

Judit, Marti Cardenas

**Development of a Hiking Trip for a Company Called Finlandia Natur**

Thesis  
Kajaani University of Applied Sciences  
Health and Sports  
Sports and Leisure Management  
26.11.2013



School Health and Sport	Degree Programme Sports and Leisure Management
Author(s) Marti Cardenas Judit	
Title Development of a Hiking Trip for a Company Called Finlandia Natur	
Optional Professional Studies	Supervisor(s) Takala Katri
	Commissioned by Finlandia Natur
Date Autumn 2013	Total Number of Pages and Appendices 47+2
<p>The aim of this thesis was to create a nature-based hiking tourism product for Finlandia Natur, the commissioner, which aims to expand their product range and thus attract new customers by developing a hiking trip program for its nature-based products. The research tasks of this thesis were the following: How was the program for a nature-based hiking trip developed, and why had the product to be tested?</p> <p>The first section of this thesis defines nature-based tourism and its different forms, with an emphasis on Finnish nature-tourism, based on previous research. This is followed by an explanation of hiking and how a hiking trip for recreational purposes is planned and prepared, which will later, to some degree be used for the following case study. Furthermore, the service product is presented theoretically in several layers, and their significance is defined. In addition, the stages of the development process are explained in detail to provide a foundation for the later conducted development process. The outcome of this analysis reveals some differences in hiking programs, depending on if they are made for recreational or tourism purposes.</p> <p>The case study introduces first the operations of Finlandia Natur and the route of the hiking trip shortly before discussing the actual product development process. In this section a detailed description of the stages of hiking trip program and product development, based on the theoretical framework, are. Some parts of the product development process were modified in order to create a hiking trip that would meet the needs of Finlandia Natur.</p>	
Language of Thesis	English
Keywords	Hiking; Nature-Based Tourism; Product Development
Deposited at	<input type="checkbox"/> Electronic library Theseus <input type="checkbox"/> Kajaani University of Applied Sciences Library

## PREFACE

This thesis was accomplished in autumn 2013 and is fulfilling the requirements for Bachelor's Degree in Sports and Leisure Management at the Kajaani University of Applied Sciences. I would like to dedicate this dissertation to some people as part of my gratitude for their support. First of all I would like to give my thanks to my flat mate and good friend, Trang Pham Thui for her great company, support and help during my study years in Kajaani during the whole thesis process, providing with great help and encouragement.

I would like to thank to my teachers and supervisors for giving me their assistance and guidance to complete this thesis. A special thanks belongs to my final thesis supervisor, Katri Takala who stayed working till the end regardless of the many changes on my thesis providing with valuable advices during the thesis process. Furthermore I would like to thank my head teacher Kari Partanen for helping and being understandable with my personal situation regarding my studies and by providing advices till my graduation day.

As this thesis was commissioned by Finlandia Natur, I would like to thank Arto Tilli, the owner of Finlandia Natur for providing the topic and supporting the thesis process with his guidance. Additionally, a special thanks belong to Piia Mäkilä, the project manager who helped me during the product development and testing, providing with great cooperation, information and feedback.

Furthermore I would like to express my gratitude towards my family and friends at home and in Spain who supported me throughout the whole thesis process with their patience and advices. My gratitude also belongs to Maria DeCarvalho who supported and encouraged me with her enthusiasm during last part of my thesis process.

## CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 NATURE TOURISM	2
2.1 Description of Nature Tourism	2
2.2 Nature Tourists and Motives	4
2.3 Finland as a Nature Tourism Country	6
3 HIKING IN NATURE	10
3.1 Planning and Preparation For a Trekking Trip	11
3.1.1 Destination, Team and Route	11
3.1.2 Nutrition	13
3.1.3 Physical Fitness	15
3.2 Equipment and Skills	17
3.2.1 Clothing	18
3.2.2 Footwear and Backpack	19
3.2.3 Walking Skill	20
3.2.4 Personal and Emergency Equipment	21
3.2.5 Navigation, Safety and First Aid Skills	23
3.2.6 Camp Equipment and Camp Craft Skill	25
4 TOURISM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT	27
4.1 Tourism Product	27
4.2 Product Development Process	31
5 DEVELOPMENTAL TASK	33
6 DEVELOPING HIKING PRODUCT	34
6.1 Idea Generalization	34
6.2 Idea Screening	35
6.3 Concept Development and Testing	35
6.4 Marketing Strategy and Business Analysis	39
6.5 Product development	40
6.6 Test Marketing and Commercialization	42

7 DISCUSSION	43
7.1 Product Development	43
7.2 Reliability	44
7.3 Professional Development	45
SOURCES	46
APPENDICES	

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Nature-based tourism has become more popular and been increasing during the past few years. As a result, many small companies have been created in order to supply new customer demands. A person who has been involved in some sort of nature-based recreational activity or sport often creates nature-based companies seeing it as a way to gain an additional job while doing the activities he or she enjoys. However, transforming recreational activities into nature-based tourism products is not always easy.

The purpose of this thesis was to provide a practical method on transforming a recreational nature-based activity program into a nature-based tourism product. The aim of this thesis was to provide the commissioning company with a nature-based hiking product. I hope that this thesis will additionally help other nature-tourism entrepreneurs in Kainuu area in the development of their products. My personal aim in creating this thesis was to learn how to create good nature activity programs with tourists as customers, thus I could implement this knowledge later in my professional life. This thesis was also written to offer support for students at Kajaani University of Applied Science by providing with a well structured theoretical background and product development example.

In the theoretical background of this thesis, nature-tourism and its different forms is firstly explained shortly. Next, an analysis describing hiking and how to plan a hiking trip for hobby and recreational purposes is shown and lastly the definition of tourism product and a systematic product development process is introduced.

As a result of this thesis, a tested nature-based product, a hiking trip, was created as a case example. The product will be offered to Finlandia Natur which is the commissioning company. The answers of the following questions can be found during the theoretical background and conclusion: How was the program for a nature-based hiking trip developed, and why had the product to be tested? Additionally, in the conclusion the case study product is evaluated as a base product, and different improvements options are provided.

## 2 NATURE TOURISM

Nature has been one of the main attractions in tourism, with ethical value and significance in human spiritual well-being and emotional life. Hall, Müller, and Saarinen (2009,130) comment that in the recent years, nature-tourism and its related sectors have been growing significantly, and it is still one of the growing trends in tourism (Hall et al. 2009, 130.). Hemmi mentions that nature tourism (or nature-based tourism) is categorised as an alternative form of tourism: it opposes conventional tourism, in other words mass scale tourism and thus, it has fewer environmental impacts and requires less nature-burdening infrastructure (2005a, 333). In this chapter, the description of nature tourism and its forms will be explained, followed by a presentation of nature tourists' motivations and lastly a short introduction into Finnish nature tourism and its activities focusing in hiking is given.

### 2.1 Description of Nature Tourism

For understanding nature tourism, it is essential to understand first the description of tourism. Tourism concept might seem simple while in reality it is quite complicated to define. The popular notion of tourism is holiday travel for pleasure or leisure. However, in academic terms, the concept is much wider including also voluntary temporary travels such as visiting friends, shopping, traveling to a second home, educational, business or health travel. In any case, travel is a fixed aspect of tourism, though it is debatable how far a trip has to be made from the usual environment to be called a tourism trip. (Holden 2008, 1-5; Hall et al. 2009, 5-9, Goeldner 2012, 3.)

Nature tourism has been defined in many ways. Based on different definitions, Hemmi (2005a, 335) collected some common features of nature-based tourism, which aids to interpreting its definition and she concluded that nature tourism is traveling (note tourism definition), takes place in a natural environment, is based on natural attractiveness, offers experiences or tourists are expected to experience them, and includes all activities that take place in nature, also motorized ones. Nature tourism is used as a base for many other tourism forms, as they are strongly dependent on natural areas, thus they overlap with each other as perceived in Figure 1 (Hall et al. 2009, 131; Saarinen 2004, 10).

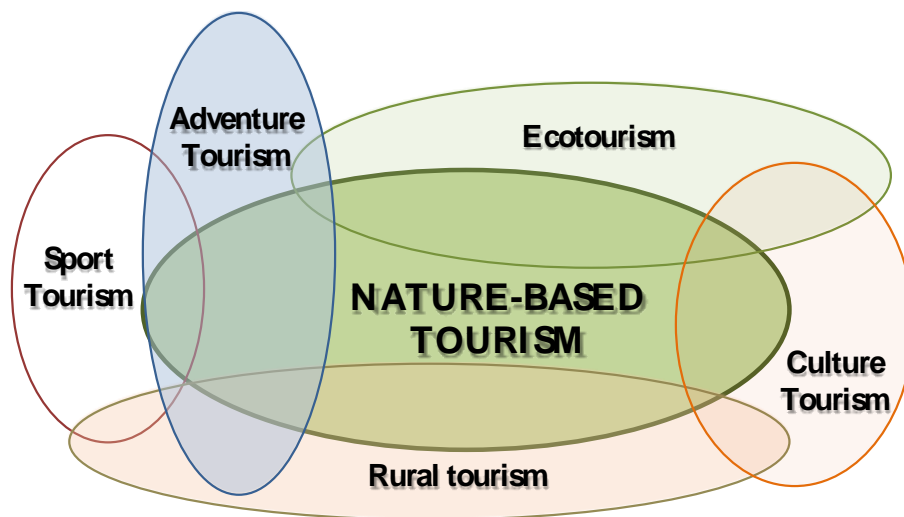


Figure 1: Nature-based Tourism and its Relative Forms. (Adapted from Hemmi 2005a.)

As shown in Figure 1, nature-based different forms are related with each other and thus create new tourism concepts. Fennel (2008, 35) mentions the tourism concept term of ACE, standing for adventure, culture and ecotourism. Another suggestion by Buckley (2009, 7) is the term NEAT standing for nature, ecotourism and adventure tourism. However, Buckley (2009, 4) and Fennel (2008, 24, 45) agree that each form has its own individual elements, and tourism products can be categorised depending on their primary product or attraction.

The international ecotourism society [IIES] names three key elements in ecotourism, which are conservation of nature, empowering local communities and emphasis on enriching personal environmental awareness (2012). Fennel (2008, 24) similarly defines ecotourism as:

Ecotourism is a sustainable, non-invasive form of nature-based tourism that focuses primarily on learning about nature first-hand, and which is ethically managed to be low-impact, non-consumptive, and locally oriented (control, benefits and scale). It typically occurs in natural areas, and should contribute to the conservation of such areas.

Swarbrooke, Beard, Leckie and Pomfret (2003, 14) and Hemmi (2005a, 357) defined adventure tourism as a tourism where participants expect intense experiences by voluntarily participating in thrilling activities or by putting themselves in a position where they can perceive risks. Furthermore, Swarbrooke et al (2003, 9-10) and Fennel (2008, 31) remark that uncertainty and risk are probably the most distinguished adventure tourism elements, and currently market offers a broad range from soft to hard adventure activities depending on uncer-



tainty and risk level. Fennel explain that adventure tourism can be differentiate from other nature tourism forms based on the activity pursued, and as mentioned earlier, in respect to the primary motivation in participating in the activity (2008, 32).

As for other nature based forms there is no clear definition for rural tourism. The simplest definition would be tourism that takes place in the countryside. However, George, Mair and Reid (2009, 7) explain that rural tourism boundary is blurred as rural can be defined as a geographical and as a description of cultural characteristics of communities in the countryside. Additionally, Sahrpley states that agriculture has always been associated with rural areas, and sometimes even primary resource industries, including fishing (1997, 5, 9).

Cultural tourism is one of the earliest tourism forms with the purpose of experiencing different human cultures. Tourists normally experience other cultures while interacting with local residents and by visiting cultural activities or attractions. Some culture segments tourists are interested in are: language, art, music, dance and traditional customs. (Bucley 2009, 16-17, 19.)

The of sport activity can be defined as Standeven (1999, 12) mentions as a range of competitive and non-competitive active pursuits that involve skill, strategy and, or chance in which humans engage, at their own level, for enjoyment and training or to raise their performance to excellence. With that definition in mind, he defines sport tourism shortly as traveling to participate in a sport activity, either actively or passively (to observe) in an organized way.

