The theoretical framework of the thesis consists of three chapters. The first is tourism, its forms and areas concerning the current study. Additionally, the the chapter describes tourism in Finland, including the city of Lappeenranta. The second is the concept of accessible tourism and its target group, models, requirements and barriers. Thirdly, the chapter touches upon the case-company, its services, and tourism services in general. The service design and its process step by step are also described.</p> <p>The main research question of the thesis is how to develop accessible tourism in Lappeenranta? To do this, it is necessary to answer the following sub-questions: what are the most suitable and accessible places for disabled people; and how to create a package tour for disabled Russian tourists?</p> <p>The research starts with the literature review. The purpose of the literature review is to analyse, compare, explore, and summarize all written researches by the authors and organizations.</p> <p>In the empirical part, places to go, to stay, and to visit in Lappeenranta are analysed and then combined into a complete tour. The collection and analysis of all information regarding the topic is qualitative research. Based on all the information received, a three-day tourist package was compiled which includes the most accessible and popular places in Lappeenranta.</p>		
Keywords tourism, accessible tourism, Lappeenranta, accessibility, disability, tour, package tour, services, designing services, service design process		

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## 1 Introduction

Nowadays, tourism is one of the most popular forms of service. People travel all over the world, and there are a great number of travel agencies providing tours and trips for every taste and pocket.

Indeed, there are a lot of different services and facilities for tourists, but when it comes to disabled people or people with special needs, there are fewer options and they are restricted. Not everywhere can such people feel comfortable during the trip and not everywhere can they find all the necessary information about the possibilities offered to them by a particular city or country. (ENAT 2007, p. 4.) Hence, there is a need to develop a service product for that specific group of customers. Services are essential for human well-being in tourism, especially if people are with disabilities. For that reason, service organizations should go beyond their daily work to improve efficiency and existing services.

Therefore, the thesis provides a package tour for a case-company Alla Tours. The package tour is developed for disabled people, so they can use it as the most suitable and convenient option to travel abroad. Moreover, the study describes convenient conditions, additional services, and accessibility for people with special needs traveling to the Lappeenranta region in Finland. The current study can be used and published in any digital Finnish channel, for example, [Lappeenranta.fi](http://Lappeenranta.fi) or [Visitlappeenranta.fi](http://Visitlappeenranta.fi), which present information about the region in question: active leisure, SPA centres, accommodations, restaurants, shopping, and other services.

The study is done in cooperation with the travel company Alla Tours. Alla Tours is a Russian tour operator and its main office is located in Saint Petersburg, Russia. The company provides city tours and works with the incoming tourists who arrive to Saint Petersburg by cruise ships. Moreover, Alla Tours organizes tours in Baltic countries.

At the moment, the company has suspended its tourism activity for a while due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it is not closed. Instead, Alla Tours develops some services which it has not had before. Therefore, the company is very interested in creating a service for Russian tourists in Lappeenranta.

## 1.1 Background of the thesis

Since accessible tourism has appeared recently, today it continues to develop and more people and organizations are getting involved in it. Nowadays, everyone who works in a travel industry knows that there are a lot of people who need extra services and that these people have the same rights to travel. That is why, there is a sufficient number of studies, articles and other materials about the travelling for disabled people and for people who have mobility issues, that can be found on various websites and blogs. However, accessible tourism is still developing, it is known and available not in each country and city. For that reason, it is essential to spread this concept and raise awareness of it because accessible tourism is important for many different groups of people with special needs. Moreover, this type of tourism is important for people who accompany such tourists.

The concept of accessible tourism was defined by two authors Darcy and Dickson in 2009. Darcy made a great contribution to the development of accessible tourism. He opened a blog on accessible tourism research, and it can help to shape the international agenda of research and development in this growing and diverse field of study. Darcy is Associate Professor at the University of Technology, School of Leisure, Sport and Tourism, Sydney, Australia. He writes books and articles together with other professors and authors, as well as independently, and tries to develop the awareness of such kind of tourism as much as possible. He is currently working on a number of projects relating to the National Disability Insurance Scheme, National Disability Strategy, disability citizenship and person-centred approaches. (ENAT 2009; UTS n.d.)

Many global and regional organizations support accessible tourism. The organizations which are actively involved in the creation and maintenance of accessible tourism are further highlighted. They also provide a complete picture and description of accessible tourism and a clear understanding for whom and how to make tourism comfortable and accessible. Based on the finding, a complete picture of the accessible tourism is given.

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is the United Nations agency promoting responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism. Their website contains a wide variety of information, videos and projects that can help to explore and study

this area of tourism. For instance, the website offers articles about the principles, tools and recommendations for accessible tourism. Moreover, most articles and books are dated from 2016, which means they are relevant and applicable in this area. (UNWTO n.d.)

There is also the website of ENAT - the European Network for Accessible Tourism - a non-profit association for organizations that aim to be 'frontrunners' in the study, promotion, and practice of accessible tourism (ENAT n.d.). They have much information about accessibility and accessible services for disabled people.

In Europe, in contrast to Russia, accessible tourism is developed much better. In European countries, people with disabilities are not isolated from the society and, conversely, the government tries to help them find their place in it by selecting the optimal workplace and employment. Moreover, the ideal conditions for tourism are created for those people with disabilities who like to travel. (European Commission n.d.)

The United Kingdom is an excellent example of such a country. There are numerous websites where people can find a lot of information about that type of tourism and it can serve as a base when creating a service for a city or a country. For instance, the website [VisitBritain.org](http://VisitBritain.org) has an entire section 'Developing accessible destinations' which provides useful guidance of accessibility information (Visit Britain n.d.).

Canada is also striking for its positive and pleasant position concerning people with disabilities. When studying this sphere, it is reasonable to rely on the U.K. and Canada experience because these are large and developed countries which treat people with disabilities very well. For instance, there is a provincial Crown corporation called Destination British Columbia which leads the marketing of British Columbia as a tourist destination and promotes its development and growth. They collaborate with industry, regional communities, and indigenous partners. The corporation always launches new strategies. (Destination BC n.d.)

Furthermore, there is a British Professor Dimitrios Buhalis who is an expert in technology applications in the Tourism, Travel, Hospitality, and Leisure industries. On his website, there is much information, books, articles, and presentations about

accessibility, which are written independently and with other professors and authors. (Buhalis n.d.)

Modern society is increasingly informed about the concept of integration of people with disabilities. The issues such as accessibility are presented at international symposiums of bodies such as the European Commission. On the European Commission's online data portal, there are quite a lot of useful links to the topic of accessible tourism, which can also be studied and viewed for general understanding.

The most interesting and very useful research and findings of accessible tourism were made in Laurea University of Applied Sciences by Kumar Khatri, Rajkumar Shrestha, and Ujjwal Mahat in their thesis 'Accessible Tourism a study of accessibility in hotel chains, public transportation, and ferry companies in Helsinki' (2012). In the final thesis, the current accessibility situation of hotel chains, public transportation, and two ferry companies in Helsinki are presented. The reasons to highlight this thesis are that it is about Finland and its accessibility.

Based on all the information collected and studied from the mentioned authors and organizations, a clear understanding of accessible tourism and its development emerges. All the data gives a complete picture of this type of tourism and how to implement it into a particular city. Moreover, based on that, it is easier to create and organize a service, a tourist program or a tour for disabled people.

## 1.2 Justification for the topic

The decision to write a thesis about developing accessible tourism for Russians in Lappeenranta comes from the fact that this topic is highly interesting for many reasons. First of all, tourism seems to be just a service industry but it becomes something bigger than that for those people who get experience and knowledge through it. Consequently, the main purpose of writing a thesis about developing accessible tourism lies in helping people travel with pleasure and comfort to the above-mentioned city. Another reason for writing the thesis is to create a type of service, i.e. to find a way how certain people from Russia can travel to Finland with comfort and pleasure.

Moreover, there is Alla Tours's great interest to develop accessible tourism. Firstly, the company's target group is mostly elderly people over fifty-sixty years old. Alla Tours receives a significant number of requests to organize a service or a tour for people with disabilities and people with mobility issues. Unfortunately, it is not possible to arrange such a service or a tour as it requires a lot of special features: transport, accompanying persons, equipment, etc. Therefore, now the company has a great opportunity to organize a special service for this type of tourism.

Secondly, Alla Tours organizes tour services in Helsinki and it is somehow familiar with Finland and has experience in communicating with representatives of various restaurants, museums, and other organizations. Thirdly, the reason is to create a service for the company's other customers – Russians – and engage in land-based tourism, since Alla Tours currently works only with cruise ships and mostly American and European clients.

Creating accessible tourism is absolutely crucial for people living in Saint Petersburg and nearby regions because conditions for such people in Russia are underdeveloped in contrast to Finland. For instance, according to the Federal Register of Disabled People (FRI 2020) in North-western Federal District as of September 1st, 2020, the number of disabled people was 10.42% of the total population in this district. Taking Saint Petersburg as an example, where 12.48% of the population is disabled and only 30% of the facilities are equipped with special devices for people with special needs, one can see that, as this city is located close to Finland, such people have an excellent opportunity for visiting and exploring another country, life, and environment without feeling limited.

The reason to consider Finland as a traveling destination is that this country takes care of each and every disabled person; people with disabilities have a right to live a normal life, for instance, to study, work, and create a family. Finland complies with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (Info Finland n.d.)

Lappeenranta is situated near the Russian border and is one of the favourite places to stay for guests from Russia. Despite its relatively small size (if compared to St. Petersburg), Lappeenranta has quite a few local landmarks worth visiting.

Convenient roads and transportation make a trip through the region comfortable and enjoyable. (Gosaimaa n.d.)

Thanks to excellent transportation, Lappeenranta is easily accessible. For instance, the high-speed train 'Allegro' departs from Saint Petersburg or Viborg and arrives in Vainikkala. From there, visitors can get to Lappeenranta by a taxi. Both vehicles are adapted for people with disabilities.

However, for now there is no information about accessible tourism on different tourist websites, neither Russian nor Finnish, so creating such content would be extremely helpful for visitors and future tourists, as it will pinpoint the advantages of going precisely to the Lappeenranta region. It can increase the attractiveness of the city and also boost the number of tourists coming to Finland.

Articles of the largest world organizations that are engaged in developing accessible tourism can be a base for creating such services. On UNWTO (n.d.) and ENAT (n.d.) websites there are a great number of articles dedicated to developing accessible tourism and its services around the world. Moreover, the articles have a list of requirements and strategies for creating special services for accessibility, for instance, these articles are 'Services and Facilities for Accessible Tourism in Europe' (ENAT 2007) and 'Recommendations on accessible tourism' (UNWTO 2013).

Professor Buhalis (n.d.) also has a lot of books and publications regarding developing services. Together with other authors, he describes service processes. So, following this information can help to understand clearly how to develop special services for the disabled.

In the thesis, a certain attention is paid to Moritz and his service design process. He provides information about service design and how it can help organizations with the challenges they may face (Moritz 2005). So, this author is very valuable for the thesis.

### 1.3 Objective and delimitations

Accessible tourism is a relatively new phenomenon and has developed rapidly over the years. The main objective of the thesis is to develop accessible tourism for Russian disabled people in the Lappeenranta region through creating a service in

cooperation with the Alla Tours company. This service is a package tour which contains a special program for the trip and additional services. Although the Alla Tours company does not have a package tour, the standard city tour will be the base for creating a package tour for the thesis (Appendix 3). So, in order to create a complete tour, it is necessary to rely on previous research and studies of this phenomenon.

Thus, in order to reach the objective, it is necessary to understand clearly the accessibility notion, how to analyse the tourist area and finally to create a package tour. Based on the above-mentioned background research, it becomes clear what requires attention when it comes to creating any services for the disabled people. For example, UNWTO (2016) describes in detail the accessibility requirements that must be met, and also offers a Universal Design for creating tourism services for people with mobility issues.

To understand what accessible tourism looks like in practice, the United Kingdom and Canada are excellent examples of accessible tourism and accessibility in general. Studying the website Visit Britain (n.d.), there are guidelines regarding the access to all areas. On the website Destination British Columbia (n.d.) there is a lot of information regarding the same topic and the description of its value.

