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Developing Domestic Conference Tourism at Pyhätunturi Leisure Tourism Centre

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<p>This thesis is about developing domestic conference tourism at Pyhätunturi leisure tourism centre in Lapland. In the theory part conference tourism in general was explained and analysed and the case part told more about conference tourism in Lapland. SWOT analysis about Pyhätunturi was used to tell about it as a conference destination today.</p> <p>The empirical part of the thesis consisted of a questionnaire survey, which was implemented as a qualitative, theme-based questionnaire through email and phone interview. The survey focused on describing conference customers, packages, services and seasonality and it was directed to conference tourism service providers in Lapland. Levi and Saariselkä were the centres that were chosen for this research. The purpose of the research was to attain information about conference tourism in Lapland and find out if there was demand for conference packages.</p> <p>It was found out that conference tourism at leisure tourism centres in Lapland was important, but not the most important part of their business operations. Conference guests came from all parts of Finland and in average they stayed for two nights. Many companies offered conference packages and they were built for customer needs. Tourism seasons had an effect on conference tourism. Decisions about conferences were made in shorter notice than before and conference service providers had to be able to react quickly for the demand.</p> <p>Developing domestic conference tourism at Pyhätunturi should be made through developing services and securing their supply also during low seasons in order to get low season gaps filled with conference guests.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

A topic of this thesis is developing domestic conference tourism in Pyhänturi. The commissioning party Pyhänturi Ltd has given this topic. Hotel Pyhänturi has a small capacity of conference facilities to offer, but in June 2012 a new nature centre Naava was opened and it has brought more capacity and alternatives for holding conferences and educational events. It serves all together 232 conferences tourists with a full-equipped auditorium and two congress rooms. (Metsähallitus 2012 b.)

The thesis is useful to the commissioning party, because the new congress facilities need to be put in use, and the more the better. Developing conference tourism in Pyhänturi is needed to fill out the conference facilities and to increase tourism in general through business tourists.

Pyhänturi is located in Eastern Lapland, 134 kilometres northeast from Rovaniemi in the boarder of Pyhä-Luosto national park. It is a growing leisure tourism centre, which has a long tourism history starting from the 1920s. (Metsähallitus 2012 a.) The first national park established in Finland was Pyhänturi. It was founded in 1938, and afterwards it has spread out towards Luosto as well. Pyhä-Luosto national park was the fifth in the list of most popular national parks in Finland with 128 000 visits in 2009. (Metsähallitus 2012 b.) In 1966 two ski lifts, a radio tower and hotel were built to answer to the demands of growing tourism in Lapland (Finland's environmental administration 2012).

2 CONFERENCE TOURISM

Business tourism refers to all work-related tourism, in other words when tourists travel because of their work for example to attend meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE). Business tourism can be divided into domestic and international tourism, and short haul or long haul tourism. (Lominé & Edmunds 2007, 18.) In this thesis the focus was on domestic conference tourism in Finland.

Business tourism has a significant effect on all tourism services, airline and airport sector and hotels and other establishments having conference facilities. The airline and airport sector gets most of their revenue from first class and business class ticket purchases. In hotels and conference centres tourists usually use their catering and other services. (Lominé & Edmunds 2007, 18.)

Business tourism can be said to be relatively price inelastic. Price elasticity means the relationship between change in price and change in quantity demand (Lominé & Edmunds 2007, 146). An individual traveller's concern about the costs of travel is lower in business travel than in holiday travel, because the company pays for the travelling costs and in that way the change in price does not have an impact on demand as much as in leisure tourism. (Holloway 1998.)

2.1 Types of conferences

The word conference has been used in this thesis to describe generally the communicational events in the meeting industry (Rogers 2008 2). Conference tourism refers to tourism that includes business activity such as a meeting or conference, and that is the main reason for travelling. It also includes elements of tourism, as it requires travelling to the conference destination and in some case using various tourism services such as accommodation, restaurant, transport and program services. (Davidson 1994, 2-3.)

Conference is defined as a gathering of people. It can be a simple morning meeting within the company's department or it can last many days including several different events. De-

spite of the type of a meeting its purpose is always to work together: decide, inform, discuss and choose persons to different positions. (Rautiainen & Siiskonen 2002, 24.)

The acronym MICE, which comes from words meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions, is one way of categorizing the four core market areas in business tourism (Lominé & Edmunds 2007, 18). The International Association of Professional Congress Organizers (IAPCON) breaks those even into smaller units. There are 18 different types of the most important conferences and 63 other types of conferences. From the most important conference types conference, congress and convention have been described in this thesis. (Rautiainen & Siiskonen 2002, 25.)

Conference is a meeting for problem solving, discussions and for consulting purposes. There are no regulations for how often it should be arranged. There is no time limit, but usually a meeting lasts for a defined time and it has set goals. It is a meeting with small amount of attendants and it has a specified theme. (Rautiainen & Siiskonen 2002, 25.)

Congress is a regularly organized gathering of hundreds or thousands of people from the same profession, culture, religion or other group members. Its purpose is to present a specific topic and it can last for several days and many lectures are offered. (Rautiainen & Siiskonen 2002, 25.)

Convention has two different types of gatherings. The first type is for members of legislation, political or economic groups. It is an official and general meeting for a negotiation about a specific event, discussion and agreements. This type of conference has set goals and a time limit, but there are no regulations about arranging meetings regularly. The second type of convention is for large, international or national business meetings, which are organized for discussions, commercial exhibitions or both. (Rautiainen & Siiskonen 2002, 25.)

2.2 Impacts of conference tourism

Values of conference tourism, which have been measured, are estimates that have been drawn from surveys. They have been received by measuring the net change in the local economy that has been resulted from holding conferences and business events. (Rogers 2008, 88.)

An economic impact of business and conference tourism can be looked at on three levels of impact, which are direct, indirect and induced impacts. With these three impacts the full positive economic impact of tourism expenditure can be fully assessed. The circulation of money in the tourism economy can be said to have a cascading effect, when money circulates from direct spending to the local economy. (Rogers 2008, 88-89.)

In business tourism it is very important to do everything as successful as possible. In the best scenario participants have experienced a pleasant, positive and well-organized business trip in a destination and they will return with their families and friends. They might also organize a conference or incentive holidays in the same destination. They are spreading out a positive message about a destination and its attractions, services and activities, which they have experienced. "A single meeting of influential business executives can do more to increase a destination's exposure than years of promotion by economic development officials." (Rogers 2008, 28.)