## 2.2 Nature Tourists and Motives

Goeldner defines a tourist as a traveller that seeks various psychic and physical experiences and satisfactions, who chooses a destination and activities depending on his or hers motives and needs (2012, 205). In an early study of Canadian nature-based tourists by Eagles (1992, 12-20) referred in McKercher (1998, 112) nature tourists could be identified with a variety of environmental, cultural and social objectives. McKercher (1998, 112) describes nature sites as environmental motives, such as wilderness, lakes and streams, mountains, natural parks etc., while local craft and historic sites are important cultural objectives. Hemmi (2005a, 427) together with McKercher (1998, 112) named social motivations for nature-based tourist as

being physically active, escaping from everyday life, self-examination, curiosity, learning new things, strengthening of social contacts and having experiences.

An essential motive of nature tourists is to have an emotional experience, which results in nature operators using experience as main motive to attract customers, though the attainment of such an experience cannot be guaranteed. According to Hemmi (2005a, 394), the emotional experience that tourists seek in nature tourism is positive, authentic and personal, bounded by feelings, place and time. Moreover, Lapin elämysteollisuuden osaamiskeskus [LEO] (2009) adds that an experience is narrative and perceived with multi-sensors, hopefully transformational and comprehensive; as it starts with early preparations, continues during activities and is remembered after the trip.

According to Borg, Kivi and Partti, service providers, tourism entrepreneurs, need to develop conditions under which experience can be achieved (2002, 27). LEO (2009) is the leading expert organization of experience economy in Finland. They help innovating the tourism industry and offer practical tools for boosting business competence and experience product development. A practical tool to analyse, understand and enhance experience-based elements of a product is the Experience Pyramid, which is the cornerstone of their R&D services as shown in Figure 2.

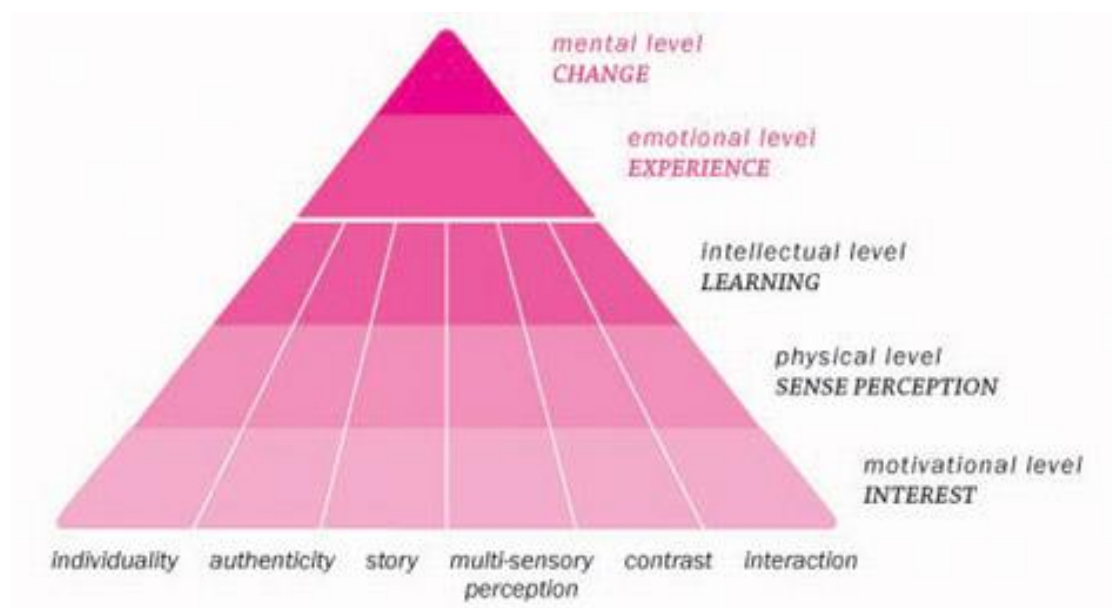


Figure 2: Experience Pyramid (LEO 2009)

The experience pyramid states a twofold approach to experience: customer experience and elements of the products. The basic thought is that for a customer to obtain a personal experience, different stages have to be reached using the outlay of the product. LEO (2009) describes those stages as motivational (awakening attention and interest), physical (experiencing the product through senses), and intellectual (learning through processing the earlier stages). After these stages, it depends on the customer to gain a personal experience and, furthermore, a change in their lifestyle. The experience pyramid mentions six main product elements that are needed in order to achieve a meaningful experience. LEO (2010) describes the meaning of those product elements as individuality (the uniqueness of the product), authenticity (the credibility of the product, which reflects the existing lifestyle and culture of the region), story (closely related to authenticity and binds the various elements of the product into a single theme), multi-sensory perception (the possibility of experiencing the product with as many of the senses as possible), contrast (the difference between experience compared to everyday life), and interaction (the communication between customers, the product and service providers).

### 2.3 Finland as a Nature Tourism Country

According to Inside Guides (2003, 133-134), a tourist guidebook about Finland, nature has been one of the most important tourist attractions in Finland. The Inside Guides mentions that Finland belongs to the taiga biome and humid continental climate, offering unspoiled wilderness, peace and quiet and free access practically anywhere. Additionally, The Inside Guides mentions the variety in seasonal changes, with warm summers and snowy winters, providing with a diverse range of activities. Hemmi (2005b, 44-50) notes that about 60% Finland's surface is covered by forests and the close to 187,000 lakes cover almost 10%. However, Hemmi reveals that Finish coniferous and mixed forests together with mires have surprisingly poor fauna and flora, with around 5000 plant species, less than 400 vertebrate species and around 26,000 invertebrate species, from which almost 20,000 are insects (2005b, 44-50).

Nature tourism activities are all activities done in real or adapted natural environment outside home locality. Finland offers a great variety of nature activities, some seasonal and others that can be attended year-round with different atmosphere depending on seasons. Activi-

ties can be classified into three main groups: nature sport activities, leisure activities in nature and other activities. (Hemmi 2005b, 285-286.)

Nature sport activities contain both fitness and recreational activities, and physical activities with benefits. Some fitness and recreational activities that belong to this group are cross-country and downhill skiing, trekking, hiking, walking, jogging, cycling, orienteering, canoeing, rowing, sailing, snowmobiling, horse trekking and horse riding camps. Fishing hunting and berry and mushroom picking are considered physical activities with benefits. Leisure nature activities are nature observation and monitoring, bird watching, collecting rocks, minerals or butterflies and nature photography. Husky or reindeer safaris, climbing, diving and hang gliding are examples of other activities. (Hemmi 2005b, 291-409.)

Bursell comments that Finland offers an unspoiled wilderness, peace, quiet and a free access due to the freedom to roam rights, making almost all forests potential for nature based activities, specially trekking or short-term camping (2002, 229). Metsähallitus (forest association) explains the main rights of freedom to roam, which is 'jokamiehenoikeus' in Finnish, and translation means 'every man's rights', refers to the rights of the residents to use nature regardless of who the landowner is (2005, 6). Additionally, Laaksonen (2008, 148) points that the freedom to roam is free of costs and includes a requirement of harmless, meaning there should not be damage or disturbance when used. According to Ministry of the Environment (2013, 9, 20) the rights of freedom to roam in shortly described in the following Table 1.

Table 1: Freedom To Roam Rights (adapted from Ministry of the Environment 2013, 9, 20.)

<b>Allow to:</b>	<b>Forbid to:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel on foot, by skis or bike, except in yards or other areas that are taken for specific purposes, such as fields, pastures or plantations.</li> <li>• Stay temporarily in areas where traveling is allowed. For example camping as long as it is far enough from residential areas.</li> <li>• Pick mushrooms, berries and flowers.</li> <li>• Angling and ice fishing.</li> <li>• Travel on waters or ice and using the waters for swimming or washing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make an open fire without landowner's permission unless it is an emergency situation.</li> <li>• Disturb or damage bird nests or its hatchlings, reindeers or other game animals.</li> <li>• Cut down or make damage to trees or take moss, lichen trees and earth-materials.</li> <li>• Cause damage or disturbance to others or nature and to litter the environment.</li> <li>• Drive motor vehicles off-roads without landowner's permission.</li> <li>• Fishing and hunting without relevant permits.</li> </ul>

According to Insight guides (2003, 133-136) Finland has 29 national parks and 14 strict nature reserves and over 350 other protected areas and local communities finance recreational hiking routes which when combined together, the hiking network expands. Bursell (2002, 229) mentions how the varied areas in Finland, such as fells of Lapland, forests, mires and lake areas, provide with different hiking levels, whereas the easiest marked routes provide with campsites with fireplace and maintenance of firewood along the way. Furthermore, Laaksonen comment about the use of snowshoes or skies for trekking during wintertime (2008, 163).

Repovesi Natural Park together with Aarnikotka nature reserve are examples of nature areas. They are located in the border of Valkeala and Mäntyharju provinces in Kymenlaakso region South-East of Finland. Repovesi and Aarnikotka cover an area of 29 square kilometres, though a big part is restricted area, as it belongs to the Pahkajärvi's shooting warning area. Pine and birch trees dominate the formerly commercial forestry and the park contains both young and old forests. The overall area is wild with some small mountains, which climbing requires some work but the view from the top is rewarding. The area and Olhava Mountain walls are also well known by rock climbers, as it is one of the most popular climbing sites in Finland. Repovesi National Park has many lean-to shelters with fireplaces and some rental

huts and cabins are available around the year. The beautiful natural views, the restored timber rafting channel and the suspension bridge are some of the park's main attractions, which are along the 24 km long circle trail, named Kaakkurinkierros (see the map in the appendix 1). (Metsähallitus 2005, 63-64.)

With so many opportunities for nature tourism activities many companies have emerged providing nature based products, such as Finlandia Natur. Finlandia Natur (2012) was founded in 2010 and it operates mostly in the southeast of Finland providing nature-based activities. Its main products are different fishing trips, though it also provides trip packages especially for Spanish tourists. Those trips might include nature activities such as hiking, canoeing, mountain biking, berries and mushroom picking, fishing and bird watching. The operating location provides varied natural areas, such as archipelago, mires, rivers and lakes while still being close to big cities and the capital, Helsinki. (Finlandia Natur 2012.)

### 3 HIKING IN NATURE

The wilderness is visited by millions of people every year, and different terms have been created for different walking activities. Following, there are some definitions of commonly used terms from Oxford dictionary (2010).

A walk: an act of traveling or an outing on foot.

Hiking: walk for a long distance, especially across country.

Backpacking: travel or hike carrying one's belongings in a rucksack.

Bushwalking: (Austral. /NZ) Hiking or backpacking.

Mountaineering: the sport or activity of climbing mountains.

Trekking: go on a long arduous journey, typically on foot.

Expedition: a journey undertaken by a group of people with a particular purpose, especially that of exploration, research, or war.

Therefore, by putting some definitions together, it can be said that hiking is an outdoor activity that consists of walking in natural environment for recreational purposes. Normally walks are shorter in duration and can be completed during a single day without the necessity of overnight camping, though a long day walk can be referred to as a day-hike. Multi-day hikes that require to camp in nature, where one needs to carry overnight equipment are normally referred to backpacking or trekking. During this thesis walking will be used as the skill and activity of walking, hiking or day-hike as the whole walking process or distance made during one day as a part of a trekking trip. Though the product itself will be called hiking trip, describing the main activity of the trip.

Laaksonen note that a small walk or day-hike might not need a lot of preparations compared to long trekking trips (2008, 21). Drake discusses how the complexity of the planning and preparations depends on factors such as the remoteness of the area, the group size or the length of the trip (2004, 10). In this chapter, hiking is explained by going through the planning and preparations needed for a trekking trip and describing the main components and skills needed in hiking for better understanding of the activity. These facts will be later used into preparing the hiking trip product program.

### 3.1 Planning and Preparation For a Trekking Trip

There are many different features to consider when planning long trekking trips. Drake mentions the first step to be finding a theme for the trip, which describes the type of the trip desired (2004, 10). He adds that once what type of trip is chosen, the next parts in planning the trip are finding a destination, choosing traveling companions, planning the route for the trip, having means of travel to and from destination, and deciding the time length for the trip.