Moreover, Professor Buhalis (n.d.) with other researches and also independently has made a great contribution to the development of accessible tourism. His work and studies can be taken as a base for creating a special service for disabled people.

It is necessary to conduct research to learn infrastructure, services, transport and other facilities in order to have information about what kind of places and services to include in the tour package. The complete itinerary needs to be designed with all the requirements of accessible tourism. Additionally, the aim of the study is to provide Russian disabled people with an opportunity to travel, so that they could go abroad with comfort and accessibility.

The current study is focused on creating a service and investigating places for tourists only in Lappeenranta. This region is chosen due to the closest location to the state border. Regarding the studies, the thesis does not present information about other Finnish cities and their infrastructure.

Accessible tourism is about making it easy for everyone to enjoy tourism experiences, but the thesis does not offer such tourism for everyone, the target group is defined clearly in a specific part of the thesis. This accessible tourism is for disabled people, i.e. for people who have a physical or mental disorder with which the physically built or social environment makes them disabled.

The thesis offers the package tour that starts from Saint Petersburg, not from other Russian cities, because the company's office is situated in St. Petersburg, and the main connection with Finland is from St. Petersburg.

The present thesis will not specify the disadvantages in the Lappeenranta infrastructure, only what is available in the city for people with limited mobility.

The theoretical part of the thesis consists of the general notion of tourism, detailed description of the accessible tourism - its target group, accessible requirements, barriers which people can face - and how to create a package tour for a special group of customers.

The main focus is the notion of accessibility. The thesis does not disclose deeply the concepts of Tourism for All, sustainable and social tourism, just gives their definitions for understanding the accessibility origin.

The study creates a package tour, not a private one. The thesis offers only one program with accessible infrastructure and additional services. Although the tourism industry includes such aspects as tourist demand and motivation, marketing, strategies, and economics, the study discloses the tourism only as a service industry.

#### 1.4 Theoretical framework

At the beginning, the theoretical part provides information about tourism: its forms, and areas concerning the current study. The notion tourism is needed for the thesis because creating accessible services is implemented through it. The authors (Lickorish & Jenkins 1997; Pender & Sharpley 2005; Goeldner & Richie 2012; Sharpley 2006) give a complete definition about tourism and why it is worth studying. Overall they give the same description about the tourism notion. Additionally, there is information about tourism in Finland including the city of Lappeenranta.

Further, the concept of accessible tourism is described fully. To make the service for disabled people and people with mobility issues this notion is very crucial for the study. Models, dimensions, access requirements, barriers which tourists can face are described in this chapter mostly by the UNWTO (2016). Additionally, the target group is defined clearly by Darcy and Dickson (2009) and Darcy and Buhalis (2010) and Darcy, Cameron and Pegg (2010), i.e. for which group of people the service is developed. It is necessary to create the tour taking into account all the features.

The third part of the theoretical framework provides information about tourism services. Moreover, the chapter touches upon the case-company and its services. Alla Tours already has the services for the tourists, however, the company is developing business and implementing services that it has never had before. The main tourist product is a package tour, and several authors (Dordevic & Hristov 2016; Patterson 2006; Bowie & Chang 2005) give the fullest and clearest definition of it. Additionally, in this part the service design and its process step by step are described by Moritz (2005).

## 1.5 Research questions

The study is based on Finnish infrastructure and opportunities offered by Lappeenranta for disabled people. The primary objective is to answer the following question: How to develop accessible tourism in Lappeenranta? To do this, it is necessary to answer the following sub-questions:

RQ 1: What are the most suitable and accessible places for disabled people?

RQ 2: How to create a package tour for disabled Russian tourists?

In order to develop accessible tourism in the Lappeenranta region and create a package tour, firstly, it is necessary to explore and observe the area. Everything that is available in cities - hotels, restaurants, transport, other places - should be taken into account. After studying the infrastructure and offered services, it is needed to make an analysis and select the most suitable places for people with limited mobility, and then create and organize a special package tour. A tour that can attract the attention of Russian tourists. This can contribute to the development of accessible tourism and perhaps it will attract other tourists in the future.

## 1.6 Research method

The research of the thesis is made around three main notions – tourism, accessible tourism, including its target group, and tourism services. The research starts with the literature review. The theoretical part describes fully the notion of tourism in general, accessible tourism, the target group, tourism services, service as a tourist product and service design process. A great number of books, articles and material written by many researches (Lickorish & Jenkins 1997; Pender & Sharpley 2005; Sharpley 2006; Goeldner & Ritchie 2012; Darcy & Dickson 2009; Darcy et al. 2010; Darcy & Buhalis 2010; Buhalis & Costa 2005; Patterson 2006; Moritz 2005) are studied and analysed for the thesis and taken as a base of creating a service. However, the main resources for the research are the largest organizations UNWTO (2016; 2019) and ENAT (2007; 2009), and they include a lot of studies, articles and books which help to understand the importance of the accessible tourism and what requirements and strategies must be followed for creating a service for disabled people.

The purpose of the literature review is to analyse, compare, explore, and summarize all written researches by the authors and organizations. Also, the purpose is to study what knowledge, ideas, approaches and viewpoints could be adopted to the topic. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2016.)

In the thesis, the literature review is the basis for creating a final tourist product. Since the main field of the thesis is tourism, at the very beginning there is an overview of its concept and types. Additionally, there is a description of tourism directly in Lappeenranta as the thesis provides a tour in this city. Further, it is necessary to clearly understand what accessible tourism is since the target group is disabled people. It is simply impossible to create a tour without knowledge of this term, so there is a need to rely on existing criteria and requirements that are offered by different organizations and authors. Finally, in order to create a tourist product, it is necessary to understand what it should include and what the process of its creation looks like.

In the empirical part, places to go, to stay, and to visit in Lappeenranta are analysed and then combined into a complete tour. The collection and analysis of all information regarding the topic is qualitative research.

The term qualitative research means any type of study in which data is obtained using non-statistical or non-quantitative methods. This term may refer to studying the history of life and behaviour of individuals, organizations, social movements, or interactive relationships. Qualitative research is about finding out what people think and feel through observing, analysing and interviewing. (Strauss & Corbin 2001.)

Qualitative data is any information collected by the researcher, which is expressed not in numbers, but in words. This is a certain content that the researcher defines from observations, interviews, documents, and audio-visual materials, and which he formulates, encodes, and transmits verbally. Qualitative research is research that primarily or exclusively uses words as data and analysis tools. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2016.)

To create a package tour, it is needed to fully explore Lappeenranta - hotels, restaurants, attractions, and many other places. Firstly, it is necessary to use the information websites such as Lappeenranta.fi and Visitlappeenranta.fi in order to understand what places there are in the city. Further, it is essential to make a list of places that may be included in the package tour. In order to find out whether places are suitable or not, it is necessary to contact representatives of all places and get the necessary information regarding the chosen place.

Further follows the description of data collection methods for the qualitative research. It is used for interviewing people who work in hotels, restaurants, museums, and other places that people can visit. The example of the asked questions can be found in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

#### 1.6.1 Data collection

The current thesis requires face to face interviews, e-mail questionnaires and observation to collect the necessary data for the research. However, first of all, it is needed to collect online data using different websites. Before collecting data through interviews, questionnaires and observation, it is necessary to analyse previous research and information.

Secondary data is the data that has already been collected through primary source and is available for other research. It can provide a useful source helping to answer or partially answer research questions. (Saunders et al. 2009, p. 256.)

Since the main aim of the thesis is to create a package tour that includes accommodation, transfer, excursions, shopping malls, etc., it is necessary to study all websites that are dedicated to each tourist place: hotels, restaurants, museums, transport, theatre, cinema, and others. These places have their own websites or pages on the information websites such as Booking.com and Raflaamo.fi. Moreover, online websites dedicated to the tourism in Lappeenranta such as Lappeenranta.fi, Gosaimaa.com and Visitlappeenranta.fi are studied.

- E-mail questionnaire

There are two types of questions in the questionnaire technique: (1) open-ended questions are those that do not place restrictions on the answers that the respondents can provide, and (2) close-ended questions in which respondents must choose among specific response options for each question (Colosi 2006, p. 1-2). Both types of questions are on the list, and the questionnaire includes at least ten questions. The questions are the same as in the face to face structured interview but several questions have answer options.

Questionnaires are sent online. There are two types of questionnaires, one contains thirteen questions (Appendix 1) and the other – ten (Appendix 2).

1. The first questionnaire (Appendix 1) with thirteen questions contains more general questions about the city. Response options are available for quick response. It is sent to the tourist info team supervisor in the tourist information office in Lappeenranta. The main aim of this questionnaire is to get information regarding all accessible places in Lappeenranta. So, based on the answers, the list of such places is made.
2. After completing the list of places, the second questionnaire (Appendix 2) is sent to their representatives. For easy perception and quick response to the questionnaire, most of the questions have response options with a brief description of the answer if necessary. For example, if the answer to the question is 'yes', then some enumeration is needed (same in the first questionnaire). The questionnaire is designed in Google forms, for faster response, since people do not have to write a response letter to the request to fill out the questionnaire. Questionnaire is sent to managers and directors of hotels, restaurants, museums, and other tourist destinations, i.e. those

managers and directors who hold senior positions in companies and who are engaged in marketing, development and customer service.

- Semi-structured interviews

This kind of interview is 'non-standard'. It refers to quality research (King 2004). The interviewer has a list of themes and questions regarding a certain topic. However, questions may vary from interview to interview and the order of the questions may also be different. Moreover, the interviewer may ask some additional questions during the conversation. So, during semi-interviews more open-ended questions are asked without a strict order. (Saunders et al. 2009, p. 320).

After making the questionnaires, the interviews are the second step. The most appropriate way to collect data regarding the topic is the interview. Interviews are conducted with the management staff of the hotels, restaurants, museums, and other tourist places. It is necessary to find specialists in the tourism sphere who manage the working processes from the company; those people who know all the work from the inside of the company.

Interviews are supposed to be taken in their offices or workspaces. It is advisable to conduct interviews during the working day in order to have an opportunity to see and take photos of the places, for example, hotel rooms, restaurant seats, entrances, exits, and others.

- Observations

Observation is a key social science method of collecting empirical data where the interviewer may or may not have direct contact with the people and events being observed (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2016, p. 99). For the current research, service environments need to be observed: hotel rooms and its facilities, public transportation, tourist places for visiting, shopping centres and other places to go. The idea is to get into the location, spend time involved in the environment and obtain the needed data from there.

Therefore, the observations are needed. Observations are supposed to be made throughout the city. The list includes all places that are convenient for the disabled. In other words, after conducting questionnaires and interviews, a list of places that need to be visited and viewed, studied and photographed is created. Once all the

information is received, it is possible to create a complete picture of what services and infrastructure are available in Lappeenranta and present it to the tourists in the right way.

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 pandemic there is no opportunity for observations, so for the study website pictures are used. Moreover, all the communication happens only through the questionnaires and it is the most suitable way to collect the data. Unfortunately, there are very few respondents because many places are closed due to the pandemic situation in the world. Many places are closed temporarily, however, some places are probably closed forever. So, the package tour is completed with all accessible places which are mentioned by the tourist supervisor, however, many places are mentioned without detailed information and photos. Further, in the empirical part all places are mentioned with information and photos which are taken from different websites.

### 1.7 Structure of the thesis

The thesis consists of three main chapters: introduction, theoretical part, and empirical part.

The introduction chapter contains the background information for the thesis, research justification, objectives and delimitations, research questions and research methods including data collection. Additionally, the theoretical framework is described.

In the theoretical chapter, the general information about tourism, accessible tourism including a special group of customers for it, tourism in Finland overall and in the Lappeenranta region in particular are studied. Moreover, the chapter gives the description of tourism services and the process of its creation.

In the empirical chapter, there is a list of all places. They are analysed and then put into a package tour.

## 2 What is tourism?

When developing the accessible tourism service for disabled people and people with mobility issues, it is necessary to consider tourism as a general concept at first. What is tourism? Why is it worth studying? As mentioned previously, nowadays, tourism is one of the most popular services in the world.