Direct impacts are renting accommodation, using taxi services, purchasing skiing tickets and rental equipment, using program services and spending money in shops and restaurants for example. Indirect impacts come to the picture when the front-line actors use services from other service providers, such as planning and building a new hotel, accountants and bank services or waste disposal services. (Rogers 2008, 88-99.) These are also services that are needed to run a tourism centre but they are not always visible to tourists.

This cascading effect creates jobs in tourism centres and especially in small towns and villages, like surrounding areas in Pyhäntunturi, many people can get a position in tourism industry due to the influence of cascading effect. New improvements in the infrastructure in Pyhäntunturi were made, for example the new road, SkiWay slope, PyhäExpress chairlift, new slopes and nature centre Naava, which is also the newest conference facility in Pyhäntunturi. The hotel was also expanded. (The Regional Council of Lapland 2012 c.)

Not all the money tourists spend in the tourism centre are going to continue circulating. There is leakage because of imports, savings and taxation. When money has been used in direct and indirect ways it starts to flow to local residents in wages, salaries, distributed prof-

it, rent and interest. This way the money that was spent in the equipment rental shop can be later used for the local economy on goods and services. (Rogers 2008, 89.)

The multiplier analysis has been commonly used to measure the economic impact of tourist spending. Multiplier analysis describes the circulation of money in the receiving economy. It explains the difference between direct and indirect income that comes from tourism at local, regional and national level. (Lominé & Edmunds 2007, 127.) It is important to use the right multiplier for spending functions for example the additional revenue measures or employment for an area arising from tourist expenditure. These formulas are complicated so they are done by using the total gross expenditure figures, that can be calculated by multiplying the number of attendees or delegates, delegate spending, the number of the event duration, any additional days, additional numbers of the group and organizers' or others' spending. (Rogers 2008, 89-90.)

With the effort of providing extra services destinations will gain extra benefits by attracting business tourists. Rogers (2008) has listed them as greater profitability, an all-year-round activity, a future inward investment, professional development, and a green tourism and improved quality of life. In business and conference tourism high quality is an important factor. That causes high costs and in the end a high yield end of the market. Business tourists spend more money in a host destination and it stays for the use of infrastructural and marketing development. For example in 2005 conference tourists in the United Kingdom spent an average £164 per day compared to spending of leisure tourists' £57 per day. (Rogers 2008, 27.)

The positive and negative impacts of business tourism have fewer negative impacts on the environment than mass leisure tourism. In business tourism there are fewer number of people to travel and that will affect on transportation in the destination. There will be less traffic congestion and environmental pollution. (Rogers 2008, 29.)

Conference guests tend to stay in a group during their stay in a destination, so information about the region and the local culture can be easily transferred to them. Guests will learn about the region and that way increase their level of experience but also they will be aware and informed about respecting the local culture and nature. Groups are easier to manage than average leisure tourists who are moving more freely at the destination. (Rogers 2008, 29.)

Business tourism has also negative impacts on environment as well as all tourism has. These problems arise from frequent travelling and high quality needs in facilities and transportation. (Rogers 2008, 29-30.)

3 TOURISM SERVICES AND PACKAGES IN CONFERENCE TOURISM

Moline and Edmunds (2007, 138) have described a package tour as a combination of holiday elements organized by an intermediate, which is usually a tour operator. A package includes at least two elements, but with three elements a standard package becomes a holiday experience. The basic three elements are flight, transfer and accommodation, and other elements are car hire, destination excursion and activities. (Rogers 2008, 26.)

Business and leisure tourism have very similar aspects for their success. In both markets travellers need services from a broad sector: accommodation and catering, transport and communications such as airports, railway stations and taxi services, entertainment, information services and medical services. They require an attractive, welcoming, safe and secure environment. (Rogers 2008, 27.)

The most important aspect in producing a conference is planning a service package. The service package includes a core product and additional, supporting services. Business trip is a combination of services, an overall experience for a client. (Blinnikka & Kuha 2004, 96.)

3.1 Conference services

Blinnikka and Kuha (2004) describe the core product as the official agenda, but in this text the core product has been expanded to mean also conference services such as conference facilities and equipment. In this thesis tourism package and a conference package have been discussed from the supplier point of view.

All the services that are offered for conference tourists form a service package, which consists of tangible and intangible elements. Tangible, physical elements such as a conference room and equipment enable delivering the message, the core product, more easily and effectively. Intangible elements such as experiences, services and quality are important elements that can be difficult to measure. (Blinnikka & Kuha 2004, 96-97.)

The differences between leisure and business tourism services arise from the specific infrastructural needs that business tourists require. Appropriate facilities with special conference equipment and trained staff to respond to their guests' needs are needed for holding confer-

ences. (Rogers 2008, 27.) Conference arrangements are an important part of a well-organized conference. Depending on the type of a conference there can be participants from a few people to thousand people. (Rautiainen & Siiskonen 2002, 24.)

3.1.1 Conference facilities

It is important to select a right place for holding a conference. Conference facilities have special requirements according to the purpose and size of the conference, but the main elements should be found in every conference facility. The main elements are AV technique, wireless and fixed-line Internet, papers and pencils, flipchart, whiteboard, LCD projector, overhead projector and nametags. (Scandichotels 2012.)

Conference refreshments and servings are a part of a well-organized conference. Customer service and conference host or hostess in a conference centre is a good way of increasing the value for the customer and create a professional image. Conference host or hostess may welcome the guests and introduce the facilities for conference organizers and also help with technical and other issues. (Blinnikka & Kuha 2004, 102.)

3.1.2 Supporting activities

Supporting services bring extra value to a conference. They are important because guests might decide to attend a conference according to the extra activities or programs that are interesting to them. Conferences can stand out and be more visible due to the activities and extra programs. Activities should be linked to the theme of the conference and the program of the whole event should be carefully planned so that everything runs smoothly. (Blinnikka & Kuha 2004, 102.)

In many cases supporting services include elements that are necessary for organizing the conference. Services that are needed are for example dining, services during a break, facilities, conference personnel services and accommodation. Program services add extra value to the event and people may experience new and positive things, which will show the whole conference in a positive light. Additional activities can be arranged during the meeting to lighten the formal program and during the free time. These activities should be planned to

support the theme of the conference. If the schedule is too tight and guests have to eat in a hurry or they do not have time to sleep enough, the event can turn out to be unsuccessful. Examples of additional program and activities have been listed below:

- Time for socialising and being together
- Cultural activity
- Sport activities outdoors for balancing the day spent indoors
- Possibility to build networks
- Possibility to familiarise with local culture and learn new things
- Possibility to get to know the sponsoring company and get deeper information about the core issue (Blinnikka & Kuha 2004, 103.)