At the planning stage, it is not necessary to make final decisions, but narrowing the options makes preparing easier, since they correlate highly with needed preparations. As mentioned before, the amount of preparation needed depends on the strenuousness of the trekking trip, therefore, is better to separate preparations in categories, such as nutrition, physical fitness and equipment and skills, to ensure that everything is arranged.

#### 3.1.1 Destination, Team and Route

There are many types of destinations such as mountains, forests, deserts, savannah, etc. and they can be domestic or foreign. According to Laaksonen (2008, 25) research on destinations helps in choosing the right place, and information can be acquired by using maps, guidebooks or Internet. Drake (2004, 10-13) explains how the research offers the knowledge of what kind of preparations are needed as for example, the climate determinates the clothing and equipment, the place affects the transportation to and from the destination and the activities in the destination influence the type of insurance and physical fitness needed. Additionally, Drake comment that when a destination is in a foreign country, the acquiring of papers for vehicles, international driving licence, permits to walk or climb and vaccinations may be included in the preparation phase (2004, 10-13).

It is important to plan the group size in early stage as a hiker can walk alone, in a small group from 2 to 4 people or in a bigger team. Drake (2004, 14) tells that hiking solo gives more freedom in choosing break times and walking speed, though a solo hiker needs to be self-sufficient and attentive to safety in all situations. On the contrary, Laaksonen (2008, 21-22) clarifies that the benefits gained from suitable team members are security and extra en-



joyment, as the team shares good moments and copes problems together during heavy difficult ones. Therefore, as Drake mentions, searching for good suitable companions is important as they help to make the trip a more valuable experience, while inappropriate companions can make the trip unpleasant (2004, 36).

There are three main qualities required to create a good hiking team. First, the team should have a common objective. Team members should communicate their expectations and goals for the trip in advance, and the goals should be tried to synchronize as a common objective for the team. The shared objective is a good incentive that encourages cohesion in the group. Second, the team members should have compatible personalities, and a similar level of physical and psychological fitness. For the safety and team spirit of the group, it might be wise to have some requirements for the team members. When choosing team members, it might be necessary to consider if they are up to the challenges of the trip. And third, the team should have altogether sufficient level of skills to be able to accomplish the hiking trip safely. There are specific skills, such as first aid or navigation, which are a necessity. In the team there should be members with enough experience of such skills. (Drake 2004, 14; Laaksonen 2008, 21.)

Once the destination and team is selected the route has to be determinate. The first step on planning the route, according to Laaksonen (2008, 26) and Drake (2004, 108), is to define the start and end points, followed by fragmenting the route into daily hikes and designate overnight stops, if possible even lunch stops. However, Laaksonen (2008, 27) and Drake (2004, 108) specify that this should be done considering the appropriate daily walking distance and keeping in mind that unforeseen events, such as changing weather conditions, might force to change the details of the route during the actual trip. Furthermore, Laaksonen (2008, 27) adds that for the enjoyment of the trip, it is important that the route contains interesting sightseeing spots.

The daily distance comfortable covered by fit and experienced walkers is of 16-24km a day, according to Drake, though the distance varies depending on the terrain, weather conditions and weight of the backpack (2004, 108). Laaksonen (2008, 27) mentions the average walking speed for hikers to be 3km/h, as when hiking in easy paths or sparse forests the speed is 4-5km/h and when walking uphill, in dense willow thickets or when admiring sceneries, the speed drops to 1-2km/h. With these numbers, while having 10min of rest stop every walking hour, traveling 20km at 3km/h would take exactly eight hours. Adding one hour as a

lunch break and the total time to cover 20km is nine hours. Considering the necessary time for a day hike, Drake justifies the importance of starting the day hike early in the morning in order to arrive early to the campsite, because it is advisable to have at least two to three daylight hours for camp building (Drake 2004, 142).

Laaksonen (2008, 26) and Drake (2004, 108) considerate to start a trekking trip with relatively short days, with respect to distance, as the backpack is the heaviest at the start of the trip and the hiker muscles might be unaccustomed to relatively heavy physical performance. Additionally, they both agree that the length of the distance covered should be gradually increased during the next or two days, to its maximum as the hikers become accustomed to carrying the pack, and to add a rest day every four to six days, meaning once a week.

### 3.1.2 Nutrition

Drake (2004, 175) states that the nutrition is highly important for a hiker, as it provides with the energy necessary to accomplish the strenuous activities during the long day. Furthermore, Laaksonen emphasises its importance, as dining moments during excursions are important memorable rest moments that are always enjoyable and heighten the mind and spirit (2008, 61). Therefore, food for trekking trips needs to be light, energy-rich and tasty. When planning the food for a trip, there are three important matters that need to be specified, which are the amount of food, the type of food, and how many meals per day.

Drake estimates the energy consumption of a man living and working in average conditions to be about 2,500kCal, and when engaging in strenuous activity such as hiking, the needed energy intake raises to about 3,500kCal, which is roughly a 40% increase (2004, 177). Furthermore, Bursell reminds the increase in intake needed in extreme cold weather conditions, which can be even 5,000kCal per day, as a lot of energy is necessary to maintain body warmth (2002, 29). This rough calculation gives an idea of how much extra food is needed to maintain the body active during a trekking trip compared to everyday food intake. Laaksonen mentions an unwritten rule whereas during long trekking where an intake needed per day is around 3,500kCal, the corresponding amount of dry food is around 800g per day (2008, 62).

There are four different types of food available for hiking, which are fresh food, dry food, ready-to-eat meals in pouches and canned food. For short hikes, fresh food can taste delicious but for trekking, the conservation and weight of the rations need to be considered. Thus, varied energy-rich dry food, in which spices can be added to improve the flavour, is the best option, even though the needed cooking equipment and needed water might add some extra weight. Additionally, all kind of dry fruits, dry meat, cheese, biscuits, nuts, chocolate and cereal bars are great snacks. (Drake 2004, 178, 182, 195; Laaksonen 2008, 62-63.)

Laaksonen clarifies that the normal three-main-meal per day rule applies perfectly during trekking trips, though the doses of the foods might need to be a little bigger (2008, 63-64). Drake specifies the main meals contents in more detail, whereas normally for breakfast a hiker would have plenty of drinks together with bread, porridge or cereals, or a more substantial cooked breakfast to provide extra energy for the day hike (2004, 194). In the middle of the day hike, Drake (2004, 195) explains that a high-energy meal needing little preparation during a brief lunchtime prevents slowing down and having a lot of snacks is the key to gain enough energy during active hours. Since the main meal of the day is commonly dinner, Drake recommends its contents to have protein ingredients, such as meat or fish and lots of carbohydrates, in form of pasta, rice or potatoes (2004, 195). Bursell adds the idea of incorporating to the meals berries, fruits and mushrooms, picked during the hike to increase the vitamins intake (2002, 220).

Keay highlight that fluid balance is as important as energy and hikers should tank-up with fluid before departure and drink as much as possible and as soon as possible once arrived to the night camp (1996, 112). While on the move, one litre is a minimum of water for a short hike and two and a half for an all-day hike and extra water should be added if cooking requires water (The Mountaineers [TM] 2013). Additionally, Laaksonen 2008,66) comment how in hot weather conditions and during strenuous activities the fluid demand increases, whereas five litres of water a day might not even enough. Water from natural sources can be filtered with reliable purification system or boiling if it is picked up from clean stream (TM 2013).

### 3.1.3 Physical Fitness

Keay reveals the three most frequent reasons for trekking trip being aborted which the first one is poor navigation skills, which leads to getting lost and becoming exhausted by traveling extra kilometres to rectify the situation; second one overweight backpacks and the third one simple lack of physical fitness (1996, 237). Basically, all the reasons have something to do with poor physical fitness.

Bursell (2002,26) explain that the amount of physical fitness needed would depend on the strenuous and length of the trekking trip. Keay (1996, 237) comments how a competent team member with a specific skill, such as navigation, can compensate for the lack of the skill in rest of the team, tough, balancing the physical fitness between the team is impossible. Therefore, Keay states that physical fitness is the most prevalent shortcoming and the most difficult to overcome, as it has to be personally obtained before the actual trip during a long period of time (1996, 237). Thus, Keay recommends the pointing of a fitness level requirement, when selecting team members in the planning stage, to ensure that the fitness level of team members is high enough before the trip (1996, 238).

According to Keay (1996, 239) the ideal is to train physical fitness throughout the year to maintain a specific level of fitness. Though, as this is not always possible or when a higher level of fitness is needed, Keay (1996, 239) points the importance of timing of the training program and he estimates a good starting time for a training program to be two months prior the trip, or three, when the amount of time used for training is small or if the person is inactive during normal everyday life, meaning the starting fitness level is really low. Additionally, Bursell (2002, 26) says that a good fitness program is increasingly strenuous until two or three days before the trip.

There are different fitness tests a hiker can take to know its own fitness condition. Keay mentions the Cooper 12-minute run test, which determinates the fitness level by calculating how far a person can travel by running, jogging or walking, and the Cooper 1.5 mile (2.4 km) run test, the level is decided by how fast a person can travel the 1.5 miles (1996, 240-141). Additionally, Aalto (2005, 24) introduces similar walking test exists for those who are not able to run, like the UKK Walk Test; where the fitness level is calculated by the time spent to walk two kilometres.

Drake lists (2004, 28-29) the muscles and joints that are mostly used when hiking while carrying a heavy backpack, which are the lower and upper parts of the legs, core muscles, shoulders and back. Therefore an all-round physical fitness is the most appropriate for trekking and outdoors activities. Aalto (2005, 22) comments that the most relevant components for hiking are cardiovascular and muscular endurance, and flexibility for better mobility. He explains that cardiovascular endurance provides with the ability to exercise the whole body for long periods of time without getting exhausted, while the muscular endurance provides with the ability of using the same muscles repeatedly without getting tired.

Aalto (2005, 41) informs that the development of cardiovascular and muscular endurance supports each other well, which enables the combination of both into the same aerobic exercises. Drake lists good aerobic exercises such as running, jogging, cycling or swimming, whereas it is possible to modify the exercises by adding muscle endurance and strength exercises to it (2004, 28). Aalto instructions in muscle endurance training are to exercise with low weights (0-40%), long repetitions (15-100) and short resting time (0-30s) between exercises (2004, 45). He mentions that in order to add cardiovascular endurance components into the muscle training, the exercises are best done in circuit training (2005, 41, 45). Additionally, Aalto (2005, 66) declares that poor mobility makes traveling uneconomical, whereas the tense muscles are more susceptible to injuries, hence, the performance seems heavier and energy is wasted unnecessarily. Thus as Drake also instructs, stretching the muscles regularly, especially after a training session, is important and vital in order to obtain better mobility (2004, 30).

According to Keay (1996, 243) and Drake (2004, 28), it is essential to add specific hiking fitness training exercises into the general fitness program. Walking uphill with an increasingly heavy pack and gradually building up walking speed can be a specific hiking training exercise according to Bursell (2002, 26) and Keay (1996, 243). They mention that one or two shorter trekking test trips are good for rehearsing. Keay explains that this specific training involves other advantages than fitness improvement as it draws attention to the body areas that are subject to hard wear and damage, hardens the affected parts and enables the learning of preventing these problems (1996, 244).

For fitness increase, it is necessary to train at least three days a week. An example of a week training program could be compressed of three training days where the first day has aerobic exercise. This can be brisk in form of walking, jogging, running, cycling etc. The second day

is muscle exercises as circuit training. The third is specific aerobic exercise with muscle training parts. This can be brisk walk while carrying a heavy pack on hill terrains. If wanted, a fourth day with muscle training can be added. The training week should not contain two muscle-training days in a row. (Aalto 2005, 33, 54.)

### 3.2 Equipment and Skills

According to Drake (2004,39) the right selection of equipment is important for both safety and comfort of the trip. Keay mentions the key to being well equipped is to take what is necessary while managing the amount of weight and bulk, especially if it is a backpacking trip (1996, 81). Since the list of equipment is wide, it is advisable to make a checklist of all needed equipment to ensure not missing any important items. Drake (2004, 39-40) and Keay (1996, 81) conveniently separate the equipment into categories such as clothing, personal and emergency equipment, and camp equipment.

