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Title

Children's Joensuu- The perceptions of Russian tourists travelling with children

Abstract

This thesis deals with services in Joensuu for children from the perspectives of Russian tourists travelling with children. This study has been divided into four themes, all of which contribute to the purpose of this study, which was to research the current services for children in Joensuu and to gather initial ideas for new ones in order to help Joensuu to develop its services for children. The themes dealt with the target group's travelling behaviour, its awareness and usage of current services for children in Joensuu, testing of new possible services and researching the level of satisfaction with the assortment of children goods in Joensuu.

The empirical part of this thesis was conducted by using a survey. The data collection was done by interviewing the target group in Russian language in November 2012 in Joensuu.

This study reveals that Russian tourists travelling with children are not well aware of current services for children in Joensuu, and the majority have not used them. The majority of those who were well aware of current services felt that the offering is not satisfactory. An amusement park, a boat cruise and a wintertime adventure park rose to be the most popular new ideas for services for children.

The overall satisfaction with the assortment of goods for children in Joensuu was very good, the most purchased things were clothes, toys, sweets and sport equipment.

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Tekijä

Kaisa Hirvonen

Nimeke

Lasten Joensuu- Venäläisten, lapsien kanssa matkustavien turistien näkökulmia

Tiivistelmä

Tämä opinnäytetyö käsittelee Joensuun palveluja lapsille Venäläisten lapsiperheiden näkökulmasta, jotka olivat tämän työn kohderyhmänä. Opinnäytetyö on jaettu neljään eri teemaa, jotka palvelevat tämän työn tarkoitusta, joka oli tutkia nykyisiä lasten paveluja Joensuussa sekä kerätä alustavia ideoita uusiksi palveluiksi ja näin auttaa Joensuuta kehittämään palvelujaan. Teemat ovat jaettu käsittelemään vastaajien matkustuskäyttäytymistä, heidän tietojaan nykyisistä palveluista sekä niiden käyttöä, heidän kiinnostusta uusiin palveluihin sekä lopuksi heidän tyytyväisyyttään Joensuun valikoimaan lasten tavaroista.

Tutkimuksen aineisto kerättiin haastattelemalla Venäläisiä lapsiperheitä, jotka yöpyivät Joensuussa ainakin yhden yön. Aineisto kerättin kyselylomaketta käyttäen.

Tutkimuksen mukaan kohderyhmän jäsenet eivät olleet hyvin tietoisia nykyisistä lasten palveluista ja jos he olivat, he eivät olleet käyttäneet niitä. Lisäksi valtaosa vastaajista jotka olivat hyvin tietoisia nykyisistä palveluista olivat sitä mieltä ettei nykyinen tarjonta ole tyydyttävä. Mahdollisista uusista palveluista suosituimpia olivat huvipuisto, laivamatka sekä talvella toimiva seikkailupuisto.

Joensuun valikoimaan lasten tavaroissa vastaajat olivat erittäin tyytyväisiä, eniten ostettuja tavaroita olivat vaatteet, lelut, karkit sekä urheiluvälineet.

Kieli Sivumäärä 45
Englanti Liitteet 2
Liitesivumäärä 6

Asiasanat

Palvelu, matkailu, Venäläinen, Joensuu, lapsiperhe

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APPENDICES

1 INTRODUCTION

Russian tourism is an increasing trend in Finland and also in North Karelia. Every year tens of thousands of Russian tourists arrive to North Karelia to shop or to have a holiday. As the number of tourists increases, more services are needed to serve them in order to make them come back or to stay longer. Hence, creating new services and activities is vital if North Karelia wishes to keep its economical growth pace in the tourism industry and allure more tourists every year.

One of the key segments for North Karelia is Russian families travelling with their children. According to researches, their consumption is constantly growing, and attracting them to the area is crucial in order to maintain and increase the income and tourism flows. What do Russian families travelling with children know about current services and activities in Joensuu, and what kind of services do they wish to be created? How could Joensuu serve the demanding target group as best as possible? These are very important questions for service providers and for the city as a whole, and studying them can help in the development of the area.

The main objectives of this study are to find out the current behaviour of the target group and study their wishes for which kind of services there should be in Joensuu. This study aims to give initial ideas. The results of this study can be used for marketing purposes as well as in the development of new services and activities for children. This study focuses on Joensuu, although other areas of North Karelia also offer services for children, most notably the spas situated in the surrounding areas of Joensuu. However, Joensuu as a focus area of this study helps the city the most and does not distort data received from the respondents.

The term **Russian family** in this study refers to a parent or parents who have at least one child under 12 years of age and who are Russian. Provided that they spend at least one night in Joensuu on a trip, they act as a target group of this study.

1.1 Aims of the study

The information for this thesis has been gathered using primary research data and secondary research data. The primary data was collected via survey. This method was chosen because quantitative data is crucial when gathering data from the target group. The secondary data is collected by using statistics and the internet as well as using previous studies. The secondary data is mostly used in constructing the theoretical part of this study.

There were four main research themes in this study:

- 1) The travelling behaviour of Russian families
- 2) The knowledge and usage of current services for children in Joensuu
- 3) The possible demand for new services
- 4) The purchasing behaviour and the level of satisfaction with the current assortment of children's goods in Joensuu.

The pleasant experience of a travelling destination is a sum of many things. Services, shopping possibilities, people, and many other situations make the experience either pleasant or unpleasant. Each research theme helps in finding out the main purpose of this study; how to serve Russian families travelling with children better in Joensuu and in that way help to make Joensuu a better destination. The travelling behaviour of respondents helps in determining when services would be mostly used. The second theme helps in the marketing of the current services; are the current services well-known and are they interesting? The third theme helps when new services and activities are developed; testing ideas gives very good information on consumer behaviour and interest in certain services. The fourth theme focuses on purchases made for children in Joensuu; what is bought and is the assortment at a satisfying level? This helps the stores in the development of their business.

1.2 Structure of the thesis

The theoretical part of this thesis begins with an overview of North Karelian tourism, focusing on Russian tourism. This chapter uses primarily statistical data in order to explain the current situation.

The next chapter builds a profile of an average Russian tourist in Finland using different sources from the internet. The profile concentrates on financial perspectives and statistics. A profile is also built separately for North Karelia using previous studies.

The third chapter presents the current services for children in North Karelia. All places are briefly presented. This gives a good insight into the current service situation.

The fourth chapter focuses on presenting the empirical results of the survey. Finally, conclusions are made.

2 TOURISM IN NORTH KARELIA

This chapter demonstrates tourism in North Karelia first in general and then focusing on Russian tourism. All the statistical data have been gathered from the transport and tourism statistical database published by Statistics Finland (Statistics Finland 2013). All graphical presentations in this chapter have been assembled using data from the same source and therefore are not mentioned each time. Statistical information of 2012 are preliminary.

An **arrived tourist** in this study is defined to be a tourist who spends at least one night in an accommodation establishment of over 10 beds, which means that the small companies with fewer than 10 beds are being left out. In North Karelia, there are is a huge number of these kinds of establishments which means that statistics do not tell the whole truth. However, they give excellent guidelines when considering the profitability and development possibilities of accommodation establishments. An **accommodation establishment** in this study is defined to be an establishment which has over 10 beds.

2.1 Tourism in figures

The amount of arrived tourists in North Karelia has been rather constant except for the years 2008 and 2009 when the amount of arrived tourists fell, due to the global financial crisis (Figure 1). Although the amount has been slowly growing, tourists arriving to North Karelia to spend a night or nights is only 2.5 % of Finland's sum, which in 2011 was over 10.3 million visitors. However, recent development in the areas tourism has been good; in 2010 and 2011 265,000 tourists visited North Karelia more than a day. According to preliminary data for year 2012, the number of arrived tourists seems to stay at the same level or decrease compared to year 2011.

