Utilization of Service Design in Tourism

Mobile Ethnographic Research in a Ski Resort

Mikko Leinonen

Bachelor's Thesis

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Tiivistelmä

Savonia-ammattikorkeakoulu osallistui partnerina kansainväliseen Service Design in Tourism – yhteistyöprojektiin, jossa palvelumuotoilun toiminnallisuutta, hyödyntämistä ja toimivuutta testattiin yhtäaikaisesti seitsemässä eri maassa matkailupalveluiden kehittämiseksi palvelumuotoilun keinoin.

MyServiceFellow mobiilitutkimus toteutettiin 27.12.2011-11.3.2012 Tahkon matkailualueella Nilsiässä Keski-Suomessa. Tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli kehittää alueen palveluita toteutetun tutkimuksen tuloksien perusteella ja luoda näiden avulla alueen matkailunkehittämissuunnitelma. Tutkimus data perustuisi alueella liikkuneiden koehenkilöiden välittömiin tunnepohjaisin emotionaalisiin reflektioihin.

Tutkimuksen otantana toimi 33 Tahkon alueen aikuisikäistä vierailijaa, joista valtaosa saapui Etelä-Suomesta. Tutkimushenkilöt raportoivat matkansa aikana tuntemuksiaan alueen palveluista hyödyntäen Itävaltalaisen MCI-yliopiston kehittämää myServiceFellow mobiiliapplikaatiota. Ohjelman avulla henkilöiden oli mahdollista lähettää kommentteja tekstein, äänikommentein, kuvin ja videoin korostaakseen lähetetyn kontaktipisteen merkitystä.

Henkilöiden loman päättyessä testihenkilöt haastateltiin, jotta jätettyjen kontaktipisteiden tiedot selvennettäisiin sekä saataisiin kattavampi kokonaiskuva henkilöiden lomakokemuksista. Tutkimuksen tuloksien pohjalta alueelle luotiin kehityssuunnitelma ja yksilölliset raportit jaettiin tutkimusta koskeville yrityksille.

Hiihtoladut osoittautuivat tuloksien jaottelussa Tahkon parhaimmiksi palveluiksi saaden asteikolla -2 - +2 arvon 1,4. Sen sijaan vastaajien jättämissä palautteissa heikoimmiksi arvioitiin alueen yleiseen infrastruktuuriin liittyvät seikat.

Avainsanat Palvelumuotoilu, mobiilietnografia, mobiilitutkimus, palvelukohtaaminen, kontaktipiste

SAVONIA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES   **THESIS**
                                                              Abstract

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Abstract

Savonia University of Applied Sciences attended as a partner on an international Service Design in Tourism co-operation pilot project, where the functionality, utilization and efficiency of the service design was simultaneously tested in seven different nations in order to enhance and to develop travel services.

MyServiceFellow mobile ethnographic research was conducted between the dates of 27.12.2011 and 11.3.2012 in Tahko tourism resort, located in Central Finland. The central aim of the study was to enhance the services of the tourism area, and based on the research, to produce a tourism development plan in which the data would be gathered on the basis of subjects' immediate emotional reflections.

The sample of the research was 33 adult Tahko visitors, of which the majority originated from Southern Finland. The subjects reported their feelings on experienced services during their vacation by utilizing MCI-University developed myServiceFellow mobile application. The subjects were able to submit text comments, voice comments, pictures and videos to highlight the importance of the submitted Touchpoint.

By the end of the holiday all the subjects were interviewed in order to create a greater overall picture of the subjects' holiday and to clarify the aims of the left Touchpoints. Based on the results of the conducted research, a tourism development plan for the area was created and individual reports were handed out to the associated companies.

When the results were categorized, on a scale from -2 to +2, cross-country skiing appeared to have received the most positive value of 1.4. In contrast, the respondents' submitted feedback evaluated the infrastructure related matters the most negative with a value of 0.44.

Keywords Service Design, Mobile ethnography, Mobile research, Service encounter, Touchpoint	

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1   Introduction

The research project and the mobile ethnographic research conducted for this thesis was first launched by MCI University, located in Innsbruck, Austria. In Finland Savonia University of Applied Sciences operated as a partner in co-operation with seven other research institutes in order to implement an EU funded Service Design in Tourism project. In Finland the project was incorporated to a greater KYKY project, launched in March 2011, which operated as a partner and a client organization of this thesis. For the conducted research a coordinative partner of the project, MCI University, developed a mobile application called myServiceFellow. The mobile application was utilized so that the partner institutes could accurately accumulate the real time emotions and experiences of the subjects taking part in the research. By analyzing the subjects reported travel experiences development areas, some of which were minor and easily fixable and some greater and further investigated, were searched for in order to enhance the basic functions of the selected tourism areas. The test site of Savonia University of Applied Sciences was a tourism area surrounding the ski resort Tahko in Nilsiä, Finland.

The central aim of this thesis is to present the possibilities of utilization of service design in tourism areas. Furthermore, the possibilities are described by providing an example of a qualitative mobile ethnographic customer research. Service design stands for design and development of new services or enhancement and improvement of the existing ones in co-operation with the end user. The results of the research presented in this thesis are tendentiously kept on a general level to protect the privacy of the associated companies. However, the thesis provides example comments on how the customers of the area experienced their vacation and the services provided for them.

The author of this thesis operated as a research assistant for Savonia University of Applied Sciences, collected and analyzed the data and prepared the research report based on the project and the collected data. As the material and data of this thesis originates from a significant international pilot study, the means of data collection were preliminary decided and therefore, in this thesis they are not widely criticized.

2   SERVICE DESIGN IN TOURISM PROJECT AND SERVICE DESIGN

2.1   Project

The international project Service Design in Tourism was first started by MCI Tourism University Innsbruck, Austria, which in co-operation with its partners (AHO University (Norway), Innovation Norway (Norway), Making Waves (Norway), Linköping University (Sweden), Hotel School Den Haag (Netherlands), Savonia University of Applied Sciences (Finland), SKEMA Business School (France) and Tourismuszukunft (Germany)), participated in an 18 month project, started in March 2011. The total budget of the project was 440 000€ and it was funded by European Union and its CIP (Competitiveness and Innovation) program (Service Design in Tourism, 2012).

Today, the individual feelings of a traveler towards travel products quality are influenced by several factors which previously were not considered significant. As the mobile technology has evolved and become a part of people's everyday lives, people have altered their regular behavior in many forms. Smart phones and tablets are carried along at all times and information is offered from various new sources. The consumers are able to seek information more easily and more accurately than ever before. The Social Media also affects on consumer behaviorism and travelers tend to seek information from review and comparison sites, such as Trip Advisor, where the other travelers' prior experiences can be easily seen and evaluated. The site members are able to link pictures and videos on their experiences and thus a filthy hotel backyard for instance, can be seen by anyone looking for information on the hotel. (Service Design in Tourism, 2012.)

That travelers do not rely only on fancy brochures produced by hotels and travel agencies, but often the averages and grades given by the other end users of the product, is significant in formation of the overall picture of the future destination. In tourism areas every individual company affects the overall picture of the area. Thus, the communication between the entrepreneurs, travelers and the travel products has to function smoothly, for it has impact on products repurchase decision. (Service Design in Tourism, 2012.)

For the previously mentioned reasons, it was justified to conduct a mobile ethnographic research on customers' sensations in a tourism area. The utilization of mobile

devices may be relatively new for the research, but people have rapidly adopted them into their everyday lives.

2.2   Service Design

The roots of the economic basis of the Western industrialized nations are in agriculture, industry and manufacturing. Today, the post industrialized countries are becoming less reliant on traditional industry and when the new growth is searched for, eyes are turned on the service industry (Soubbotina, T. P. & Sheram K.A. 2010, 52.)
As the economic growth continued in the 20th century, the newly achieved wealth allowed people to consume more services. By now the service industry has grown to become the greatest and most significant economic sector of the Western Countries. In European Union the service industry overall represents 70% of the total GDP (Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö 2010). In these post-industrialized high-income countries great services are needed and great services do not exist by accident. They need to be well designed and executed.

To be exact, what is service design? According to Mager, Erlhoff & Marshalle (2007): "Service design addresses the functionality and form of services from the perspective of clients." From the customer's point of view, it aims to ensure that service interfaces are useful, usable and desirable. From the supplier's perspective the aim is to create effective, efficient and distinctive services. Service designers not only restructure existing services to become more efficient, but they also visualize and formulate possibly new services and solutions to problems that do not necessarily yet exist by observation and interpretation of behavioral patterns. When contemplated from this angle, service design has its roots in product and interface development. (Mager, Erlhoff & Marshelle. 2007. 354-355).

Not so long ago research and development was the main source of investment in manufacturing. Research and development concentrated on the optimization of the means and processes of production. Product development and product design were taken for granted. However, in services the emphasis was not put on the development, research or creation. Before the 1990s service design did not exist even as a concept. As the market grew, it started to receive more economic attention and the well designed services started to gain a competitive edge.   (Mager, Erlhoff & Marshelle. 2007, 354.)

The competitiveness of any service product depends on customer satisfaction, which is determined by the expectations of the customer towards a service product. A successful vacation experience consists of several service encounters, which exceed or match the expectations of the customer. Service journey of a customer is characterized by Touchpoints, which are service encounters with the service providers perceived prior, during and after the holiday (Stickdorn & Zehrer, 2009. 2, 6.)

In service design, the product and service development processes are designed in co-operation with the end user of the product (Miettinen, 2010, 21). This enables contemplation of the broader overall picture in order to discover new perspectives to further develop the product. The tendentious service design from the user centered perspective is the intrinsic value of the service design. Utilization of service design provides new competitive advantages for the businesses, thus the contents of the comparison sites are created by the end users of their products. Service design provides an innovative approach to analyze and to systematically innovate, enhance and design service processes in order to further develop their functionality for the end user. (Service Design in Tourism, 2012.) In this sense, service design applies an "outside in" approach to service innovation, which is conducted by observation of users behavior and experience. Furthermore, incremental changes are suggested to service delivery or completely new service ideas are proposed (Meroni & Sangiorgi, 2011, 84).

In the past couple of years service design has become trendy. Miettinen, Mager Stickdorn & Zehrer are probably the most cited service designers but according to Koskinen (2010) they and the entire service design network appear to be service design missionaries praising the subject. The entire field of service design appears to suffer from lack of criticism. Koskinen, the editor in-Chief of the Service design magazine, states that enthusiasm drives the field forward and constructive criticism would be more than welcome to enrich the competences and expertise of the field.

Prior to this project, service design has been used only rarely in tourism but this international research project, despite the criticism of the field only preaching its advantages, proudly pursuits to alter the trend. In this research the opportunities provided by a new mobile technology were utilized in an ethnographic customer study for the first time in Finland.

3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative research methods have a long history and they have gained authority and reputation over these years. Such techniques include ethnography, unstructured interviewing and participant observation. These methods of qualitative research are multiform research techniques, often used in humanistic and social researches. The origin of the name is determined by the approach of the research, which stresses more 'quality' rather than 'quantity'. In qualitative research emphasis is put on social meanings rather than to collect numerical statistic data. (Robert, Miller & Brewer, 2003, 238.)

3.1 Elements of qualitative research

Qualitative and quantitative research differ the most from their research design. Whereas quantitative research is based mainly on results of measurements and cognitive process of the researcher, qualitative research is constructed on prior researches on the subject and theories based on those. The material is often empiric and textual, which leaves a lot open for interpretation. In the process of data analysis, quantitative methods, such as statistics are often used. Numeric values are often given to qualitative matters in order to generate statistical information. When statistics are used based on the qualitative data, the data is thereby quantified. (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka, 2006.)

3.2 Characteristics of qualitative research

The following list clarifies the characteristics of qualitative research:

- Data collection methods: Tend to be more empiric rather than numeric.
- Utilization of interviews, biographies, letters, diaries or other personal matters: To generate greater overall picture on the research subject.
- The sample: Often discretionary or theoretical. The samples are relatively small.