To arrange a successful conference, accommodation should be chosen carefully. Guests need to sleep and eat well to be vivacious and energetic in the meetings. Facilities should be suitable for the image of the conference and in the planned budget. Issues that should be taken into account are the amount of participants, field of business, age and cultural background, which can have an effect especially on the dining and food services. (Blinnikka & Kuha 2004, 103-104.)

3.1.3 Programme planning

Planning the program of a conference it is important to make sure that it is not too tight and that it does not last too long. Program services should be checked that they are available and easily accessible. Few things should be taken into consideration when planning program services:

- The time available for program services
- Transfer times
- Versatility of food services
- Time for preparation

- Equipment needed

Conferences can include a welcome ceremony and gala dinner. The welcome ceremony should also be planned carefully because it is the opening of the conference event and the first impression. If the welcoming ceremony goes well it creates a positive and nice atmosphere for the whole event. (Blinnikka & Kuha 2004, 104-105.) The organizing party, a hotel for example, also shows their best knowledge and skills and that can be a guarantee that the company organizes their conference there again the following year.

Accompaniment and children should be noticed in the conference planning, too. There should be activities organized also for them to make sure that they enjoy their stay and conference attendants can focus on the conference. (Blinnikka & Kuha 2004, 105.)

3.2 Business customer as a client

In business tourism customers have a specific need to travel: their work. That is why they are more demanding with their needs and expectations. Travelling is not the main focus in business tourism, but instead the focus has to be in the results of the conference. Risks always exist in business related actions for example closing deals successfully and in maintaining and succeeding in customer relations. (Verhelä 2000, 14-15.)

Business tourists do not usually have a chance to determine the destination and time of travelling. Trips may have to be arranged at a short notice for specific time and perhaps they do not last many days. For these reasons services that business tourists use, should be working without problems and unnecessary delays. Business tourists value convenience such as frequent transportation, efficient service and good facilities. (Holloway 1998.)

Tourism services play an important role in business tourism when companies are organizing events for their customers or co-operational companies. They are regarded as a part of the organizing company's business actions so services should be well organized and high-class. In this type of business tourism also experiences play an important role to make the organizing company look good. Mistakes in any stage of business tourism can in the worst-case lead to financial losses. (Verhelä 2000, 15.)

A marketing research that was done in 1999 by Suomen Gallup, shows the features that participants attending conferences value the most in hotels. These features are functional conference facilities, friendly service, traffic communications, technically high quality conference equipment, professional staff, reacting for customer feedback, easy booking, facilities for group work, possibility to have a conference dinner, price, versatile restaurant services, conference package and security arrangements. (Blinnikka & Kuha 2004, 107.)

4 CONFERENCE TOURISM IN LAPLAND

An all-year-round activity is an important issue that could be developed by increasing business tourism. Pyhäntunturi is primarily a leisure tourism centre with high and low seasons. Winter is the high season but there are also quiet times during winter. All the extra activity that fills out the low season gaps is warmly welcome.

Business tourism does not follow the normal tourism seasons and business trips have been done all year round according to the company's timetable. There are peak seasons in business tourism and as can be seen in the research about Finnish travel by Statistics Finland (2011), the peak seasons in 2011 were October, November and May. Also January and April were busy months in domestic business and conference tourism. All-year-round activity enables creating permanent jobs and also careers in leisure tourism centres. (Rogers 2008, 28.)

In 2011 there were altogether 5 907 000 domestic and international business travels done among Finnish people. From that amount 4 362 000 travels were in the field of domestic business tourism. Remarkable in this statistic is that the highest numbers of travels can be found in January, May, October and November. (Statistics Finland 2012.)

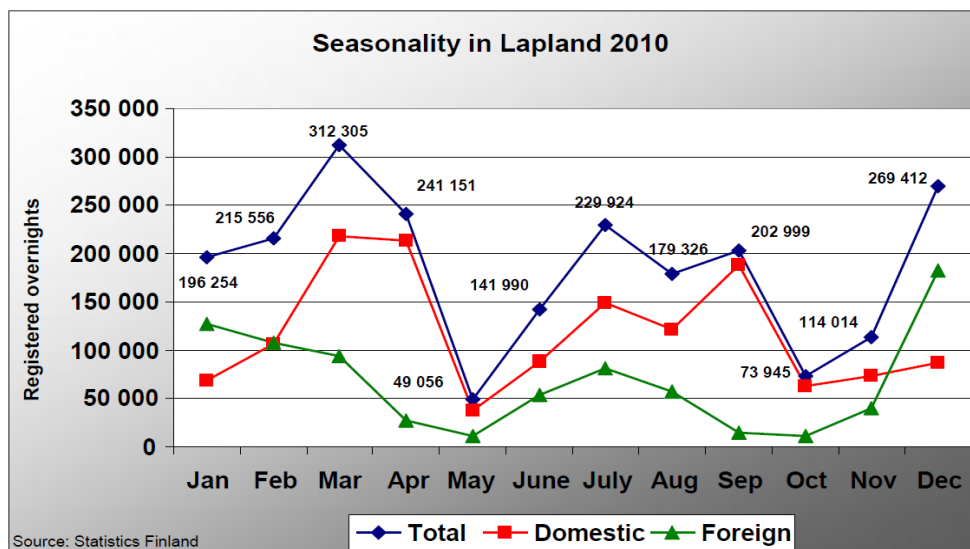
Table 2: Domestic and international business and conference trips according to the month of the ending of the trip in 2011

Ending month of the trip	Domestic trips, overnight at the destination	International trips, overnight in the destination country	Cruises, overnight at the cruise ship	Day trips abroad	All business and conference trips
TOTAL NUMBER OF TRIPS	4 362 000	1 244 000	140 000	161 000	5 907 000
January	454 000	63 000	20 000	17 000	554 000
February	367 000	89 000	-	11 000	470 000
March	285 000	68 000	-	-	364 000
April	433 000	134 000	-	14 000	587 000
May	578 000	223 000	18 000	29 000	848 000
June	217 000	73 000	-	18 000	317 000
July	153 000	74 000	-	-	230 000
August	304 000	72 000	-	11 000	392 000
September	264 000	88 000	18 000	-	376 000

October	506 000	129 000	12 000	-	653 000
November	578 000	139 000	32 000	23 000	772 000
December	223 000	91 000	15 000	14 000	343 000