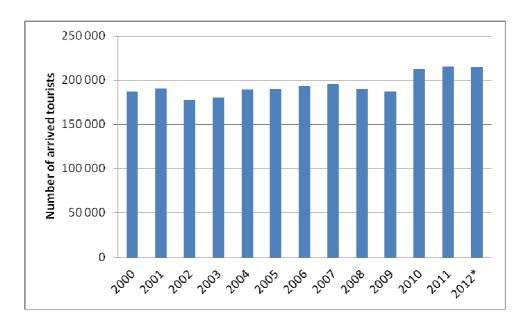


Figure 1. The number of arrived tourists to North Karelia by year. 2012 is preliminary data.

As in the rest of Finland, tourism in North Karelia is very seasonal (Figure 2). There are 6 times more arriving tourists in July than in January. The summer in general is the high season in North Karelia's tourism, when during June, July and August over 120,000 tourists stay in the area. These 3 months make almost half of the whole year's sum.

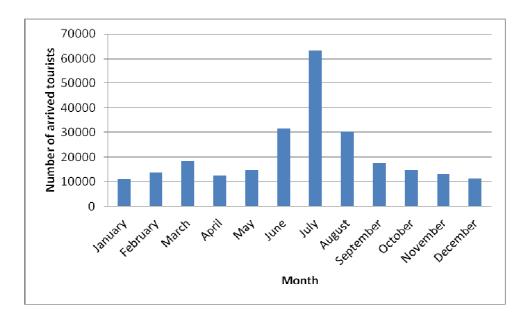


Figure 2. The number or arrived tourists to North Karelia in 2011 by month.

The seasonality can also be seen in the occupancy rate of accommodation establishments (Figure 3). Hence, the same trend has been constant from the beginning of 2000.

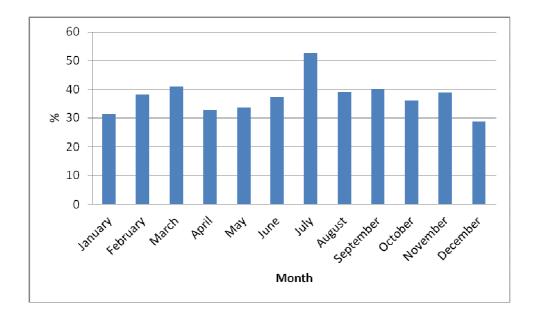


Figure 3. The occupancy rate of accommodation establishments in 2011 in North Karelia.

Although the tourism flows are 6 times larger in the summer, the amount of accommodation establishments grow during summertime and therefore increases competition and keeps capacity levels low, in around 50% in the summer and 30% during other seasons. North Karelia follows the average of the whole of Finland in occupancy-rate of bed-places statistics.

The price per room-rate follows the capacity level development; when the number of accommodation establishments grows during the summertime, the price per room lowers (Figure 4). Summer hotels and cottage renting companies stay open from May until August or September and therefore increase the number of accommodation establishments to over 60 during that time. Almost 40 establishments are open the entire year.

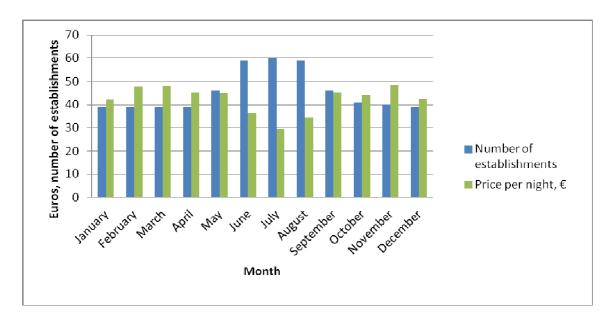


Figure 4. Number of establishments and the contrast of price per night in 2011.

2.2 Russian tourism in North Karelia

The growth in the tourism flows to North Karelia is partly due to Russian tourism, which has been constantly growing (Figure 5). The number of Russian tourists arriving to North Karelia to spend a night or nights has been growing fast, the amount of is nowadays more than four-fold than in year 2000. The country's tourism flows to North Karelia are vital to the area; over 57% of all foreign visitors, and 7% of all arrived tourists come from Russia (2011). The percentages appear to be growing in 2012, according to preliminary data provided the Statisctical Center of Finland, over 28 000 Russian tourists spent at least one night in Joensuu with the growing rate of 48.5 %. Thus, the number of all arrived tourists to North Karelia in 2012 appears to have fallen slightly (0.3 %), the percentage of Russian tourists compared to all tourists is growing.

North-Karelia plays a role of an easy destination to Russians, especially for those Russians who live near the border of Finland and Russia. For example the destination between Joensuu and Sortavala, Russia, is only 140 kilometres and therefore travelling between these 2 cities is quick.

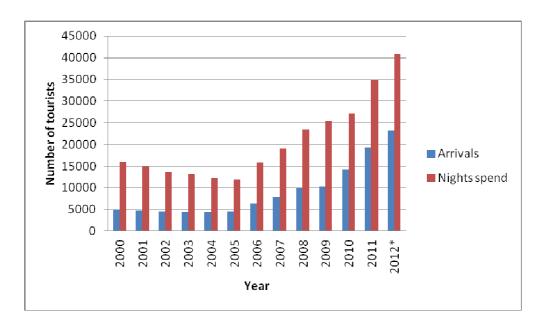


Figure 5. The number of arrived Russian tourists to accommodation establishments and nights spent in North Karelia. 2012 is preliminary data.

However, as illustrated in Figure 6, Russian tourists spend less time in North Karelia each year; in 2000 the average time spent in North Karelia was 3.2 nights, and this time has decreased to 1.8 nights per visitor in 2011. Although the average number of nights spent has decreased, there has been a significant growth of over 20% in 2008, 2009 and 2011 in the number of nights spent in the region, which is a positive sign for the area. According to the premliminary data for year 2012, the number of nights appears to stay the same. The fall in the amount of nights spent on average is a clear indication that those tourists who spend only 1 or 2 nights are an increasing trend and those tourists who spend a longer time in Joensuu a decreasing one.

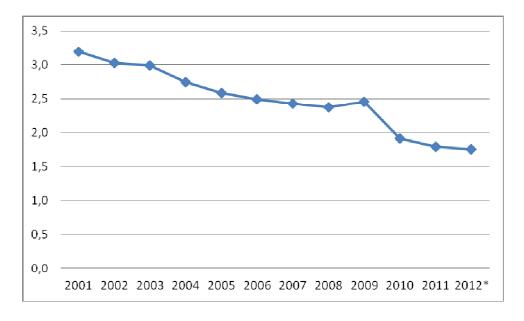


Figure 6. The average number of nights spent in North Karelia by Russian tourists by year. 2012 is foreknowledge.

However, statistical figures show only the amount of those tourists who spend at least one night in North Karelia. Day tourism, meaning that a tourist arrives to North Karelia and spends only a day in the area and returns home for the night, is heavily increasing. It is also popular that arriving Russian tourists spend nights with their relatives or at a friend's house, and therefore does not show in any statistics (KAUPAKS 2012). It is impossible to say exactly how many tourists visit North Karelia each year, because if a tourist does not stay a night in an accommodation establishment, there is no mark left from the visit to the statistics. For example in January 2013, there were 113,158 border crossings in Niirala, of which 45% were obliged to have a visa (Rajavartiolaitos 2013). This means that the number of potential customers and service users to North Karelia is approximately 60,000 persons per month. During summertime this figure multiplies as the summer is the high season in the tourism industry.