- No hypothesis: Whereas quantitative research is based on hypothesis, which is then tested and new research subjects found, the qualitative research does not have hypothesis.

- Researcher's significant role: In qualitative research the researcher has a greater impact on the results compared to quantitative research. The researcher has a freedom of choice and even the imagination of the researcher plays a role.

- The analysis: The aim of the analysis is not to verify the hypotheses but rather to invent them. The theories are either constructed on the material or combined with the existing ones. (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka, 2006.)

3.3   Ethnographic research

Whereas Fetterman (2010) starts by describing ethnography as telling a credible, rigorous and authentic story, which is told through the eyes of local people as they pursue their lives in their own communities and natural settings, Amould & Wallendorf (1994) describe ethnographic research as data collection and analysis by means of observation of human action in this, natural setting. The research environment is not thus artificially prepared to meet the needs of conducting a quantitative research. From the perspective of a researcher, ethnographic research often requires knowledge and participation on the cultural context of the subject. The cultural anthropological researches of the past about the distant new cultures found, and the behaviorism of the people influenced by that culture, can be thus considered ethnographic. In participant observation significant data is often recorded during ordinary events of subjects' daily routines. In traditional ethnographic research relevant incidents are witnessed by ethnographer who records the occurred and analyzes the data. (Arnould & Wallendorf, 1994, 484-504.)

Research topics are usually broad and general or sensitive and difficult to talk about. The knowledge produced by ethnographic research would have usually been difficult to be gathered by traditional means of data collection, such as surveys and inquiries. (Arnould & Wallendorf, 1994, 484-504.) Ethnography as a method of research data collection is old but not outdated. Even current media anthropological studies are often conducted by several ethnographic means to clarify how people use and construct meaning for the media surrounding their lives (Sumiala, 2010, 12).

3.4   Mobile ethnography

In terminology, "mobile" can have various connotations. It can stand for movement of something or a mobile technology (Merriam Webster, 2012). In ethnographic research the mobile element can be the ethnographer, utilization of mobile technology, a research subject or a combination of two or more of the previously mentioned elements. As technology has evolved, it has been quickly utilized in the field of ethnographic research. When the ethnographers of the past had to travel to distant destinations to observe the life situations, the modern ethnographers are able to utilize modern tools. In the past technology has been utilized in ethnographic research, for instance, to understand how long distance runners see and experience their running terrain (Atkinson, Delamont & Housley, 2008, 168). The study was conducted by using a combination of photographic materials, narratives and auto ethnographic reflection.

In this current research a mobile platform, which in this case is a smart phone or a tablet, plays a remarkable role. The research utilizes all the elements of the definition of mobile, as the researcher, the subject and the technology used were mobile.

4 RESEARCH TOOLS

For the research MCI University had developed two tools which were used to collect and to analyze the data. Mobile application myServiceFellow functioned as a feedback giving tool. For the analysis of the data received from myServiceFellow, another program, ServiceFollow was developed.

4.1 myServiceFellow mobile application

As part of Service Design in Tourism project, Austrian MCI University Innsbruck developed a mobile application myServiceFellow to carry out the research. myServiceFellow mobile application can be operated on smart phones and tablets, which use Android (2.2 or higher) or iOS (4.1 or higher) operating systems. The users of the program (people participating in the research) were able to download the program for free directly from Android's Android Market or from Apple's AppStore.

By using the application, the end users of the services in the research area were able to comment their sensations in real time. The end user determines which service encounter (later Touchpoint) is relevant and meaningful to himself both in positive and negative.

When all the positive and negative aspects of the vacation from all the experienced service encounters are recorded, the overall picture and variability of different moods of the tourist can be seen. This holistic and user centered approach aimed to relive the complicated associations between the services. In a tourism area every individual service provider has an effect on the travelers' overall picture of the tourism area. The end users are rarely aware of the individual businesses and service providers in the area, but the functionality of the tourism area as a whole is recognized. myServiceFellow pursuits to reveal the affiliations between the companies and to develop business co-operation between the companies. For the individual companies the central aim was to give product and service development ideas. (myServiceFellow, 2011.)

The application was in contact with user's smart phone's GPS device. By using the device the program was able to draw a map on customer's individual real time service path in the research area. The researcher was able to follow the submitted

Touchpoints by using the tracking program, ServiceFollow (see 4.2), which was developed for the purposes of tracking and data analysis.

The participants were able to submit comments on the experiences they had by using smiley scale (see pictures 1 and 2 below). In addition to smiley faces, the participants were able to comment on the service encounter by using text comments, pictures and videos. These more precise comments were essential for the data analysis, which otherwise would have been more difficult and near impossible. For the participant this feature enabled them to stress the significance of the submitted Touchpoint by giving a concrete example about the experienced event.

If the participant wanted to submit a comment, the first thing was to log in to the program. After logging in the person was able to choose between five different smiley faces and to pick the one which most closely corresponded to his current evaluation. After pressing the smiley face, the program guided the user to submit text comments, pictures and voice comments on the occurred event.
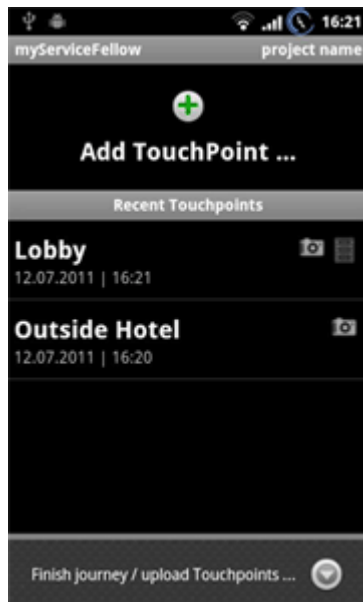
PICTURE 1. – Starting view (MCI, 2011)

PICTURE 2. – Smiley scale and comment field (MCI, 2011)

4.2   ServiceFollow program - analysis tool

ServiceFollow program was utilized to follow and to analyze the Touchpoints the par-
ticipants had submitted. The utilization of the program enabled the researcher to ob-
serve users of the program and to analyze the data received from myServiceFellow
application. The program enabled to view all the submitted Touchpoints on one
screen and thus to perceive greater overall view on the submitted Touchpoints in a
form of a matrix (picture 3). The program also enabled individual contemplation of
each Touchpoint and the comments, videos or pictures the user had submitted. The
program automatically calculated the overalls and individual averages. The program
also automatically calculated the averages in a timeline, which made it possible to
discover which part of the spent vacation was the "happiest" in terms of subject's
momentary mood.
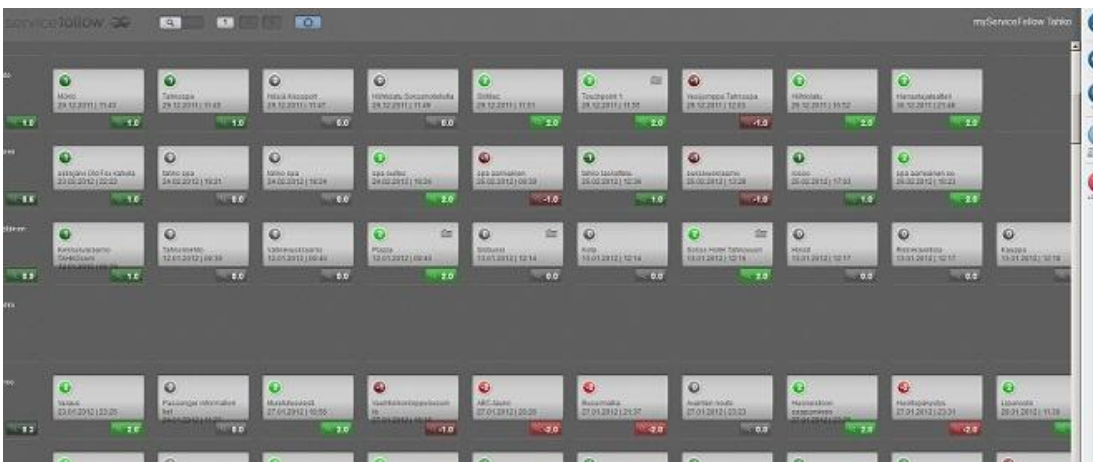
PICTURE 3. – User matrix

The program was in contact with user's smart phone's GPS devices. Based on the
movement of the subjects in the research area by using the GPS given information,
the program was able to draw a map on user's real time Touchpoints. (picture 4) The
GPS function was utilized, for instance, when the user had merely submitted a smiley
face and had not submitted any other comments. In these cases during the interviews
the researcher was able to receive from the GPS generated map where that specific
Touchpoint was submitted and what the subject had meant by it.
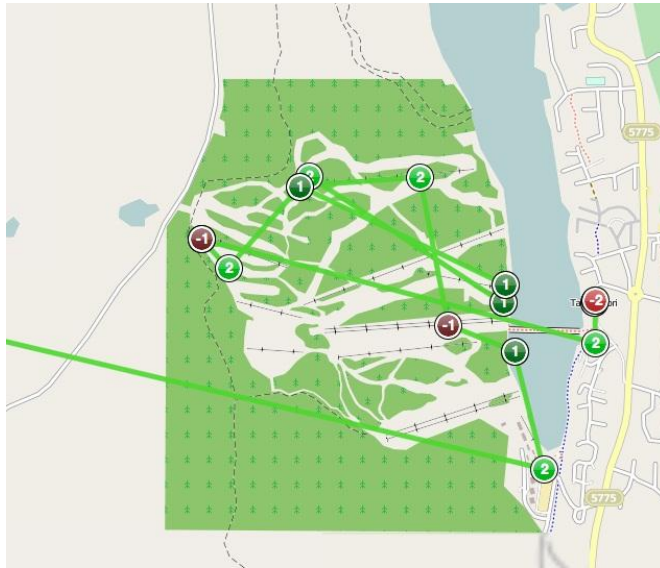
PICTURE 4. – User on the map

The program also enabled to view user's individual moods curves by dots, which en-
abled to follow, for instance, when the mood of the customer in the area had col-
lapsed (picture 5). This feature helped to find the essential turning points of the vaca-
tion and helped to monitor, when comments and pictures were submitted or if they
were merely mood updates.
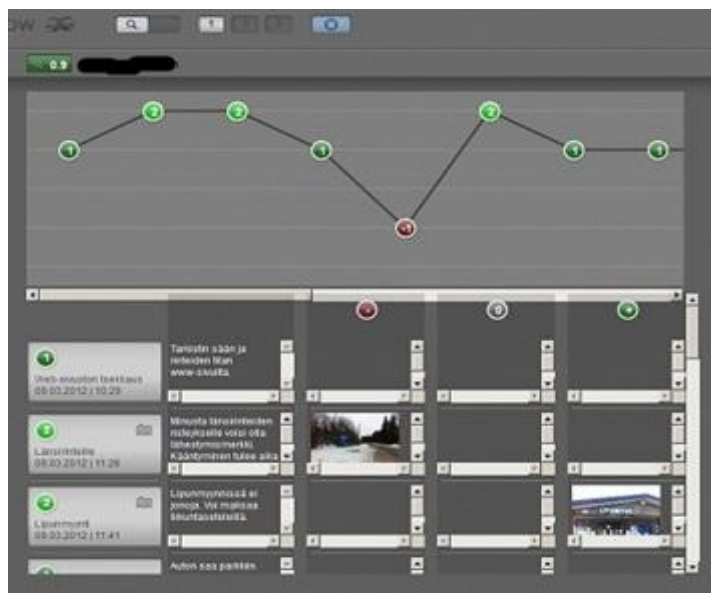
PICTURE 5. - Moods curve of a user

5   MARKETING OF THE RESEARCH

The participants used seven different marketing methods to create awareness about the research and to encourage people to register. The process of gathering the persons testing the service turned out to be more difficult than expected. The target size of the sample was 50, but only 38 took part in the research. The marketing methods used were: Email, Tahko website, Facebook, posters in the research area, magazines, personal persuasion and the people already taking part in the research, who persuaded their friends to register. TAHKOcom Oy donated a 500 € accommodation voucher, which was advertised in all the marketing methods mentioned above. The subjects taking part in the final interview took part in the draw of the voucher. The draw took place in March 13. 2012 and it was won by Jarno Lappalainen from Espoo.