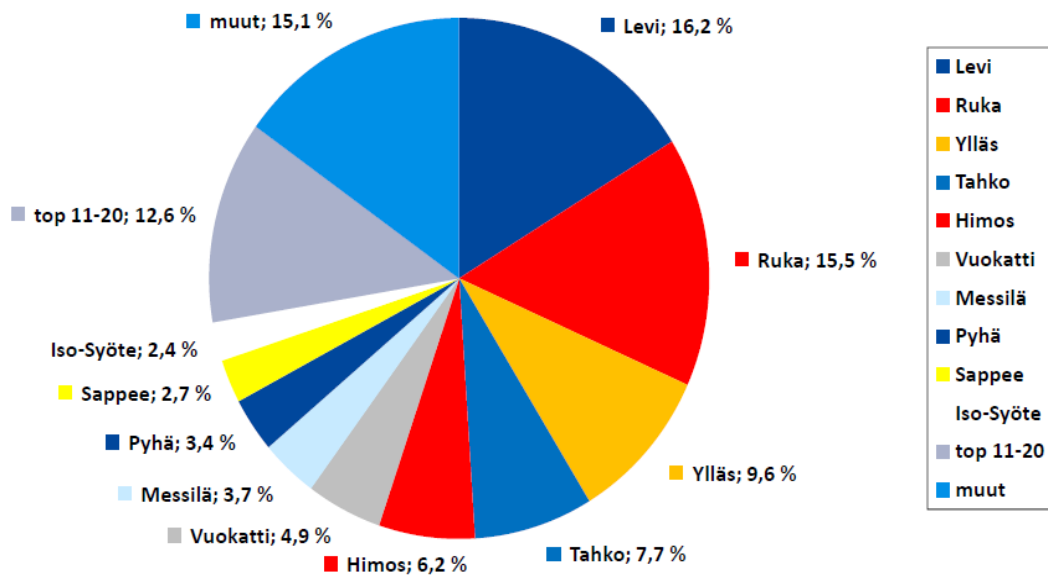
- 1) In the research of Finnish travel destination county is not been taken into consideration in domestic business tourism.

High season peaks in skiing centres are in different times than business tourism high seasons. The high seasons at tourism centres follow closely school holidays, which are Christmas and New Year, Sport holidays in March and Easter. So we could roughly say that their high season peaks are in December, March and April. If the business tourism flows could be directed to Lapland and to the ski centres they would fill their low season gaps with business tourism.



Picture 3: Seasonality in Lapland. The Regional Council of Lapland. Lapin matkailutilastollinen vuosikirja 2011. (Statistics Finland)

The pie chart shows Finland's skiing centres market share by their size (The Finnish Ski Area Association 2012). In the thesis focus is on Lapland's leisure tourism centres.



Picture 1: The Finnish Ski Area Association 2012.

If figures about all tourism overnight stays in tourism centres are compared, in 2012 from January to July in Finland there were 12 508 816 overnights and from those 1 514 700 overnights were spent in Lapland. Rovaniemi was the leading tourism centre in Lapland with 300 946 overnights, Kittilä (Levi) had 277 575 overnight guests, Saariselkä 168 911 and Pyhä-Luosto 89 335 guests staying overnight. Compared to 2011 statistics between January and July Saariselkä has 14% increase in overnight stays, Levi 8,1% increase and Pyhä-Luosto has got 1,9% increase. (The Regional Council of Lapland 2012 a.)

Table 1: Business tourists' overnight stays in Lapland's tourism centres.

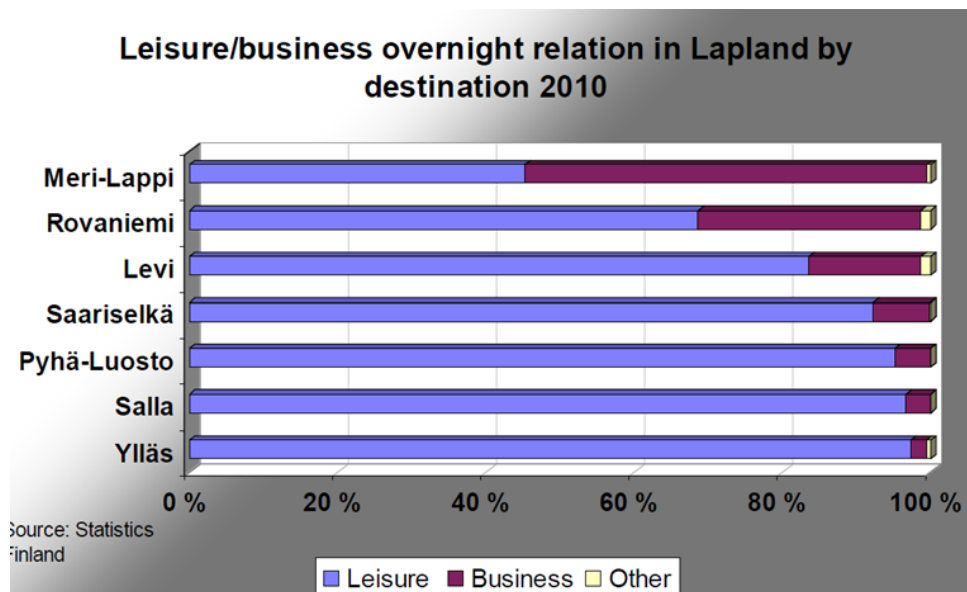
Tourism centre	Business tourism overnight stays			Domestic business tourism overnight stays		
	2010	2011	2012 (i-vii)	2010	2011	2012 (i-vii)
Lapland	410 195	444 161	272 119	273 263	291 946	162 706
Rovaniemi	137 491	133 152	73 629	92 835	84 736	46 741
Marine-Lapland	69 851	73 750	41 549	58 732	63 032	34 170
Levi	62 980	72 316	44 436	44 749	52 622	29 263
Saariselkä	19 880	21 294	12 894	13 028	12 292	6 718
Tornio River Valley	8 344	4 330	2 737	7 039	3 295	2 633

Pyhä-Luosto	6 854	6 817	3 294	5 925	6 136	2 552
Ylläs	6 542	No info	13 677	5 472	No info	8 105
Salla	3 233	3 736	3 804	2 400	3 118	2 373

Nights spent by purpose of visit by The Regional Council of Lapland 2012 b.

In the Table 1 research, which shows business tourism overnight stays in total (international and domestic) and only domestic business tourism overnight stays, the information has been collected from 2010 until 2012 (January-July). Levi and Saariselkä have been highlighted in the table because they have been analysed in the thesis. Levi is the biggest skiing centre among business tourists and after that come Saariselkä and Ylläs.

The following graph illustrates the relationship between leisure and business overnights in Lapland's destinations. It can be seen that in Pyhätunturi (and Luosto) business tourism consist of less than ten per cent of all the overnights. Leisure tourism is the major tourism sector in Lapland.



Picture 2: Leisure and business overnight relation in Lapland by destination 2010.