Though the right equipment is important, so are the needed skills in using them. Keay (1996, 80) list skills in different areas such as walking, camp craft, navigation and first aid. Knowledge of the skills can easily be obtained by reading, but field practice is needed in learning how to use the skills. However Laaksonen adds that there is no need to learn and master all the skills for short hikes, but while trekking in rough conditions, the mastering of such skills become crucial for survival (2008, 21).

Laaksonen (2008, 11) divides trekking trips in Finland according to the difficulty, which determines the needed skill levels. The higher the difficulty, the higher the skill levels needed. He found three different demanding levels according to the season of the year. According to Laaksonen (2008, 11-12), the easiest level is during no snow season, meaning summer and beginning of autumn, the second level is during the end of winter in spring and the third level is in the beginning and middle winter because of cold and the quantity of snow. He recommends that the party should contain someone with trekking experience and the needed skills on that specific season when a hiker moves from one level to the next for the first time. Another alternative, which he introduces, is to join a guided trekking trip, whereas an experienced professional guide takes the responsibility of the whole team.

### 3.2.1 Clothing

The clothes chosen for any trip varies depending of the weather conditions. Laaksonen (2008, 32) and Keay (1996, 82) mention that clothing must be capable of protecting the wearer under the worst conditions that might be encountered and that the basic principle of dressing outdoors is layered clothing, where the air trapped between the fibres of cloth and layers of garments provides thermal insulation. Therefore, they explain that two light pullovers provide more insulation than a same weight thick one. Keay (1996, 82) adds that with layering clothing, layers can be added or taken off as needed, thus being practical with sudden weather changes. He also mentions how essential it is to keep clothing as dry as possible during the hike since clothing loses most of its insulating qualities when wet, though, there are several materials which retain their insulating properties even when wet, such as natural wool or modern synthetic fibres (Keay 1996, 83).

Keay (1996, 82-83) and Laaksonen (2008, 32) tells about the three main layers and its different functions of layering clothing and how it is important to choose the appropriate cloth material according to the layer's function. Keay explains that the inner layer absorbs and transfers perspiration to the middle layer, then the middle layer continues moisture transfer and provides insulation, and the outer layer (or shell) keeps the wind and rain out and in best cases will remove the moisture (1996, 82-83).

Special attention needs to be made to the body's extremities. Firstly, as unduly large proportion of body's heat is lost through the head, some form of headwear is essential to remain warm. Instead, in heat and strong sun, a light wide-brimmed hat protects wearers from sunstrokes as well as sunburns to the face and neck. Secondly, there are a range variety of gloves and mittens for the hands, which can provide protection from the cold, wind, rain and sun. Gloves should be considerably long so they can be tucked inside jacket sleeves and thus protecting the wrists. Thirdly, most hikers apply a layered clothing style on their feet, whereas a combination of a thin and thick pair of socks is used as an inner and middle layer while the boot provides the outer layer elements. Two pairs of socks will additionally cushion the feet and prevent the forming of blisters. (Laaksonen 2008, 35, 37; Keay 1996, 86-87. Bursell 2002, 52-53.)

### 3.2.2 Footwear and Backpack

Bursell (2002, 55) mentions how footwear is the equipment that has the greatest impact on the enjoyment of the hiking trip. Therefore, a hiker should pay high attention in choosing the footwear, since as Drake (2004, 25) shows, there are a great existing variety of hiking footwear, from lightweight fabric boots to traditional heavy one-piece leather upper mountain boots. Nevertheless, Laaksonen explains how different boots have different suitability for certain terrains but in general boots should fit properly and comfortably (2008, 37). For better comfort, Keay (1996, 88) mentions that new boots need to be breaking in, meaning, to use them until the upper loosens up and the inside is moulded to the shape of the hiker's feet. He claims that a good hiking footwear is water resistant, has low water retention, dries fast, has flexible cleated rubber type sole to prevent losing the footing and provides with a certain ankle support.

A backpack helps the hiker to comfortable carry all the needed equipment. Drake mentions that there are diverse sizes and models of backpacks available on the market for different purposes, though the amount of equipment needed and the carrier's size determinates normally the size of the backpack used (2004, 72). He explains that a backpack needs to be water resistant and fits comfortably with wide and padded shoulder straps. Additionally, he recommends that for larger packs, or even in small packs when hiking in difficult terrain, a padded hip belt is essential. Bursell mentions that the hip belt ensures the distribution of the load while taking weight off the shoulders and increases security as it prevents the back from moving around when climbing, which can affect the hikers balance (2002, 64-65).

Drake (2005, 72-73) separates the size of backpacks according its purposes, where, small packs with a capacity of 20-30 litres are ideal for day hikes, and 30-60 litres backpacks are good for overnight trips: ether short camping trips or longer trips when sleeping in huts. He also mentions that packs of 60-120 are used for more than one week-long expeditions in remote areas. However, according to Keay a 65 litres pack should be enough to fit all the needed equipment of a hiker, and especially women might feel uncomfortable with bigger packs than that (1996, 93). Additionally, a hiker needs to pay attention to the weight, as the less weight on the pack, the more energy can be used to enjoy the trip. Bursell comment that as a norm, that a backpack should not weigh more than one third of the carrier's weigh,



though experienced hikers with good fitness can carry some extra weight without problems (2002, 65).

### 3.2.3 Walking Skill

Drake discuss how walking is not a skill that needs to be mastered from scratch, as it is such a natural process that everyone knows how to walk (2004, 112). Keay mentions that normally, the majority of humans give little or no thought to the activity, but when carrying a pack weighing a third of the bodyweight, it merits special attention, especially nowadays, as walking more than a hundred metres is a rarity for the vast majority of the population (1996, 274). Drake (2004, 112) and Keay (1996, 275) mention the importance of some techniques and tactics in walking that help avoiding accidents and put less strain on feet and joints when hiking on rough, steep or slippery ground. For example, Bursell recommends to avoid over-long strides when carrying a backpack, especially while climbing uphill, since the longer the stride is, the more weight is applied on the front knee which might develop repetitive strain injuries (2002, 149).

Keay mentions that for efficient walking, a calm, steady and deliberate pace is essential (1996, 275). He points the steady rhythm as the most important tactic for long hikes and that everyone in the group should feel and be conscious of this rhythm. Drake (2004, 113) suggests shortening the strides when going uphill in order to keep the important rhythm, and if the route becomes even steeper, it might be necessary to zigzag. Keay explains that reducing the steepness by zigzagging, the heel of the feet can be properly planted on the ground, which provides with a better grip on the ground and reduces the strain on the calf muscles (1996, 276). Keay (1996, 277) points that Zigzagging during downhill is of greater importance than in uphill and for safety reasons running down should never be done. He also mentions how walking downhill might not be exhausting but uncomfortable instead, and that most slips and falls usually occur while descending. Therefore, to prevent this, Keay instructs to keep the weight well forward instead of leaning back and to bend the knees in order to let the shock be absorbed by the thigh muscles instead of the knees (1996, 277).

Day hike routines will help for long-distance hikes, such as when to start and resting times. Drake (2004, 115), Bursell (2002, 151) and Keay (1996, 276) all say that that, a rest stop of 10 min every hour is normally enough for most hikers, although when hiking with children

or uphill, the breaks can be more often though shorter. Keay (1996, 276) specifies that the first rest stop of the day or after a long break should be after 15 min as it might be necessary to remove some clothing. However, Keay reminds that stopping and starting destroy the steady rhythm, thus rest stops should be kept at minimum (1996, 277). Additionally, he describes that in order to prevent extra stops, all group members should wait for the appointed stops for drinking, going to the toilet or checking the map.

### 3.2.4 Personal and Emergency Equipment

There are a number of items needed for hiking and especially for safety. Keay (1996, 89) reminds to keep the equipment to a bare minimum without excluding any vital equipment; otherwise the extra weight may lead to fatigue and loss of mobility self-defeating the safety. Drake shows that every hiker has a personal item list which might vary from others depending on what they assume is most and less important, but normally all hikers cover the main basic equipment (2004, 54). The basic equipment is listed in the ten essentials list, which was created by The Mountaineers, an outdoor education non-profit corporation founded in 1906. Later, they changed the list from individual items into a list of functional systems, named the ten essentials system. According to The Mountaineers Books [TMB], the list helps to answer two main questions: first, is it possible to respond positively to an accident or emergency? And second, can the hiker safely spend a night or more out? (2013). The ten essentials list is shown in the Table 2.

Table 2: The Ten Essentials, System Approach. (Adapted from TMB 2013)

<b><u>Essentials</u></b>	<b><u>Equipment</u></b>	<b><u>Extra Info</u></b>
<b>Navigation</b>	Topographic map of the area, Compass Global positioning system (GPS)	The map should be 1:25000 or 1:50000 scale map and be in a waterproof map case. Navigation skills required.
<b>Sun Protection</b>	Sunglasses Clothing Sunscreen	Sunscreen should be for lips and skin.
<b>Insulation (Extra Clothing)</b>	Could be: Fleece or wool sweater Water resistant shell Extra hat Mittens or gloves Extra socks.	Extra clothing refers to additional layers that would be needed to survive the long, inactive hours of an unplanned bivouac.
<b>Illumination</b>	Flashlight or head lamp Batteries	Even for a day hike it can get dark sooner than predicted. A head-lamp is a great option since it does not require the use of hands, thus leaving them free
<b>First-aid Supplies</b>	First aid kit with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gauze pads and roll</li> <li>• Waterproof adhesive bandages in various sizes and types</li> <li>• Triangular and compression bandage</li> <li>• Battle dressing</li> <li>• Adhesive tape</li> <li>• Small scissors and tweezers</li> <li>• Latex gloves</li> <li>• Antibacterial ointment</li> <li>• Painkillers</li> <li>• Medication for diarrhoea</li> <li>• Indigestion tablets</li> <li>• Two days extra supply for any prescription medicine.</li> </ul>	Safety's first step is always prevention. First aid skills required.
<b>Fire</b>	Matches Lighters Fire starters	Carrying the means to start and sustain emergency fire helps to maintain the hiker's warmth if necessary. Equipment should be packed in a waterproof case. Fire making skill required.

<b>Repair kit and Tools</b>	Knife Other good repair tools. Could be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Penknife</li> <li>• Shoelaces</li> <li>• Safety pins</li> <li>• Needle and thread</li> <li>• Wire</li> <li>• Duct and nylon fabric repair tape.</li> </ul>	Knife is one of the most useful tools in wilderness.
<b>Nutrition (Extra Food)</b>	Could be: Jerky Fig Chocolate or energy bars Nuts and dried fruits.	Extra supply of food in case the trip unexpectedly extends. Easy to digest, non-cook, food containing high calorie intake
<b>Hydration (Extra Water)</b>	Water bottle Water sterilizing tablets	It is recommended to have more water than expected to consume. Some skills are necessary to obtain and purifying additional water in worst-case scenarios,
<b>Emergency Shelter</b>	Could be: Tube tent Jumbo plastic trash bag Reflective emergency blanket	When a tent is not carried, an extra shelter from rain and wind should be carried.

### 3.2.5 Navigation, Safety and First Aid Skills

Navigation might be the most important skill of all in trekking. Laaksonen (2008, 72) divides navigation skills in four levels: basic level, excursion level, trekking level and orienteering. He describes that in the basic level a hiker walks in familiar nearby areas using only memory and their sense of direction. Laaksonen (2008, 74) mentions that in the excursion level, hikers walk on marked routes and would check the map on crossroads as they know how to read the map a little and understand the idea of the compass though it is rarely used. Keay explains that in the trekking level, hikers can locate their current position, set the map and create a route between two camping sites, even when there are no paths as the hikers can take direction between two points with the compass and maintain the right direction while walking (1996, 145). Laaksonen (2008, 74) describes orienteering as the highest navigation skill level as it is really precise using small-scale maps such as 1:10 000 or 1:15 000.