Tourism is different in each country. There is no typical structure of this industry; for instance, shopping and restaurants are major attractions for tourists in Italy but not in Russia. These distinctions are still present and are interesting to study. (Lickorish & Jenkins 1997, p. 1.)

Tourism is an activity that takes place when people cross borders for leisure or business and stay at least twenty-four hours and less than one year (Mill & Morrison 1998:2). That means people stay in new places outside their usual environment (Chadwick 1994: 66). Therefore, it is essential to create all the necessary and convenient services for travellers. (Pender & Sharpley 2005, p. 4.)

The term usual environment is intended to exclude travel within the area of usual residence, frequent and regular travel between the place of residence and the place of work, as well as other travel within the place of usual residence (Goeldner & Ritchie 2012, p. 5).

Tourism has several forms:

- domestic tourism (involving residents travelling within the given country);
- inbound tourism (involving non-residents in the given country); and
- outbound tourism (involving residents travelling in the other country).

(Lickorish & Jenkins 1997, pp. 36.)

These forms can be combined to get categories of tourism:

- internal tourism (including domestic and inbound tourism);
- national tourism (including domestic and outbound tourism); and
- international tourism (consists of inbound and outbound tourism).

(Lickorish & Jenkins 1997, pp. 37.)

Tourism is a broad and complex field of study. Its diversity makes it such an interesting object of study; moreover, tourism is an interesting and active business facing new demands and challenges. Tourism is subject to academic attention as this field is very vast and is still developing. (Sharpley 2006, p. 13.)

As reported by Sharpley (2006, pp. 12-13), travel and tourism can be divided into several thematic areas which in turn are all raised in the study:

1. The business of travel and tourism. This topic is closely connected with the tourism industry. It touches upon different sectors of the industry such as transport, tour operations, attractions, accommodations, marketing, management, finance, human resources management as well;
2. The tourist demand. Understanding the tourist demand process, tourist motivation, psychology of travel and tourism, tourist typologies, and customer culture is essential for studying;
3. Travel and tourism forms. It is important to differentiate between rural, urban, island, and marine tourism;
4. Tourism products and markets. A significant proportion of international and domestic tourism is related to non-leisure purposes, such as business travel. However, there is a variety of travel and tourism experiences such as adventure, sports, dark, wine, and religious tourism;
5. Tourism, culture, and heritage. The difference between these three notions is a dominant theme in the study of travel and tourism;
6. Planning and managing travel and tourism. The greatest challenge is the effective planning and management of tourism development to ensure that travel and tourism are optimized for all stakeholders.

Additionally, Sharpley (2006, p. 20) states that tourism includes three basic elements:

- Tourists – their motivations, desires, needs, demands, expectations;
- Destination – where people have their experience;

- The travel and tourism industry – numerous organizations which cater for the tourists' needs.

All these elements are not independent from each other. One of the defining features of tourism is that for destinations it is an export industry. The destination is the product which is offered to the overseas customers or to the tourists from other regions in case of domestic tourism. So, the product is consumed where it is developed, indicating the interrelationship between the destination, the tourist and the travel industry. Therefore, travel and tourism can be considered as an interrelated system. (Sharpley 2006, p. 20.)

For more precise definition of the tourist product it is necessary to mention that it is a collection of tangible and intangible components. Tangible products include accommodation, transport, hospitality, entertainment, cultural attractions, and intangibles products include accessibility, weather, value for money, contacts with people, and expectations. However, all together it represents a service which, in turn, is an intangible product. (Sharpley 2006, pp. 44-45.)

## 2.1 Tourism in Finland

Finland is a small country but tourists can study it endlessly. With each trip to the country people will discover it from a new side. The country offers thousands of hotels, hostels, cottages located in the most beautiful corners of the country, and camping for outdoor enthusiasts. For those who want to relax with health benefits in Finland, there are many wellness centres. (E-finland n.d.)

According to the Knoema – World Data Atlas – the contribution of travel and tourism to Finnish GDP in 2018 was 8,7%. However, in 2017 and 2016, it remained almost unchanged. (Knoema 2018.)

Moreover, in 2019 tourism in Finland continued to grow from the record number which was reached the year before. There are four main tourism regions in Finland that are popular among international tourists: the Helsinki region, Lapland, the Finnish lake districts, and the coast and archipelago. These places create the foundation for strong provision of travel services and products. (Kuva 2019.)

### 2.1.1 Lappeenranta as a travel destination

Lappeenranta is one of the most visited cities in Finland by Russian tourists. Despite its small size, everyone can have a great time there – go shopping, visit tourist attractions and enjoy the environment.

A hundred Russian people visit Lappeenranta each day. Besides doing shopping, they visit local museums, art galleries, and just walk in the city enjoying nature and other attractions. (Discovering Finland n.d.) However, due to the language barrier and lack of information, people cannot find the information about cultural events to have a chance to participate in them. Not everybody knows about, for instance, the Lappeenranta City Library, Lappeenranta City Theatre, and Cultural Centre Nuijamies. Every tourist can find all of the information on the websites about this region, for example, the Russian big informational website about Finland - E-finland.ru and Finnish websites - Visitlappeenranta.fi and Gosaimaa.com.

So, the mentioned region is worth visiting. Additionally, it would be wonderful if people with disabilities had great opportunities to come and see all the beauty of Lappeenranta.

### 2.1.2 SWOT analysis of the regions

SWOT analysis is a strategic planning tool that allows concluding the company's strategic development by comparing its strengths and weaknesses with current opportunities and threats. (Gürel 2017, p. 995.)

Table 1 below shows the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis of the Lappeenranta region. The analysis is based on all the studied informational websites dedicated to the tourism in the region. Its main strength is its location. As mentioned previously in the study, the region is situated near the Russian-Finnish border. It means that there are a lot of potential tourists within two hundred kilometres, which makes it possible to increase the tourist flow. The small population of the region is a good advantage for Russians because they can feel calm and in peace compared to the big, crowded, noisy, and hurried city of St. Petersburg. However, the main disadvantage is crossing the border (except for the Allegro train). Sometimes people spend much time waiting in line at the border. Threats are strongly related to Russians' financial opportunities. It is quite expensive

for some people to stay for a night in the Lappeenranta region because of the high prices. (E-finland n.d.; Gosaimaa n.d.; Lappeenranta n.d.; Visit Lappeenranta n.d.)

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
1. location (beautiful landscape, attractions, etc.); 2. the small population of the region; 3. close location to Russia.	1. long border crossing (except for the train); 2. lack of information and the language barrier.
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
1. increase the tourist flow (especially disabled people and people with mobility issues).	1. very expensive.

Table 1. SWOT analysis of the Lappeenranta region (E-finland n.d.; Gosaimaa n.d.; Lappeenranta n.d.; Visit Lappeenranta n.d.)

By making an analysis, it can be concluded that there are more positive characteristics of the region than the negative ones, so it is worth creating an accessible service for disabled people and people with mobility issues.

### 3 Accessible tourism

When the topic of Accessible tourism started to develop, the term 'Tourism for All' was widespread in many countries. Its main point was that tourism services and environments are used and enjoyed by people, with or without a disability. The concept 'Tourism for All' appeared for the first time in the Tourism for All campaign run in the United Kingdom in 1989. Additionally, the concept covers the entire population, so it touches on 'Social Tourism.' According to the International Tourism Organization, this term is defined as 'the effects and phenomena resulting from the participation in tourism, more specifically the participation of low-income groups.' There is one more notion as sustainable tourism, which is also a part of the Tourism for All. According to the UNWTO, sustainable tourism is defined as: 'Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities.' (UNWTO 2016, pp. 21-22.)

Therefore, accessible tourism is an integral part of Tourism for All.



Figure 1. Tourism for All configuration (UNWTO 2016, p. 22)

Accessible tourism allows people with access requirements, including mobility, vision, hearing, and cognitive aspects of access, to function independently and with dignity through universal tourism products, services, and the environment. This definition refers to all people, including those traveling with children in strollers, people with disabilities, and the elderly. (Darcy & Dickson 2009, p. 34.)

### 3.1 Target group for accessible tourism

In Russia, there are three groups of disabilities, where the first group is considered the most severe and requires social protection or assistance. As of September 1st, 2020, there are 555 845 disabled people in Saint Petersburg, of which 88 721 belong to the 1st disability group (FRI 2020). As mentioned earlier, the low level of social support for disabled people in Russia has been repeatedly noted.

People with limited mobility face a big number of barriers that must be eliminated. The infrastructure must provide the following: full access to social infrastructure and means of communication and information, full usage of transport facilities, full receipt of social services, and 'barrier-free' psychological environment in society. (UNWTO 2013.)

#### 3.1.1 Disability

Disability is a term that combines various disorders, activity restrictions, and the possibility to participate in society. Disorders are problems that occur in the functions or structures of the body. Disability is not just a health problem. This is a complex phenomenon that reflects the interaction between the characteristics of the human body and those of the society in which this person lives. So, to overcome the difficulties faced by persons with disabilities, i.e. to remove environmental and social barriers, certain measures need to be taken. (WHO 2011.)

According to Darcy, Cameron, and Pegg (2010, pp. 4-5), disability is a multidimensional construct, with each dimension having its own access requirements that are significantly different from one another (Darcy, 1998; 2010). It is now recognized by most disability statistics that the multidimensional construct consists of:

- Mobility;
- Hearing;
- Vision;
- Cognitive/learning;
- Mental health;
- Sensitivities and long term health conditions (Disability Discrimination Act 1992)

(Darcy et al. 2010, pp. 4-5.)

Accessible tourism focuses on providing people with access to buildings and structures (such as ramps, tactile ground surface indicators, path signs, etc.). However, there are difficulties with structures because people may require different accessibility devices. For example, a person with a cerebral palsy needs a wheelchair, but a person with a speech disorder needs a communication board. Depending on their level of support needs, they can also travel with an accompanying person. Thus, this person needs an accessible physical environment, assistive technologies and social policy inclusions. (Darcy et al. 2010 p. 5.)

The problem of complexity, however, is much more intricate: a disabled person's access requirements are likely to be very different from those of a person with arthritis, who may need a continuous path that includes handrails to facilitate weight carrying, seats to provide seating areas, universal handles on doorways, and taps. (Darcy et al. 2010 p. 5.)

### 3.1.2 Models of disability

As stated by Darcy and Buhalis (2010), disability scholars describe two main models of disability: the medical or individual model and the social model.

Table 2 presents a difference between these two models. The medical model regards the disability phenomenon as a 'personal' problem caused directly by a disease, injury, or health condition that requires medical care in the form of individual treatment by specialists. Disability management aims at adapting to people better and changing their behaviour. On the other hand, the social model of disability views the problem mainly as a 'social construct' in integrating disabled people into society. Disability is not a person's characteristic but a complex set of conditions, many of which are created by the social environment that is superimposed on top of a person's disability. Thus, disability has been created, but a disabling social environment requires social action. It is the collective responsibility of the society to make the environmental changes necessary for the full participation of people with disabilities in all areas of civic life. (Darcy & Buhalis 2010, pp. 8-9.)

<b>MEDICAL</b>	<b>SOCIAL</b>
Personal problem	Social issue
Medical care	Social integration
Individual treatment	Social action
Professional help	Individual & collective responsibility
Personal adjustment	Environmental manipulation
Behaviour	Attitude
Care	Human rights

Table 2. Medical and Social Models (Darcy & Buhalis 2010, p. 9)

### 3.1.3 Dimensions of disability

As Darcy and Buhalis state (2010, pp. 11-12), there are five categories of disability:

- Mobility – different levels of physical mobility restrictions (legs, feet, arms, hands, back, or neck). The difficulties people face are physical tasks, independent movements and performing essential life functions;
- Sensory – capacity to see is limited or absent; and deaf or hard of hearing. Difficulties with written and oral communication and with understanding visual and aural information;
- Communication – limited, impaired, or delayed capacities to use expressive and/or receptive language. Problems with conveying, understanding, or using spoken, written, or symbolic language;
- Intellectual/mental health – lifelong illnesses with multiple etiologies that result in a behavioural disorder. Difficulties with adaptive behaviour, understanding general concepts. Such people have limited control of cognitive functioning and a slower learning rate. Moreover, they have sensory, motor, and speech problems;
- Hidden – a variety of illnesses. People have heart problems, high/low blood pressure, breathing difficulties, problems with stomach, liver or kidneys, or a central nervous system disorder.