The Regional Council of Lapland 2012. Lapin tilastollinen vuosikirja 2011. (Statistics Finland)

4.1 Main business and conference centres in Lapland

The main business centres can be listed by the statistical information about business trips, overnight stays, accommodation capacity and turnover, but another way to list them is to compare facilities the tourism centres has to offer. For example tourism centre Olos has in 2005 opened conference centre with capacity of 800 people in their auditorium and also four conference rooms, but is not mentioned in the research of The Regional Council of Lapland about business tourism. (Lapland Hotels 2012.)

If the numbers about business tourism overnight stays in Lapland have been taken into consideration it can be seen that Rovaniemi attracts the most of business tourists. From the skiing centres sector Levi is the most popular destination within the business tourists.

In this thesis Levi and Saariselkä have been analysed as conference tourism centres. Levi has been chosen, because it is the largest and it has versatile programs and activities to offer. Saariselkä represents more Pyhätunturi-like tourism centre and it has different image than Levi. Saariselkä is also a smaller tourism centre than Levi and that way it might have different ways of managing business and conference tourism.

Levi belongs to the Mountain Lapland area together with Ylläs, Olos and Pallas. Levi and Ylläs have been the fastest growing tourism centres in Lapland in turnover. That results from large investments in both centres, and there have been opened large conference and congress centre Summit and Panorama hotel in Levi. (The Regional Council of Lapland 2012 c.)

Levi has more than ten companies who offer conference facilities. These are only the companies who market their conference services in the Internet and they can be found relatively easily.

As previously has been noted Levi is the leading leisure tourism centre in Finland and it also attracts business tourists. Levi offers a lot of activities and alternative possibilities to skiing and other snow activities so it has something for everyone. That can be said to be the reason why it is easy to choose for a leisure and business destination. Especially in companies there are people from different age groups and they have different interest and hobbies, so this

kind of destination as a conference destination is a safe choice. For shorter conference trips there is not that big demand for activities and program services, but for longer trips Levi offers alternatives. If a company comes year after year to hold their conferences in Levi, they can have new and different activities and experiences.

Big events such as Alpine Skiing World Cup in November, Hullu Porock in January and business event Levi Suksee in the end of January attract also business tourists in Levi. Program activities are listed in the webpage clearly and there is a phone number of central booking centre for making a booking easier. (Levi 2012.)

Important aspect considering the accessibility of the destination is that new train connections are planned to build due to the growing mining industry and those tracks should be continued to Levi and Ylläs. That is a new challenge to increase accessibility in the region. (The Regional Council of Lapland 2012 c, 64.)

Saariselkä belongs to the North-Lapland tourism sector together with Ivalo and Inari tourism centres. Its profile as a tourism centre is traditional, family and sport centre. Services are high quality and versatile and there is a conference centre Giellas offering conference services for 300 people. Gold washing, history of Sami people, lively culture and reindeers are unique elements in the region, which have been also used in creating tourism products. (The Regional Council of Lapland 2012 c.)

As can be seen in the Picture 2 Leisure/business relation in Lapland by destination 2010, Saariselkä is positioned right after Levi. Saariselkä has six companies who offer conference services. There are also activities listed right after conference facilities, which might attract person's interest when looking at place to have a conference. This information can be found in Saariselkä tourism centre's web pages.

Saariselkä attracts conference guests from ministry level as there has been held conferences of European Union Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 2010. In 2010 it was a success according to the newspaper Turun Sanomat on 14th of March 2010. What was pointed out was that guests had time to go through their topics without tight schedules and they had had time to enjoy skiing as well. The conference trip was so successful that they have returned in Saariselkä two times after that. Returning customers are the best feedback that a company can get.

4.2 Conference facilities in Pyhäntunturi

Pyhäntunturi has conference facilities in Hotel Pyhäntunturi, Restaurant Huttu-Uula and the newest facilities in nature centre Naava. Pyhä-Luosto Tourism Ltd rents cabins that can be used for small meetings. Below there is collected information about Pyhäntunturi's conference facilities.

Hotel Pyhäntunturi has a Holy Suites conference centre with three different conference rooms and they are located next to the skiing hill. It serves up to 185 persons in 176 m² altogether. The rooms are equipped with an overhead projector, flipchart, and ADSL - connection and WLAN Internet connection. Meeting coffees and snacks are served in Holy Suite conference centre and other dining's in Hotel Pyhäntunturi's restaurants. Specialty is dining outdoors in Tajukangas. (Pyhäntunturi 2012 a.)

Restaurant Huttu-Uula opened a balcony Parvi in 2011 for conferences and other event purposes. It serves up to 45 persons and it is equipped with a data projector and screen. (Restaurant Huttu-Uula 2012.)

The newest facility in Pyhäntunturi is 2012 opened nature centre Naava. It offers conference facilities for up to 232 persons in auditorium and two conference rooms. Facilities are equipped with video projectors, document cameras, WLAN – Internet access and sound and light table. (Pyhäntunturi 2012 a.)

As a conclusion of these facilities and services offered in the websites of Pyhäntunturi and its co-operational companies has been noticed, that these services are available but there is no party or company offering the service for putting it all together: accommodation, transportation, conference facilities, dining and other activities.

The new conference centre Naava has great facilities for organizing a conference but there is no marketing in Pyhäntunturi's webpages about it. By just looking at the other skiing centres conference marketing in their webpages it reveal the missing parts in Pyhäntunturi. There are package program examples in the web pages and just by clicking one button everything can be solved. "One call to Levi Tourist Office, and everything you need, from accommodations and meals to seminar rooms and canoeing will be arranged." (Levi 2012). That is something what is missing in Pyhäntunturi.

4.3 Developing domestic conference tourism in Pyhäntunturi

Developing and enchanting tourism is goal-directed working. It means working for increasing purchasing power, which means in tourism business getting more customers in a region by different strategies and developing programs. It also means actions from the government, marketing, product development, planning and research and educational work. Developing can be done in four different levels, which are company level, local level, regional level and national level. (Hemmi 1993, 238.) The thesis has been focused on the local level as the research has been done how Pyhäntunturi's domestic conference tourism could be developed.

Pyhäntunturi belongs to the Central and Eastern Lapland tourism sector together with Luosto, Salla and Suomu tourism centres. There are two airports, Kuusamo and Rovaniemi, which are operating in the eastern region. Town centres bring additional services available to tourists. Central and Eastern Lapland sector have been listed as semi-strong and developing tourism centres. (Regional Council of Lapland 2012 c.)