The figure 1 below clarifies the personal awareness on the research, from which marketing method the subjects first heard about the research. Some of the subjects had latter registered, but in the final interview the first contact and the first awareness on the research were wanted to be clarified.
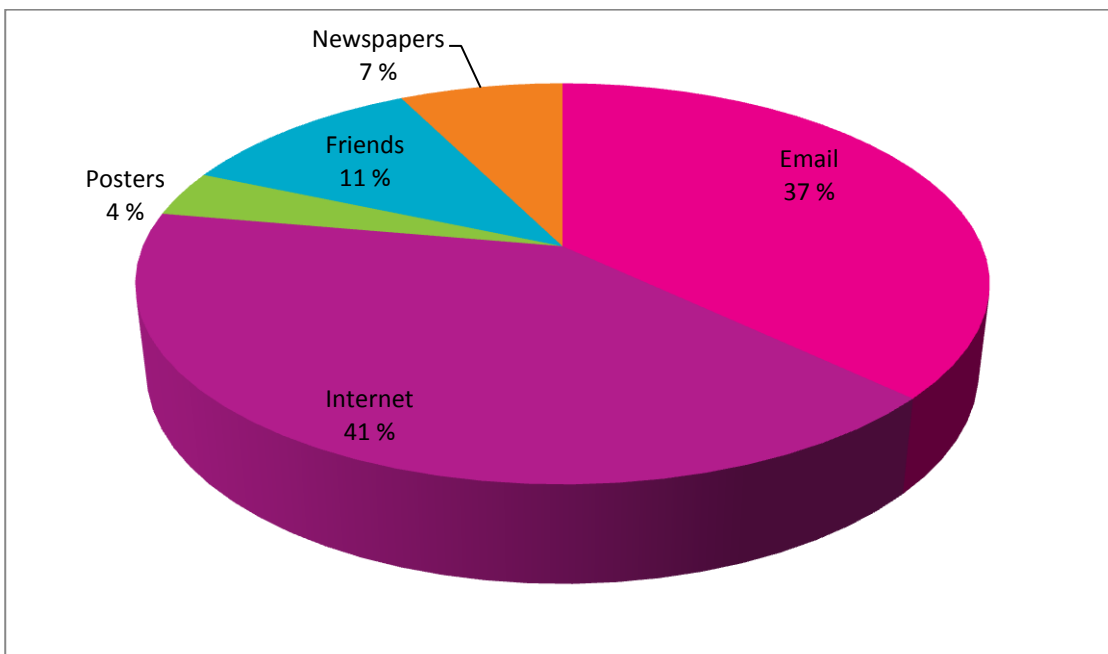

FIGURE 1. Efficiency of the marketing methods

The following chapters will clarify the used marketing methods in more precise detail and will give the reasoning behind the methods.

5.1   Email

The aim of the marketing of the research was to gather a maximum amount of people from whom the entire travel experience and feedback could be recorded. The research was conducted in co-operation with Tahkon Markkinointi Oy, the co-marketing organisation of the Tahko tourism area, and thus TAHKOcom OY also functioned as a partner organization of the research. TAHKOcom Oy functions as a central reservation agency of the tourism area and they had an opportunity to send emails to customers reserving their vacation through their service. Between the dates January 11 2012 and February 19 2012 overall 1400 emails were sent to the customers of the company. Of the used marketing methods this direct marketing method appeared to be the most efficient. Overall 37 % of the respondents had first found out about the research via email and then registered.

5.2   www.tahko.com - site and the banner

Greater visibility was wanted to the research and Tahko main website, www.tahko.com was able to provide it. A banner (picture 6); "Participate in the development of Tahko and win a 500€ voucher", was posted on the front page of the site. During the active marketing of the research overall 225 000 different Internet users visited on the site. The research page itself was able to lure 3100 different visitors. When defining the user profiles of the participants, Internet pages together with the social media were counted as one entity. 41 % of the participants registered and got the awareness on the research via the Internet.

PICTURE 6. Banner on the website

By clicking the banner the user of the webpage was linked to the site www.tahko.com/tutkimus where additional information and registering instructions were found. On the webpage the site visitor was also able to view a video animation, which was produced by MCI University Innsbruck. The video presented the basic functions of the program and instructed the usage of the program.

5.3   Facebook

The social media effects on behaviour and opinions of the people. The usage of social media is a cost efficient way to get contact in vast masses of people, especially those who are the most interested in the subject. Merely one "like" is able to spread the information to hundreds of people. The friends of the user potentially share the link and so the hundreds of potentially new people are able to see the post, and so it goes on. For reasons such as this, in the creation of the user profiles the separation between the two categories, "Friends" and "Facebook", caused inconveniencies. In some cases the users had found the information individually on the website. In other cases the information had spread orally among friends.

The information on the research was spread on two greater Tahko linked Facebook websites, which were TAHKOcom and Tahkonrinteet (Tahko slopes). On March 14th 2012 overall 3264 people had "liked" the pages.

The Facebook page of TAHKOcom had on March 14th 2012 overall 920 likes. The information linked on the site has thus reached at least this amount of Facebook front pages. The information on the research was also spread, when people liked the updates of TAHKOcom. The post on TAHKOcom Facebook site was carried out on February 16th 2012. (Facebook1, 2012.)

The marketing of the research started on Tahkonrinteet Facebook page when the research was near to an end. The post was made on March 7th 2012 when the target size of the sample started to seem unrealistic. The Facebook page of Tahkonrinteet has the most followers from all the Facebook sites in the area and it was expected to gain rapid visibility for the research. After the post several registrations were made on the same day. (Facebook2, 2012.)

5.4   Posters

On February 19th 2012 posters advertising the research (see appendix 1) were spread around Tahko and Nilsiä areas. Touchpoints were wanted to be collected from maximum period of time, when the traveller would visit the area. Therefore, when placing the posters the focus was put on the areas the arriving visitors use the most.

In Nilsiä the posters were placed in Matkahuolto (bus station) and K-supermarket Artomarket, since these places were most probable to draw the attention of the arriving tourists. In addition to these places the attention was put on the research site, the area around Tahko slopes. The focus in this area was also put towards the places where the visitors were most likely to notice the posters when they first arrived. In Tahko the posters were placed to the lobby of Sokos Hotel Tahkovuori, K-market Tahkontähti, Tahko Spa lobby, ticket sales places of Tahkolahti and Mutteri and to both SkiMac ski and equipment rentals.

 The posters appeared to be an inefficient marketing method when compared to time and effort spent on designing and spreading of those. Only one person (4 %) announced to have registered to take part in the research via poster.

5.5   Personal advertising

The researcher who conducted the final interviews also persuaded people visiting the area to take part in the research. Several people showed interest in the research but the registrations were not made due to some device problems. The mobile devices needed to take part in the research appeared not to be common in the area. Personal contact with the people in the area would have enabled personal guidance and presentation of basic functions of the application. However, personal guidance to all the participants requires time and resources which were scarce when the research was conducted. Personal guidance was now given to already registered people in the area when the interviewer was close by.

5.6   Newspapers

Media is often interested in new technology and its possibilities and recently Service Design has been broadly visible in the public conversation. MyServiceFellow mobile research was able to draw attention in the media already in the beginning of the research. Now conducted new technology customer research, which was implemented with mobile devices, was carried out in Finland for the first time. Therefore visibility was quickly achieved both in newspapers and in radio. The first press release was published on December 20th 2011 (appendix 2). Based on the press release Savon Sanomat published an article (appendix 3) on the research on December 22nd 2011. Savon Sanomat published another longer article on March 4th 2012, which was on the first page of the newspaper. After the press release also a local newspaper in Nilsiä, Pitäjäläinen, published an article on December 22nd 2011. Two participants (7 %) announced that the newspapers were their first awareness of the study and the reason for their registration.

In addition to newspapers, the research drew attention in radio. Tiina Kuosmanen, the Project Manager of Savonia University of Applied Sciences was interviewed in Radio Savo morning show on February 27th 2012.

5.7   Friends

Awareness among the people spread also from mouth to mouth. Inspired by their friends, people took part in the research. Some inconveniences were found in the categorisation of the study population, since some of the participants were not able to tell whether they had first got the awareness on Facebook or if a friend had told about it.

The attendance of other friends and the social pressure brought with it inspired three persons to register, which comprised 11 % of the total subjects.

6   STUDY POPULATION

The target size of the sample was 50, which fell short despite the intensive marketing of the research. When the research had brought to the end overall 34 people had participated in the research. 32 subjects out of 34 attended in the final interview. All 32 people were utilized in the creation of nearly all the sections of the study population. Touchpoints were utilized from 33 subjects, whose personal details were for the most parts in the study population descriptions and statistics. The attendance and Touchpoints of one participant were rejected. Personal details of the subject were not either utilized in the creation of the study population statistics. The respondent had not submitted comments or additional details on submitted Touchpoints. Therefore, it was impossible to deduce the significance of the submitted Touchpoint for the user. Despite several contact requests and attempts to contact the person, the respondent was not reached to answer the questions of the final interview. The details of the Touchpoints were not clarified and the decision to reject the attendance was made.

Touchpoints of one respondent were utilized despite the subject not taking part in the final interview. Valuable data was achieved from the Touchpoints the respondent had submitted. The respondent had described the significance of each submitted Touchpoint in the comment field. Despite several contact requests the respondent did not make contact nor participate in the final interview. Profile details of the respondent were utilized from preliminary data given in advance. These details were age, gender, locality and the duration of the stay.

In the creation of the study population statistics, data was received from two sources. The details about age, gender, locality and duration of the stay were requested in advance. The rest of the details were collected in the final interview. All the respondents did not answer to all the questions asked in the interview. For those questions smaller sample sizes and numbers were used.

The following sections will structure and clarify the numbers, data and questions behind the background information on the subjects.

6.1 Gender Distribution

During the early stages of the research men tended to volunteer to attend more actively than women. The sex ratio levelled off when more subjects registered to take part in the research. When the research was finalized, 55% (18) of the subjects were male and 45% (15) female.

6.2 Age Distribution

The age distribution of the study population was wanted to be analyzed to facilitate the classification of interests in different age groups. Tahko attracts people from all age groups and the pursuit was to line the sample as accurately as possible with the customer profile of the area.

The attendants interested in the development of the area were received from all age groups, except for the elderly population. The youngest person to take part in the research was 19 and the oldest 58 years old. The average age of the study sample was 36.

The figure 2 describes the age distribution of the sample. Four age groups were used to categorize the sample. The categories were: 18-25, 26-35, 36-49 and 50-70.
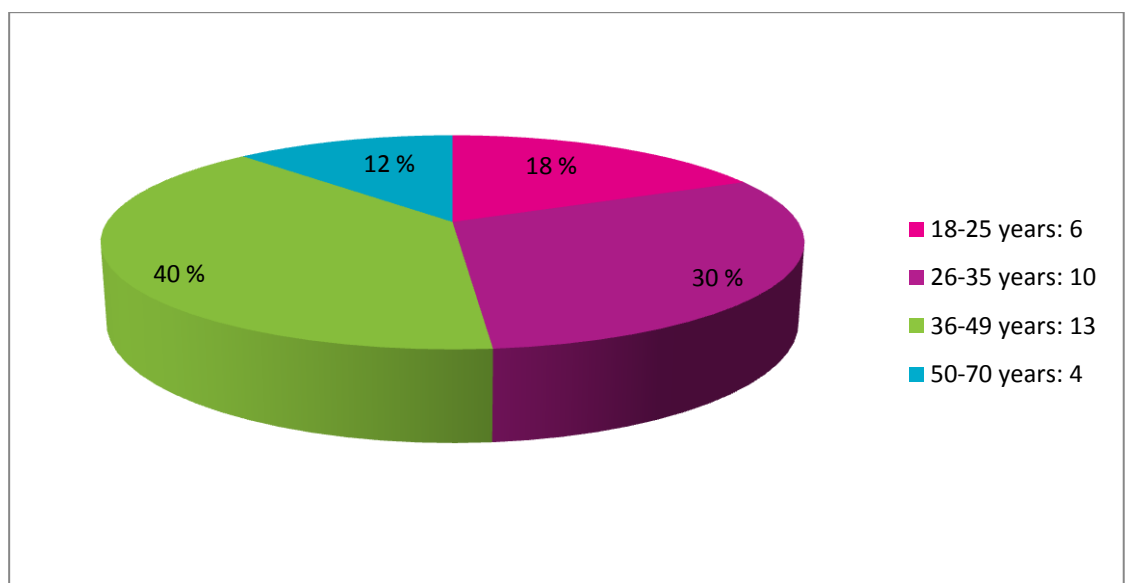

FIGURE 2. Age distribution

The largest cohort was 36-49 year olds, which represented 40 % of the total sample, followed by 26-36 year olds (30%). The smaller age groups were 18-25 year olds (18 %) and 50-70 year olds (12%).