The equipment most commonly used for navigation are map and compass, though nowadays global positioning system (GPS) devices are also regularly used. Bursell (2002, 131) explains that GPS provide with a position and an instant course to any destination through satellites. In order to properly utilize a GPS, Bursell (2002, 132) states that map-reading skills are still necessary as a GPS gives only a beeline between two locations, so the shown route may go through impractical points such as cliffs or lakes. However, according to Bursell, it is almost impossible to get lost during foggy times when using a GPS (2002, 133). Additionally, Drake mentions navigation as part of survival skills, where a rough navigation can be made using nature resources, such as sun, stars, moon, shadows, vegetation and anthills (2004, 100-105).

Laaksonen explains that prevention is the key factor of safety and there are factors that should be avoided or applied during trekking to guarantee safety (2008, 122). Thus, The Mountaineers instructs in the ten essentials system to leave the trip information and time schedule to a responsible person before departure and informing once returned. They also recommend hiking with a group instead of solo and having the right equipment, fitness and skills. Laaksonen (2008, 123-124) also recommends regulating the amount of physical burdens per day and eating enough to prevent exhaustion. He also highlights the importance of taking care of the equipment, by preventing from loosing the equipment or getting it wet. Additionally, he recommends being extra attentive when using fire or sharp equipment and avoiding dangerous routes, such as deep rivers, ravines or cliffs. Lastly, Laaksonen (2008, 123-124) instructs to prevent the ending of food or water and not separating from the team or getting lost.

Keay tells that it is essential to provide with first aid procedures immediately in case of an accident or injury, additionally, fetching help may be necessary if the case is severe (1996, 205-206). Furthermore, he mentions that analysing and recognising the early symptoms of typical hiking injuries or sicknesses enables simpler treatment and eliminates worst-case scenarios. Keay comments that the individual first aid kit is normally enough for treating small injuries, and in case of a severe accident, individual kits from the team members can be combined for a bigger treatment (1996, 207). Bursell lists the most typical small and severe injuries and illnesses that occur while trekking: small injuries are blisters, burns, scalds, open wounds, headaches, midge bites, sunburn, splinters and minor sprains; while severe injuries and illnesses are major sprains, cuts and burns, dislocation or broken limbs, injuries to head and back, heat stroke, hypothermia, altitude illness and snow blindness (2002, 163-166).

### 3.2.6 Camp Equipment and Camp Craft Skill

Camping equipment can be divided into personal and group camping equipment. The group camping equipment items are those that the group shares and these items are distributed between the team members for carrying, such as tents, cooking stoves, fuel bottles and cooking pots. The personal camp equipment items are for personal everyday use, such as eating equipment, sleeping mat and bag, and hygienic kit. Other personal items such as comfortable camp clothes and shoes, camera, notebooks and writing materials or even travel games, might not be essential for surviving but they make camping life more comfortable, though at the same time add weight and increase the probability of succumbing to fatigue and exhaustion. (Drake 2004, 55-57, 60; Keay 1996, 91-96.)

According to Keay (1996, 97), camp craft are the skills that provide oneself with food and shelter under all conditions in the outdoors, basically meaning building a camp. Drake (2004, 141) explains that the level of camp craft skills determinates the comfort of the camp and such skills are choosing a suitable site, erecting a shelter and building a fire. Additionally, Bursell informs that as a good manner, the camp place should be cleaned and left as how it was when arrived (2002, 216).

Laaksonen (2008, 115) discuss how finding a good campsite is important for the comfort, safety and wellbeing of the hiker. Keay (1996, 100) and Drake (2004, 143) explain that as the most common camp style while hiking is a mobile lightweight camp with the minimum camping gear, the camping site should fulfil a number of criteria if possible. Thus, according to them, the land should be permissible for camping, reasonable level with a secure anchorage ground for the shelter and have some softness for sleeping comfort. Additionally, they mention that the site should provide shelter from the wind and be within easy reach of water resources. Furthermore, Keay (1996, 100) and Drake (2004, 143) notify that the area should be free from objective dangers such as flash flood or cattle and if possible provide with some privacy. Moreover, Laaksonen adds that if an open fire is going to be used, the site should be provided with some dry wood (2008, 115).

The skills and equipment required to build a shelter differ depending on the type, as the variety of shelters available is immense. Laaksonen (2008, 109) comments on the easiest shelter choice available for hikers, which are the huts and already built lean-up shelters. However, Laaksonen (2008, 110-114) and Drake (2004, 145-147) agree that mostly almost all different

types of tents are considerable easy to pitch. Though Drake adds that when building other alternative shelters that require the use of nature elements, such as lean-up or snow shelters, require more skills (2004, 149, 154).

Bursell (2002, 79) state that to build an open fire, (camp fire) the permission of the land-owner is needed. Therefore Keay mentions that during camps where permission is not granted, an easy-to-use spirit stove is commonly used for cooking (1996, 116). However, Bursell insists that fire-making skill is an important skill to have, as not only has fire an aesthetic value but also provides with many practical tasks (2002, 197). He explains that the fire provides light and heat; thus, it is essential for cooking, keeping warm and drying equipment. Additionally, he mentions that the fire lights the camp during night, which saves batteries, and the smoke helps to keep insects a little further away. Nonetheless, Laaksonen (2008, 116) warns that fire should be done with safety, far from tents or other burning materials and afterwards, it is essential to put out the fire properly.

## 4 TOURISM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Kompula and Boxberg define product development as the development of new products as well as the improving of already existing products to meet the needs of the customers better (2022, 93). They explain that the development alternative range differs greatly from new innovations, meaning completely new product ideas, to minimal style changes in existing products (2002, 94). Kotler, Bowen and Makens (2006, 322) mention some causes which effect why a product development processes is started, which are changes in the market or consumers' consumption habits, competition or the need to increase sales. Additionally, they state that a successful product development helps the company to prosper by keeping its products up to date (2006, 323). This chapter examines a service product and the process for producing a new tourism product. It begins with the description of what a product is and its components, followed by a product development process model.

### 4.1 Tourism Product

Kotler et al. define a product as anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use or consumption that might satisfy a need or a want (2006, 304). Moreover, Mckercher (1998, 104) emphasizes on the key words 'satisfying the customers' needs and wants. Kompula and Boxberg (2002, 10) state that tourism product is by nature a service product and thus, it has all its specific features. They describe one characteristic of a service product as intangible, which makes it impossible to store for later use, as it is created and used by the client at the same time thus making the product and provider inseparable. Another characteristic of a service product they describe is heterogeneous, meaning that the product is variable depending of changing factors (2002, 10). According to Komppula and Boxber (2002, 11), and Hall et al. (2009, 26) every client might have different attitudes and expectations regarding the product, which results in unique personal experiences complicating the evaluation and quality control of the product. However, Hall et al. (2009, 33) mention that tangible components might be included to the service product and those can be evaluated in concrete, such as food or souvenirs, though only while producing the service product. Additionally, Kotler et al. (2006, 338) and, Kompula and Boxberg (2002, 95) introduce the lifespan of the service product, which starts with the product development and



as its sales declines it dies. In conclusion, McKercher (1998, 104) mentions that from a tour operator's point of view a tourism product is a set of tangible and intangible components that are packaged together and offered for the market for a certain time period.

There are different approaches to a products components and layers. Kotler et al. (2006, 305) provide with a model where a product is divided into four components and in two layers. They list the components of the inner nucleus layer as: the core product, the facilitating product and the supporting product; while in the external layer are the augmented product components as seen in Figure 3. Additionally, Kotler et al. explains that in order to create a complete remarkable service product, all this four components have to be considered (2006, 304).

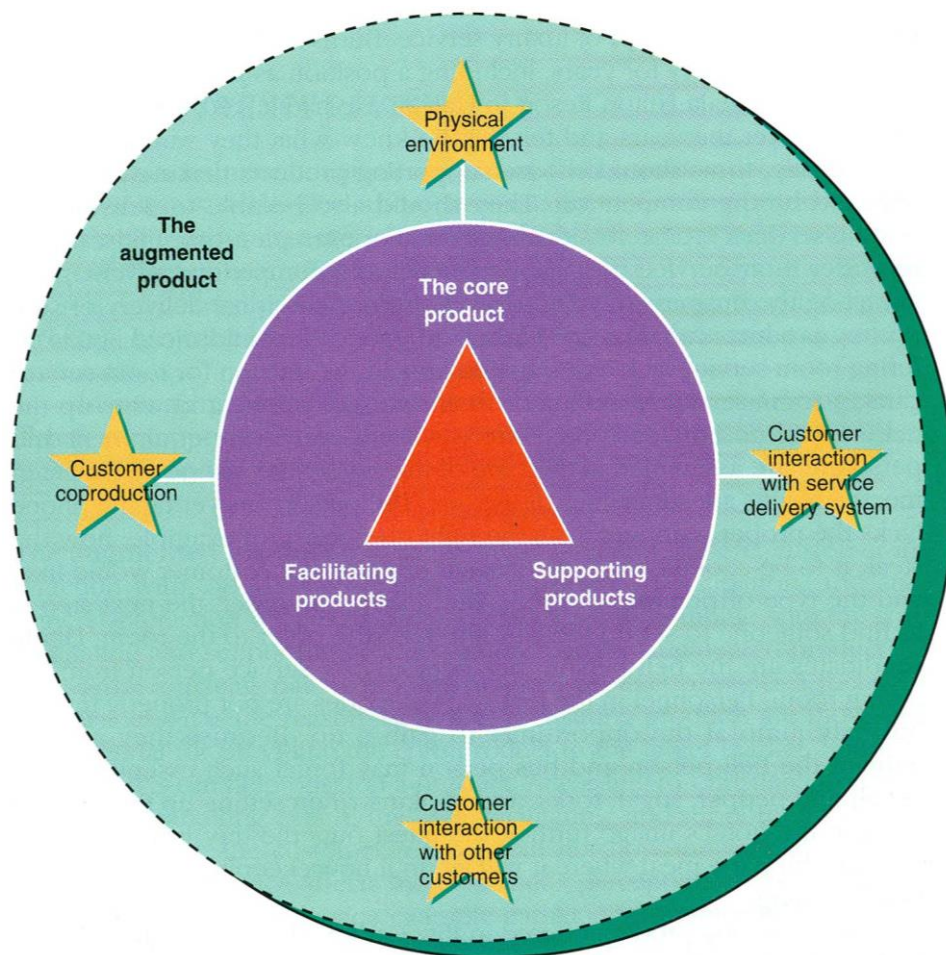


Figure 3: Product Components

Kotler et al. introduce that the core product represents the heart of any product and shows what is the client really buying (2006, 304). They specify that the core product should be

considered as benefits that satisfy individual's needs, wants or desires, instead of features (2006, 305). McKercher (1998, 105) explains that every tourist has basic needs such as nutrition, rest or safety but these needs would not trigger the tourist to buy a trip product. Instead, Borg, Kivi and Partti mention that tourist might purchase the product if it contains benefits, such as social needs, safe adventure, experiences or romance (2002, 129).

Facilitating products can be either intangible services or tangible goods according to Kotler et al. (2006, 305). They show how these products are linked to the core product, as they are a necessity for the core product to be workable. Additionally, McKercher (1998, 106) describes an important aspect of facilitating products, which is accessibility, as the target market is expecting to use the required facility products when they want or need. He explains that facilitating products must satisfy the tourist basic needs, whereas transportation, accommodation, food or guides are examples of facilitating products (1998, 106).

According to Kotler et al., supporting products are extra products that add value to the core and facilitating products, and thus they are not a necessity to the core product (2006, 306). However, they explain that these supporting products can make a significant difference in competition and thus firms choose supporting products that are not easily matched. Additionally, Kotler et al. (2006, 307) mention that there is not a clear line between facilitating and supporting products as different market segments may look at a service as supporting product while another segment may think of it as an essential facilitating product. Moreover, they also mention that a supporting product might change into facilitating product over time, once the majority of companies commonly use it.

Kotler et al. (2006, 307) introduce augmented products as additional services and benefits built around the core, facilitating and supporting products, to provide an even more improved product. According to Christian Gronroos (1990, 69) a service-marketing expert, the components of the nucleus determine what the customer receives, although not how they receive it. He states that the augmented service products combines what is offered with how it is delivered. Since in a tourism product, the customer interacts with the company, product and other customers, Kotler et al. explain that the augmented product has an important role to ensure the maximum satisfaction for the customers (2006, 308).