### 3.1.4 Access requirements

According to Darcy and Buhalis (2010, p. 13), accessible tourism must comply with many requirements to provide an appropriate service for disabled people and people with special needs:

- People with mobility issues need continuous pathways, circulation space, specialized equipment, low floor buses, customer service attitude, wayfinding and information systems;
- People with hearing disorders need telephone typewriters, hearing loops, captioning, sign language interpreters, customer service attitude, wayfinding and information systems;
- People with vision disorders need tactile ground surface indicators, audio systems, large text, Braille, audio in informational systems, sensory trails, customer service attitude, wayfinding and information systems;
- People with cognitive disorders need understandable English text, attendant support, activity programs, customer service attitude, wayfinding and information systems;
- People with hidden and sensitivity diseases need chemical-free environments, dietary considerations, non-smoking areas, organizational promotion, customer service attitude, clearly labelled areas, information system;
- People with health problems need medical support, a supportive environment, opportunities for group travel, specialized equipment, information systems.

### 3.2 Barriers for disabled people

According to ENAT (2007), accessible tourism includes:

- Destinations without barriers: infrastructure and facilities;
- Transport: by air, land, and sea, suitable for all users;
- High-quality services: delivered by trained staff;

- Activities, exhibitions, attractions: permission to participate in tourism for all people;
- Marketing, booking systems, websites and services: information available for everyone.

As reported by UNWTO (2016, pp. 42-43), these are indeed all barriers that exist between the customers and the environment. They prevent people from accessing and enjoying the tourism infrastructure and services. UNWTO highlight:

### 1. Planning and booking

Before traveling, people need to book a trip, and the first thing people face is the internet. Usually, it is quite complicated to use digital devices for elders or people with disabilities. Most of the websites are not adapted for such people; they do not have accessibility. The main problems on the internet are:

- Inaccurate information;
- General information without details;
- Incomprehensive view on disability;
- Obsolete information;
- Inaccessible website.

UNWTO (2016, pp. 42.)

### 2. Infrastructure and transportation

Transportation is the biggest problem for disabled people. The problems which people can face are transportation infrastructures such as airports and any stations. There are also such barriers as insufficient lighting, long pathways, slippery floors and glass walls with no marking. A lack of facilities such as changing rooms, waiting rooms, or accessible toilets can be a problem for people with disabilities. Inside the transport such as airplanes, buses, trains, cars, and others everything should be adapted. (UNWTO 2016, p. 43.)

### 3. Buildings

Buildings can have barriers such as doorways, lifts, narrow halls, tables in the restaurants. Such elements in the environment, as counters, cupboards, or

payphones, may become barriers if they are not placed at the appropriate height and location. The hotel room, for example, also needs to provide a shower chair and a non-slip bath. (UNWTO 2016, p. 44.)

#### 4. Communication

The place which people can visit should provide Braille, big and noticeable icons, sound-based communication systems, such as loudspeakers, alarms, bells, buzzers or audio guides. People can face the communication language problem with the service personnel; for instance, if the person has speech impairments, the listener should have a high level of concentration to understand the received information. (UNWTO 2016, p. 44.)

#### 5. Activities involving the destination

Certain cities, towns, villages, and parks have barriers restricting the free movement of people with mobility issues, people with visual impairments, elders, and children. Many locations are simply not adapted for people with disabilities because these areas are related to their historic nature, with elements that have remained unchanged throughout the years. Additionally, museums, theatres, and cinemas should have good access. (UNWTO 2016, p. 45.)

Therefore, to make an accessible tour (which contains all the necessary information for traveling to the regions) high-quality and valuable, it is necessary to provide information about each of the points mentioned above. Since the thesis is focused on creating a service for potential customers, it is important to understand the benefits that the host country will receive. For instance, outbound tourism is the most cost-effective for the host country since its operation helps attract money, revenues from tourism activities stimulate the development of the regional economy (Mason 2003).

### 3.3 Universal design

When creating an accessible tourism service, it is necessary to follow the requirements and needs of disabled people. UNWTO offers Universal Design for creating services for a special group of customers. According to UNWTO (2016, pp. 49-50), Universal Design is a tool that helps to achieve accessibility, it includes:

- Equitable use: the design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities;
- Flexibility in use: the design accommodates individual preferences and abilities;
- Simple and intuitive use: use of the design is easy to understand;
- Perceptible information: the design communicates necessary information to the user effectively;
- Tolerance for error: the design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions;
- Low physical effort: the design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue;
- Size and space for approach and use: appropriate size and space.

Following all listed points it is possible to create a service with the most convenient and accessible environment.

## 4 Services

Services surround people every day in their lives. By nature, services are very diverse, and the service sector includes a big variety of industries such as hospitality, tourism, financial services, charities, arts, public utility services, health services, educational services, and professional services. (Gilmore 2003, p. 1.)

Services are often not physical products, but are a combination of processes, people's skills, and materials (Goldstein et al. 2002, p. 121). As reported by Pender and Sharpley (2005, p. 11), services have no agreed definition, however, Grönroos (2000) summarized the most important characteristics of the services:

- Services are intangible;
- Services are heterogeneous;
- Production, distribution, and consumption of services are simultaneous processes;
- Services are an activity or a process;
- Core value of services emerges in buyer-seller interactions;
- Customers participate in the service production process;
- Services cannot be kept in stock; and
- There is no transfer of the service ownership.

Tourism occupies a special place in the service sector and contributes very heavily to developing economics (Gilmore 2003).

### 4.1 Service as a tourism product

Tourism services include services provided by hotels and restaurants (including catering), travel agencies and tour operator services, tourist guide services and other related services (WTO n.d.).

Tourism product is a service, and tourism customers differentiate it according to their feelings about service quality when making their purchasing decisions. So, tourism service providers, such as tour operators, need to pay attention to customers' views in order to increase their level of satisfaction. (Education Bureau 2009, p. 80.)

Product development in tourism can be considered as a three-stage process which includes service concept, process and system development. The core of the tourist product is the service concept. The concept is presented in a way that causes mental images of the potential tourist's ability to gain the experience and values expected from the trip. The service concept is the idea of the customer value based on customer needs. (Buhalis & Costa 2005, pp. 101, 105-107.)

The service process is the formal components of value creation (Kotler et al. 1999; Komppula and Boxberg 2002). To the customer these components are represented through the communication instruments – location and place. In the company, the service process consists of modules and blueprints. (Buhalis & Costa 2005, pp. 105-107.)

The service system includes resources available to enable the creation of the process and to implement the service concept. There are internal resources: staff, leadership, and entrepreneurship; and external ones: physical plant, cooperative partners, equipment, and destination. (Buhalis & Costa 2005, pp. 105-107.)

The tourism product created through these processes forms a service package consisting of several fragments. Those fragments form separate parts of the product, which together create a complete experience. The core of the product is the service concept, which should be based on the customer's needs. The service concept is the core of the customer's expected value. Therefore, the enterprise creates various activities that form the service process that the customer participates in. The activity is performed within the service system: in a service environment with available resources. Service modules are created by multiple travel companies and destination networks, often acting together as a cluster. (Buhalis & Costa 2005, pp. 106.)

#### 4.2 Tour operators

Tour operators make a crucial impact on the tourism sector. They are aggregators, package creators and wholesales. Tour operators have a list of responsibilities which are divided into: before the trip, during the trip, and after the trip. (Buhalis & Costa 2005, p. 172.)

Before trip tour operators contact suppliers and travel agencies, organize charter flights and pre book accommodation, put packages together, and market products. (Buhalis & Costa 2005, p. 172.)

During trip tour operators deliver transportation and surprise delivery by principals such as hotels and attractions, are responsible for local handlings, deal with local authorities, and handle special requests. (Buhalis & Costa 2005, p. 172.)

After trip tour operators review the quality of products and services, review the travel experience and receive feedback, monitor satisfaction levels, and handle complaints. (Buhalis & Costa 2005, p. 172.)

Tour operators provide services mostly by selling package tours. Package tour is a combination of services which includes at least transport and accommodation. Middleton (1994, p. 292), defined package tours as 'a standardized offer with controlled quality, made of one, two or more elements: transport, accommodation, food, destination sights, entertainment, activities, organized visits to sights, etc.' (Dordevic & Hristov 2016, p. 18.)

#### 4.2.1 Alla Tours company and its services

Alla Tours is a Russian tour operator with a long history and a great reputation. The company provides visa-free shore excursions since 2005, but not only in Russian, Saint Petersburg, also in Germany, Berlin, and the Warnemuende area; Estonia, Tallinn; Finland, Helsinki; Denmark, Copenhagen; Sweden, Stockholm; Latvia, Riga; Poland, Klaipeda and Gdansk; Netherlands, Amsterdam; and Norway, Oslo. (Alla Tours n.d.)

The company provides various services such as city tours and evening tour options in St. Petersburg (Ballet, Folk Show, Faberge Museum Tour, Russian Musical Seasons). Moreover, the company guarantees the best prices, does not require visas (for Americans), does not have credit card fees, cancelation fees, and hidden costs. (Alla Tours n.d.)

The company does not have a package tour. As mentioned previously, the package tour should contain accommodation and transport. The Alla Tours company does not offer accommodation because all tourists stay on the cruise ship at night,

however the company has a city tour (Appendix 3). The tour includes the program with the tour schedule (day and hours).

The Alla Tours company has different tours for tourists: Group Tour (standard) and Private Tour. For instance, group tours are: 2-day St. Petersburg Grand Tour, 2-day St. Petersburg Must See Tour, 2-day St. Petersburg Royal Tour, and others which can be found on the official website [alla-tour.com](http://alla-tour.com). (n.d.)

The company's group city tour has a strict, pre-planned (before contact with the client) set of services, focused on a specific type of the tour, as well as on the social class of tourists and their age. The group tour can be called route tour, when a group of tourists travel by bus in one or several cities or even countries. The tour is a single program for all with a clear timetable. The list of services on the group tour does not change during the trip. The tourist can buy the whole tour or choose not to take it at all.

The company also has a private city tour. Unlike the group tour, when selling a private one, the service program is completed with the direct participation of the tourist. The tourist creates the service with the booking manager. The tourist is offered a choice of different service options for each of the types of services in the desired place of rest.

The company specializes more on the group city tours. The target group is incoming tourists who arrive in the cities by cruise ships. Moreover, the target group are American and European customers. As each cruise ship stays in the cities for one or two days, time is very important for the company. In such a short time (approx. 2 days), tourists are willing to see the entire city (for example, Saint Petersburg) with its main suburbs. The example of the most active and diverse program can be seen in Appendix 3.

#### 4.3 Package tour

Package tour is the main product of tour operators, and the results of their business largely depend on the success in developing and implementing such a product (Dordevic & Hristov 2016, p. 15).

Package tour is a trip that is planned and paid in advance. It includes transport and accommodation, and additionally trip and meals (Morrison 1989). Middleton (1991,

p. 185) defines the package tour as a tour that includes two or more elements of transport, food, accommodation, attraction, and other facilities and services. Package tours are very popular because they make a trip very comfortable and easy. (Patterson 2006, p. 141.)

The package tour is a tourist complex product which consists of a certain number of services: accommodations, transportation, food, excursions, and different activities. The component of the service package depends on tourists needs and requirements. Special characteristics of services - seasonality, intangibility, inherence, variability, concurrent production and consumption - apply to tourism. Guided package tours have become popular for special market segments and represent a crucial tourism market. (Bowie & Chang 2005, p. 304.)

Syratt (2011, p. 6) highlights a more complete list of package tour components:

- Transportation – rail, road, sea, air, etc.;
- Accommodation – hotels, guest houses, etc.;
- Transfers – between all city destinations;
- Sightseeing tours – excursions, events, etc.;
- Insurance – visa for request;
- Car rental – for request.