6.3 Regional distribution

All regions of Finland were represented in the study population. The research was able to attract the most subjects from Southern Finland. Overall 26 (79%) people originating from Southern Finland took part in the research. In order to obtain a more accurate break down Southern Finland was divided to two sections, the Capital Area and the rest of Southern Finland.

The figure 3 below describes the regional distribution of the research.
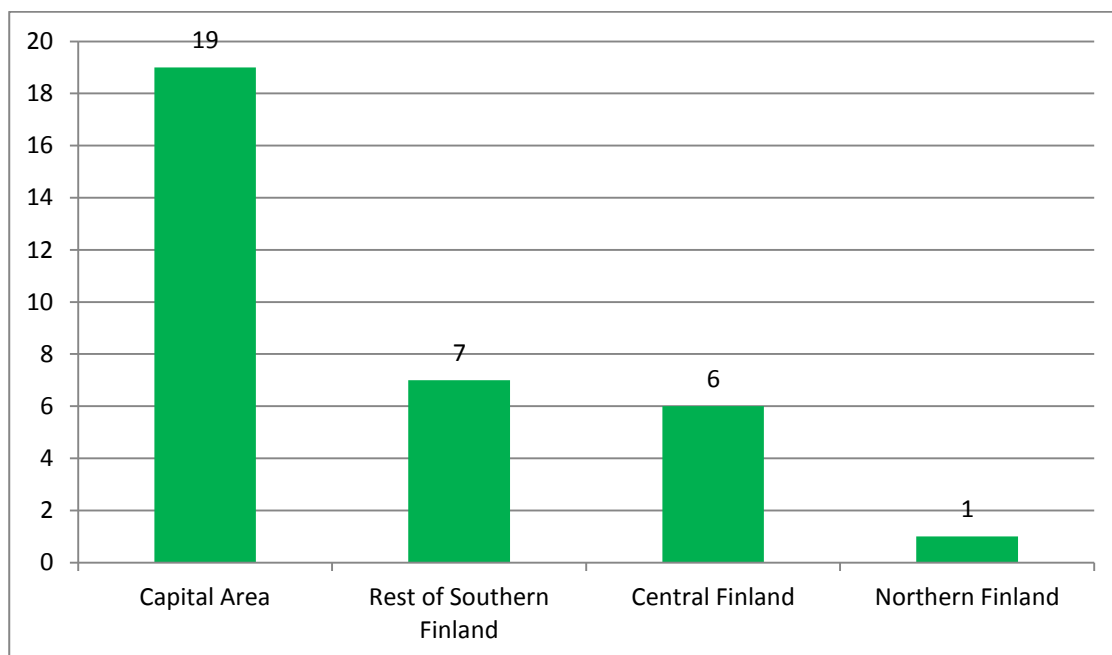

FIGURE 3. Regional Distribution

The interest towards the research among the visitors of Tahko appeared to be lower in Central and Northern Finland. The overall attendance of the two was 21%. Six subjects (18%) registered from Central Finland and one (3%) from Northern Finland.

6.4   Travel Companions

In the final interview the attendants were asked about their travel companions. The area of Tahko attracts various different groups and travel companies and they all have different travel needs. The question on travel companions clarified the travel motives and interests of different travel groups visiting the area.

In the classification the subjects were divided to following groups: Alone, family, friend or group of friends and co-workers. The figure 4 below clarifies the travel companions of the subjects who visited Tahko.
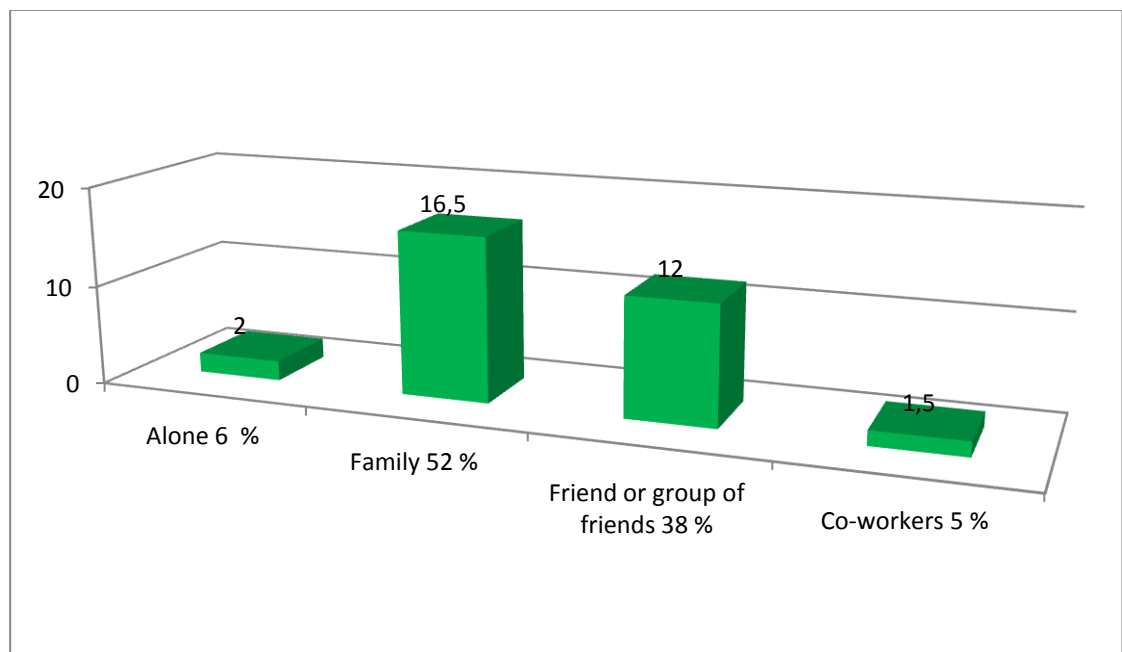
FIGURE 4. Travel companions

In the classification the value of 0.5 was given to one of the subjects, since the respondent spent the first half of the stay in Tahko with his co-workers and the rest with his family.

The majority of the subjects (16.5) spent the vacation in the area with their friends. They represented 52% of the total sample. The second largest group was visiting the area with a friend or with a group of friends, representing 38%. Two respondents (6%) visited the area alone

6.5   Duration of the stay

During the registration the subjects were asked to inform the duration of their stay in the area. Some of the respondents failed to respond to some of the preliminary detail questions and these were asked afterwards in the final interview.

In the classification the subjects were grouped to three categories: Day visitors, people visiting the area for 2-4 days and people visiting the area for 5 or more days. The figure 5 below presents the durations of the stays among the subjects.
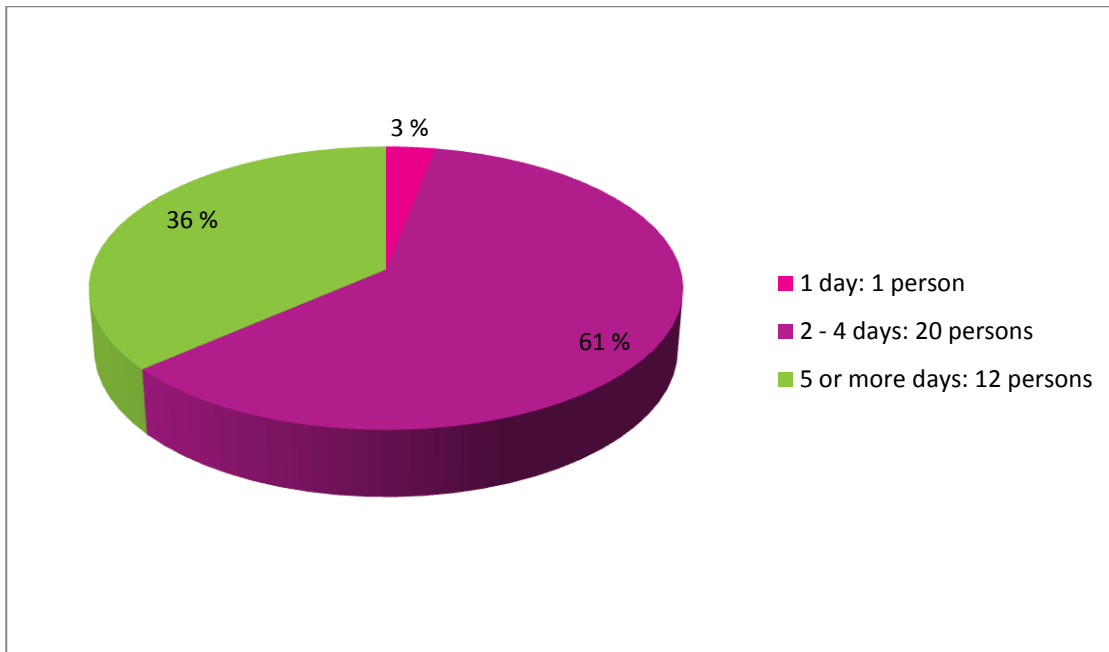

FIGURE 5. Duration of the stay

The majority (20) of the subjects visited the area for 2-4 days. The proportion of all the participants was 61%. The next highest proportion were the long time visitors of 5 or more days. Their overall proportion was 36%. One day visitor took part in the research, representing 3% of the total sample.

6.6   Number of visits to Tahko

People of different backgrounds share diverse perspectives. When arriving to a new place, different things are relevant and interests vary between first time visitors and frequent visitors. Considering the fact, it was relevant in the final interview to clarify the density of the visits and thus the knowledge of the area.

The clarification of the visits density caused challenges for some of the interviewees who were not always able to recall the number of visits to the area. Consequently, the responds were categorized to three groups: First time visitors, few visits, several visits and frequent customers, who visit the area several times each year. The figure 6 below describes the density of the subjects' visits in the area.
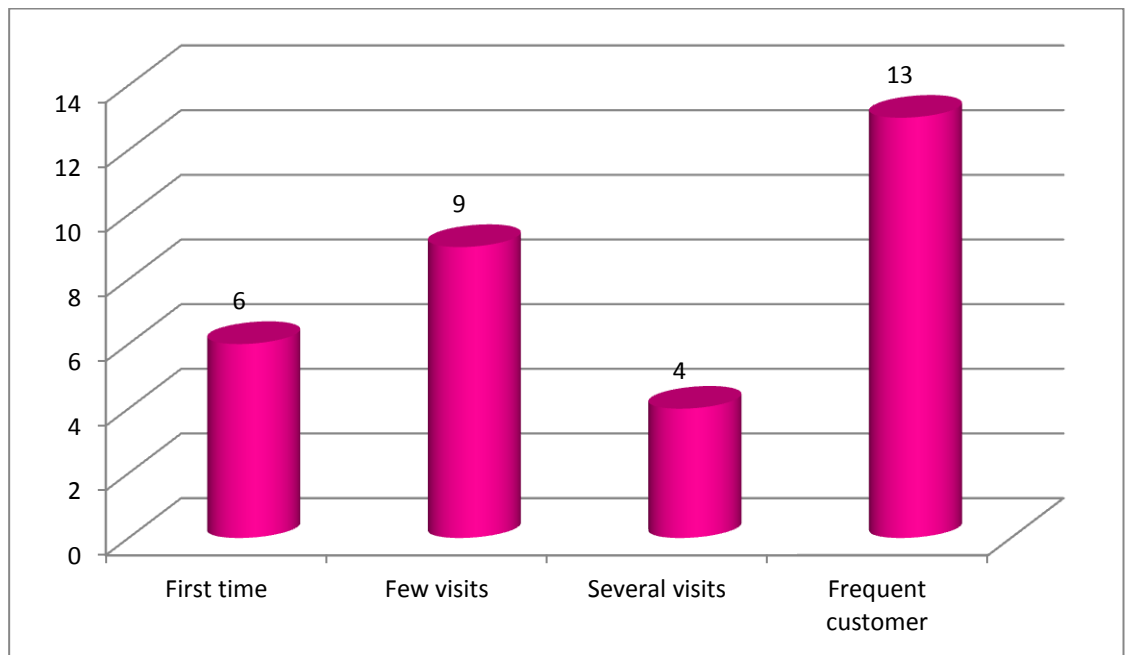
FIGURE 6. Density of the visits

The greatest number (13) was achieved by the frequent visitors, who visit the area several times a year. Their proportion of the sample was 41%. The next biggest group (9) were the people of few visits in the area. They represented 28% of the total sample. Six first time visitors attended in the research. Their proportion of the interviewees was 19%. The smallest group of several visits (4) represented 13% of the total sample.