Russian tourism in North Karelia mostly functions with its 2 international border crossing places; the airport in Joensuu and Niirala in Tohmajärvi, 70 kilometres from Joensuu and 130 kilometres from Koli.

The future is looking very promising when potential customers are investigated. According to Rajavartiolaitos (2013), the border crossing station Niirala had 17% growth in border crossings in 2012 having 1.5 million customers crossing the border. Approximately 45% of those crossings are made by Russians so

there is a huge amount of potential customers coming to the area. Of course not all of them come to Joensuu, but it can be assumed that most of them are, because Joensuu is the closest city to Niirala.

As the amount of Russian tourists has increased, so has tax-free shopping. It has been growing constantly, especially in 2012 compared to 2011; there has been 40 % growth between January and September 2012 to year 2011. According to Kaupan liitto (2012), the value of tax-free shopping in Joensuu between January and September 2012 was 9.5 million Euros. Russian consumers buy groceries, children's clothes and shoes, sport equipment and spend more money than before on accommodation and services. (Kaupan liitto 2012).

2.3 Discussion

It is clear that North Karelia has recently been able to enjoy the constantly growing amount of Russian tourists. It is also extremely positive that tax-free shopping has grown so much. However, when observing the statistics on occupancy- rate of rooms in North Karelian accommodation establishments, there is still a lot of space to accommodate tourists. Therefore, increasing the mass of those tourists, who spend at least one night in Joensuu and in North Karelia, is beneficial not only to the service providers, but also to accommodation establishments.

Developing the tourism areas is a challenging task. One of the biggest problems in the growth and development in tourism in North Karelia is its lack of centralized tourism concentrations. Also the small size of the region and the disjointedness are problems. (Pohjois-Karjalan maakuntaliitto 2007, 13.) The size and the lack of centralized tourism concentrations can mean that tourists do not have enough to do or they have to travel in order to do what they want.

For example Vuokatti, which is a centralized tourism concentration near Kajaani, has a lot of services to offer; there is a spa, downhill skiing possibility, beaches, program services as well as restaurant and hotels. Recently, an angry birds park has been build. A tourist does not need to move a lot during his or

her holiday; everything is found from the same place. North Karelia does not have any such equivalent.

There is potential, as can be witnessed from the growing border crossings, but developing the whole area and especially Joensuu is important if continuing growth is wanted. Furthermore, creating new services and developing existing ones could make tourists, who are already spending nights, stay longer.

3 RUSSIAN TOURIST PROFILE IN FINLAND

The growth of Russian tourism is becoming a global phenomenon. Twenty years ago Soviet citizens spent their vacations inside the borders, because travelling abroad was made almost impossible by the Soviet regime. Usually, Soviet workers went on holidays organized by their factories. They often travelled without spouses, whilst their children went to communist pioneer camps. Nowadays, approximately 17% of Russians have a valid passport (Finnish tourists board/ Statistics Finland 2012).

The typical Russian tourist in Finland is From Saint Petersburg or from the Leningrad area. According to the Finnish tourism board (2012), over 80% of tourists arriving to Finland are from these areas. He or she spends 111 Euros per day and 263 Euros per visit (2011). This money is mostly spent on shopping and accommodation as well as to restaurants. He or she books the holiday independently and arrives to Finland with his or her own car. He or she spends 1.4 nights in Finland, but usually he or she just spends a day in Finland (70%) travelling to Helsinki or to Eastern Finland. (Finnish tourist board/ Statistics Finland 2012.)

A Russian tourist can be considered as the so-called active tourist, who enjoys sight-seeing and visits to various cultural sites and attractions. They are interested in the local way of life, history and traditions as well as shopping, which has risen to be the most important reason of visiting Finland. (Venäläisen matkailijan asiakaspalveluopas 2004). According to Kaupan liitto (2012), 77% of Russian tourists have the main purpose for visiting Finland shopping.

Many of the Russian tourists are not highly qualified linguistically and tend to avoid communicating in English, partly due to the level of language education in Russia. Therefore, Russian tourists appreciate any material or service provided in Russian (Venäläisen matkailijan asiakaspalveluopas 2004). Nowadays, travelling in small groups or with the family is popular. Young adults and wealthy

grandparents travelling with their grandchildren are the new tourist groups (Finnish tourism board 2010).

3.1 Russian tourist profile in North Karelia

A recent study (KAUPAKS 2012), controlled by Josek, the regional development agency, surveyed 457 Russian tourists in order to determine their demographics, what they think of the quality of customer service and why they come to Joensuu. With the information received from the results of this study and also using a bachelor level research done by Liisa Kähkönen (2011), a profile of an average Russian tourist can be assembled.

A usual Russian tourist is 20-50 years old and comes from the Karelian Republic. The most important reason for coming to Joensuu is shopping. A Russian tourist comes to Joensuu for example because it is close, there are good shopping possibilities, the nature is close and because it is a familiar destination. The tourist has visited Joensuu before and is a regular visitor. Information from Joensuu is received almost always from acquaintances. The tourist is quite unfamiliar with the services in the city and sometimes feels that Joensuu is boring. Activities for children are needed, especially amusement parks, water parks and boat cruises. Fishing also seems interesting. (KAUPAKS 2012, 1-15, Kähkönen 2011, 25.)

3.2 Discussion

The findings emphasize that it is clear that good shopping possibilities and Russian speaking personnel or at least information in Russian language are important. Due to the fact that shopping- tourism has increased so heavily, attracting tourists to spend nights in a certain area is becoming harder because it is relatively easy to return home for the night. Giving tourists reasons to stay for a night or several nights would benefit the whole region, as tourists would have to spend money on accommodation and services.

4 CURRENT SERVICES FOR CHILDREN IN NORTH KARELIA

4.1 Tourism centers and spas in North Karelia

There are 4 spas in North Karelia: in Kitee, Nurmes, Polvijärvi and in Ilomantsi (Figure 7). Each operate with a different concept and include different side services in order to make their customers stay better and longer. Each spa is presented below with information on their services.

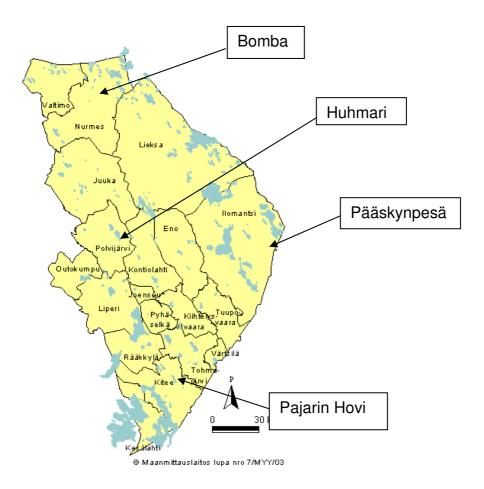


Figure 7. Spas in North Karelia (Source: Ympäristö.fi 2012).

4.1.1 Pääskynpesä

Pääskynpesä is a hotel- spa situating in Ilomantsi, 70 kilometres from Joensuu, 510 kilometres from Helsinki and 75 kilometres from the border crossing area of Niirala. Pääskynpesä specializes in rehabilitation and it calls itself a rehabilitation spa. (Pääskynpesä 2013.)

Pääskynpesä offers accommodation in a hotel situated in the same building as the spa. The spa also includes a restaurant, a gym, a sport hall and wellness area for different beauty treatments and massages. Pääskynpesä offers a beach area where customers can play beach volley and other games, sunbathe and swim. There is also a children's playground. Pääskynpesä also offers facilities for conferences and for parties such as weddings and birthdays. (Pääskynpesä 2013.)