4.4 SWOT analysis

SWOT analysis is a tool to point out the strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities of the object. It covers the present and looks for future and includes positive and negative points. It covers internal and external factors. (Lominé & Edmunds 2007, 180.) SWOT analysis has been done from conference destination point of view.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Strong image and long history	Services
Regular guests	Marketing of conference services
Co-operation with other centres (Ruka, Luosto)	
New conference facilities	

Sustainability	
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <p>Developing infrastructure</p> <p>New activities</p>	<p>THREATS</p> <p>Accessibility</p> <p>Economic situation</p> <p>Competitors</p>

4.4.1 Strengths

The strengths of Pyhätunturi as a conference destination are its strong image and long history. Pyhätunturi is place for nature lovers with national park next to it. Forests over 400 years old, geology and history of Sami people are unique features in Pyhätunturi. Rugged scenery, magnificent nature and silence are elements that many people desire. (Metsähallitus 2012 a.) Long history as a tourism centre can be sensed in the atmosphere and sometimes there can be heard stories from decades before. Due to the long history it has got regular guests that have been visiting Pyhätunturi many years or decades.

Co-operation with other leisure tourism centres, Luosto and Ruka, is one of the strengths. That enables Pyhätunturi to offer their guests more services and possibilities and for Pyhätunturi it gives tools for marketing and visibility for example. Pyhä-Luosto tourism association's aim is to work for co-operation of the companies in the region, national and international attraction and recognisability and work for lobbying of region's tourism companies and property owners (Pyhätunturi 2012 b.)

Pyhätunturi belongs to the family owned company Rukakeskus group, which is responsible for activities related to skiing slopes, but also are working for accommodation, restaurants, equipment rental and gift shops. They started their activities in Ruka in 1973 and in Py-

hätunturi in 1987. Today Rukakeskus group is one of the leading tourism companies in Finland. (Ski.pyha.fi 2012 a.)

The new nature centre Naava was opened in June 2012 and it has the newest conference facilities in Pyhätunturi. Conference facilities in Naava have been already used in many events and bookings have been made frequently. The capacity utilization has been high in the beginning and later on there will be arranged national nature preserve days and nature tourism seminars in Naava. (Yle Uutiset 2012.) Now the challenge is to keep the utilization rate high in Naava, but also the other conference facilities should be taking into use and not to forget them.

Environmental program was introduced in 2008 in Pyhätunturi. Pyhä and Ruka were the first skiing resorts that changed all operations to use 100% hydropower. In October 2011 Pyhätunturi became the first carbon neutral ski resort in Scandinavia having also zero carbon emissions in Ski-In Apartments. Pyhätunturi has signed the European Union Energy Efficient Agreement, which has a target of reducing energy use 9% by 2016. (Ski.pyha.fi 2012 b.)

4.4.2 Weaknesses

All the basic services that are needed for a ski holiday or a business conference trip can be found in Pyhätunturi, but are it enough? It depends on the type of conference and what do the guests want to achieve from the trip. During the high seasons there are outdoor activities in the surrounding areas and in the evenings hotel and restaurants are lively and blooming. During the low seasons things are different. How to attract companies to the area during those times? There should be services available and possibility to arrange for the business customers. As it was mentioned earlier in the text, business customers are important messengers outside.

Marketing has not been covered topic in this thesis but few remarks will be given. Conference tourism should be developed in the region, but also there should be a strong desire to attract business and conference guests. Internet sites and email posts for example should be effectively used to attract also business guests. Levi is a good example of that. Marketing of

their conference services in the websites is good and visible. They are offering their services and they are ready to help right from the first page. (Levi 2012).

4.4.3 Opportunities

Developing infrastructure is an opportunity for Pyhätunturi to develop as a conference destination. New nature centre is already attracting people and investments in the skiing slopes have changed the centre into easier to access and easier to use. Pyhätunturi was chosen the ski resort of the year in 2011-2012. This award has been given to Pyhätunturi because they have done large investment especially for skiing customers and working for sustainability. (Ski.pyha.fi 2012 c.)

New activities that the nature centre Naava offers, new program providers and also silence and peace are opportunities that could attract regular customers but also new business customers. A new program provider company Snow Games starts on the coming season and they provide winter experiences such as safaris and day trips. (Ski.pyha.fi 2012 c.)

4.4.4 Threats

Remote areas are dependent on good road network and functional public transport including busses, trains and airplane connections. As the times are uncertain in air travel industry it effects on tourism in Lapland in a large scale. At the moment Finnair and Norwegian fly from Helsinki to Rovaniemi. Pyhätunturi is 90 minutes away from Rovaniemi airport by car and ski busses drive in regular basis there and back. (Pyhä 2012.)

Train connections are available to Rovaniemi and Kemijärvi. In 2006 a night train to Kemijärvi was shut down. In 2008 the connection was re-opened and again in 2011 it was about to shut down. In 2011 developing manager of Rukakeskus Ltd/Pyhätunturi Ltd Ville Aho told facts to managers of VR about the importance of night train to tourism in the East-Lapland region. Also the chief executive officer of Rukakeskus Ltd/Pyhätunturi Ltd Miia Porkkala delivered the message about concern of the region to parliament. (Rataverkko 2007., Lappilainen.fi 2012.) Train connection to Kemijärvi is important also from the grow-

ing Russian tourism point of view and possibilities to extend the rail network to Arctic Ocean are under research. (The Regional Council of Lapland 2012 c, 64.)

Economic situation today has an effect on businesses budgets and travelling long distance could be a barrier for organizing a conference in Lapland. Competition is strong and centres need to offer something different and unique to stand out of the crowd.

5 RESEARCH PROCESS

The central idea of the research is to find out if there is demand for conference packages among conference tourism providers in leisure tourism centres. The survey was conducted for selected leisure tourism centres and additional information about conference tourism in Lapland has been searched from other researches.

The empirical part of the thesis was conducted by a theme based questionnaire survey about conference tourism in leisure tourism centres in Lapland. The purpose of the research was to find out information about conference services and packages and their purchase. Are the conference packages used in conference tourism and what does the conference package mean? That information was used to develop domestic conference tourism in Pyhänturi.

5.1 Research methods

The research was conducted by an email and was built up from a theme interview base. There have been used qualitative research methods in the survey, which included also elements from quantitative research. Since there were not enough answers through email, a phone interview has been conducted in order to get more information.

Qualitative research can be done in various different ways and it includes different traditions, manners of approach and methods of collecting and analysing data about human and its life. Important in qualitative research are meanings that occur in various ways, how individuals and groups understand the world. In tourism business topics that are difficult to quantify, such as tourism experience, attitude, image of destination or product, can be analysed and understood better through qualitative research. Quantitative research method can be used in research for statistical analysis and measurements of precise data. It requires large number of respondents. In tourism qualitative method can compile statistics and forecast trends. Qualitative and quantitative research methods can be used together to get better understanding about the issue being research. (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2009, 4. Lominé & Edmunds 2007, 157.)