Package tours are suitable for first-time travellers, older, single tourists, those lacking language and for people who do not like to travel on their own. These tours are mostly good for older people, because the tour has good organization and is well-prepared in advance, so they can feel safe and worry-free; moreover, this way seniors have a great opportunity to meet and socialize with other like-minded people. (Patterson 2006, p. 141-143.)

Patterson (2006, p. 142) highlights Enoch's (1996) stated benefits of package tours:

- Tours are most rational and have a travel goal to visit a numerous of the most interesting places on a restricted time schedule;
- Tours provide safe travel;
- Tours are cheaper;
- Tours provide companionship for many tourists who travel alone;

- Tours have a set of itineraries which are created to provide the best value for money and has the best sightseeing;
- Tours are predictable, they proceed according to a set of itineraries.

A package tour with its benefits and characteristics seems to be very attractive. However, there are some challenges that can appear when creating the tour. Bowie and Chang (2005, p. 306) show that a tour operator can face a number of difficulties: for instance, tour leader - the person should have professional skills, service attitude, and leadership; hotel should have good facilities, service attitude, and convenient location; restaurant - food quality, service attitude; transport - driver's attitude, seat arrangement, vehicle condition; shopping opportunities; tour service - content, price, satisfaction level; attraction - time spent with pleasure, enjoyment level; and others - interactions, unforeseeable events, weather conditions.

#### 4.4 Service design

Service design is a planning and organization of processes, people and infrastructure in order to improve the interaction between the client and the company, the person and the process. The focus of service design is to create solutions based on the needs and expectations of consumers. The services that the client receives should be good, fast, simple, fully meet expectations, and also be competitive and reasonable on the market. (Moritz 2005.)

It is true that the distinctive feature of service design is to find a point of balance at which both parties benefit: the manufacturer and the recipient of services. Service design takes care of how to create mutual value for organizations, employees, and end customers. (Moritz 2005.)

Moritz's Service Design overview model is presented in Table 3 below.

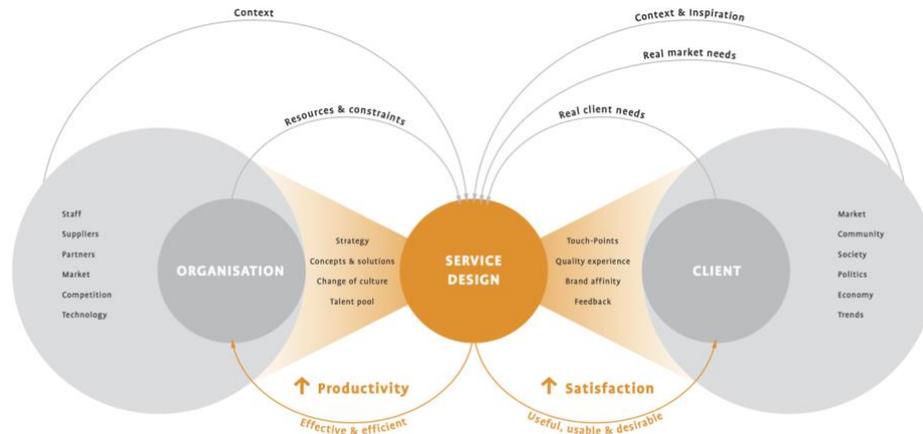


Table 3. Service Design overview model (Moritz 2005, pp. 152-153).

#### 4.4.1 Service design process

It is crucial to remember that services are intangible products. Selling tourism services is a sale of experience, knowledge, and vision of the benefits that customers will have after their purchase. The desired service should exceed customer expectations, especially in accessible tourism.

For instance, there is a Finnish online platform where the information about the Lappeenranta region is presented to tourists. To add the information about accessible tourism on the website, a special service must be designed. Service design helps to innovate or improve services, to make them more useful, desirable and efficient for clients as well as effective for companies (Moritz 2005).

According to Moritz (2005, p. 122), service design is a process across the four D's: discover, define, develop and deliver. By understanding the client, the organization develops, translates and implements the ideas. Service design connects the desires of the customer and the organization, thus, building a bridge between them.

However, nowadays, it is not enough to follow these stages, so Moritz (2005) offers different stages of service design which are grouped into six categories:

- Service Design (SD) Understanding

It is the link between the project and its reality. Understanding generates insights that define the areas that the company should strive for, according to what is right for the organization. SD understanding is beyond the scope of things that people

are already familiar with. For example, what things do people dislike? What are the client's desires, needs, motivations, and contexts? What should people do, desire? What are the features? What will support the business? (Moritz 2005, pp. 124-125.)

According to Moritz (2005, p. 156), the base of that stage are project team, objectives, time plan, and scope. Objectives are clear targets which should be achieved by the team. It should be mentioned that exactly a team is required for that, not a group of people, because in a group everyone works to achieve their own goals, however, for a team, a common goal and mutual responsibility should be the main aspects. Scope saves time because time is the only irreplaceable resource, which should be used correctly.

- SD Thinking

It includes all strategic considerations and determining the direction and scope of the service design project. It sets the parameters for other categories. Thinking often plays a transitional role between other categories. For example, after working with Understanding, it is necessary to specify which elements to use and how to generate it. Thinking is the area that provides direction and guidelines for designing services. (Moritz 2005 pp. 128-129.)

Market needs, client needs, service provider, context, and relationship are the base of SD Thinking (Moritz 2005, p. 156). It is important to know the context of the project to evaluate it in general. It is also crucial to understand the customer needs, the more answers the company has, the more understanding it gets. Moreover, knowledge about the competitors will make the project successful.

- SD Generating

Generation is about doing, creating, and developing ideas and solutions. In a service design project, relevant ideas must be developed and combined into strong concepts. It is necessary to find solutions and set up processes. The service experience must be developed in all its details: objects, spaces, and other elements. (Moritz 2005, pp. 132-133.)

Studying the SD Thinking step gives the base for the next stage which is SD Generating - criteria, objectives, service strategy, direction, and selection. To that, base environment, inspiration, and involvement are added. A big number of ideas

and concepts is cut down based on set criteria, strategy and factors. The generation process is a crucial process for the project, looking to innovate and gain competitive advantage. (Moritz 2005, pp. 154-156.)

- SD Filtering

From a range of solutions or ideas, you should choose the best and most relevant ones. Performance or quality is checked and measured. Various indicators evaluate ideas, concepts, solutions, and results. For example, the company could evaluate whether an idea works against the law's requirements or which idea will require less technical effort. (Moritz 2005 pp. 136-137.)

- SD Explaining

An explanation can give the team, decision makers, and other stakeholders access to abstract concepts of the future. It provides a discussion base accessible to people with different backgrounds and different levels of intelligence. SD explaining can work with various principles and methods. It is always aimed at creating a common understanding of a multidisciplinary team. From manual sketches, Photoshop layouts, and video montages to real prototypes, you can show various abstractions and details. Processes and models can be explained using animation or maps. Different scenarios may show different ways to use the service. (Moritz 2005 pp. 140-141.)

- SD Realizing

It provides everything one may need to implement specific and selected concepts. SD implementation of a service can mean either testing a prototype of the experience or the service itself. Different tools are used to implement the service depending on service complexity and implementation in different locations. SD implementation includes everything that may be needed for planning, refining, and deploying the service. (Moritz 2005, pp. 144-145.)

Service design projects are often very different, and there are no absolute rules about the order in which the categories should be used. Just as production, consumption, and design can co-occur in a service design project, these six categories often overlap and are interconnected. For example, a service design project starts with an idea, maybe the result of observing the situation and thinking

about a solution, but the idea may need to be prototyped and tested. Various execution options must be developed, selected, and prepared for implementation. In addition to the fact that categories can be used in any desired order and time, the model assumes via a spiral arrow that service design projects are mostly iterative, which means that some categories will be used multiple times throughout the project. (Moritz 2005, p. 149.)

There is no linear process in service design. Different tasks can be performed in different order and sometimes together. Service development is not a short project to launch a service, but rather a continuation of its development on an ongoing basis. Six categories of service design were used as the basic framework for customizing this process. They are playing an important role in any service design project. (Moritz 2005.)

## 5 Creating a package tour

Before creating a package tour for disabled people and people with special needs, it is necessary to understand whether it is relevant for the region and how well Lappeenranta is developed for such people.

Firstly, the list of websites dedicated to the tourism and accessible tourism in Lappeenranta are studied:

- [Visitlappeenranta.fi](http://Visitlappeenranta.fi)
- [Lappeenranta.fi](http://Lappeenranta.fi)
- [Gosaimaa.com](http://Gosaimaa.com)

Unfortunately, there is not enough information regarding the accessible tourism in Lappeenranta on these websites. However, according to the tourist supervisor, in the near future the [Visitlappeenranta.fi](http://Visitlappeenranta.fi) webpage will contain a special sector 'Accessible tourism in Lappeenranta'.

These Finnish websites also contain information regarding hotels, restaurants, museums, attractions, events, etc. in Lappeenranta. In addition to these websites, [Booking.com](http://Booking.com) (the online hotel booking system) and [Raflaamo.fi](http://Raflaamo.fi) (which has the list of all restaurants, cafes and pubs in the Finnish regions) are also studied because they have a lot of information regarding some places which are included in the package tour.

Secondly, there is a list of different places (hotels, restaurants, museums, attractions, etc.) which are recommended by the tourist supervisor of the tourist information office. The representative of the tourist office says that the following places are well adapted, and some are even excellent for disabled people and people with mobility issues. Therefore, all the listed places are included in the package tour:

- Original Sokos Hotel Lappee;
- Rakuuna;
- Scandic Patria;
- The Kitchen;
- Lalo;

- Rosso;
- Angus Steak & Wine;
- Lappeenranta Art Museum;
- South Karelia Museum;
- Karelia Museum;
- Lappeenranta City Theatre;
- Finnkino Strand;
- Karelia Lines;
- Taxi Saimaa;
- Tilausliikenne Hänninen Oy;
- Rantaraitti;
- Pappilannienmi.

Additionally, questionnaires were sent to managers who work in tourist places in Lappeenranta. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic situation in 2019-2020 caused by COVID-19, many organizations work remotely, or are completely closed. Therefore, out of twenty requests to fill out the questionnaire, only four organizations were able to do so.

Here is a list of these organizations and their responses:

- The manager of the Sokos Hotel Lappee evaluates its service environment and the disabled tourist's expectation of its service environment positively and notes that it is very important to develop accessible tourism in the region. They do have appropriate information on their website regarding the accessibility. Moreover, the hotel has special facilities and special parking spots for disabled people.
- The manager of the Hotel Rakuuna evaluates its service environment and the disabled tourist's expectation of its service environment positively and notes that it is very important to develop accessible tourism in the region. However, the hotel does not have the information regarding the accessibility on their website. The hotel also has no special facilities and services for the tourists in question. The hotel has easy access parking and a special toilet

for wheelchair users. The hotel is located in an over 100 year old building and they do not have any special rooms for disabled people at the moment.

- The manager of the Scandic Hotel evaluates its service environment and the disabled tourist's expectation of its service environment positively and notes that it is very important to develop accessible tourism in the region. The hotel has much information regarding the accessible tourism on its official website. The hotel has guest rooms for disabled guests and a public toilet for disabled people. Additionally, several rooms are equipped with a hearing loop and vibrating alarm clock. There are also special parking spots next to the hotel.
- Museum staff of the Lappeenranta Art Museum and South Karelia Museum evaluates its service environment and the disabled tourist's expectation of its service environment positively and notes that it is very important to develop accessible tourism in the region. Museums have appropriate information about accessibility on their website. Museums have special toilet rooms, hearing aids, and wheelchair elevators.

### 5.1 Package tour description

The package tour lasts 3 days, going from Saint Petersburg to Lappeenranta and back. This tour is suitable for any time of the year but mainly for the summer period, as the tour contains places that are located in nature and they are most pleasant to visit when the weather is warm. Additionally, Karelia Aviation Museum is only open in summer, so there is another option instead of that museum for other seasons.

A group can consist of no more than six people, since most buses that are specially equipped for the disabled people and people with mobility issues have six seats. The accompanying person travels with the group and stays until they return to St. Petersburg.