6.7 Visits during the winter or summer

Relating to customer relationships, the interviewees were asked if their visits in the area took place during the winter or summer. With the question, the Touchpoints, which were submitted to develop or to comment on summer services, needed to be linked. The first time visitors were automatically categorized to "only winter" visitors. The table 1 below clarifies the distribution of winter and summer visits.

TABLE 1. Time of the visits in the area

		Sometimes also in the summer		Often also in the summer	
Only winter	18		7		7
Percentages	56 %		22 %		22 %
Overall	32				

The majority of 56% (18) declared to visit the area only during the winters. Seven "sometimes also in the summer" visitors were involved in the research. Their share of the total number was 22%. The number of "often also in the summer" visitors was also seven (22%).

6.8 Instructions

The people registered in the research received an email which included a document in pdf format (see appendix 4). The document contained instructions on the usage of myServiceFellow mobile application. The email included a link which guided the registered person to Tahko research website, www.tahko.com/tutkimus where the video instructing the usage of the program was found. Only few of the subjects announced that they had watched the video, but the instructions were mainly considered clear and understandable.

The answers given by the interviewees were classified to three categories which were: The instructions were clear and understandable, the instructions needed minor fixes and the instructions were deficient. Some of the interviewees had not read the instructions and therefore responded, "They were probably sufficient". The table below describes the responds of the interviewees on the given instructions.

TABLE 2. Sufficiency of the instructions

Sufficient	29	Minor fixes	3	Deficient	0
Percentages	91 %		9 %		0 %
Overall	32				

The majority of the interviewees (91%) announced the instructions were sufficient and adequate and they did not need further instructions. Three of the respondents wanted minor fixes to be made. None of the respondents considered the instructions deficient. Some of the respondents wanted clarification on the central aim of the research. They had been left unclear on whether the aim was to test the mobile application itself or to develop the tourism area. In the final interview the interviewees were explained the aim was both, to further develop the program and based on the results to develop tourism services in the Tahko area.

6.9   Research experience

In the final interview the interviewees were asked how they had experienced their participation in the mobile research. The results were compiled from three questions: Was the participation to a mobile research a natural part of the vacation, was the participation convenient and easy, and finally; were the connections functional at all times?

Based on the questions, the responds were combined to three groups: The participation was easy and convenient, the participation caused minor problems and the participation disturbed the vacation. The table 3 presents the evaluations of the interviewees' participation experience.

TABLE 3. Research experience

				Disturbed the	
Easy and convenient	21	Minor problems	11	vacation	0
Percentages	66 %		34 %		0 %
Overall:	32				

The majority of 21 interviewees considered the participation was easy, convenient and a natural part of the holiday. They represented 66% of the total sample. Their comments were mainly positive. The smart phone or tablet had been carried every-where the subjects went, as one respondent described: "The Toucpoints were sub-mitted at the same time the phones or tablets were anyhow used". One of the re-spondents considered the participation as a "fun mission course". The respondent had intentionally circled the places he found most significant and commented on each of them based on the first reaction.

11 interviewees, representing 34% of the total sample, had countered minor difficul-ties or problems during the participation. The problems were mainly related to func-tionality or insufficiency of the program myServiceFellow. Minor problems occurred with the batteries of the mobile devices. The program had quickly consumed the charge and the interviewees were not always able to submit Touchpoints. The tem-perature had also negatively affected on the research and the results. In the cold air their fingers had become chilled and the phones functioned improperly. The screen sometimes jammed and the camera was not always functional. None of the respon-dents announced the attendance had been so difficult or inconvenient that it would have disturbed their vacation.

6.10 Participation in the Touchpoints

The majority of the interviewees visited Tahko with their friends or families. One of the aims of the interview was to clarify if the opinions of others had affected on the interviewees opinions or if all the opinions were the ones of the interviewee. The fig-ure 7 describes the distribution of the results.
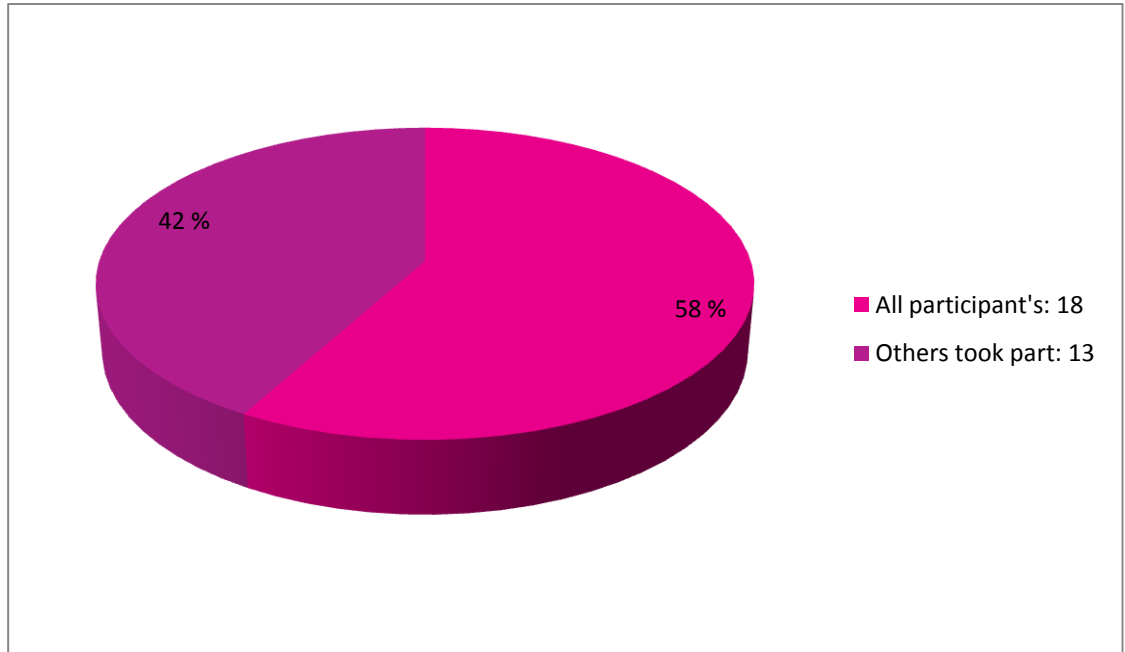
FIGURE 7. Opinions

The distribution between the answers was fairly equal. In the final interview 18 inter-viewees (58%) stated all the opinions were their own and the others did not affect on them. 13 (42%) announced others were also involved in the opinions. Several inter-viewees explained, that the travel companions experiences and moods also had an effect on their personal opinions and thus, on the perception of an individual success-ful holiday experience. A few of the interviewees explained that the entire travel group was interested in the research and therefore they decided to produce the Touch-points together. Suggestions were given to the participant about possible Touchpoint subjects.

7 FINAL INTERVIEWS

During the registration the participants were made clear the submitted Touchpoints would be asked about in the final interview, which would take place in the day of departure. In the final interview further background information would also be questioned (see section 5.). Overall 33 people took part in the research, from which 32 attended in the final interview. The information given by the Touchpoints of one participant was utilized despite that participant did not attending the final interview. The interviews were conducted between the dates of January 3rd 2012 and March 11 2012. The duration of the interviews varied between 15 and 55 minutes depending on the number of submitted Touchpoints. Some of the interviewees wanted to discuss other matters, irrelevant for the research. Thus, the interviewee had a lot of impact on the duration of the interview. Some of the interviewees were in a hurry and they needed to go back to their families. In these cases the interviews were implemented as quickly as possible.

The interviews were carried out as theme interviews, which were guided by a ready-made interview form (see appendix 5.). The interview form was produced to ensure all the interviewees were asked the same questions and the user profile analysis would be accurate. After this, the aim was to make the interview an informal and relaxed chat with the interviewee. The questions were not asked in strict order but the answers to questions were searched for during the informal conversation.

Because of the early departure, all the participants were not able to participate in the interview. In these cases the interviews were implemented the day before the departure. Due to difficult schedules, in a few cases the interviews were implemented as phone interviews. The phone interviews appeared to be qualitatively weaker compared to personal interviews. In phone interviews the interviewee was not able to see the information given by the GPS trail or the Moods curve. In the phone interviews the pictures posted by interviewees were not revised and the interviewer had to explain the content of each picture.

7.1 Progress of the interviews

The interviewee arrived to the pre-agreed spot, where the interviewer presented himself. The interviewer wore a cap advertising TAHKOcom Oy, to make sure the inter-

viewee would identify the interviewer. The interviews were started with questions on background information, followed by contemplation of customers' GPS trails and Moods curves. Thereafter, the significance of each Touchpoint was clarified one by one. At this stage the interviewer attempted to find out additional information about each submitted Touchpoint. To get more information helping questions were asked, such as: What event or situation was involved in this Touchpoint? What caused these reactions? How could this service encounter be enhanced? After all the Touchpoints had been contemplated, the interviewee was given a chance to present his own free opinion on the research. At the end of the interviews, the interviewees were offered similar TAHKOcom Oy caps as the interviewer had. The interviewee was told he would participate in the lottery of 500€ accommodation voucher. The interviewees were greeted a safe trip back home and inquired about possibility of future participation, if the research would be conducted again.

7.2   Interview locations

The attempt was to find peaceful quiet locations to execute the final interviews. The aim was to find places close to the centre of Tahko area and the interviewee. The central location for the interview spots was relevant, so that the interviewees would not have to travel for the research more than necessary. Hotel Ukko and Sokos Hotel Tahkovuori were operated as two main spots to execute the interviews. From these two locations interview spots had been preliminary negotiated. Other interview spots were: Pub Karhu, Restaurant Tirol and lounge for Tahko ski school employees. These places were utilized, if for some reason the two previously mentioned locations were not suitable for the participant.

8 TOUCHPOINTS

33 participants successfully registered and posted Touchpoints in the research. Overall 444 Touchpoints were submitted, which on average was 13.45 / participant. On a scale from -2 to +2 the average value was 0.78. In the final interview the interviewees, almost without exception, underlined, that their average value was lower than their real sensations. They had focused more on development of Tahko and therefore, stressed negative matters while posting Touchpoints.

In addition to 444 utilized Touchpoints, the Service Follow program had recorded 12 comments, which were not utilized in the statistical or qualitative analysis. The participants had been thinking of taking a picture or leaving a comment but for some reason they had failed to do so. The fields had been left empty, but the Touchpoints had been recorded. Often a new Touchpoint had been submitted on the same matter. Some of the unutilized Touchpoints were entirely accidents. Often the comment in those was: "miss". The program had a Touchpoint removal possibility, but all the participants had not found the feature from the program.