Questionnaire survey was chosen as a research method in this thesis. It was sent by email because there was a tight schedule and no funding given to this thesis. Visiting the companies would have taken too much time and it would have cost a lot. During the planning the possibility of no answers was taken into account and phone interviews were planned after the email survey. The survey was built up with themes and that way it was easier to analyse the answers.

5.2 Implementation of the research

The research process started on thinking of the questions and themes. After many meetings with supervising teacher and other researchers questionnaire was ready with introduction letter and questionnaire. Below there is the timetable of the research:

1. During week 42 questionnaires were sent
2. During week 43 reminder of questionnaires were sent
3. During week 43 deadline of answers

During the meetings possible problems were discussed: unwillingness to answer resulting lack of answers. The backup plan, phone interviews were created to secure the success of the research and to get more detailed information from few companies. First only companies from Levi and Saariselkä were chosen to form the population, but since there was a small amount of companies, companies from Ylläs were chosen for the survey as well. All together 30 questionnaires were sent and after the first round two answers were received. Six addresses were not in use or they were away from office.

The questionnaire was done in PDF form and some of the receivers could not fill out the form directly. That feedback came from respondents and for the reminder email form was changed into Word form. After reminder email two emails were received, but they were either rejections or questions about the survey. The timetable of the research was extended due to severe incident of near relative.

Phone interviews were started during week 46. As it takes time and there are some costs in doing that, three companies from Levi and Saariselkä were chosen to interview for this. The

original plan was to collect information from those two leisure tourism centres. Three interviews were accomplished. Questionnaire survey and introduction letter can be found in appendices (APPENDIX 1.)

Questionnaires were sent to selected tourism centres companies in Levi, Saariselkä and Ylläs who offer conference services. Survey was limited only for leisure tourism and skiing centres in Lapland. Those tourism centres were chosen because they are different types of leisure tourism centres and they might have valuable information from two different perspectives.

5.3 Ethics of the research

Measuring liability of the research is important part of any scientific research. Reliability and validity are normally used concepts to measure liability of the result, but it has been more common in quantitative researches. In some cases these concepts has been used also in qualitative research, but researcher have developed also their own ways to measure reliability. (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2009, 23-24.)

Validity has been more used in qualitative research than reliability. Validity measures if the research is qualified meaning is the research properly done and are the results and analyses correct. (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2009, 24.)

The survey was conducted anonymously and the results are show as overall results. In the survey form information were given about the survey and its purpose. Research questions were written again after three professionals had read them and given correction suggestions.

6 RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

The survey was done using a theme questionnaire base so the results will be presented in themes. In the beginning of the survey there were three questions about conference tourism in general in a company.

30 questionnaires were sent and five answers were received. In most of the answers were said that conference tourists are important or very important, but in some cases they are not the biggest group of tourists and in that sense not remarkable. They are important because companies have facilities to hold conferences and it is important to keep them in use. In one answer was said that conference tourists are only quite important.

Conference tourism's percentage amount of company's turnover varies a lot from very small amount to 85 per cent. Some companies said that it depends on the season so it was difficult to say.

Companies do not have special themes or events for conference tourists only, but themes and events that they have are for all the guests for example theme dinners. Some companies have named conference facilities with some theme. In one answer was noted that they do not have themes or events but they have other activities such as spa, bowling, guided workout or outdoor activities.

6.1 Customers

In most of the answers were said that the companies from which their conference guest come from are located all over Finland and they cannot specify cities or towns, they come everywhere. In one answer were said that their conference guests come only from North Finland and the surrounding areas.

In one answer were specified that their guests come from Rovaniemi and north from that and from Helsinki and its surrounding areas. Explanation for this is transportation issues. Guests from south tend to use airplane and guests from north use their own cars.

In a question about transportation mode in most of the answers airplane and own car were chosen. Only one answer specified that their guests come with airplane, train, bus, walking and by bike.

Size of the conference guest groups varies a lot from small two person meetings to 200 guests or bigger conferences. In some cases companies own facilities are too small but they use other conference facilities for the conference but guests stay in their hotel. Guests stay in average two days but there are guests who stay from few hours to one day or three to five days.

In most of the answer were noted that conference guests come from all kinds of fields of business. In some answers were specified that they arrange meetings for local fishermen, large international companies, professional alliances, pharmaceutical companies and mine, metal and paper companies. In some companies conference guests come from culture and nature sector and educational sector.

Size of the companies where conference guests come from varies in most of the answers from small than 10 people companies to large enterprises over 1000 people. In one answer were noted that their guests come from small companies that are smaller than 10 people and companies that are smaller than 50 people. In one answer were said that their guests come from large companies smaller than 1000 people.

One respondent wanted to specify that they get conference guests not only from companies but also from alliances and associations. They arrange educational days for different groups.

6.2 Conference packages

80 per cent of respondents answered yes to the question if they have conference packages. Conference packages vary among the companies, but the core product in conference packages includes conference facilities and material, coffee and refreshments. In some cases accommodation included also in the conference package.

One example of a conference package includes morning coffee and coffee bread, lunch, afternoon coffee and coffee bread and use of the conference facilities with the price of 29 eu-

ros. Some companies also include AV technique and conference host's services in the list of items in the conference package.

In many cases conference packages are built up meeting the customers' needs. The core is usually the same but what comes after that is what makes the difference. In the answers there were listed activities and services that are offered to conference guests. These are exhibitions, lunch and dinner, spa services and bowling for example.

The question how many per cent of business trips are conference package trips none of the respondents could give answer. Demand of conference packages in last few years has been staying the same in most of the cases. For some companies increased competition has influenced negatively for their conference tourism.

Conference destinations in the northern parts of Finland are facing the fact that the distance might be too long and that way too expensive to travel for even their regular customers. That naturally means that companies in Helsinki area might decide to hold their conference closer to them.

Demand of conference packages in the future can be seen staying the same. Naturally companies are hoping and believing in the increasing demand of conference tourism. This ongoing fall has been busy in some centres with conference tourists so that gives hope of better and busier times in the future.

Companies believe in the driving force of the tourism centre and the large amounts of different activities that are available for tourists, for example spa and skiing centre, bowling, live music and other activities, also for children. They also believe that companies and associations will use their services because they get special benefits with them. They also believe in that the image of the hotel brings guests to them. Changing pricing will tempt customers to use their services.