In Appendix 7, there are photos of some hotels and museums. Since the borders are closed from 2019 due to the COVID-19, it is not possible to take photos of the places, so all the photos are taken from the internet, most of them from the information websites about Lappeenranta.

The tour program is scheduled by hour, taking into account the time required for organizational matters (meetings, disembarkation, toilet visits, etc.). The program shows the travel distance and duration. It also indicates the types of roads and types of pavement on the route sections, which is necessary to mention as people in wheelchairs need comfortable transportation.

The tour program contains a description of the objects since it is necessary to explain why these places are worth visiting. The program also includes several accommodation options, depending on the period of staying in the country.

The tour includes:

- Accommodation;
- Meals in restaurants;
- Transport services according to the tour program;
- Tour service according to the tour program;
- Guide;
- 24 hour ability to call the manager in case of unforeseen situations.

The tour does not include:

- transportation out of the package tour;
- additional visits to museums or other places;
- personal expenses, such as hotel bills, use of the minibar, etc.

## 5.2 The package tour program

### 5.2.1 Day 1 - Going to Lappeenranta

The first day includes the road to Finland and getting acquainted with the city through a sightseeing tour. Lunch at a local restaurant, check-in at the hotel, free time and dinner are also a part of the first day. During free time, tourists can go to the cinema, theatre or walk around the city. Shopping is also available.

**10:30** – Meet at the Finlyandsky railway station

*Botkinskaya str., 6*

In Saint Petersburg, there are several transport companies that serve people with disabilities. If necessary, the company manager can pre-order the transport that takes tourists to the station. At the entrance to the station there are special ramps for wheelchair users (Appendix 5). After passing through passport control, the passageway to the train is wide and there are also wide doors that open automatically.

There are several time departures to Finland: 06:40, 11:30, 15:30 and 20:30. The most appropriate time for the trip is 11:30. Tourists wake up in the morning without any rush, get ready and go to the train station. For Saint Petersburg, this time is not a rush hour, so people can get to the train station quickly. Additionally, it is not too late for a trip, because the train goes only an hour and a half, so there is still time for a sightseeing tour of the city.

At the railway station the accompanying person meets the group. Meeting is one hour before the train leaves. Tourists need to check their luggage at the entrance and to pass the passport control within this hour. After passport control, the group gets into the car. If there is a need, tourists can go to the Duty Free store before that.

#### **11:30 – 12:34** Travel on the speed train to Vainikkala (Finland)

Allegro is a speed train which shuttles between Saint Petersburg and Helsinki. The distance between cities is 407 km. The maximum speed of the train is 220 km/h, which in turn is very convenient, since the trip takes only 3 hours and 27 minutes. The train follows the route: Saint Petersburg – Vyborg – Vainikkala – Kouvola – Lahti – Tikkurila – Helsinki and vice versa. The train has seven sitting cars and can accommodate three hundred fifty passengers. (E-finland 2018.)

The train is intended for people with disabilities. There are two seats (car № 2) and special toilet for passengers with disabilities, and the car equipped with a lift (Appendix 6). The company books seats in this car even if there are no wheelchair users in the group.

According to the Russian Railways website (PZD n.d.), additional advantages are as follows:

- The train is designed as a non-smoking area;

- Air conditioning is provided;
- Passengers are provided with drinking water;
- The passenger information system is available in three languages (Russian, Finnish, and English);
- Service on the train is provided by an international train crew which has received special training and speaks three languages.

Moreover, the train has a restaurant car, so, if there is a need to have a coffee or a snack, tourists are welcome to go there (RZD n.d.). Unfortunately, for the tourist in a wheelchair it is impossible to visit the restaurant, however, the accompanying person can bring anything from the restaurant.

The train goes to the station Vainikkala (the third stop), and from there the taxi goes to Lappeenranta. Vainikkala railway station is only 20 km from Lappeenranta city centre and is located on Russian-Finnish border (Gosaimaa n.d.).

The train is more comfortable than a bus or a car for travelling to Lappeenranta. People do not need to spend a lot of time on the border because documents are checked by border guards and customs inspection takes place right on the way.

Upon arrival to the Vainikkala railway station, the special transport is waiting for the group. This vehicle gets the group to Lappeenranta. The approximate time on the way is half an hour. The guide who is going to be with the group for the whole weekend is also waiting with the bus.

**12:34 – 13:05** Transfer from the Vainikkala railway station to the Lappeenranta city

Upon arrival to Vainikkala the group gets on the bus that is waiting for them at the entrance. There are two options of transportation to the region: by Taxi Saimaa or the Tilausliikenne Hänninen Oy company.

1. Taxi Saimaa (n.d.) has special vehicles for disabled people and the organization can provide big vans for a group of people.
2. Tilausliikenne Hänninen Oy serves individuals by managing charter trips and transport for wheelchair and stretcher. The company has special equipment for the disabled people. All their cars have wheelchair lifts. If necessary, the company can provide a wheelchair for transportation. Moreover, the

organization provides transportation of wheelchairs and stretchers to houses without elevators. (Tilausliikenne Hänninen Oy n.d.)

The company makes sure that the transport is equipped with air conditioning, audio and video systems, anatomical seats with adjustable backrest and meets the strictest requirements for a safe and comfortable trip.

The driver and the guide instruct tourists about the safety rules while driving the bus before starting the route. The company takes into account that people with disabilities, for instance, who have severe physical limitations cannot use technical equipment by themselves. If a tourist is unable to use a technical device on their own, for example, to adjust the back of the passenger seat or to turn on/off the air conditioning system, they can ask for help from a guide, a driver or a person accompanying the group of tourists.

When choosing a bus, the company pays attention to its design and security equipment. Additionally, the suitable company is chosen depending on how many tourists there are in the group.

### **13:05 – 15:00** City orientation drive tour with a lunch stop

The first acquaintance with the city happens through a sightseeing tour. Since this is the first day in the region and there is a slight fatigue from the road, the tour is short. Since it is necessary to check-in a hotel that is located in the centre, the tour includes sights that are located in the city centre and nearby. All locations are close to each other.

The company takes into account that the target group of the tour requires additional time for packing, toilet visits, and other needs. Therefore, upon arrival in the city, it is possible to make several stops on request, if necessary. The company is always ready to make changes according to the tourists' wishes during the tour day.

The city tour assumes that during the excursion tourists are in the bus - from the beginning of the tour to arrival at the hotel. However, further there is an option to make a little walk tour. If tourists do not want to go on foot, the group stays in the bus.

The city orientation drive tour includes:

- Linnoitus

The fortress Linnoitus is a unique attraction in South-eastern Finland. Nowadays, it is bustling with life, however, a long time ago it was a part of a system of defensive buildings, which also included the fortresses of Suomenlinna in Helsinki and Hamina. Lappeenranta fortress was laid out and built on a small territory, caught between East and West. At first, Lappeenranta was developed under the reliable protection of the fortress, gradually occupying the surrounding territories. Later, the fortress was considered the 'old city', which nevertheless continued to grow and live an active life. Today Lappeenranta fortress is a valuable monument of cultural and historical heritage of Finland, Russia and Sweden — a link in the chain of fortresses and strengthening on historical territories. (Lappeenranta n.d.)

- Harbour area

The picturesque harbour area of Lappeenranta starts from the coastal Park Rantapuisto, also called Casino Park (Kasinon puisto) and continues all the way to the largest Sand castle in Finland and the Myllysaari area. The beautiful promenade runs along the shore of the city's Harbor, passenger port and Kasino restaurant. (Visit Lappeenranta n.d.)

From the harbour area people can sail away on an archipelago cruise of Lake Saimaa and the Saimaa Canal for a few hours. There are several companies which provide such tours: Karelia Lines, Saimaa Travel and Saimaan Risteilyt. (Visit Lappeenranta n.d.)

If the weather is sunny and warm and tourists have strength and desire to go on a boat, the company can organize such a tour. In summer the company can also organize a trip instead of a walk tour on the third day.

Karelia Lines provides tours for people with disabilities. M/S Camilla, Finland's largest inland waterway vessel, is one of the most modern inland waterways in Finland; the ship has an a La carte restaurant, a bar with sea views, and a sun terrace (Karelia Lines n.d.).

Going on board, disabled people and people with mobility issues can face problems with steep ramps, cramped toilets, and narrow passages. In order to avoid difficult

situations, the company always checks the accessibility before going on board in advance.

When organizing a cruise, boarding and disembarking from the ship must be carried out using a ladder equipped with handrails for both left and right hands. Before starting the trip, it is necessary to conduct a safety briefing for tourists and that they learn rules for passengers on board. Travel of disabled people on board a passenger ship must take place not only with the participation of a guide, but also with the accompanying person(s), as mentioned previously.

Returning to the tour, if the weather is good and sunny, the tour offers a little walking tour from the harbour area to the city centre along the street Kaupakatu. The route is chosen depending on the tourists' mobility and their wishes as well as on the weather and seasonal conditions (rain, snow, winter, summer, etc.) as mentioned previously. When conducting tours for the disabled, it is necessary to take into account their rapid physical and emotional fatigue. This is why the tour provides places for short-term rest.

On the way there is the Wolkoff House Museum. It is the famous Wolkoff merchant estate built by the entrepreneur Jakob Klauelin, and its construction was completed in 1826 (Visit Lappeenranta n.d.). Moreover, the museum offers a virtual tour which is highly relevant for people with disabilities since it is quite difficult for disabled people with a wheelchair to visit the museum.

**14:00 – 14:50** Lunch in a local restaurant

*'Angus Steak & Wine' Valtakatu 33*

During the city tour the group is invited to have lunch in the local restaurant Angus Steak & Wine. The restaurant has a special atmosphere and unforgettable impressions, as well as delicious dishes. Service guarantees are based on the professionalism of the restaurant staff and the excellent quality of meat products used for cooking. (Raflaamo n.d.)

When choosing the restaurant in the city, the company follows some general rules to make the stay in the restaurant comfortable. Disabled people, for instance, with musculoskeletal disorders should not be seated on very low chairs with arms. Tourists, who have restrictions in the mobility of the hip joint, for example, feel

extremely uncomfortable sitting in such chairs as well. The distance between the tables should be wide and tourists should be seated in pairs so that they are comfortable at the same table. It should also be kept in mind that a person who is totally blind in one eye must be seated in a place where there is no movement of any other person, including the waiter, on the side of the blind eye.

Moreover, it is necessary to remember that proper nutrition is especially important during the trip and people's well-being depends on it. To ensure that their vacation is not spoiled, the food must be delicious, high-quality and safe. Therefore, organizations working on a professional level in the field of public catering should provide food on the route.

After lunch, on the way to the centre there is the St. Mary's Church of Lappee on the left hand side, which is situated in Kirkkokatu street. It is a wooden church with a double cross, built in 1794 and located in the centre of the city. The Church is built in the form of two diagonally intersecting crosses, forming a kind of star with radial symmetry. The Church is open to the public in the summer. The Church is located on the corner of the Lappeenranta heroes' cemetery. (Visit Lappeenranta n.d.)

This route leads to the shopping centre IsoKristiina where the hotel is located. However, if the weather is bad and rainy and it is hard to go on foot, the bus takes the group to all the needed places.

#### **15:00 – 16:00** Check-in to Original Sokos Hotel Lappee

The choice of hotel was not difficult as only a few hotels are suitable for people with mobility issues. When choosing hotels and other accommodation facilities while organizing a tour for people with physical disabilities, the company checks the availability of elevators, ramps and specially equipped accommodation rooms.

Original Sokos Hotel Lappee belongs to the most famous and largest Finnish hotel chain which includes 50 hotels in Finland, Tallinn and Saint Petersburg. All hotels are located in the city centre or in close proximity to recreation facilities and have good transport accessibility. The hotel has a specially designed room for people with reduced mobility. (Sokos Hotels. n.d.)

According to the website Booking.com (n.d.), the facilities for disabled guests are:

- Lowered sink;

- Raised toilet;
- Toilet with grab rails;
- Wheelchair accessibility.

As stated on the official website Sokos Hotels (n.d.) of the hotel, it has one room built specially for a disabled person. It is a spacious superior room with two separate beds.