An Excel template was utilized in the classification of the Touchpoints. All the Touchpoints were categorized by its content. The categories were: Ski Slopes, program services, accommodation services, restaurant services, customer service, infrastructure, cross-country skiing and other services and comments. Mood comments, such as "Way to go!", where the comments had no deeper significance, were counted to this category. The Touchpoints related to functionality of myServiceFellow program were also registered to this category.

To protect the privacy of the related companies, this thesis contemplates the previously mentioned categories only on a general level. The companies the Touchpoints were linked to have received their own individual reports which include accurate values on each Touchpoint. This thesis only provides examples on what type of comments were submitted to each category. The central aim of this thesis is to present the possibilities of utilization of service design in tourism. Therefore, the accurate values are not relevant for the thesis, but for the companies.
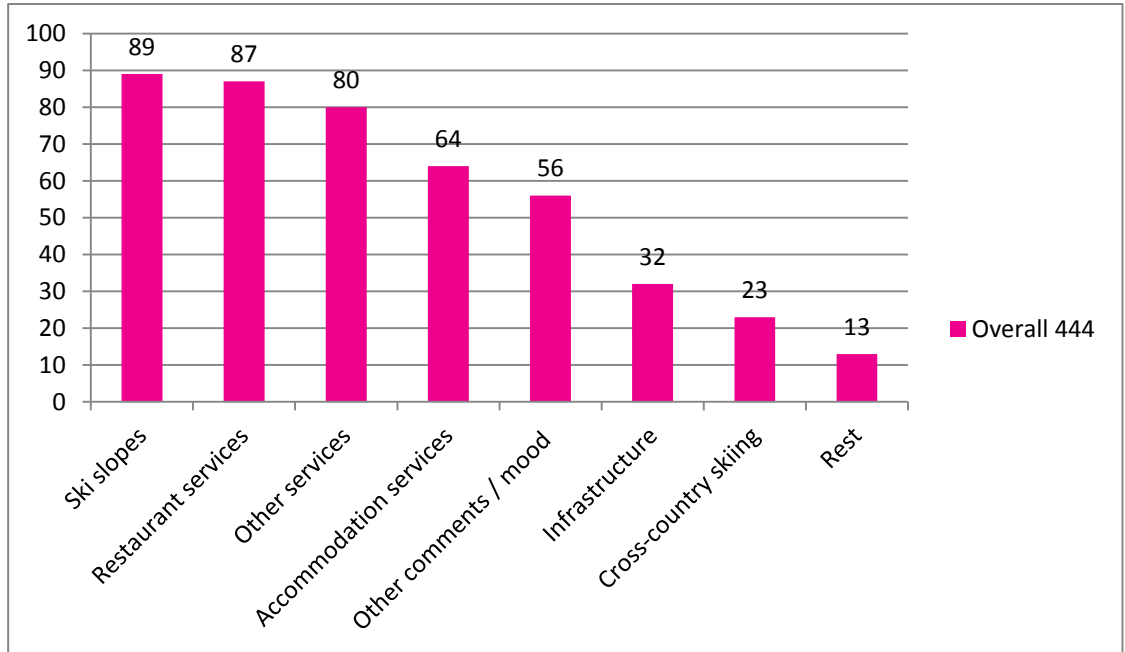
FIGURE 8. Distribution between categories

The figure 8 above reflects the numeric distribution of the submitted Touchpoints between different categories of service types. In the figure categories customer service and program service were combined to category "rest", due to minor Touchpoint amount of 13 comments. These comments were notified in the reports the companies related to these comments received.

The figure 9 presents the averages of all the submitted Touchpoints by service types. From this figure the category "ski slopes" has been omitted to protect the privacy of company Tahkonrinteet. The category "rest" was also omitted due to its small size and combination of two categories.
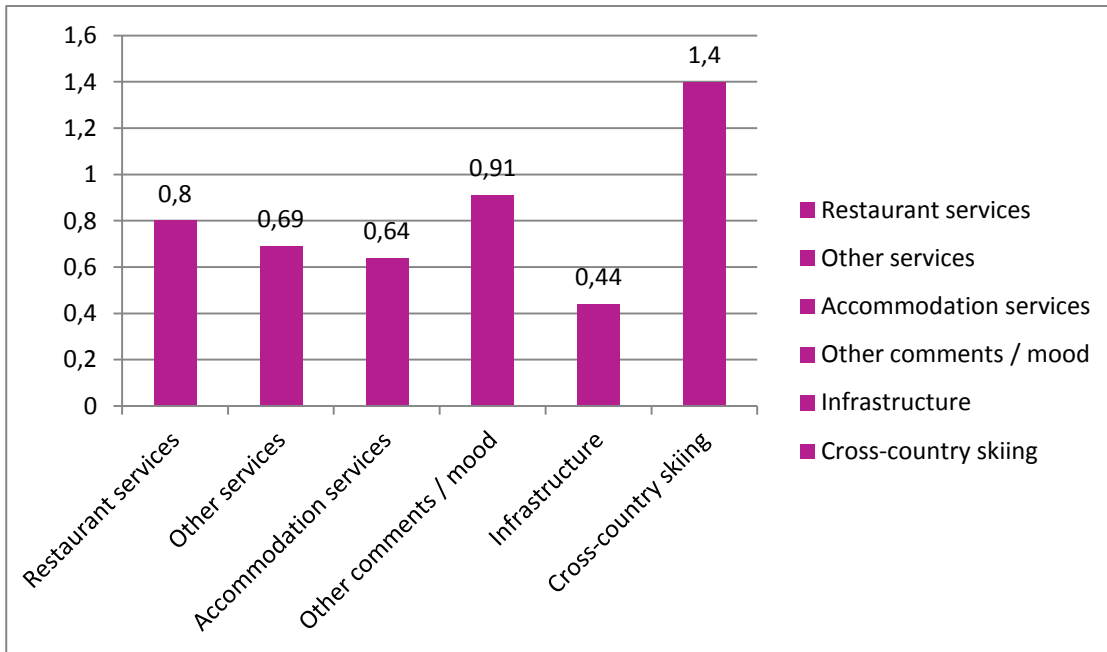
FIGURE 9. Distribution of averages of the Touchpoints

Generally speaking, the services of Tahko were considered positive and when distributed by their service types, all the service types received a higher value than 0. Based on the Touchpoints, the cross-country skiing related matters were the most valued features of Tahko. They received an average of 1.4. The weakest point of Tahko appeared to be the infrastructure and design of it with an average of 0.44.

The first Touchpoint the participant had submitted was the most positive one with an average of 1.3. These Touchpoints were often comments submitted in advance right before the vacation started or during the arrival to the area.

The following sections will clarify the Touchpoints by their service types without revealing the companies related to them. The sections will present the nature of Touchpoints submitted to the specific service type by demonstrating example comments from both, positive and negative comments. A sample selection of pictures, taken by the participants to underline the importance of their submitted Touchpoint, will also be presented in the following sections.

8.1   Ski slopes

When arriving to Tahko, the ski slopes appear to be the most significant attraction factor. Overall 26 participants, representing 79% of the total sample, had submitted comments related to ski slopes. When Touchpoints were categorized, the ski slopes received the most comments. Overall 89 Touchpoints related to ski slopes were submitted, which represented 20% of all the submitted Touchpoints.

PICTURE 7. Scenery of Tahko, snowy trees

The maintenance of the slopes repeatedly received positive comments. Also the scenery of Tahko was often mentioned in the positive comments (picture 7). The negative comments were predominantly development ideas, which would be possible to carry out with a relatively small investment. Such Touchpoints were comments on, for instance, queuing on the West Slopes. Several participants described the complexity of it by posting pictures and comments on it. A better organized queuing system was wanted, as currently the skiers from two slopes join the same queue. The comments were received also on the ski card reading device. A mound in front of the card reading device made it difficult for small children to reach the device without ski poles. This had led to congestion and confusion. General tidiness and particularly, the dirtiness of the bottom of the old chair lift were commented on several occasions.

PICTURE 8. Queue on the West Slopes

Some of the commentators needed more sanitation facilities in the area. One responded described the situation: "The area has more ski lifts than toilets". The comment was not, naturally, only aimed at the ski slopes, but it was also related to the restaurants in the area, whose duty it is also to organize sanitation facilities.

Some of the participants who had submitted comments on slopes were drawing bigger lines and they wanted to develop the entire ski area. Some of them focused also on the development of summer time activities in Tahko. More ski area and slopes were wanted, for the queues were considered too long. This would also create more variety on the slopes. One of the participants wanted a ski tube and an indoor skiing hall to be developed to Tahko. This would enhance the possibilities of summer activities and to improve the utilization of the accommodation capacity in the summer.

8.2 Restaurant services

The restaurant services were well represented among the submitted Touchpoints. Overall the restaurant services received 87 Touchpoints, which represented 20% of the total amount. The restaurant services were considered diverse and the customers seemed to be satisfied with them. The average of the restaurant services was 0.8. The category, restaurant services, included all the comments submitted to all the restaurants including ski restaurants and the restaurants of the hotels. Thus, these comments were no included in the statistics or categories of accommodation services or ski slopes. Overall 29 responded submitted Touchpoints on the restaurant services. Thus, the category received the most participants to submit comments.

The customers were especially satisfied with the quality of the service, even though a few participants wanted it to be improved. The food of several restaurants also received positive comments. The atmosphere of ski restaurants was mainly considered positive.

The negative comments were often related to congestion and long queuing times. Some comments criticized long waiting times of the food portions. One interviewee reported a waitress had poured red wine on him. The occasion had not been credited by any means. A Touchpoint of the event had not been submitted. More salad options were wanted to food selections of the restaurants. Everyone in the slopes does not only want to eat greasy and unhealthy food. More salad options were wanted also in restaurants other than the ski restaurants.

8.3 Other services

The category 'other services' was a large ensemble, to which comments unsuitable to other services related categories were collected. Such comments were related to spa activities, bowling, equipment rental, reindeers, and shops of the area or the Internet site of Tahko. Overall the category received 80 comments, which represented 18% of all the submitted Touchpoints. Due to wide range of comments in the category, the following example comments are kept on a general level to protect and not to reveal the associated companies. The average of the category was 0.69. In the classification problems were found when the comments were separated to their categories.

Some of the comments might have also been, for instance, infrastructure related comments. Overall 25 participants submitted comments on category other services.

The commentators were principally satisfied with the selection of the stores in the area. Mainly participants wanted to extend the opening hours of the stores. The stores in Nilsiä also received positive comments.

A unified information office was needed to Tahko. Currently the area has no information office, which would provide the information of all the services and events. The Internet site of Tahko provides a lot of information but the respondents felt it was not enough. An information office would guarantee a personal touch with the customers in the area. A respondent stated the information centre should operate at least during the on-season times.

Several participants were in a need of a ski storage area or a service, where a staff member could give a ticket when the skis were left to storage near the slopes. According to an interviewee, such service has existed in numerous places in Central Europe for a long time and the respondent had always wondered why such service is lacking from Tahko. The service could also include, for example, a ski boot drying service, in which case the customer could receive warm dry boots when arriving to the slopes.

Some participants were drawing bigger lines and they wanted a mobile Tahko service to be developed for the area. The commentators argued the application could be downloaded to visitors' smart phones and it would include all the information of the area, including restaurant details, slope maps and ski trail maps. A GPS feature could be utilized in ski maps details, so that the customer could see his location. Table reservations for the restaurants could be made by utilizing the program. With the same program the customer feedback could be anonymously submitted in real time on all the experienced services. The service could have a Facebook styled "Check in" feature in which case the program could automatically find the companies near the customer.

8.4 Accommodation services

The accommodation services were seen as second weakest category from all the services. The average of accommodation services was 0.64. Comments for the group were categorized 64. Some of the participants did not stay overnight in the Tahko tourist area, but rather had a cottage further away from the area. In total 25 participants submitted comments on accommodation services. The respondents, who had not submitted comments on the category were generally accommodated in their own or their friends cottage.