The augmented product includes:

1. Accessibility; A geographic location and hours of operation.
2. Atmosphere, the physical environment; A critical element in services that is appreciated through main sensory channels; sight, sound, scent, and touch.
3. Customer interaction with the company; Serving the customer during the whole service product, from the initial inquiry contact, through consumption phase to the detachment phase.
4. Customer coproduction; Involving the customer in the service production can increase capacity, improve customer satisfaction and reduce costs.
5. Customer interactions with other customers; Customer becomes part of the offering product. (Kotler et al. 2006, 307-315.)

Additionally a service product has a specific life length. Normally companies want the product to have a long and lucrative life, at least until the company earns enough profit to compensate for the effort and risk. Therefore, a product's marketing strategies may be reformulated several times in order to maximise its profits and lifespan. A product lifespan can be shown as a S-shaped product life cycle which has five distinct stages as seen in Figure 4. The product life begins when a company develops a new product idea and at that time the profits are non-existing. Once the introduction is made the sales grows slowly and the company might still be recovering from the resources used preparing the product. Once the market accepts the product, it rapidly grows in sales and profits. In its maturity stage the product's sales growth slows down as it reaches most of its potential buyers and the profits might drop because of competition. During the last decline stage the product's profitability drops and the decision of developing the product to keep it in sales or deleting it has to be made. (Komppula & Boxberg 2002, 95-96; Kotler et al. 2006, 338-343.)

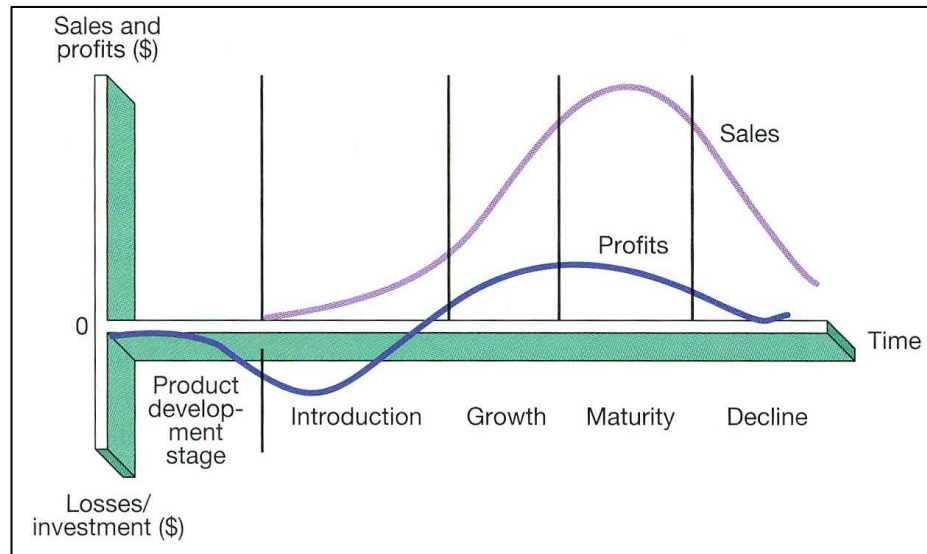


Figure 4: Products Life Span

#### 4.2 Product Development Process

Komppula and Boxberg (2002, 92) states that productization is normally based on a specific destination's existing resources, location or culture related attraction factors, which can be used as a foundation for creating of experiences and fulfilling the needs of the clients. Moreover, Kotler et al. mentions that the product development is usually based either on stimulus obtained either from ideas of customers or entrepreneurs, with the purpose of developing the operations of the company (2006, 322). However, Komppula and Boxberg state that combining different resources and attractions ideas into a complete, finished product is hard and they easily stay into a set of detached measures without proper shape (2002, 93). Kotler et al. mentions that in order to avoid risks and high failures rates is essential that the product development is made properly (2006, 323). They explain that the solution lies in the use of a systematic new product development process for finding and nurturing new products.

The new service product development process that Kotler et al. (2006, 323) introduces follows the same process used for a normal product development and has eight stages to follow in the process, as seen in Figure 5. Additionally, Borg et al. mentions that linking the customer needs into the process stages will bring out the features and specific characteristics of the service product (2002, 134).

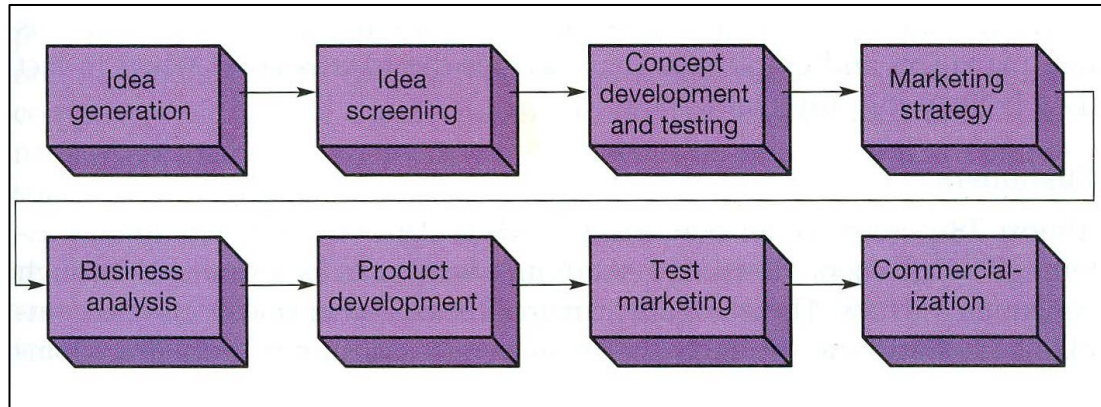


Figure 5: New Product Development Process Model

New product development starts with the search for new ideas. Later in idea screening the superior ideas are recognised and poor ones are discarded. Accepted ideas must be developed into product concept, meaning a detailed version of the idea stated in meaningful consumer terms and tested. The next step in the development process is designing a market strategy for introducing the product into the market. In business analysis the business attractiveness of the product is evaluated and after that, the product concept is developed into a physical prototype. During test marketing potential problems can be found and is possible to notice the weak parts of the product that could be further improved and lastly the product and marketing program are introduced into realistic market settings. (Kotler et al. 2006, 324-339.)

## 5 DEVELOPMENTAL TASK

The aim of this thesis is to create a nature-based hiking tourism product for Finlandia Natur, the commissioner, which aims to expand their product range and thus attract new customers by developing a hiking trip program for its nature-based products. The purpose of this thesis was to provide a practical method on transforming a recreational nature-based activity program into a nature-based tourism product. Additionally, my personal aim in creating this thesis is to learn how to create good nature activity programs with tourists as customers, thus I could implement this knowledge later in my professional life.

The research and developmental tasks of this thesis are:

1. How the program of a nature-based hiking trip for tourists is developed?
2. Why the tourism product has to be tested?

## 6 DEVELOPING HIKING PRODUCT

In order to create the nature-based hiking tourism product I worked together with the employee in charge of the product development of Finlandia Natur. My main tasks in the product development process were the program development, product concept description and testing, while the company managed other sections such as idea screening pricing and marketing. Additionally, Finlandia Natur introduced me to a project manager of Mäntyharju Chamber of Commerce, working in building outdoor trails from Mäntyharju to Repovesi. The project manager provided me with information regarding the resources of the area, such as nature, trails, potential activities and accommodation places. Therefore, when creating the product I used the information provided by the theoretical background, Finlandia Natur and the project manager, and I specifically implemented the new product development process model (Figure 5) as a practical method. Though the model was slightly modified for this specific case study, in this chapter, its sections are explained in more detail and the development process of the hiking trip is described through those sections, answering to the research and developmental tasks.

### 6.1 Idea Generalization

Komppula and Boxberg (2002, 100) explain that a company typically generates many ideas, though only a few ones will make into a final product. They mention that new ideas can be obtained from several idea sources and should be made considering the needs and wants of a specific market target. Kotler et al. mentions that according to some researches 55% of new ideas are produced from the internal sources of the company, such as formal research and development or from employees that are in contact with customers, 28% originates from customers, by giving feedback about their needs and wants, and 27% come from analysing the products of competitors, though when doing so, in order to receive positive feedback from the customers, the product needs to be improved or given unique characteristics compared to the original (2006, 324-325). Additionally, Kotler et al. adds that suppliers or other sources such as magazines and seminars can pass along information about consumer problems and new product possibilities (2006, 326).

Since the year Finlandia Natur was founded in 2010, it has been providing with fishing trips and other fishing related services. At the beginning of 2013, Finlandia Natur saw a need to widen its working area by creating different nature-based products in order to attract new customer from different segments. After researching about the resources provided in the area, Finlandia Natur thought of creating hiking trips in order to provide different activities for the customers.

## 6.2 Idea Screening

In order to analyse the new ideas, Kotler et al. (2006, 237) instruct to describe some major parts of the idea product, such as the product, the target market and the competition. Additionally, Kotler et al. suggest estimating the market size and financial parts such as product price, development and manufacturing costs, and rate of return (2006, 328). Furthermore, they state that the new product idea should be compatible with the company's objectives, strategies and resources.

After I discussed with Finlandia Natur about the contents of the nature-based tourism product, the length for the hiking trip product was decided to be two to three days long. Finlandia Natur described that the hiking trip should be a base product that could later be modified easily by adding activities or by implementing only a part of the trip depending on the needs of the customers. The starting and ending point for the trip was decided to be Mäntyharju and Repovesi national park. Additionally, Finlandia Natur clarified that the product should be creating while thinking of Spanish tourists as the main customers segment, as the company provides with Spanish speaking guides.

## 6.3 Concept Development and Testing

Kotler et al. instruct that the product idea needs to be changed into a product concept, meaning a detailed version of the idea stated in meaningful consumer terms and tested (2006, 238). The purpose of the product concept test is to evaluate the product for further improvements. Patton (1982, 15) describes the practice of evaluation as the collection of information of main topics, such as activities, characteristics and outcomes of programs, per-



sonnel, or products, for use by specific people for a variety of purposes, which can be to reduce uncertainties, to improve effectiveness or to make decisions. Patton (1987, 8) adds that the information collected for evaluation can be acquired using qualitative, quantitative method or a combination of both. He explains that the data collection methods for any particular evaluation depend on to whom the information is for, what kind of information is needed, how is the information to be used, when the information is needed, and what resources are available to conduct the evaluation (Patton 1987, 9).

Veal (1997, 129) describes that the qualitative methods involve the collection and analysis of qualitative data and thus permit the evaluator to study selected issues, cases or events in depth and detail. Therefore, according to Patton (1987, 23) the use of qualitative methods is appropriate in some evaluation situations in the product development process, such as process and formative evaluations. Patton writes that the process evaluation clarifies the internal dynamics of program operations, whereas it focuses in analysing the factors of the program, how customers are brought and how they participate through the program, and the interactions between the staff members and customers (1987, 24). Additionally, He adds that process evaluations are useful for revealing areas in the programs, which can be improved. Instead, formative evaluation, which often includes process evaluation strategy, is conducted for the purpose of improving programs and its quality and is valuable in developments early stages where great deal of changes are expected (Patton 1987, 28). Patton explains how a qualitative formative evaluation can provide depth and detail about the strengths and weaknesses of the program, such as what is working properly and what is not, and what are the perceptions of program participants or staff (1987, 29).

The most used qualitative data collection methods listed by Patton (1987, 7) are in-depth open-ended interviews, direct observation and written documents. Additionally, Patton mentions that for formative evaluation, naturalistic inquiries evaluation strategies are useful, while process evaluation may be based on observation and, or interviews of staff, clients or program administrations (1987, 29). Patton adds that the validity and reliability of qualitative data depend greatly to the methodological skill of the evaluator (1987, 7-8).

Kotler et al. (2006, 238) mentions that the product concept might include the information of the specific target market, the specific product parts and services and the amount of the product. Therefore I started to build the product concept by specifying roughly the hiking

program and the product parts. The main points of the program structure where: the start and ending points, the overnight places, the meals, and the day distances of the route.