Additionally, there is the Rakuuna hotel and the Scandic Patria hotel which are also adopted for disabled people. According to Booking.com (n.d.), the Rakuuna hotel is located on the ground floor. Unfortunately, on the official website there is no information regarding the accessibility and the hotel does not have right facilities and services for disabled people because the hotel building is very old. However, the hotel is glad to meet all tourists and is going to try to do their best to serve a special group of customers.

Scandic is the largest Nordic hotel operator with a network of about 280 hotels. On the website there is a note that the hotel has a specially equipped room for the disabled. Additionally, there is a big section dedicated to accessibility. (Scandic Hotels Group n.d.)

#### **16:00 – 19:00 Free time**

After the check-in, tourists have some free time. They can stay at the hotel or go shopping to IsoKristiina or wherever they would like to. IsoKristiina is a shopping mall with different stores, cafes, restaurants, supermarkets, tourist service information, and there is also a cinema located on the second floor (IsoKristiina n.d.). According to the tourist supervisor, the mall offers a wheelchair. It is possible to take it for the duration of staying at the shopping mall.

Moreover, there is the Finnkino Strand – the Finnish cinema. So, in the evening, if there is some movie at the cinema, it is definitely worth seeing it. Another option is to visit Lappeenranta City Theatre. The Theatre is located on Kaivokatu street, so it is very close to IsoKristiina.

The theatre is a provincial repertory theatre that offers a variety of high-quality artistic experiences to both Lappeenranta residents and visitors. Their theatrical productions combine the public interest of the audience with the artistic challenges

of those who work in the theatre. The repertoire of the Lappeenranta city theatre includes musicals, domestic and foreign classics, comedies and farces. (Lappeenranta n.d.)

It is important to remember that the accompanying person spends all the time with tourists and is ready to help in organizing any additional services.

**19:00** Dinner at restaurant

*'Rosso' Kauppakeskus IsoKristiina, Brahenkatu 5*

The dinner is organized at the Rosso restaurant which is located on the first floor of IsoKristiina, opposite to the hotel Sokos Lappee. Rosso is a well-known classic Italian restaurant, where Finns have been enjoying a comfortable atmosphere for a long time. There people can enjoy traditional dishes, delicious novelties and, of course, world-famous pizza. Rosso is a restaurant with a friendly atmosphere, where everyone is welcome at any time and in any composition. (Raflaamo n.d.)

### 5.2.2 Day 2 - Day in Lappeenranta

The second day is dedicated to visiting three museums. All of them are located in the city centre. The transfers between the hotel and the museums take half an hour each because disabled people and people with low mobility require a little more time.

The company provides a comfortable stay for tourists in museums during the day:

- the bus stops as close as possible to the museum entrances;
- unobstructed access to the lobby;
- availability of information placed in the lobby, which is provided taking into account the disabled people's perception specifics (visual, audio-visual and tactile information);
- availability of at least one sanitary cabin equipped specifically for disabled people;
- people with disabilities who use wheelchairs to move around have free and convenient access to storefronts for visual perception.

Given that the exhibition is viewed rather slowly by people with limited mobility, the guide and accompanying person are patient and adapt the pace of information

presentation to this category of citizens in advance. Taking into account the rapid fatigue of the tourists, the most important exhibits are placed on the main routes.

For each museum excursion, the tour allocates an hour due to the specifics of the target tourist group. This time also includes visits to the toilets, souvenir shopping and photo stops.

**08:00 – 10:00** Breakfast at the hotel

**10:00 – 10:30** Gathering in the hotel lobby to start the tour

It is very important to choose a gathering place for tourists before and during the tour. The morning gathering place is the lobby of the hotel where tourists live.

In museums and the city, the guide warns tourists in advance about the place and time of gathering. The place should be in the central part of the city and located near the object where people can hide from negative weather conditions for instance, rain, wind, scorching sun and others. For example, it can be a bus stop.

The guide also reminds tourists to take personal medicines and identity documents, as well as contact phone numbers of relatives or other close people.

**10:30 – 11:00** Transfer to the South Karelia Museum

**11:00 – 12:30** Excursion in the South Karelia Museum

The museum is located in the Lappeenranta fortress, in the massive grey-stone buildings of the former artillery depot, built in the early 19th century. In addition to the permanent exhibition, the museum holds temporary exhibitions on various topics. Exhibitions and events try to take into account different groups of visitors. (Lappeenranta n.d.)

**12:30 – 13:00** Walk to the Lappeenranta Art Museum

The visit to the South Karelia Museum is followed by the Lappeenranta Art Museum. It is a two minutes' walk from the South Karelia Museum. On the way the group sees the fortress Market Square, Orthodox church and next to the Art Museum is the Cavalry Museum. If time permits, the group can go to the Orthodox church and/or the Cavalry Museum, however, unfortunately, these places are not adapted for wheelchairs.

**13:00 – 14:00** Excursion in the Lappeenranta Art Museum

The art museum collection mainly contains works of Finnish fine art, from the 19th century to the present. One of the largest and most important collections is the Viipurin Taiteenyöstävät collection ('Vyborg friends of art'). Art from South-Eastern Finland is one of the main areas in the museum acquisitions. (Visit Lappeenranta n.d.)

**14:00 – 15:00** Dinner at the local restaurant

*'The Kitchen' Raatimiehenkatu 18*

After attending the Art Museum, the group has lunch near the museum. The Kitchen is a cosy restaurant with excellent cuisine. The restaurant menu offers Western European cuisine combined with shades of tastes from different parts of the world. (The Kitchen n.d.)

**15:00 – 15:30** Transfer to the Karelia Aviation Museum

The group then goes to the next place - Karelia Aviation Museum.

NB! The museum is opened from 1st of June till 31st of August

If the tour is arranged at some other time, the group is offered to attend square events or to stroll along the nature trail in Rantaraitti.

- Square events. The majority of the events are organized at Harbor and Market squares. The most popular events in summer are summer concerts. The summer concert is the opening event and the summer season of events closes with the cultural event 'Harbor Lights'. In winter tourists can go to fairs. Additionally, there are many events arranged during the winter at the harbour area such as 'The Harbour's Winter Day' and 'Thousand Lanterns challenge'. (Visit Lappeenranta n.d.)
- Pappilanniemi is a nature trail on the Lake Saimaa shore (Visit Lappeenranta n.d.).

**15:30 – 16:00** Excursion in the Karelia Aviation Museum

The Karelian aviation Museum is located near the Lappeenranta airport. The Museum was opened to the public in 2000 and is run by the Association of aviation

museums of South-Eastern Finland. In addition to the museum activities, the Association has erected aviation monuments throughout South Karelia, with one of them even located on the Russian side of the border. (Visit Lappeenranta n.d.)

**16:00 – 16:30** Back to the Sokos Hotel

**16:30** – Free time

Tourists return to the hotel after visiting the museums. If they have desire and energy, then, as a recommendation, the company offers them to visit the Galleria shopping centre or/and take a walk in the city. Tourists can also go to the large supermarkets Prisma, Lidl and Jysk. In these stores (and not only), they can issue a tax free or an invoice. Tourists can also visit the theatre or the cinema if there are any performances or movies.

5.2.3 Day 3 - Going back to Saint Petersburg

**08:00 – 10:00** Breakfast at the hotel

**10:00 – 10:30** Transfer to the hiking trail

**10:30 – 15:00** The hiking trail

#### *Rantaraitti*

Rantaraitti is a picturesque walking route which skirts lake Saimaa and which is accessible for all. The total length of Rantaraitti is 14.8 kilometres, the route winds a little in some places and has many entrances. The main route stretches for about 10 kilometres from the beach in Mullusaari to Tervahaudanpuisto Park in Skinnarila. (Visit Lappeenranta n.d.)

The route can start from anywhere, depending on the tourists' preferences. Since it is quite long and it is not possible to get around it all on the last day due to the limited time, the group with their guide decide on a starting point. For example, it is possible to drive to Universities, at the same time look at them and from that area walk on foot and enjoy the beautiful and amazing nature of Finland. (Visit Lappeenranta n.d.)

The route from Myllysaari to Pallo is paved. Tourists can travel along the route in various ways - on foot, running, cycling, walking or in a wheelchair. Rantaraitti is suitable for people of all ages and fitness levels. The route is equipped with

recreation areas with tables and benches, which makes it possible to take longer hikes. (Visit Lappeenranta n.d.)

**15:00 – 16:00** Lunch in a local restaurant

*'Lalo' Valtakatu 46*

After a long walk in nature, the group is offered to have lunch in a local restaurant before travelling back to Saint Petersburg. Restaurant 'Lalo' offers grilled dishes, delicious burgers, salads, soups, pastas and pizzas (Lalo n.d.).

**16:00 – 17:00** Transfer to Vainikkala

To be on the safe side, the bus leaves 50 minutes before the train arrives. Additionally, the tour allocates the time for passing the border and registering the tax free.

**17:53** Travel on the speed train to Saint-Petersburg

**19:27** The train Allegro arrives to Finlyandsky railway station

Upon arrival, the company will drive everyone home.

Additional information regarding the tour

In Appendix 8 there are three maps which show the day routes. Depending on the day of the week, month, and year, the tour may be changed. While the content will always remain as confirmed, the sequence and timing of sightseeing may vary day by day. For example, if the second day of the tour falls on a weekend (Saturday and Sunday), the company organizes a nature walk on this day, and the museums are visited on the third day.

All changes are not critical, the company takes into account the tourists' condition and offers the most convenient schedule. If, during the tour, tourists want to change locations (time, order, and day), it will be possible to adjust the itinerary provided that it does not contradict the schedule of museums and the program in general. The company cherishes its tourists and wants them to feel as comfortable as possible.

## 6 Summary

Disability is a social phenomenon and society should not ignore it. Each government, based on its level of development, should develop and support a social policy towards people with disabilities. Unfortunately, in Saint Petersburg and its regions, disabled people have very few opportunities for a full-fledged existence in the city, although tourism can be particularly useful for the disabled people rehabilitation.

The number of the disabled people in Russia is increasing every year, and it is impossible to continue ignoring their problems. People with disabilities can feel comfortable in the nearest foreign country. Additionally, it is essential to remember that disabled people are also potential customers, and they can bring the profit.

Having studied the research of various authors and countries in relation to accessible tourism, it can be concluded that they highly appreciate the prospects for the disabled tourism development and are actively working in this direction. Therefore, there is no need to turn away from that problem but rather develop this tourism as widely as possible.

Furthermore, by studying the above mentioned aspects as well as features and classifications of accessible tourism, it becomes clear why it is so important. Moreover, the thesis presents a complete picture of the special group of people for whom this type of tourism exists.

The objective of the thesis was to develop accessible tourism for Russian disabled people in the Lappeenranta region through creating a service in cooperation with the Alla Tours company. This service is a package tour which contains a special program for the trip and additional services.

In order to create a package tour, at first it is necessary to study all the tourist places in the city of Lappeenranta. Since it was not possible to be in Finland while writing the thesis, all the necessary information was studied online on websites dedicated to this region. Questionnaires were also used to collect the data, which were filled out online by representatives of tourist places (hotels and museums) and the tourist supervisor of the tourist office in Lappeenranta. The entire process of collecting data did not take much time because it was made online.

After collecting and analysing all the received information, a package tour for disabled Russian tourists was created. The three-day package tour includes a transfer from Saint Petersburg to Lappeenranta (and back), sightseeing and walking tours, check-in at the hotel, visiting museums, restaurants, shops, theatre and cinema. The tour also includes accompaniment of the company's representative for all three days, a guide and additional services for tourists (taxi booking, assistance in processing documents at the hotel, 24 hour ability to call the manager in case of unforeseen situations).

As mentioned previously in the thesis, the concept of accessible tourism appeared recently, so nowadays this topic is highly relevant. At the moment none of the informational websites about Lappeenranta have any information regarding accessible tourism. Therefore, through this thesis, Lappeenranta is shown as a well-adapted city for accessible tourism where the disabled tourists are most welcome.

Unfortunately, it was not possible to see all the objects live and make sure that they are all suitable for disabled people. That is why, in future studies it would be good to examine this type of tourism in more detail. Moreover, to consider not only Lappeenranta but, for instance, Imatra, as this city is also located near the Russian border and is visited by Russian tourists.