The Ilomantsi area itself offers just a few services for tourists. There are hiking trails and skiing possibilities for nature lovers as well as fishing and swimming in the lake. The area is perhaps best known for its winery, *Hermannin viinitila*, and the old ironworks factory of Möhkö. (Visit Karelia 2012a.)

4.1.2 Bomba

Bomba is a hotel-spa situated in Nurmes, 130 kilometres from Joensuu, 520 kilometres from Helsinki and 200 kilometres from Niirala. The Hotel- spa Bomba is a part of a nation-wide hotel chain of Sokos Hotels, which has hotels in all big cities in Finland. Sokos Hotels itself is a part of S-group, which is a network of retail trade and service providers covering the whole country.

Bomba offers tourists much more than accommodation, restaurant and the spa. Bomba in fact is a tourism center including for example a Karelian "village" with Karelian architecture. The biggest tourist attraction is the Bomba-house, which offers tourists a restaurant, a beer hut, a souvenir and handicraft shop, a *tsasouna* and a summer theatre. (Visit Karelia 2012b.)

Nurmes as an area offers different kinds of accommodation services from small guesthouses to cottages. The tourism-youth center Hyvärilä also operates in the area near to Bomba. Hyvärilä is a small tourism center offering accommodation from camping sites to hotel rooms, different restaurants, conference- and party facilities, saunas, beach volley- and tennis courts, children's playground, a climbing wall, a mini ramp and a beach. The center also rents canoes, boats, snow shoes and many other equipment for activities. (Hyvärilä 2013.)

4.1.3 Pajarinhovi

Pajarinhovi is a hotel-spa in Kitee, 70 kilometres from Joensuu, 390 kilometres from Helsinki and 50 kilometres from Niirala. Pajarinhovi is a small tourism center including a 2010 built spa, hotel rooms, a restaurant with a dance stage and an animal park. The center also has a factory shop which sells different handicraft and household items of many well-known suppliers. The shop also sells local handicrafts and souvenirs. The animal park in Pajarinhovi, the Kitee Zoo, is the fourth biggest animal park in Finland and it has over 50 different species. (Pajarinhovi 2013.)

Kitee is a small town of 9,000 people with a strong reputation being the moonshine city of Finland. Kitee is also known for being the hometown of Kiteen Pallo, the Finnish baseball team, and the hometown of one very popular band, Nightwish. Kitee has a few nature attractions and there are many program service companies offering motor sled safaris and hiking possibilities. (Visit Karelia 2012c).

4.1.4 Huhmari

Huhmari is a holiday center situated on the shores of Lake Höytiäinen, 100 kilometres from Niirala and 430 kilometres from Helsinki. The holiday center offers a good variety of services and four different sorts of accommodation alternatives as well as a spa. The service offering of Huhmari includes a chil-

dren's playground, a dance hall, tennis courts, restaurant and a couple of cafés. Huhmari also arranges meetings and conferences. The specialty of the holiday center is organized cruises in Lake Höytiäinen. (Huhmari 2013.)

Huhmari targets its offerings to many groups. It offers organized activities for children during on-season and also arranges program services such as fishing and mushroom picking to adults. (Huhmari 2013.)

Huhmari is situated far from any town; the closest village is the village of Polvijärvi, 16 kilometres away. The village of 5,000 inhabitants offers only few services. Joensuu is 40 kilometres away.

4.1.5 Koli

Koli is a 30 km² natural park situated in North Karelia, approximately 70 kilometres from Joensuu and 500 kilometres from Helsinki. Koli is a part of city of Lieksa, which is a small town of 13,000 people. Koli and other surroundings of Lieksa are known for nature and nature tourism attractions such as the natural park of Patvinsuo and the camping area of Ruunaa. (Koli 2013.)

The national scenery of Finland is situated in Koli, and many hiking trails attract thousands of tourists every year. Hiking attracts tourists in the spring, summer and autumn. In winter, Koli offers downhill skiing possibility in two places, Ukko-Koli and in Loma-Koli. Other activities in winter include skiing, horseback riding, walking with snow shoes, riding motor ledges, ice fishing, and a small zoo which is situated near the city of Lieksa. (Koli 2013.)

4.2 Services in Joensuu

Mukulakatu is a children's city situated in the center of Joensuu, in the facilities of Carelicum. Mukulakatu is a little town inside the museum. There are plenty of organized activities each week and it is very cheap, only 2€. Children can enjoy puppet shows, make handicrafts and much more. (Majakka&Perävaunu 2013.)

Vesikko is a public swimming hall in the center of Joensuu. Vesikko offers a good variety of different pools from children's pool to swimming lanes. Vesikko can be compared to a spa, because it also contains massage points and other treatments. (Joensuun liikuntatoimi 2013).

The largest shopping center in Joensuu, Iso Myy, offers a children's corner in their facilities which contains a television and videos, drawing and colouring possibilities and swings. The service is free of charge. (Iso Myy 2013).

The city of Joensuu offers many play parks, which are open to all during spring, summer and autumn. Play parks are free of charge and are situated all over the city. However, there is only one play park near the center.

4.3 Discussion

North Karelia as a whole offers good services for children, but the services are far apart. There are plenty of spas, but they do not serve the tourists arriving to shop to Joensuu. Only Pajarinhovi in Kitee is on the way from the border to Joensuu; others are far and therefore unreachable when a short visit to Joensuu is the purpose of travel. Hence, the places where spas in North Karelia are situated do not offer services for families other than accommodation and therefore are not very attractive.

The city of Joensuu offers a few services, but it lacks a so-called main attraction, meaning that there are no amusement parks, water parks or other big services for children. For example Mikkeli, which is not much bigger city than Joensuu, has Visulahti, which is an amusement park designed for children. Also Punkaharju, which is a small village, has Kesämaa, a water park for children.

Although tourism concentrates heavily on the summer season, North Karelia offers also a lot during the wintertime. At this time of year, tourists can go to Koli and downhill ski, cross-country skiing, ice fishing and skating on ice. During the summertime, there are couple of zoos in the area, and canoeing as well as drafting are popular activities. Activities placed inside are open all seasons.

Investing into tourism and creating new services for families travelling with children would also bring benefits to all families living in the area. There would be more services for local inhabitants as well, and the increasing number of services could also mean more jobs and therefore benefit the whole region.

5 RESEARCH METHODS

5.1 Research questions

The survey of this study was conducted with a questionnaire which was designed to be easy to do by interviewing participants. The questionnaire was first written in English and then translated to Russian in order to get valid answers without translation problems. Most of the questions did not give ready-made answers, but the purpose was that the participants could give their own ideas and longer answers in order to bring ideas to the study which this study did not had considered.

The questionnaire also contained questions where possible answers were given ready. These questions were designed to determine possible demand in a sense of interest and the willingness to pay for certain concepts which were designed in beforehand.

The target group for this study were Russian tourists who are staying at least one night in Joensuu and who have at least one child under twelve years of age. This target group was chosen because the purpose of this study was to determine what kind of services and activities Russian tourists travelling with children are currently using in Joensuu and what kind of services would they like to have. Tourists, who only visit Joensuu briefly, for one day, do not usually need any services for children because they come and go fast and do not necessarily carry children with them. Studying families who are spending at least one night in the city gives accurate information on the needs of the target group. Studying only those families who visit Joensuu gives a more accurate picture of the situation in the city. If the entire North Karelia region would be studied, other motivation factors, such as cottage renting, would somewhat distort the results.

5.2 Data collection and analysis

The data collection was done by 7 North Karelia University of Applied Sciences (name was changed to Karelia University of Applied Sciences on 1.1.2013) students 3-4.11.2012 in two hotels; Hotel Greenstar and Hotel-restaurant Aada. The students were also able to collect the data in the streets of Joensuu if necessary. The places of data collection were chosen because the target participants of the study were best reached in hotels. The time period of the data collection was chosen to be 3-4.11 because it was expected that there would be a high number of Russian tourists in the city of Joensuu. All Russians had a day off on 5.11 due to a celebration so a large number of tourists were expected to arrive to Joensuu.