A majority of the accommodation services related comments were neutral or slightly positive. "A basic neat cottage" was the comment of several accommodation services related Touchpoints. The customers were often positively surprised on the quality of their accommodation. The pictures on the Internet had not presented the best parts of the accommodation. In addition, the location of the accommodation received multiple comments.

Predominantly, the development subjects were minor matters. Touchpoints were submitted for example related to level of equipment (picture 9). Sometimes the room had lacked a cheese slicer or a water kettle. A majority of the comments were short announcements, but also longer comments were submitted: "The parking space was not ploughed, had to shovel the snow. The location of the keys was unclear, had to call for maintenance. The toilet smelled like urine. Otherwise high quality. I recommend. Development ideas: A clock on the wall, outside thermometer, a hanger for the shampoo to the shower, shower soap, hangers, hanger hooks and a radio. In the evening we sent an email on the toilet smell, in the morning the service visited. Well taken care of. The smell stayed, but we can handle it".

PICTURE 9. "Water kettle would be nice!"

One of the participants was not able to switch on the sauna by himself. The instructions had been incomplete. The maintenance service had to come over to switch on the sauna.

8.5   Other comments / mood comments

The participants left a significant amount of "mood comments" on their stay at Tahko. These comments were not linkable to any other categories. Comments such as: "Feeling good" were involved in this category. This category overall received 56 comments. The average value of the comments was 0.91, which was the second highest among the categories. The category received comments from 23 participants. Great variation between the comments within the category was detected. Some of the respondents had commented on the weather, while some had taken pictures of their suitcases during the departure.

The comments, which sum up the entire vacation from the general perspective, were involved in the category. As previously mentioned, the respondents averages did not

reflect with the reality. For such reasons the averages of "mood comments" were relatively high.

One participant considered submitting the Touchpoints as a vacation diary and had submitted general sensations from the places visited. One of the participants had submitted 10 comments on this category, from which the first one started with the planning of the trip. On the way to Tahko six Touchpoints were submitted and on the way back two more. The comments described, for instance, driving weather. During the trip to Tahko pictures were also taken from travel companions.

8.6   Infrastructure

18 participants had submitted comments related to general infrastructure of the area. These comments were generally development ideas. Partially because of this, the infrastructure received the lowest average of 0.44 among the categories. Overall 32 Touchpoints related to infrastructure were submitted.

In the classification of the category difficulties occurred when defining, whether the comment was related to general infrastructure or the ski slopes. In many cases the same comment was related to both of the categories.

The positive comments related to infrastructure described already functional features and services in Tahko. Positive comments were submitted to, for example, the functionality of the ice parking place. The recycling possibilities and the pedestrian bridge (picture 10) across the ice also received positive comments

PICTURE 10. Scenery from the pedestrian bridge. "It's great to have the bridge"

The negative comments repeatedly focused on problems with the signs in the area. Difficulties had occurred both with signs on the slopes and by the roads. Several respondents wanted to develop services for children. One respondent wanted to develop an entire children's winter land, which included variety of activities outside the ski slopes. In addition, sledging possibilities wanted to be enhanced. One participant suggested the children's winter land could be commercialized. The land could include several sledging courses and provide the sledges and possibly even ski lifts.

The lack of childcare facilities caused negative emotions among the families with children. For example a children's day-care, located under the slopes, was suggested. The children could be left in the park for few hours while the adults could focus on the winter activities

More services were suggested for the area. One respondent suggested that a single service provider could start Alko's subscription service. The service has been functional in Lapland's ski resorts for a long time and the respondent had found it convenient. On the other hand, the respondents were often positively surprised with the range of services in Tahko. Sokos Hotel Tahko had provided a mini pharmacy and the services of it were found convenient.

8.7   Cross-country skiing

Based on the Touchpoints submitted during the research, cross-country skiing related matters are the most valued features of Tahko. Overall 23 Touchpoints related to cross-country skiing were submitted. The average value of the comments classified to cross-country skiing was 1.4.

The participants were especially pleased with the ski trails in Tahko. In the comments they caused positive emotions almost without exception. The ski trails received over-all 10 positive comments. In the final interviews the interviewees clarified, that the ski trails were versatile and suitable for all skiers from various levels. The signing caused mixed emotions among the interviewees. Some of the respondents found signs by the ski trails (picture 11) convenient and easy to understand, when others wanted enhancement on these.

PICTURE 11. "Which way to go?"

One commentator wished a first snow ski trail to be developed in Tahko. At the mo-ment the area does not have a ski trail, which could be opened long before Decem-ber. The interviewee stated, that the natural snow from the previous winter could be stored for the summer and used in the late fall to open a short ski trail with lights be-fore the slopes are opened. The first snow ski trail could extend the winter season of the entire area.

In addition to the existing ones, the interviewees wished to have more cafes by the ski trails. To the existing ones the interviewees especially wished to have more lunch sandwiches and options to be offered. One respondent wished to have a mobile juice / coffee serving service. The service had existed in Central Europe and it was found a positive surprise.

8.8   Rest

The category "rest" was a combination of two categories; customer service and program services. The two categories received overall 13 Touchpoints. When the Touchpoints were classified, the difficulties occurred when the comments were separated between restaurant services and customer service. The comments were often related to both of the categories, since the customer had commented on the customer service of the restaurant. Instead of categorizing the comments to the category customer service, the Touchpoints were registered to category restaurant services. Since the two categories were combined and the number of received Touchpoints was low, the average value of the category was not calculated for this thesis.

The participants were generally pleased with the level of customer service in the area. Only singular situations had caused more negative emotions.

The participants submitted 10 Touchpoints related to only customer service, when program services received three comments. These comments are involved in the reports the associated companies have received. However, the comments are not clarified in this thesis to protect the privacy of the associated companies.

9   LIMITATIONS

The greatest limitations of the research were associated with the user profiles of the participants and hence the possibility of the study material becoming generalized (See section 6.). Tahko 2030 research had earlier studied the customer profile of visitors of Tahko. Compared to the now conducted research, the size of the sample in the research was significantly greater. The accuracy of the results of earlier research can thus be considered more precise. The size of the Webropol conducted population sample of Tahko 2030 research was 407 subjects, compared to now participated 33 (Finnish Consulting Group, 2011, 12). The sample of now conducted research was not consistent with Tahko 2030 research, but similarities were detected. Hence, the material and sample cannot be generalised and due to its limited size, it only represents the feelings and experiences of the participants of now conducted research.

The participants visited the area from December 27th 2011 to March 11th 2012. Tahko is a year-round tourism area and the sample does not represent the overall picture of the visitors of Tahko. Due to a small size of the sample, the sample cannot be generalised even to winter visitors of the area. On the other hand, the 33 participants and their service paths match, even partly, with sensations of hundreds of visitors in similar life situations.

The age of the participant was limited to adults over the age of 18 only. The decision was made, since the accommodation was not wanted to be given to a minor. The tourism area attracts masses of families with children and youngsters with their friends. Their responses are not involved in the research material.

Another limitation was related to the usage of myServiceFellow mobile application. In now conducted research only the people, who possess an Android, iPhone or iPad device were able to participate in the research. This limits the participants to smart phone users, who are interested in new mobile technology and possibilities brought with it. Since the pictured mobile technology was used and the mobile anthropological research was now conducted in Finland for the first time, In this case the participants can be considered more like early adopters of the mobile technology.

The participation demanded interest to develop the area of Tahko. All visitors of the area are not remarkably interested in the development of the area, but they like to enjoy their vacation in a readymade environment. The participants were requested to

attend to a 30 minute interview, which was time away from their own vacation. The participants had to be ready to sacrifice 30 minutes of their own time and in addition, to travel to the interview location.

For the previously mentioned reasons, the population bias affects the most on the results of the conducted research. The results cannot be generalised to the group of average service consumers in the area and therefore the results may not be entirely valid.

10 EVALUATION AND CONCLUSIONS

The conducted research was able to reach the aims set for it and by utilization of a mobile application development subjects from the area were found. The mobile eth-nographic method of data collection was proven to function well in the development of a tourism area. If the suggested development ideas are carried out, the travellers of the area will consume services designed by themselves for themselves and re-ceive additional value for their vacation experience. By conducting the research the companies of the area were offered valuable information to enhance their business operations.

This thesis does not provide direct idea proposals to be implemented, but the com-panies of the area are free to utilize the suggested ideas. The development subjects are tendentiously kept on a general level and sensitive matters are not presented in this thesis. However, the general development ideas, such as infrastructure related ones this thesis presents, can be utilized to develop the tourism area.

The ski resort Tahko appears to be the dominant company of the area and the major-ity of the service paths of the participants were linked to it. The travellers did not con-sider the service encounters as services provided by singular companies, but they felt they were on a vacation at Tahko. This fact emphasis the role of Tahko as a tourism area. The equipment rentals, ski restaurants and skiing are considered as one ser-vice, but the service providers were not always aware of the events, services or offers of the others. The co-operation between the actors of the area still has significant room for development.

The research tools, myServiceFellow and ServiceFollow, appeared to be functional, yet still need to be further developed. By utilizing the tools the data required for the research was easily collected, but processing the data was left for the researcher for the final analysis. In an international research project the information, not just data, should be comparable between the research partners and thus the similarities and differences could be compared between the partners and locations. For Finland, the greatest downfall of the mobile application was the lack of support for Nokia smart phones.

Some difficulties were occurred with the GPS data provided by ServiceFollow analy-sis tool. The coordinates were often inaccurate and they sometimes were off by up to

40 kilometres. Minor problems were also occurred with the Moods curves. The order of the Touchpoints was false due to some difficulties with the submission of the Touchpoints at the end of the journey. The program did not allow large data transmissions and the interviewees were forced to submit the Touchpoints in smaller packages. In some cases the Touchpoints, which were submitted the latest, registered to the program first. The problem with the program misleads the average values of the Touchpoints in order, which in this case was the first submitted one.

Another difficulty with the mobile application was related to the lens of the camera, which did not always open when the participant wanted to take a photo. In several cases the participant had wanted to attach a photo to a Touchpoint, but the participant had not seen the view from the screen. The participants were not always able to include the attachment they had intended. The picture appeared not to have either registered to the memory of the software for further contemplation. The participants had often taken several pictures of the same event, when the first one had already successfully recorded.

As well as completing its aims in testing the data collection methodology, the study was able to relieve the most successful and the most development requiring service categories in the area. In the categorization of the results on a scale from -2 to +2 cross-country skiing appeared to have received the most positive value of 1.4. In contrast, the respondents' submitted feedback evaluated the infrastructure related matters with the most negative value of 0.44.

The marketing of the research was able to receive contact with thousands of visitors of Tahko. The marketing channels and methods were sufficient, although the social media could have been utilized more effectively from the beginning of the research. The visitors of Tahko were lured to participate by offering a possibility to win a 500€ accommodation voucher. The voucher lottery was drawn on March 13 2012.

The interviewees were not especially thrilled with the accommodation voucher they had a possibility to win. They rather wanted a prize for every participant. Such prize could have been, for instance, a day ticket to Tahko ski resort. The ticket would have tempted the participants to return to Tahko later during the winter. The majority of the participants were on a vacation with their families and stayed in the area for couple of days. The ticket would have been purchased for the rest of the days and for the rest

of the family members. During the stay other services of Tahko would have also been used.

Despite the fact that the population sample size of Tahko 2030 study was larger compared to now conducted study, their customer profile of Tahko visitors cannot either be considered entirely valid and bias free. The study required respondents to have Internet access and furthermore, motivation to fill the Webropol survey used to gather the utilized data. Moreover, the study had only one foreign respondent. However, due to larger number of respondents and less bias causing factors, the population sample represents closer the real customer profile of Tahko, when compared to population sample utilized in now conducted research.

11   FINALLY

Personally, the thesis process was interesting and it enabled to combine the two, the thesis and the mandatory work placement. Because of the unique nature of being part of a large international project, the personal choices in research methodology, place, tools, study population etcetera, were quite limited. Retrospectively thinking, my personal expertise in service design has greatly developed during the thesis process. The mobile ethnographic research method can be applied to concern, not just tourism areas, but also other fields of industries. Similar research approach can be applied in basically any field, where the end user of the product plays an active role. Moreover, the enormous potential of applicability of this research methodology was the key factor which first drew my attention to the subject.