Future researchers can make an analysis of all tourist places and make a study regarding competitiveness: compare hotels, restaurants, museums, and other attractions. Additionally, a comparative analysis of the Lappeenranta and Imatra regions can be made to find out which city is more suitable for the disabled people and people with mobility issues.

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## Appendix 1. Questionnaire 1

### Questionnaire for Tourist Information Office

Date:

Organization:

1. How is Lappeenranta adapted for accessible tourism?

- excellent                       bad                                       hard to answer  
 good                               poor

2. How important is it to develop accessible tourism in Lappeenranta? (rate on a scale from 1 to 5; where 1 is not important at all and 5 is very important)

- 1                                       3                                       5  
 2                                       4                                       hard to answer

3. How many Russian tourists visit Lappeenranta per year? (in percentage of the total number of all tourists)

(if you have any official data, please provide it, if possible)

- less than 20%                       30% - 40%                       more than 50%  
 20% - 30%                       40% - 50%                       hard to answer

4. How many disabled people\* visit Lappeenranta per year? (in percentage of the total number of Russian tourists)

(if you have any official data, please provide it, if possible)

- less than 1%                       2% - 3%                                       more than 4%  
 1% - 2%                               3% - 4%                                       hard to answer

5. How do you evaluate the disabled tourist's expectation of your service environment?

- excellent                       bad                                       hard to answer  
 good                               poor

6. Do you have any tourism literature or other promotional materials for disabled people? (materials can include the list of all support services, how to contact the establishment through accessible media, etc.)

yes

no

hard to answer

**If yes, please list what kind of materials you have:**

7. Are there any organizations where passenger vehicles – buses, coaches, taxis – can be rented?

yes

no

hard to answer

**If yes, please list them:**

8. How do you rate the accessibility of the hotels in Lappeenranta?

excellent

bad

hard to answer

good

poor

**Please list the hotels with excellent and good accessibility:**

9. How do you rate the accessibility of the restaurants in Lappeenranta?

excellent

bad

hard to answer

good

poor

**Please list the restaurants with excellent and good accessibility:**

10. How do you rate the accessibility of the museums in Lappeenranta?

excellent

bad

hard to answer

good

poor

**Please list the museums with excellent and good accessibility:**

11. How do you rate the accessibility of the theatres and cinemas in Lappeenranta?

excellent

bad

hard to answer

good

poor

**Please list the theatres/cinemas with excellent and good accessibility:**

12. Are there any additional tourism activities and events which disabled people can attend in the region?

yes

no

hard to answer

**If yes, please list them:**

13. What would you like to see in our tour to make it the most accessible? Please write your recommendations and suggestions.

---

Thank you for taking your precious time to answer these important questions.

## Appendix 2. Questionnaire 2

Questionnaire for managers who work in Lappeenranta's organizations

Date:

Organization:

1. How is Lappeenranta adapted for accessible tourism?

- excellent                       bad                                       hard to answer  
 good                               poor

2. How important is it to develop accessible tourism in Lappeenranta? (rate on a scale from 1 to 5; where 1 is not important at all and 5 is very important)

- 1                                       3                                       5  
 2                                       4                                       hard to answer

3. How do you evaluate your service environment?

- excellent                       bad                                       hard to answer  
 good                               poor

4. How do you evaluate the disabled tourist's expectation of your service environment?

- excellent                       bad                                       hard to answer  
 good                               poor

5. Do you have appropriate information about accessibility on your website?

- yes                                       no                                       hard to answer

6. Do you have any tourism literature or other promotional materials for disabled people? (materials can include the list of all support services, how to contact the establishment through accessible media, etc.)

- yes                                       no                                       hard to answer

**If yes, please list what kind of materials you have:**

7. Do you have special facilities for disabled people?

yes

no

hard to answer

**If yes, please list them:**

8. Do you have special services for disabled people?

yes

no

hard to answer

**If yes, please list them:**

9. Do you have special parking spots and driveways for disabled people?

yes

no

hard to answer

10. What additional services are you ready to provide for such people?

Thank you for taking your precious time to answer these important questions.

Appendix 3: An example of Alla Tours excursion

**Guide's Name:** .....

2GT # 01 (pax.....)

**Ship name:** ..... (dock № ....., time.....)

**1st Day**

Meet at the ship. City highlights drive tour. Short walks and picture stops.

**Subway ride**

**10:10** - 12:30 Excursion in **Hermitage museum** (early entry)

**Coordinator: name ....., tel.:.....**

12:30 - 13:00 Excursion in **Church on the Blood**

13:00 - 14:00 Lunch at a local restaurant

**Name of the restaurant, tel. & address:.....**

14:00 - 15:00 Excursion in **Saint Isaac Cathedral**

**15:00** - 16:30 Excursion in **Yusupov palace** incl. Gregory Rasputin exposition

**Coordinator: name ....., tel.:.....**

Payment for the tour

17:00 Onboard

19:00 Optional evening program

**2nd Day**

7:30 Meet at the ship.

**8:30** - 9:30 **Boat ride:** City tour from the water angle

**Place:.....**

10:00 - 10:30 Excursion in **St. Peter and Paul Fortress** & Cathedral

10:30 - 11:30 Travel to Tsar's Village

**11:40** - 13:30 Excursion in **Catherine palace** & walk through the park

**Route №: .....**

**Coordinator: name ....., tel.:.....**

13:30 - 14:30 Travel to Peterhof

**Packed lunch**

**Coordinator: name ....., tel.:.....**

14:30 - 16:00 Tour of the **Lower Fountain Park & Upper gardens**

16:00 - 17:00 Travel back to the city

17:00 Onboard

18:00 Sailing off

## Appendix 4: The package tour

### Package Tour

#### Day 1

**10:30** – Meet at the **Finlyandsky railway station**

*Botkinskaya str., 6*

**11:30 – 12:34** Travel on the speed train to Vainikkala (Finland)

**12:34 – 13:05** Transfer from Vainikkala railway station to **Lappeenranta city**

**13:05 – 15:00** **City orientation drive tour** with a lunch stop (Linnoitus, Passenger Harbor; if possible Wolkoff House Museum, St. Mary's Church of Lappee, and the Lappeenranta heroes' cemetery)

*14:00 – 14:50 Lunch in a local restaurant*

*'Angus Steak & Wine', Valtakatu 33*

**15:00 – 16:00** Check-in to **Original Sokos hotel Lappee**

**16:00 – 19:00** Free time

**19:00** Dinner in a restaurant

*'Rosso' Kauppakeskus IsoKristiina, Brahenkatu 5*

#### Day 2

**08:00 – 10:00** Breakfast at the hotel

**10:00 – 10:30** Gathering in the hotel lobby to start the tour

**10:30 – 11:00** Transfer to the South Karelia Museum

**11:00 – 12:30** Excursion in the **South Karelia Museum**

**12:30 – 13:00** Walk to the Lappeenranta Art Museum

**13:00 – 14:00** Excursion in the **Lappeenranta Art Museum**

**14:00 – 15:00** Lunch in a local restaurant

*'The Kitchen', Raatimiehenkatu 18*

**15:00 – 15:30** Transfer to the Karelia Aviation Museum

**15:30 – 16:00** Excursion in the **Karelia Aviation Museum**

**16:00 – 16:30** Back to the hotel Sokos

**16:30** – Free time

### Day 3

**08:00 – 10:00** Breakfast at the hotel

**10:00 – 10:30** Transfer to the **hiking trail**

**10:30 – 15:00** The hiking trail

*Rantaraitti*

**15:00 – 16:00** Lunch in a local restaurant

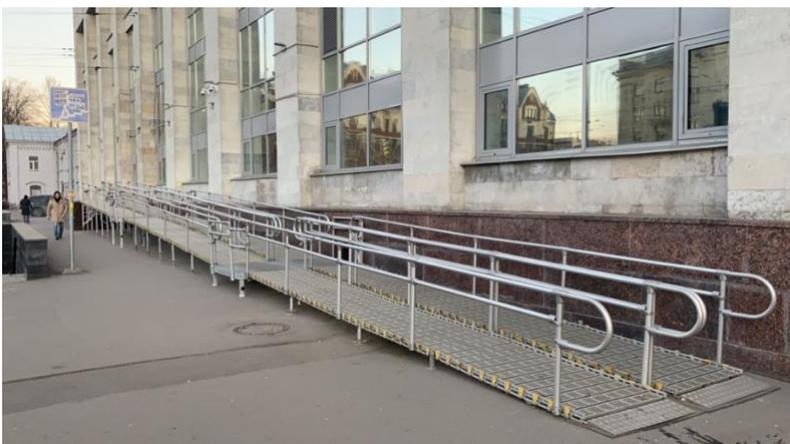
*'Lalo', Valtakatu 46*

**16:00 – 17:00** Transfer to Vainikkala

**17:53 – 19:27** Travel on the speed train to **Saint Petersburg**

**19:27** The train Allegro arrives to Finlyandsky railway station

## Appendix 5: Finlyandsky railway station

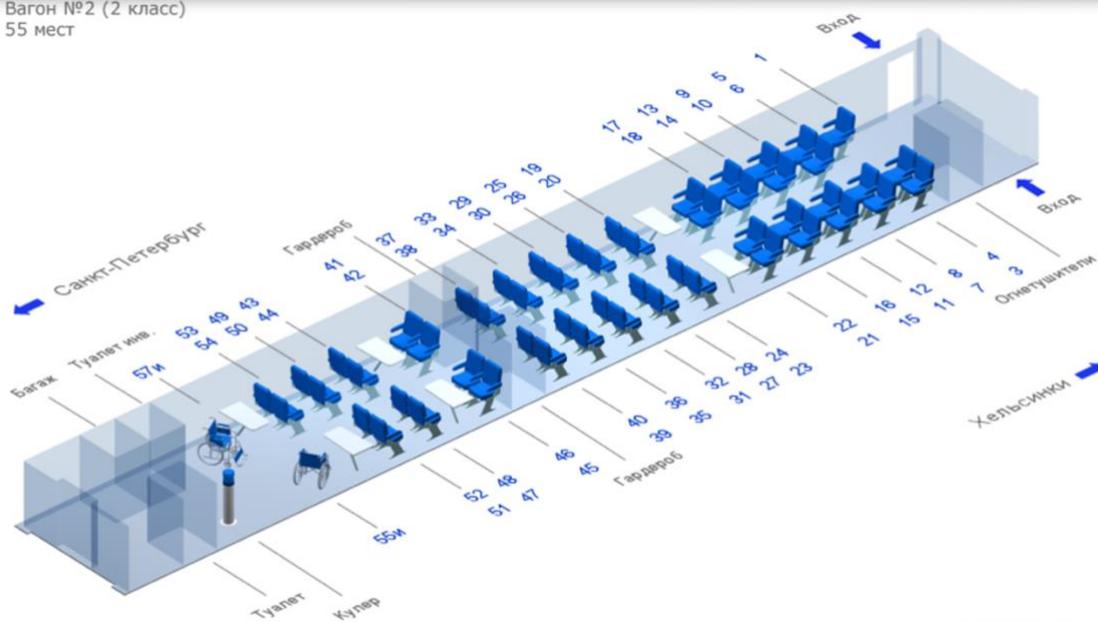


## Appendix 6: Allegro train

### Allegro train (RZD n.d.)



Вагон №2 (2 класс)  
55 мест



**ALLEGRO**

## Appendix 7: Lappeenranta's places

### Linnoitus photos (Frida 2020)



### The Harbour (Visit Lappeenranta n.d.)



### Karelia Lines (n.d.) M/S Camilla



**Wolkoff House Museum (Visit Lappeenranta n.d.)**



**Original Sokos hotel Lappee (n.d.)**



**Rakuuna Hotel (Gosaimaa n.d.)**



**Scandic Hotel (n.d.)**



**South Karelia Museum (Visit Lappeenranta n.d.)**



**Lappeenranta Art Museum (Visit Lappeenranta n.d.)**



**Karelia Aviation Museum (Visit Lappeenranta n.d.)**



## Appendix 8: The routes