The students collected the data by interviewing the participants with the questionnaire. The interviewers were instructed to collect data only from the designed target group. This data collection method was chosen because the purpose was to get tourists to give their own answers to some questions rather than to just circle a ready given answer. Unfortunately, this purpose did not get fulfilled; the interviewers wrote only a few words although they were instructed to write everything the tourists say. Nevertheless, the answers still gave very good information on the researched matter.

The turnout of 48 responses gave a good basis for data analysis. The results were analysed with the help of the statistical information analysis program SPSS 19. Each question was first analyzed separately and then in the themes of research questions. This data analysis was chosen because SPSS gives the possibility to compare answers, and with the program it is also possible to determine if some variable affects another variable.

Two questions were left out from the analysis due to translation mistakes when the questionnaire was translated from English to Russian. Fortunately, these questions were not essential to the results of this study and therefore it was possible to ignore them.

5.3 Validity and reliability

The sample size of 48 responses was rather small and therefore no wider conclusions can be drawn. Nevertheless, it provides a good picture on the target group, especially when considering families from the Karelian Republic. The idea was to gather comments in addition to the quantitative data, but unfortunately this did not happen. Nevertheless, the received data turned out to be very useful and served the aim of this study very well. One of the aims was to create new ideas, and this purpose was served by testing new ideas. It is, however, vital to point out that the results of this study give information only from those tourists who have visited Joensuu at least once. Therefore, it is not necessarily valid for new potential tourists. To increase the validity of this study, more research should be done to determine the potential interest to tested concepts from new potential tourists.

6 EMPIRICAL RESULTS OF SURVEY

6.1 The respondent's background information

The first theme of this study was to determine what kind of Russian tourists visit Joensuu: how many children they have, from where they come from, and how long they are staying. The usual behaviour was also studied; when they usually visit Joensuu and how long they usually are staying.

Most of the respondents were travelling with 1 child (67%) or with 2 children (27%). As expected from the results of previous studies, all except 2 families were from the Karelian Republic; the most frequently mentioned hometowns were Petroskoi, Pitkäranta and Kontupohja. The 2 remaining families were coming from Saint Petersburg and from Leningrad Oblast.

The target group was reached very well; 96% of interviewed families were staying in Joensuu at least 1 night. The participants were interviewed in 2 hotels in Joensuu; in Hotel Greenstar and in Hotel- Restaurant Aada.

Most of the families were staying in Joensuu 2-3 nights which means a weekend (Figure 8). Only a few families were staying longer than 4 days.

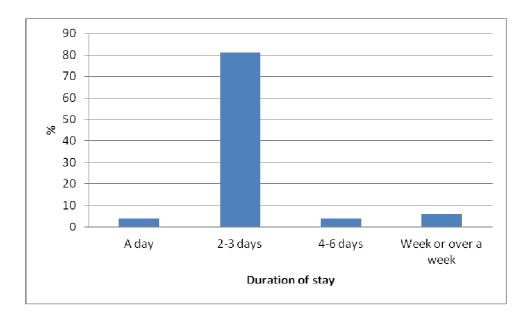


Figure 8. The number of nights spent by respondents in percentages (n=48).

The respondents were relatively familiar with Joensuu; over 80% of respondents had visited Joensuu before (Figure 9). Only 20% of the respondents had not visited Joensuu. Considering the fact that the respondents were both staying nights in Joensuu and also were frequent visitors, the target group for the purpose of this study was met perfectly.

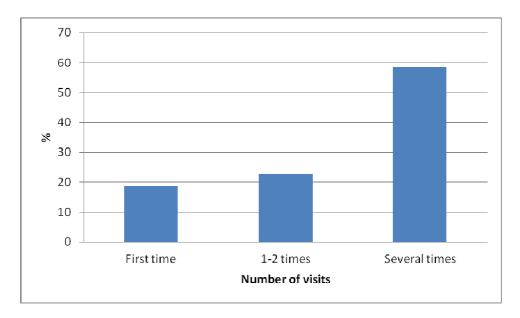


Figure 9. Respondents visits to Joensuu in percentages (n=48).

The respondents were also asked which season they usually visit Joensuu. (Figure 10). Summer and winter are the most popular seasons, which is natural due to vacation seasons.

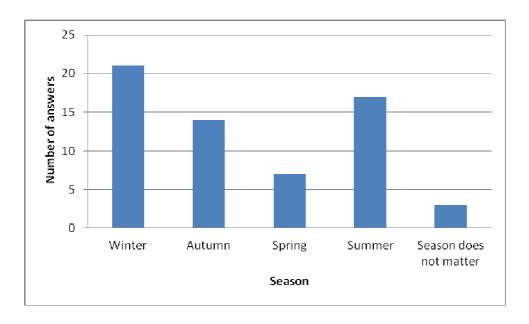


Figure 10. The season of usual visit in number of answers (n=48).

When the usual length of stay in Joensuu was asked from the respondents, only 11 respondents answered. Out of these 11 respondents, 8 usually stayed for 2-3 days. 2 respondents usually stayed 7 days or more. No valid conclusions can be drawn from this data, because the number of responses was so low.

6.2 Awareness and usage of current services for children in Joensuu

One of the key purposes of this study was to find out how well the respondents know the current services and activities for children in Joensuu, if they are well aware of them, and do they consider them satisfactory. Again, the answer options were not given ready-made; the respondents identify how well they know services and activities. In order to analyze the responses, the answers were coded to be "yes" if the respondent knew the services well, to "some idea" if one or few services were identified and to "no" if they were not aware of them.

Only 27% felt that they know well what kind of services and activities Joensuu offers. One-third could identify a few services and 40% did not know the current services at all. (Figure 11.) This indicates that although most of the respondents had visit Joensuu before, they have not familiarized themselves with the services.

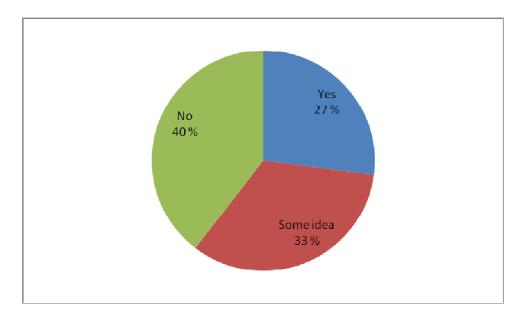


Figure 11. The respondents awareness of current services and activities for children in Joensuu (n=48).

After analyzing the current awareness, the respondents were asked to evaluate if the service offering is satisfactory or not. Only 39% of the respondents who knew the current services well considered them to be at a satisfying level. Hence, over 60% were not happy with the current situation.

Finally, the current service usage was identified by asking the respondents if they had used the current services in the city. The places were given ready and the respondents were asked to say if they had visited the place or not. Figure 12 illustrates the usage of current services in percentages by place. The figure clearly indicates that Russian tourists do not use the current services and activities actively. There may be many reasons for the low usage percentages; either tourists do not know that the service exists, they are not interested in the service or they do not have time to use the service.

The public swimming hall Vesikko is the only one who has been able to attract the respondents. Others, especially the kid's street in Carelicum and the butterfly garden Botania were poorly visited; only 7 respondents had visited the kid's street "Mukulakatu" with their children and only 11 out of 48 had visited Botania.