Delimitation of the topic produced minor difficulties. Service design is so broad and multiform subject that this thesis is only able to scratch the surface of it. Only the key features and central aspects were presented to keep the text in topic and to maintain the reader's attention. In addition, the aspects presented are relevant only for reader to understand the conducted research and the methodology used to implement it. However, the aim was to merely present a single study, where one way of utilizing service design in tourism, could be brought into attention of a potential reader.

Despite the fact that the now utilized mobile ethnographic method appears to be promising, a greater study with a more representative population sample is required to re-evaluate the results.

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mySserviceFellow –mobiilitutkimus Tahkolla

Oletko kiinnostunut ottamaan osaa Tahkon matkailualueen kehittämiseen ja mahdollisesti voittamaan samalla itsellesi 500€ arvoisen TAHKOcom OY:n majoituslahjakortin?

Mikäli **kyllä**, osallistu Tahkolla järjestettävään **myService-Fellow –mobiilitutkimukseen**! Osallistua voit, mikäli olet täysi-ikäinen, lomailet Tahkolla 11.3.2012 mennessä ja sinulla on Android tai iPhone –puhelin.

Mukaan tutkimukseen tarvitaan vielä ilmoittautujia!
Osallistu nyt!

Lisätietoja osoitteesta: www.tahko.com/tutkimus
Ilmoittautumiset: tiina.kuosmanen@savonia.fi
tai puhelimitse: 044-785 6097

Ensimmäisenä hiihtokeskuksena Suomessa Tahkolla kerätään asiakaspalautetta kännykällä

Tahkolla testataan MCI Tourismin kehittämän ohjelman "myServiceFellow" avulla (toimii Anroid, iPhone puhelimilla) palvelumuotoilun soveltuvuutta matkailualalle. **Uutta tässä on, että asiakkaat voivat antaa palautetta kaikista käyttämistään ja kokemistaan palveluista kuvin, numeroin, videoin jne. koko lomansa ajalta.**

Tahko on Service Design in Tourism –hankkeessa ainut pilottikohde Suomesta. Muut pilottikohteet ovat: St. Anton am Arlberg (laskettelukeskus Itävalta), Juist (kesäkohde, Saksa), Hurtigruten risteilyt (Norja), Linköpingin museon Joulutapahtuma (Ruotsi), Mougins ja Juan Les Pins (Ranskan Rivieran lomakylät) ja The Hague hotellikoulu (Hollanti).

Asiakaspalautetta kerätään Tahkolla 20.12.2011-29.2.2012 aikana. Tutkimukseen otetaan mukaan 50 tuona aikana Tahkolla lomailevaa täysi-ikäistä asiakasta. Heidän tehtävä on lomansa aikana arvioida "myServiceFellow" -ohjelmaan kokemuksiaan Tahkon palveluista mahdollisimman monen itse valitsemansa kontaktipisteen eli "touchpointin" avulla.

Loman lopussa asiakkaat osallistuvat tutkimukseen liittyvään loppuhaastatteluun. Kontaktipisteiden arvioinneilla ja loppuhaastattelulla asiakkaat osallistetaan Tahkon palvelujen kehittämiseen. Asiakkaan mukaan ottaminen kohteen kehittämiseen on oleellinen osa palvelumuotoilua ja yritysten tuotekehittelyä tänä päivänä.

"Tutkimukseen osallistuvien asiakkaiden rekrytointi on käynnissä, ja jännittyneinä odotamme miten Tahkon kävijät ottautuvat tähän. Toivottavasti Keskusvaraamo TAHKOcomin 500 € lahjakortti ja moobiliteknologian uutuuden viehätys herättävät kiinnostusta", toteaa projektipäällikkö Tiina Kuosmanen. Ainakin Tahkon yrittäjät ovat innostuneita uudesta tavasta kerätä asiakaspalautetta. Eero Väätäisen mukaan "tämä on erinomainen keino saada asiakaspalautetta reaaliajassa". Eero osallistui Tahkon yrittäjien kanssa ohjelman testiryhmään 9.11. itävaltalaisten Tahkolla pitämässä hankkeen esittelytilaisuudessa.
Service Design in Tourism -hanke kestää syksylle 2012, jolloin saadaan vertailutietoa erilaisista matkailukeskuksista ja matkailijoiden palvelupoluista. Tahkolla toimenpiteet on keskitetty Keskusvaraamo TAHKOcomin kautta. Savoniasta hankkeen toteutukseen osallistuvat matkailu- ja ravitsemisalan opettajat Hilkka Lassila ja Pauli Verhelä, projektipäällikkö Tiina Kuosmanen sekä Savonian opiskelijat opinnäytetöiden ja projektiopintojen kautta.

Savonia-ammattikorkeakoulu on partnerina kansainvälissä Service Design in Tourism –hankkeessa, jota hallinnoin MCI Tourism yliopisto Itävallasta (Management Center Innsbruck **)**. Muita kv-partnereita hankkeessa ovat AHO University (Norja), Innovation Norway (Norja), Making Waves (Norja), Linköping University (Ruotsi), International Hotel School Den Haag (Hollanti), SKEMA Business School (Ranska) ja Tourismuszukunft (Saksa). Kyseessä on EU:n innovoinnin ja kilpailukyvyn puiteohjelman tutkimushanke.
Lisätietoja: Tiina Kuosmanen, tiina.kuosmanen@savonia.fi puh. 044-785 6097

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Savon Sanomat

TORSTAINA 22.12.2011

Tiesitkö, että...
Viime vuonna Venäjältä Suomeen tehtiin 2,6 miljoonaa matkaa. Kaupan Liitto

ASIAKASPALAUTE

Kännykkä käyttöön

ARKISTOKUVA - SOILE NIEVALAINEN

Tahkon talviurheilukeskus Nilsiässä kokeilee asiakaspalautteen keräämistä kännykällä ensimmäisenä hiihtokeskuksena Suomessa.

Tahkolla testataan tänä joulukautena itävaltalaisen MCI Tourism -yliopiston kehittämän, Android- ja iPhone-puhelimilla toimivan ohjelman soveltuvuutta matkailualalle. Mukaan valitaan

50 täysi-ikäistä asiakasta, jotka voivat antaa palautetta kaikista käyttämistään ja kokemistaan palveluista kuvin, numeroin ja videoin koko lomansa ajalta. Tutkimukseen osallistuvien rekrytointi alkaa ensi viikolla.

Asiakkaat osallistetaan Tahkon palvelujen kehittämiseen myös loppuhaastattelun avulla. Tahko on ainut pilottikohde

Suomesta itävaltalaisyliopiston hallinnoimassa kansainvälisessä Service Design in Tourism -hankkeessa.

Hankkeen partnerina toimii myös Savonia-ammattikorkeakoulu, jonka opettajia ja opiskelijoita osallistuu Tahkon kokeilun toteutukseen.

Muut partnerit ovat Norjasta, Ruosista, Hollannista, Ranskasta ja Saksasta.

myServiceFellow ohjelman käyttö

MyServiceFellow -ohjelma on ladattavissa ilmaiseksi Androidmarketista ja AppStoresta.

- Hae ohjelma nimellä myServiceFellow.
- Lataa ohjelma puhelimeen ja kirjaudu sisään ilmoittautumisen yhteydessä saaduilla tunnuksilla.
- Nyt pääset luomaan omia kohtaamispisteitä eli touchpointeja.
- Puhelimen datayhteys tulee olla päällä kirjautumisen yhteydessä sekä loman lopussa tietojen lähettämisen aikana.

Ohjelman englanninkielinen esittelyvideo on osoitteessa: http://vimeo.com/34160910

Kohtaamispisteiden luonti

Kun olet varaamassa matkaa tai jo valmistautumassa matkaan ja huomaat jotakin raportoinnin arvoista, kirjaudu matkapuhelimellasi sovellukseen. Näet puhelimen ruudussa vasemmalla olevan näkymän. Voit luoda touchpointin painamalla ruudussa näkyvää plus- merkkiä. Voit myös nimetä touchpointit haluamallasi tavalla esimerkiksi: "hotellin aula", "maisema", "ravintola".
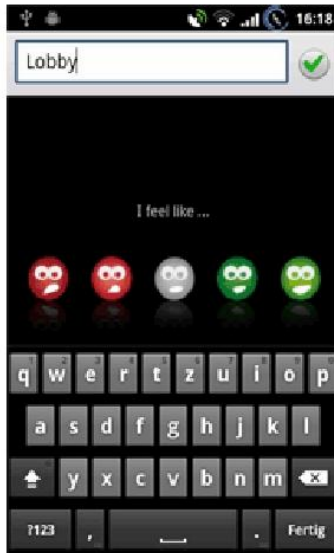
Seuraavassa ruudussa näet viisi hymynaamaa. Ne kuvastavat tunnetilaasi touchpointissa. Punaiset naamat tarkoittavat negatiivisia tunteita ja vihreät positiivisia tunteita. Touchpointin sisältöä voit selventää kirjoittamalla, ottamalla kuvan tai videon tai nauhoittamalla äänikommentin.

Jos haluat selittää touchpointtia kuvalla, paina hymynaaman valinnan jälkeen "Photo" kuvaketta. Tämän jälkeen paina "plus" symbolia, joka sijaitsee "Add a photo" tekstin alla. Kuva on tallentunut sen jälkeen kun olet valinnut yhden kuvaan liittyvän hymynaaman.

Kaikki touchpointit tallentuvat ohjelmaan automaattisesti kun poistut ohjelmasta. **Loman loppuessa ohjelmassa olevat tiedot pitää lähettää painamalla linkkiä:" Finish journey/upload Touchpoints" ja sen jälkeen: "Upload now!" Huom! tällöin puhelimen/laitteen datayhteys tulee olla päällä.** Varmistathan operaattoriltasi, että liittymässäsi on rajaton datayhteys käytössä. Tutkimukseen osallistuva henkilö vastaa puhelimensa/laitteensa omista datayhteyskuluista.

Savonia-ammattikorkeakoulun opiskelijat tekevät **lähtöhaastattelun**, jossa kysytään kokemuksia tutkimukseen osallistumisesta sekä kohtaamispisteistä. **Kaikki vähintään 15 kohtaamispistettä luoneet, yhteystietonsa antaneet ja loppuhaastatteluun osallistuneet osallistuvat 500 euron TAHKOcom Oy:n majoituslahjakortin arvontaan. Haastattelu kestää noin 30 minuuttia.**

Lisätietoa tutkimuksesta ja tutkimukseen osallistumisesta projektipäällikkö Tiina Kuosmanen. Savonia-ammattikorkeakoulu, tiina.kuosmanen@savonia.fi, puh. 044-785 6097

Loppuhaastattelu

1. **Taustatietojen tarkistus**
- olitko Tahkolla yksin, perheen, työporukan kanssa vai vieraana?
- kuinka kauan olit Tahkolla?

2. **Oletko Tahkon kanta-asiakas?**
- vaileletko enemmän Tahkolla kesällä vai talvella?

   Oletko Tahkolla ensimmäistä kertaa?
- mistä sait tiedon Tahkosta?
- mikä vaikutti valintapäätökseesi saapua juuri Tahkolle?

3. **Olivatko tutkimuksen ohjeet riittävät?**
- minkälaista lisäohjetta olisit kaivannut?

4. **Miten koit mobiilitutkimuksen?**
- oliko luonteva osa lomaa?
- tuntuiko miellyttävältä/helpolta?
- toimivatko yhteydet?

5. **Olivatko kaikki Touchpointtisi sinun mielipiteitä vai osallistuiko joku muu sinun kanssa Touchpointtien luomiseen?**

6. **Touchpointti kerrallaan tilannekatsaus.**

7. **Miten suuri merkitys yksittäisellä Touchpointilla oli koko lomakokonaisuuteen?**

8. **Vapaa mielipide tutkimuksesta.**