6.3 Selling channels

Booking of conferences varies on the type of the conference. Smaller conferences can be booked few weeks before the event, but bigger events can be booked over a year ahead.

Bookings are verified later, closer to the date. Companies have to live with that uncertainty and they need to be flexible with conference bookings.

Bookings are primarily done straight through company's own channels. Email and phone are the most used channels. Some respondent mentioned also booking centres and other co-operational companies, but with these companies also own marketing channels were the most important.

Most of the companies answered no to the question if they have a customer care program. Some respondents said that it is a shame that they do not have it and it would be good to have it if they can develop or find a good one. Some companies said that they do remember their regular customers who have been staying certain amount of nights with glass of champagne. Spa services and guided sport and outdoor activities are free of charge. Some of them send information via email about conference packages.

6.4 Tourism seasons

In the survey seasons sector was the one that gave the most variable answers. 40 per cent of answer said that tourism seasons do not have an effect on the conference tourism. 60 per cent of answers said that seasons do effect on the conference tourism as well as other tourism.

There was also distinction within the 60 per cent how the seasons effect on conference tourism. More than half of the answers said that conference tourism follows tourism seasons directly. Low seasons, which are from May until October are quiet also in the conference tourism. Local companies are holding their conferences during the low season. Companies would like to fill the low season gaps with conference guest.

There are also companies who do not have many conferences during the high peaks in winter, because families are on a vacation during those times and prices are also high. They have the most conferences during September until November and at the end of January and April. They get conference guests from Sweden and local companies are also holding their conferences and meetings during low seasons.

40 per cent of respondents say that they do not have seasonal prices and 60 per cent do have seasonal prices. Some of them have seasonal prices that apply to all of the products and they are not focused on conference and business tourists specially. Some companies said that they are making offers for business and conference customers and prices will be building up to the customer. They naturally follow the markets on conference tourism and they have the regular prices, but there is always possibility to negotiate about the prices.

7 CONCLUSION

I have a personal interest in doing my thesis for Pyhätunturi, because I have been working in Pyhätunturi ski school for six years. Developing tourism in Pyhätunturi will have a positive effect on the whole infrastructure in the area. The growing tourism will enhance the area economically, which will enable it to develop further.

The research was known to be difficult and it turned out like that. Answering per cent was low and contacting by phone did not give much help for the situation. Anyhow, the results that were received gave in general quite similar answers, so that at some point generalization can be made.

Leisure tourism centres in Lapland consider business and conference tourism as an important part of their business but it is not the primary field of business. As there are facilities build for holding conferences they should be put in used. Seasonality is a problem for all and that is something tourism centres are hoping to compensate with spreading business and conference tourism to the low season gaps.

The trend that could be seen from the answers is that conference services offering companies do not arrange program services to their conference guests. Hotels are focusing on producing the conference services and providing accommodation, and they propose some local program service companies for their guests. Guests arrange activities themselves. Activities vary depending on the seasons and conference packages vary a lot depending on the customer's needs. Pyhätunturi should anyhow focus on co-operation with program producers and have their activities visible on the Internet, on the same section with conference packages to attract potential customers' interest.

80 per cent of the respondents have conference packages to offer for their conference guests. That can be seen as a positive way of serving their customers. Thinking of the actual theme of the thesis, developing conference tourism in Pyhätunturi and findings about conference package use conference packages should be used in Pyhätunturi as well. Emphasis should be laid on how to offer them and what extra services are offered. Basic facilities and infrastructure is good and functional, but delivering the actual service should be developed. Having conference packages on the Internet can work as a reference what the company has to offer for business guests.

Business customers must feel that when they start thinking about coming to Pyhätunturi for a business trip, they are taking care from the first step. There is a great opportunity to show how Pyhätunturi can serve business tourists in the upcoming business events that will be held in nature centre Naava. Services must be guaranteed also during the low seasons and Pyhätunturi's unique elements could be taken into part of conference facilities and activities.

In general business tourists stay two nights. If they could get staying longer they would have more time to enjoy activities and services. How to get them to stay longer requires developing a package that is an offer that cannot be missed. That package should include something special and something extra that requires extra work if it was arranged on their own.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

1 QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY IN ENGLISH

Dear reader,

Following questionnaire survey is part of my degree program Bachelor of Hospitality Management in Kajaani University of Applied Sciences as I am currently working on my thesis Developing business and conference tourism in Pyhätunturi.

I have selected distinguished samples for this research and Your company is one of them. Every answer is very valuable for this survey and for completing my thesis.

This survey will be conducted anonymously and the results will be published as an overall result.

It is possible to answer by sending this form back via email or on the phone during the week 44. Please send it to the following email address: heidi.iiris@gmail.com by **29th October 2012**.

If You wish to have the thesis after the survey is completed, please leave Your contact information in the end of the form. If You have any questions, please contact me:

Heidi Kauppinen
Tel: 040-763 1042
Email: heidi.iiris@gmail.com

Questionnaire survey about conference tourism in Lapland

1. How important conference tourists are for your company?

2. What amount of turnover consists of conference tourism?

3. Do you have special themes or events for conference clients?

- No
- Yes, what kind of?

4. What travelling mode your clients prefer to use?

- airplane
- train
- bus (rented or public)
- private car

CUSTOMERS

5. In which part of Finland your conference companies come from?

6. What size of conference groups stay in your facilities?

7. What is the average length of stay of conference guests?

8. In which field of business your conference guests work for?

9. What size of companies your conference guests come from?

- Micro/Minute < 10
- Small < 50
- Medium > 250
- Large < 1000
- Enterprise >1000

CONFERENCE PACKAGES

10. Do you sell conference packages?

- Yes
- No

11. How would you describe your conference package? What is the core product and what additional services are available?

12. How many percentage of business trips are conference package trips?

- 0-25%
- 25-50%
- 50-75%
- 75-100%

13. Has the demand of conference packages in previous years been:

- increasing
- decreasing
- staying the same

14. How would you estimate the demand of conference packages in next years?

SELLING CHANNELS

15. How long conference travels or packages are booked ahead?

- 0-6 months
- 6-12 months
- 12-18 months
- 18-24 months
- earlier than 24 months

16. Which channel conference travels are booked through?

- Internet, own webpages
- Internet, booking center
- Phone, company
- Phone, booking center
- Travel agency

17. Do you have a customer care program for business clients?

- No
- Yes

SEASONALITY

18. How tourism seasons effect on conference travel in your company?

19. Do you have special seasonality offers for conference clients?

- No
 - Yes, what kind of?

-

Thank you for your time for answering in this survey! If you have any comments please write them here, thank you. You can also leave your contact information here, if you wish to have the results of this survey and the full report.