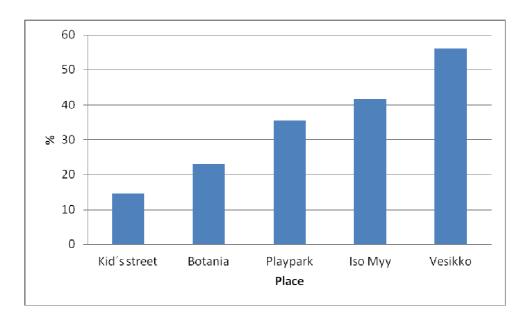


Figure 12. The usage of current services and activities in percentages (n=48).

However, when more closely observing the usage of current services, it can be identified that those respondents who answered "no" when asked about the awareness of current services, had used those services which are free. In this case the play parks and the kid's play corner in shopping center Iso Myy. A conclusion can be drawn that perhaps the respondents considered that when asked about the awareness of current services, they felt that free services do not need to be mentioned.

It can be said that although over half of the respondents had at least some idea of current services and activities in Joensuu, they had not used them actively. There may be many reasons; the lack of information in Russian language, or the lack of interest to some services. It was also concluded from the results, that Russian tourists do not necessarily feel that free services, such as free play parks in the city or the kid´s play corner in shopping center Iso Myy, are actual services to be mentioned.

6.3 Ideas for new services

In order to make Joensuu more attractive for Russian tourists, more services must be invented. The respondents were asked if they were satisfied with the current services in Joensuu. Over 60% of the respondents who had good

awareness on the current services were not satisfied with the current offering. It is clear that new services are needed to attract more tourists to the city and also to better serve the tourists who visit Joensuu regularly. One extra night for example would bring income to different service providers; to accommodation establishments, restaurants and shops. Therefore the respondents were asked to make wishes regarding which kind of services and activities they would like to have for their children. Usually if a person is asked for new ideas, nothing is made up immediately, and therefore example ideas are easier for the respondent.

In order to gather interest to certain ideas, 6 were first designed, but because of translation misunderstanding in the translation phase of the questionnaire, 1 idea was left out of the final analysis. In addition, willingness to pay for them was also asked, because it indicates the real interest and gives insight which ideas could be profitable business or not.

Indoor adventure park with professional caregivers

The first idea included an indoor adventure park where the respondent could leave his or her child/children and go shopping. (Figure 13). This model is in use for example in IKEA in Kuopio. Children can be left to a supervised space while the parents go shopping. As can be seen from the figure, more than half had interest in this service. Most of respondents who had interest would be willing to pay under 5 €/h. Nevertheless, many respondents had said to the interviewer that they would not leave their child in any case to anyone.

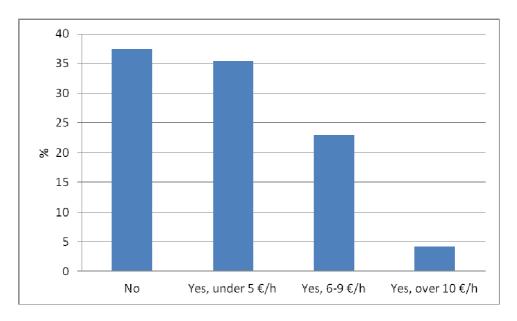


Figure 13. The interest in an indoor adventure park with professional caregivers and the willingness to pay for it (n=48).

Indoor adventure park without caregivers

The second idea introduced was the same as the first excluding the professional caregivers. This idea therefore included an indoor adventure park. This concept is in use in many places and almost in every big city in Finland. Chains such as "Hoplop" and "Puuhapark" are indoor adventure parks where children can play. Both chains have already tried doing business in Joensuu, but with poor results and both have finished their business. Nevertheless, this type of a concept could work in the center, where the service would be better available for all, not just for tourists.

The response to this service was very poor and can partially explain the poor success of Hoplop and Puuhapark in Joensuu. Over 60% of the respondents were not interested on this service, and the rest who were, would not have been willing to pay over 6 €/h for it. (Figure 14.)

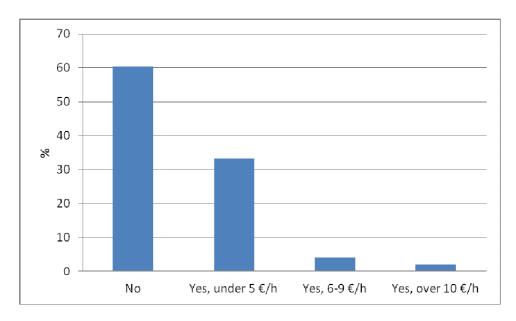


Figure 14. The interest in an indoor adventure park without professional caregivers and the willingness to pay for it (n=48).

Wintertime adventure park outdoors

The third idea tested introduced an outdoor adventure park in winter where children could for example slide, play in snow tunnels and make snowmen. This idea was introduced by Jaani Holma, the project manager of KAUPAKS-project, who is also participating in arranging an event called "Lunta Ilosaaressa". This event is held in Ilosaari in Joensuu after New Year's Eve, and for the event, slides and ice skating tracks are built. Because the sets are built, making business with the place could be possible after the event.

Russian tourists are very interested in this idea and would be willing to pay for it (86%) (Figure 15). The place is already being built every year; this kind of an activity would not have to cost so much for the customer. In addition, Ilosaari is located near the center of Joensuu and is therefore very well reached by all tourists. This service would also not need a lot of employees, just one to collect the payment. Extra services, such as renting sleds, skates and security equipment such as helmets, would bring more income and could be done by companies in the center or in Ilosaari.

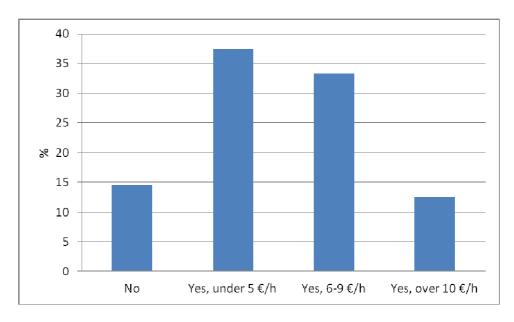


Figure 15. The interest in an outdoor adventure park during wintertime and the willingness to pay for it (n=48).

Summertime amusement park

A summertime amusement park was the fourth idea in testing. Finland has over ten amusement parks, which gather hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. Amusement parks are usually very attractive for families with children and people are willing to drive long distances to reach one. Joensuu does not have an amusement park. Such a park is very expensive to build and to maintain and therefore demand has to be carefully measured. The results received from the research done by KAUPAKS (2012) already revealed that tourists wished to have an amusement park in Joensuu, but to further investigate the matter, the amount of money which the tourists would be willing to pay was asked.

As Figure 16 shows, this target group was very interested in this idea. Almost 90% were willing to pay for it, and over 20% would be willing to pay over 10 €/h. Therefore, it can be concluded that there would be a great demand for an amusement park amongst Russian tourists, especially amongst this target group.

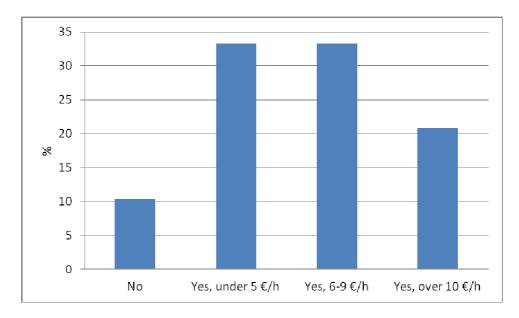


Figure 16. The interest towards an amusement park during summertime and the willingness to pay for it (n=48).