Mäntyharju is easily accessible by local transports such as train or busses. For the starting point of the actual hiking trip I decided to appoint Kisala, the sport hall of Mäntyharju, which is clearly the point that separates the city from the forest area. The distance between local transport stations and Kisala is about one kilometre, and going through the city centre provides with the last shopping possibility before the trip. Additionally, there is a big parking lot next to Kisala which can be used when arriving with other transport methods. The ending point for trip was appointed to be Lapinsalmi, the southwest gate of Repovesi national park, from where a pick up car would take the customers back to the starting point.

I thought of two different options for the overnight places: tents or cottages. After asking workers opinions and gathering information from Spanish customer services the best option were the cottages. Finlandia Natur worker stated that sleeping in cottages would decrease the equipment carried by the clients, while the project manager preferred cottages because of comfort. As a result the first overnight place was decided to be Linkkumylly and the second place would be one of the cabins in Repovesi, such as Kuutti cabin.

For the route I decided to use the marked hiking tracks of area, which are being renovated this year. There are lean-to shelters throughout the route, but only a few cottages. Because of the few overnight options the day hike distances are long, which will increase the fitness requirement of the clients. The estimated distances are: from Mäntyharju to Linkkumylly about 18 km, from Linkkumylly to the cottages in Repovesi around 15 km and from the cottage to the Lapinsalmi around 6 km. Unfortunately, during the second day there is a long transition of dirt road in order to cross the railway track safely.

The guide would be carrying the lunch ingredients, either for a cold or hot meal, such as sandwiches, sausages or Finnish rice pies. The evening meal as well as breakfast and the ingredients for the meal of the next day will be provided in the cottages. Therefore the customers would only need to carry their own hygiene kit, with a towel and swimsuit, change of cloths and the drinking water for the hike. Additionally, because the cottages and pick up mini bus provide with 8 places a good group size for the hiking trip was decided to be a maximum of 7 customers.

As mentioned before, once the product concept is done it had to be tested. Therefore I decided to test the product concept in order to make a process evaluation. The test was made on the 26th-27th of August. The time for the test was quite late, but because of schedule problems it was the only possible time. Because of finance reasons the test program varied a little bit from the actual product and only the workers from Finlandia Natur and Mäntyharju Chamber of Commerce workers related to the outdoor activities project were invited through e-mail. In total four were invited though only three participated during the actual test. During the trip we stayed only in Linkkumylly for one night and each of us brought personal meals. The main purpose of the test was to evaluate the attractiveness of the landscapes, the difficulty level, the time needed, the quality of lean-to shelters and cottages, and the sites of interest of the route. The participants provided with opinions on such topics during the trip and I was provided with a route evaluation describing in detail the evaluation topics from another party, a group of three people, which went hiking the same route by themselves.

The whole route was full of beautiful views from different kind of forests or nature areas, such as countryside, fields, commercial forests, clear cut, pristine marshes, old forests and lakeshores give a realistic view of Finnish nature. Every one of the participants agreed that each different landscape has its own attractiveness, though it depends on the person's interests which one is the most beautiful. The transition part, which was supposed to be a weakness, got some positive feedback. Some enjoyed the rural atmosphere and the sheep pastures beside the road, while others mentioned that it was an easy walk as a preparation for the demanding parts. In overall the landscapes' beautifulness increased as we proceeded and came closer to Repovesi.

Each hike of the day was well balanced with some relaxed and demanding parts, depending on the road surface or elevation. We travelled the route quite slowly as we needed to stop to take advertising pictures quite often. However as tourists tend to walk slowly while admiring the views, we calculated that our walking speed would be similar compared to tourists. Additionally, it took about the same time for both test parties to reach the camp destinations. During the first day we travelled 18 km and the walking speed was fast as the route was easy. However, because of the long distance, hiking became time-consuming and tiring. For the first day hike it took around 8 hours, when added the rest breaks, the total time was almost 10 hours. The distance of the second day was shorter and had more dirt road transition parts and thus it took around 8 hours in total to arrive to Kuutti cabin in Repovesi. Taking the

shortest route from Kuutti cabin to the Lapinsalmi gate took only three hours. The only problem encountered during the trip was the 7 km before reaching Linkkumylly during the first day, as there was basically no path and we had to straggle while putting aside bushes and branches. The project manager took note on the place to inform the person in charge of the route to clear the path.

All the lean-to shelters were in great condition. The one in Pitkälampi is a little unpractical despite being positioned in a beautiful place between lakes. Otherwise all shelter where in a nice distance from each other and they provided extra features such as an outdoor toilet, fireplace and firewood. A participant descried Linkkumylly as uniquely beautiful place and all the other participants agreed. The sauna and swimming in the lake felt great after the long hike giving a real Finnish cottage atmosphere. Kuutti cabin is a similar 8-person cabin next to the lake equipped with a sauna. But as we couldn't stay because financial reasons, the quality could not be evaluated.

We found some interesting points during the trip. Fist of all, the different Finnish nature landscapes with its animals, such as swans, other game birds and a crane couple, which unfortunately flew off before we could take pictures. We also found markings left by animals, such as an eating-log for woodpeckers, footprints of moose and anthills. Additionally, history related sites could be found along the route, such as a big glacial erratic, milk dock and the restored timber rafting channel. Furthermore, the suspension bridge at the end of the trip offered some excitement. Despite the interesting sites along the road, a trip of three days with only hiking seemed a little too boring, and participants showed the desire of having other activities. We decided to dedicate some time for berry picking, which we ate them as snacks or in meals as dessert.

#### 6.4 Marketing Strategy and Business Analysis

According to Kotler et al. (2006, 30-31) the market strategy can be divided into three parts. They specify that the first part describes the market, the product positioning and the sales for the few first years and in the second part the planned price of the product, the distribution and the marketing budget is outlined for the first year. They mention that the last part provides the planned long-run sales, profit and the market mix strategy over time. (Kotler et al. 2006, 330-331.)

Kotler et al. explain that together the product concept with the marketing strategy, a review of the sales, costs and profit projections are formed to determine whether they satisfy the objectives of the company (2006, 331). Finlandia Natur took care of the marketing strategy and pricing the final product, therefore I only made a simple cost management for the product. The cost parts for the program can be divided into two separate groups, variable and fixed costs. Variable costs depend on the amount of persons in the group while fixed costs do not change. The used costs for the cabins are the ones provided for private use while normally for company use the costs should be lower and other costs such as the cost of the guide, where specified by Finlandia Natur. The following Table 3 gives a close estimate of the costs for the program.

Table 3: Product Costs

Group of 7 Customers	Costs (euros)
<b>Fixed</b>	
Linkkumylly	150
Kuutti Cabin	95
Pick-up	50
Guide	1000
<b>Variable</b>	
Food (20e/person/day)	350
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1645</b>

## 6.5 Product development

The physical prototype of the product should have the key features mentioned in the product concept perceived by the customers, it should perform safely under normal circumstances and the production should meet the budget costs (Komppula & Boxberg 2002, 103-104). Moreover, Kotler et al. (2006, 332-333) reminds to consider the missing of intangible aspects of the product, such as the performance of the employees.

During the product development phase a specific program for the hiking trip was created for the guide of the company. In the program were specified the activities for each day and timetable for the trip. A short product concept description was also created for the marketing of the product. In the product concept description there the customers can see a short explanation of the trip, the duration and time of the trip, the price and what the product includes in the price. Additionally, a list containing more specific information about Finland nature and the trip was created to be sent for the buying customers.

The experience pyramid (Figure 2) was used in order to assure that the product contains all the needed components, in order to create new experiences for the customers. In overall, the product has individuality as a guide with Spanish language can explain the secrets of the forest. It is authentic as the variety of different landscapes and forests together with the overnight places show the real Finnish culture. A theme story was created to link all the small stories from the interesting places along the route, such as Finding Finnish culture in nature or the secrets of Finnish forests. The trip provides with a definite multi-sensory perception as the customer will be able to: smell the different trees, plants, fire and smoke, taste some wild berries and other Finnish foods, feel the warm sauna, the tranquil lakes and the annoying mosquitos, hear the songs of birds or the quietness of the forests and see many beautiful nature landscapes. The product has a great contrast compared to the everyday life of the customer and the guide will help the customers to interact with the product. The guide plays a great role in creating experiences as he or she is responsible in making the customers interested, providing opportunities for sense perception and teaching them new things so that the customers can obtain good experiences.

The overall program was made while thinking of customer satisfaction. Thus, there are some differences if compared to how a common hiking trip would have been. As the acceptable overnight locations are few, there are not many route options available. Therefore, the trip does not look as a common hiking trip, whereas the length of the day hikes increases gradually, being the first day the shortest. Additionally it is normally to have, if possible, the hardest part of the hike early, when hikers have energy and the easiest at the end of the day, as the hikers are already tired. In this hiking trip however it is the opposite. It starts with long days and hike time decreases till the end, and each day starts with the easy section first. This could have been fixed by hiking the trip backwards, from Repovesi to Mäntyharju. However, the strength of hiking in the original order the beautifulness of the landscape increases each

day until the national park is reached. Making the most exciting part of the trip towards the end. Hopefully it compensates for the difficulty level of the first parts.

## 6.6 Test Marketing and Commercialization

Kotler et al. (2006, 334) mentions that occasionally, when the development and product introduction costs are low or if the confidence in succession is high, the company might do a little or no market testing. However, Kotler et al. highlight the importance of test marketing as it gives the information required in taking the final decision, whereas the product would be commercialized or not (2006, 335).

Therefore, the next step for the created hiking product is the product test to evaluate the satisfaction of the customers with the program. However, as the season was already at its end when the path was fixed, I was not able to perform this test because schedule problems. Therefore I only had the plan and strategy for the test and evaluation. The main topics to be evaluated are the opinions and feelings of the customers about different activities, the program as a whole, the usefulness and interestingness of the provided information before and during the hiking trip, and interaction between the guide and customers.

For this test it is important that it is done following the program schedule as much as possible. However the guide should be able to modify the schedule if he or she notices a need. All modification should be written down for later evaluation. As the guide has a great influence in service product satisfaction, the guide for the test should be, if possible, the same who would continue providing the service. The test customers should know from early stage that this is going to be a test product and that they would need to give a detailed feedback about it. During the last break stop, the enquiry is to be explained and given to the customers for filling. Additionally I, as the evaluator, was supposed to be observing the customers during the trip while discussing about their feelings.

## 7 DISCUSSION

The aim of this thesis is to create a nature-based hiking tourism product for Finlandia Natur, the commissioner. Therefore, in order to create a good hiking product the theoretical aspects of nature-based tourism, hiking and product development is introduced and later used in the development task. The later conducted hiking product development was founded on these theoretical approaches.

The theoretical part of nature-based tourism provided with an introduction of the different types of nature-tourism sub-forms and its different activities. Additionally, a light insight is presented on the nature tourists and on Finnish nature as a possibility for nature-tourism. Because hiking is the main activity of the product, it is essential to understand the activity entirely.

The hiking description gives an overall understanding at hiking and the preparations procedures needed for a trekking trip. Firstly, the planning and preparation procedures of its different parts are explained, followed by the description of the equipment and skills needed.

The Product development is a complex process which has to be understood throughout in order to result in a valuable product. Therefore the product concept is explained and the different stages of service product development process are illustrated, and on this base the process of developing a new hiking tourism product was expounded.

The actual product development started with a presentation of the Finlandia Natur, the commissioner company and other parties involved in the development process. That was thought to be necessary to provide the background information on which the product was going to be developed. Additionally, the parts of the process I was responsible for are listed and later the specific product development process stages are explained and adapted in the hiking trip product development.

### 7.1 Product Development

A trekking program varies a lot depending on if it is created for recreational purposes or as a program for a nature-based tourism product. It is essential to identify the motives and needs



of the customers for creating a good nature-based trekking trip product for tourists. In nature-based tourism the product should provide experiences to its customers, and the components of the product should be identified. The program should also be developed and updated to regularly meet the new trends and needs of the customers in order to increase its life span. For that purpose testing becomes essential and evaluating provides information on different topics, such as customer satisfaction, weaknesses and strengths of the product or the interaction between the guide and customers, which later can be used to improve the product.

The main objective of this thesis is to provide Finlandia Natur with a good hiking product that fulfils its needs. Therefore, the hiking product created will expand the market segments of the commissioner company. However, the restriction of the camping sites forced the program to have long hiking days and therefore, it might not have much potential as a base product, as it is not possible to add other activities. Additionally, the current product is not fully tested and thus, it still has uncertain elements in whether it will provide contentment or not in the point of view of the customers. Therefore it is important that the product is tested fully as soon as possible to increase customer satisfaction and to solve possible arising problems. Nevertheless, the development process of the product went smoothly by using the new product development process model introduced in the theoretical background.

The first test results indicated that the area of the hiking trip is beautiful and has a lot of potential. However, the interaction between the guide and customers has great importance in nature-based trips. Even if the program has great potential, it may turn out to be quite unsuccessful if the guide does not know how to present the product to the customers. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to the working style of the guide almost as much as to the contents of the program. Especially when the destination of the trip does not have any remarkable sites such as waterfalls or other spectacular and exiting views.

## 7.2 Reliability

The theoretical background is collected from various existing literature resources. Many different authors agreed in the information acquired, which provides with certain reliability on the discussed topics. The reliability of the test evaluation depends on the methodological skill of the evaluator as the data was acquired using qualitative methods. The methods for

collecting the qualitative data were obtained from existing literature and as I was the evaluator, my own evaluation skills were the source of the reliability level.

The hiking product was created as a base product. Therefore, it was supposed to be transferable for other customer targets by modifying it. The destination area provides with opportunities for other travel methods, which makes adapting the program to different customers possible in many different ways. For example, a part of the hiking route can be travelled by a mountain bike or canoe. Another method of modifying the program is by staying extra days in the cottages and organising activities during those extra days. For example, Linkkumylly has the possibility to have a short canoe trip and see the rock paintings on the wall of a nearby mountain, while canoeing or abseiling are also possible in Repovesi. In contrast the trip can be shortened and only provide one or two days of the program days by making a round trip to Linkkumylly and back by canoeing and hiking.

### 7.3 Professional Development

The thesis process provided me with the challenge to select a suitable theoretical background applicable to the practical development of an actual product. In the theoretical research part the greatest challenge was to set the limits for the theoretical aspects to be covered. Additionally, to bring out the emphasis of the sport and leisure management of the thesis topics in order for the thesis to not transform into a tourism thesis, was quite challenging.

Having developed a nature-based activity tourism product for a company provided me with the great opportunity to control my personal achievements of the studies. The thesis enabled me to apply many of the previously gained skills and knowledge in terms of activity program development. By improving my product development skills, I will be able to create or modify different service products in the future during my professional life. Additionally, working with different workers from different companies I understood the importance of a professional network. From a personal perspective I am satisfied with this thesis and the work ensured me to possess sufficient competencies to work in the nature-based activities industry.

## SOURCES

- Aalto, R. (2005). *Kuntoilijan käsikirja – Opas tulokselliseen kuntoliikuntaan* [Athlete's Handbook - A Guide to Successful Fitness Improvement]. Jyväskylä: Docendo Finland
- Borg, P., Kivi, E. & Partti, M. (2002). *Elämyksestä elinkeinoksi* [From Experiences to Business]. Juva: WS Bookwell Oy
- Buckley, R. (2009). *Ecotourism – Principles & Practices*. Wallingford: CABI
- Bursell, J. (2002). *Eräretkeilyopas* [Wilderness Trekking Guide]. Otava
- Drake, P. (2004). *The Complete Practical Guide to Camping, Hiking & Wilderness Skills*. London: Lorenz Books
- Fennel, D. (2008). *Ecotourism* (3th ed.). New York: Routledge
- George, E., Mair, H. & Reid, D. (2009). *Rural Tourism Development: Localism and Cultural Change*. Bristol: Channel View Publications
- Goeldner, C. (2012). *Tourism – Principles, practices, philosophies*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Gronroos, C. (1990). *Service Management Marketing*. New York: Lexington Books
- Hall, C., Müller, D. & Saarinen J. (2009). *Nordic Tourism – Issues and Cases*. Bristol: Channel View
- Hemmi, J. (2005a). *Matkailu, ympäristö, luonto* [Tourism, Environment, Nature] (Part 1). Jyväskylä: Gummerus
- Hemmi, J. (2005b). *Matkailu, ympäristö, luonto* [Tourism, Environment, Nature] (Part 2). Jyväskylä: Gummerus Oy
- Holden, A. (2008). *Environment and Tourism*. Abingdon: Routledge
- Keay, W. (1996). *Expedition Guide*. Wellingborough: Sterling Press
- Kompula, R. & Boxberg, M. (2002). *Matkailuyrityksen tuotekehitys* [Product Development of Tourism Company]. Helsinki: Edita Publishing Oy
- Kotler, P., Bowen, J. & Makens, J. (2006). *Marketing for Hospitality and Tourism*. New Jersey: Pearson Education.
- Laaksonen, J. (2008). *Vaeltajan opas* [Hikers guide]. Helsinki: Edita
- Lapin elämysteollisuuden osaamiskeskus. (2009a). *Näin toimimme* [This Way We Work]. Retrieved November 1, 2013, from <http://www.leofinland.fi/index.php?name=Content&nodeIDX=3622>

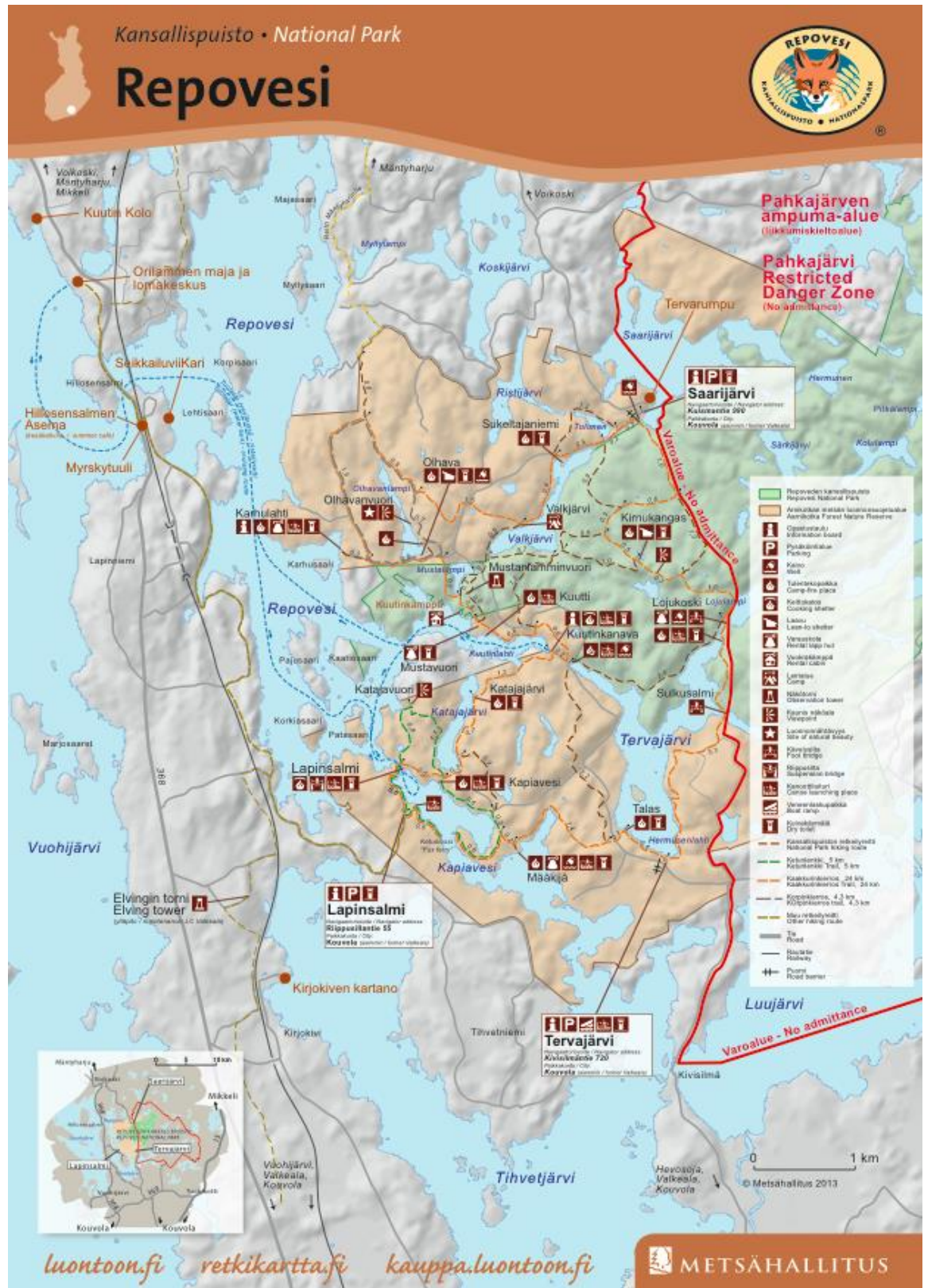
- Lapin elämysteollisuuden osaamiskeskus. (2009b). Experience Pyramid. Retrieved November 1, 2013, from <http://www.leofinland.fi/index.php?name=Content&nodeIDX=3615>
- Lapin elämysteollisuuden osaamiskeskus. (2010). Elements of Meaningful Experience. Retrieved November 1, 2013, from <http://www.leofinland.fi/index.php?name=Content&nodeIDX=4321>
- McKercher, B. (1998). *The Business of Nature-Based Tourism*. Elsternwick: Hospitality Press Pty Ltd
- Metsähallitus. (2005). *Suomen retkeilyopas [Finnish Hiking Guide]*. Helsinki: Edita
- Ministry of the Environment. (2013). *Jokamiehen oikeudet – Lainsäädäntöä ja käytäntöä [Everyman's rights - laws and practices]*. Retrieved October 31, 2013, from <http://www.ymparisto.fi/download/noname/%7BC2B3CAFB-6E61-4945-B42B-D9774680BD6E%7D/56996>
- Oxford Dictionary. (2010). *New Oxford American Dictionary*. (3th ed.). Oxford University Press
- Patton, M. (1982). *Practical Evaluation*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications Inc.
- Patton, M. (1987). *How to use qualitative methods in Evaluation*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications Inc.
- Sharpley, R. & Sharpley, J. (1997). *Rural Tourism: An introduction*. London: International Thomson Business Press
- Standeven, J. & DeKnop, P. (1999). *Sport Tourism*. Champaign: Human Kinetics
- Swarbrooke, J., Beard, C., Leckie, S. & Pomfret, G. (2003). *Adventure Tourism: The new frontier*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann
- The International Ecotourism Society. (2012). *What is ecotourism?* Retrieved October 21, 2013, from <http://www.ecotourism.org/what-is-ecotourism>
- The Mountaineer Books. (2013). *The New Ten Essentials – A Systems Approach*. Retrieved October 26, 2013, from [http://www.mountaineersbooks.org/Assets/ClientPages/zz\\_TenEssentials.aspx](http://www.mountaineersbooks.org/Assets/ClientPages/zz_TenEssentials.aspx)
- The Mountaineers. *The Ten Essentials – A System Approach*. Retrieved October 26, 2013, from [http://www.mountaineers.org/images/TenEssentials\\_web.pdf](http://www.mountaineers.org/images/TenEssentials_web.pdf)
- Veal, A. (1997). *Research Methods for Leisure and Tourism – A Practical Guide*. London: Financial Times

## LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: REPOVESI NATIONAL PARK MAP

APPENDIX 2: MÄNTYHARJU – REPOVESI AREA MAP

REPOVESI NATIONAL PARK MAP



MÄNTYHARJU – REPOVESI AREA MAP



- |    |  |    |  |
|----|--|----|--|
| 1  |  | 13 |  |
| 2  |  | 14 |  |
| 3  |  | 15 |  |
| 4  |  | 16 |  |
| 5  |  | 17 |  |
| 6  |  | 18 |  |
| 7  |  | 19 |  |
| 8  |  | 20 |  |
| 8  |  | 21 |  |
| 8  |  | 22 |  |
| 8  |  | 23 |  |
| 9  |  | 24 |  |
| 10 |  | 25 |  |
| 11 |  | 26 |  |
| 12 |  | 27 |  |

» [mantyharju.fi](http://mantyharju.fi)