Boat cruise for children

The last idea dealt with a boat cruise around the region during summertime. A company called "Satumaa risteilyt" offers cruises around the region, but these cruises are not designed for children. Satumaa also does not advertise in Russian language; the websites are only in Finnish and tickets can be bought only from a few places. This idea was tested because a boat cruise designed for children is missing from Joensuu. Satumaa's cruises last for two hours, and children often do not have the patience to sit so long in one place if there is no program arranged.

The idea of a boat cruise for children turned out to be successful (Figure 17). Over 60% would be willing to pay more than 5 €/trip. Satumaa's cruises cost 7.50 €/child and 15 €/adult, so the price range could be the same as theirs. (Satumaaristeilyt 2012). Perhaps Satumaa could develop their offering and develop a cruise for children. There seems to be demand for it among the Russian tourists. Also the results received from the research made by KAUPAKS (2012), boat cruises would be popular.

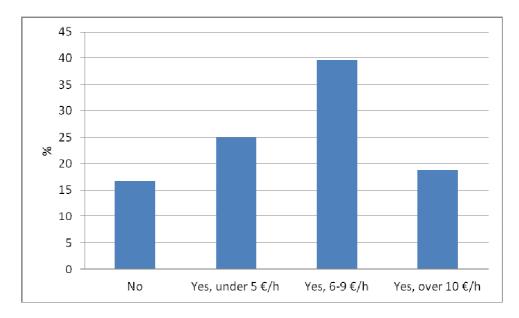


Figure 17. The interest towards a boat cruise around the region during summertime and the willingness to pay for it (n=48).

The respondents were also asked what other services Joensuu could offer to children. This question was very important for the study because the main purpose was to gather new ideas. Unfortunately, only a few respondents were able to invent services. One hoped for a kindergarten with Russian caregivers, which would operate from morning until afternoon. One mentioned a water park. Also carting and something for snowboarding were wished for. One respondent mentioned Disney Land. However, many respondents separately mentioned an amusement park, although it had been already mentioned in the survey.

6.4 Awareness of popular Finnish services for children

In order to determine how well Russian tourists know Finnish services for children, the respondents were asked which services they know from a given list of services. The services included an adventure park, seven amusement parks and one circus. The awareness was tested in order to determine how important for example a certain chain is for Russian tourists if it matters at all.

Russian tourists do not know Finnish services for children very well (Figure 18). Linnanmäki, Särkänniemi and Angry Birds- Park were the best known, but also they were weakly recognized. None of the respondents knew Tykkimäki and only one knew of Powerpark, Flowpark and Visulahti.

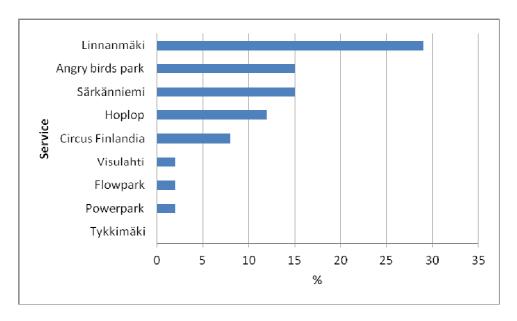


Figure 18. Awareness of popular Finnish services for (n=48).

6.5 Purchase behaviour

The most important reason for Russian tourists for coming to Joensuu is shopping (Kähkönen 2011, 25; KAUPAKS 2012, 3). Therefore, the last research theme was to find out what the target group purchases for their children, and their satisfaction with the assortment found in the stores in Joensuu. Good assortment is highly important when considering the attractiveness of a place to families travelling with children. This was especially true here, as the respondents were asked if they make purchases for their children in Joensuu and furthermore, what kind of goods they purchase for them. They were also asked about their satisfaction with the assortment and if not, what would they like to have in Joensuu. The received answers were similar so they were able to be coded to four different categories: sport equipment, toys, sweets and clothes.

Almost all respondents had bought clothes for their children from Joensuu (Figure 19). Toys were bought by many respondents. Satisfaction with the current assortment in the stores of Joensuu is excellent; 94% reported being very satisfied. One unsatisfied respondent wished for more toy stores and another for more winter clothes for children.

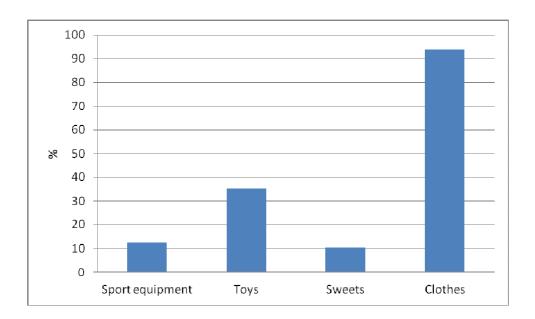


Figure 19. Things purchased for children in Joensuu, in percentages (n=47).

7 DISCUSSION

This research has revealed many interesting matters. The first is that current services for children are not well-known and used amongst the target group. Furthermore, the tourists are not satisfied with the current service offering. This is a clear message that development has to be done in order to make tourists satisfied and stay longer. There is not always the need to create new services; developing existing ones is an option.

According to this research, current services for children are not well-known, and therefore investing in marketing could easily bring more tourists to use the services. Hotels and other accommodation establishments are an excellent marketing routes when Russian tourists are considered; providing marketing material in Russian language to the reception or working in co-operation with the establishments could be beneficial to both parties. Co-operation in Joensuu is at a very low level in this matter. One big chain dominating the accommodation, restaurant and in some extent the retail market should enforce the willingness of the smaller players to join forces. Hence, the big chain does not offer many services for children either.

New services for children

One of the main purposes of this study was to gather new ideas from Russian families travelling with their children. Planned ideas were tested and therefore new ideas were gathered. This research has also shown that Russian families travelling with children are willing to pay for services. When ideas were tested, an amusement park, a boat cruise and a wintertime adventure park arose good interest. For example the wintertime adventure park is not costly to build or maintain because the frames are already built, and therefore could be an excellent addition to the current service offering. Creating something which cannot be found anywhere nearby is also an excellent choice. A wintertime adventure park

could bring a boost to wintertime tourism in Joensuu. Furthermore, services should be available for all seasons. An amusement park does not operate during winter and therefore an adventure park would be a good supplement for it during the wintertime.

Joensuu lacks one big attraction, such as an amusement park or something similar. As demonstrated, there would be a demand for example for an amusement park. There have been plans of building an amusement park in Joensuu, but for some reason the plans have not resulted in anything, at least not yet. These plans, however, have been about building an amusement park around a certain theme, such as for example the Angry birds -theme. It can be assumed based on this study that Russian tourist's awareness of existing services for children is not good and therefore an amusement park without a theme could be considered. Furthermore, the closest amusement park from Niirala and also from all border crossing stations is near Helsinki. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that building an amusement park needs millions of Euros and therefore more research for ensuring the demand definitely exists.

Creating something new, something which does not exist in any other place in Finland could be one idea worth considering. Benchmarking from abroad or concentrating on Joensuu's strengths, such as the nature, could bring new ideas for functional business. Creating new could also mean more domestic tourism. Good ideas could be gathered for example from students, local families and from tourists.

Developing the existing services

If new services are not being developed, making the existing ones more attractive is one option. Marketing through correct channels is not always enough, developing the current services so that they would be more attractive is important. Conducting research into finding out what kind of activities both locals and tourists want would make the current services more attractive to both parties. A single service cannot survive in Joensuu if only tourists use the service; therefore taking local consumers into consideration is vital. The same works both

ways; rare service survives if only locals use it and therefore the point of view of tourists is important.

Creating some sort of bonus systems amongst the service providers or giving benefits to frequent visitors would also benefit the stores and service providers. This option has just recently been taking into action in some companies, mostly shops, in Joensuu in result of the KAUPAKS-project, but for example "an activity-passport" for children could allure more tourists to places and also to get tourist more acquainted with the current services. This kind of "passport" could be marketed by hotels and other accommodation establishments. Special packages could be assembled so that both accommodation establishments and service providers would benefit from it. For example children would get a free-access to 3 places which offer activities for children and it would be a part of the price of accommodation. The accommodation establishment would then pay a certain fee to those places which the family visits.

Russian tourists visiting North Karelia are very often frequent visitors and a bonus system could prevent them from visiting other cities and would make them feel appreciated. Co-operation between accommodation establishments and service providers would also increase the attractiveness if joined discounts or packages would be available. Also co-operation in creating new services for tourists would benefit the service providers and would split the risk in investments. Sponsoring activity, for example, could be one option.

Evening out the seasons

To even out the fluctuations in the amount of arriving tourists in different seasons, discounts and other benefits to those tourists who visit Joensuu in low-seasons such as spring and autumn could even out the currently big differences. Lowering the price-per-room rate during low seasons and then invest to side services such as to restaurants could allure more Russian tourists to Joensuu. Families travelling with children are usually not travelling during high seasons if the family has children in school, but those families who have very small children could be a good target group to market for during low-seasons. Hotels could, for example, use Russian speaking students and offer babysitting at the hotel so that parents could go shopping.

Services for children in Joensuu are mainly those kinds of services which are inside and therefore are not depended on the weather. They all are also open daily so giving discounts to Russian families travelling with children during low seasons would benefit them also. Many of the respondents in this study pointed out that they would not leave their children to a professional caregiver in any situation, but creating a service where a professional caregiver and parents still being in the same building or near could be made possible by creating a space where there would be services to both. A restaurant with a playcorner with a caregiver present would give parents the possibility to eat in peace or an adventure park where would be a space for parents to rest could be few options.

Maintaining the satisfaction in shopping abilities

Although the respondents were not happy with the current service offering, they were very satisfied with shopping abilities for children's goods in Joensuu. This finding is very important, because currently the most important reason for coming to Joensuu is shopping. Maintaining good assortment is vital and perhaps creating something new would allure more tourists to Joensuu.

The KAUPAKS- project has already done work to make customer service and assortment better for Russian tourists. Companies invest to Russian speaking personnel and taxes can be distracted in many places in Joensuu. Investing into signs and information in Russian language is also one goal of the project.

Suggestions for further studies

This thesis gives good basis for further studies. Tested concepts should be tested more intensively with bigger samples if some of them are considered to Joensuu. Extensive research is necessarily if big investments are planned and therefore the results received from this study are just for preliminary plans.

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Hello, We are students from the local University and we are researching what kind of activities and services the city of Joensuu could offer to your children . If you could spare few moments, I would like to ask you few questions about it?

1) How many under 12 year-old children do you have? (If none, do not

continue this interview)

2)	What is your hometown?
3)	Have you visited Joensuu before? If yes, how many times?
4)	What time of the year do you usually visit Joensuu? (Don't ask this if the answer to question 2 is NO)
5)	How long are you now staying in Joensuu? And usually?
6)	Do you know what activities Joensuu offers for children?
7)	Do you think there is enough activities for children?

8)	Have you	visited	the	following	places	with	your	children	in	Joen-
	suu?									

a) Kid's street in Carelicum Yes

e)	Kid's play	corner in shopping center Iso	о Муу	Yes	No

9) Would you be willing to pay for following services for children?

a) Indoor adventure park where you could leave your children with professional carers and go shopping?

No Yes, under 5 €/h Yes, 6-9€/h Yes, over 10 €/h

b) Indoor adventure park without carers?

No Yes, under 5 €/h Yes, 6-9 €/h Yes, over 10 €/h

c) An outdoor adventure park during wintertime where children could for example slide, play in snow tunnels and make snowmen?

No Yes, under 5 €/h Yes, 6-9 €/h Yes, over 10 €/h

d) An amusement park during summertime?

No Yes, under 5 €/h Yes, 6-9€/h Yes, over 10 €/h

e) An ice skating track in the marketplace during wintertime?

No Yes, under 5 €/h Yes, 6-9€/h Yes, over 10 €/h

1) A boa	t cruise around region	during summer time?					
No over 10 €/trip	Yes, under 5 €/trip	Yes, 6-9€/trip	Yes,				
10)Which ognize		ces are familiar to yo	u? (Underline if rec-				
Särkänniemi cus Finlandia		Angry birds-park	Cir-				
Powerpark	Flowpark		Hoplop				
Linnanmäki	Visulahti		Tykkimäki				
(max 2)	Which of the following you would like to have in Joensuu the most? (max 2) 11)What other activities would you like to have in Joensuu for children?						
12)Do you buy things for children in Joensuu?, If yes, what?							
13)Is there a good assortiment of children's things in Joensuu?, If no, what is missing?							

THANK YOU VERY MUCH AND ENJOY YOUR STAY IN JOENSUU!

Привет, Мы студенты из местного университета, и мы исследуем, какие действия и обслуживает город Йоэнсуу, мог предложить Вашим детям. Если бы Вы могли бы сэкономить несколько моментов, я хотел бы задать Вам немного вопросов об этом?

14)Сколько у вас детей, которым меньше 12 лет? (Если ни один, не продолжайте зто интервю.)
15)Из какого вы города?
16)Посещали ли вы Йоэнсуу до этого? Если да, то сколько раз?
17)В какое время года вы обычно посещаете Йоэнсуу?
18)На какое время вы сейчас остановились в Йоэнсуу? А обычно?
6) Вы знаете, какие развлечения для детей есть в Йоэнсуу?
7) Вы считаете, здесь достаточно развлечений для детей?

8)	Посещали	ЛИ	вы	следующие	места	СО	СВОИМИ	детьми	В
	Йоэнсуу?								

•		_	
f١	Улица ребенка в Carelicum	Да	Нет
11	TINDA DOCCHRA B CAIGICUITI	да	1101

j) Развлекателный уголок ребенка в торгового центра Iso Муу Да Нет

9) Вы бы заплатили бы за следующие виды сервиса для детей?

а) Крытый парк приключения, где Вы могли оставить свойх детей с профессиональными воспитателями и поитй по магазинам?

Нет Да, Ниже 5 €/час Да, 6-9€/час Да, Над 10 €/час

b) Крытый парк приключений без воспитателя?

Нет Да, Ниже 5 €/час Да, 6-9€/час Да, Над 10 €/час

с) Парк развлечений на улитце, в котором ваши дети зимой могли бы играть в снежный тоннель, кататься на санках и строить снеговика?

Нет Да, Ниже 5 €/час Да, 6-9€/час Да, Над 10 €/час

d) Луна - парк в летнее время?

Нет Да, Ниже 5 €/час Да, 6-9€/час Да, Над 10 €/час

е) Каток в торговом центре в зимнее время?

Нет Да, Ниже 5 €/час Да, 6-9€/час Да, Над 10 €/час

f) Лодочный круиз по региону в летнее время?

Нет	Да, Ниже 5 €	Да, 6-9€	Да, Над 10 €
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10)Какие еще развлечения для детей вы хотели бы видеть в Йоэнсуу?

11)Какие из этих мест знакомы вам? (Underline if recognized)

Särkänniemi Angry birds-park Circus Finlandia

Powerpark Flowpark Hoplop

Linnanmäki Visulahti Tykkimäki

Какие вы бы хотели больше всего? (тах 2)

12)Вы покупаете вещи для детей в Йоэнсуу? Если да, то какие?

13)По вашему мнению, в Йоэнсуу хороший ассортимент вещей для детей? Если нет, то что отсутствует?

большое спасибо. Приятного отдиха в Йоэнсуу!!!