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International Market Development

Marketing situation study for Radalla Resort

DEGREE PROGRAMME IN INTERNATIONAL TOURISM
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| Abstract <p>The objective of this thesis was to study the marketing situation of Radalla Resort, to come up with development proposals for them in order to penetrate their new target markets of Germany and France.</p> <p>This was done by researching the marketing environment of the company from both an internal and external standpoint. The internal environment was studied using a GAP analysis to deduce the main gaps the company is facing when attempting to attract the target markets, as well as by conducting a marketing mix of the company's main offering.</p> <p>The external macroenvironment was studied using a PESTLE analysis to gain a perspective of the larger entity affecting the company, while the microenvironment was studied using a variety of methods. The target markets were studied using secondary data analysis to gather intel about their consumer behavior. The current customers of the company were studied by looking at their satisfaction, and dissatisfaction based on online reviews. And the competitors were analyzed by creating a marketing mix analysis of three big competitors in the same area as Radalla Resort with a similar value proposition. Lastly a SWOT analysis combines both the internal and external environments to conclude the analysis with the main takeaways from each section.</p> <p>The results for each analysis come together to create a full picture of the marketing environment and situation, based on which the concluded development proposals can be provided. As the main issues come from the comparison between the competitors and the commissioner company, they can also be used as a blueprint for what is the commissioner missing that the others may have or do better. Other than investing on activities and equipment like the competitors, marketing more efficiently than them is also a possible way to increase attractiveness to the intended markets, as the competitors are not marketing any more broadly than the commissioner, although there is room for improvement.</p> | | |
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1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a qualitative study in the form of planning for market development by studying the marketing situation of a Finnish resort offering accommodation services in Iitti, Finland, nearby to Kouvola. The marketing situation analysis considers the commissioner company's marketing situation thoroughly, as well as the environment, both internally and externally, from different standpoints to conduct a clear understanding of the surrounding environment, to create development propositions for the commissioner to better their marketing towards the target market.

The topic is especially important as in 2022 not only is the commissioner company rather new, but the coronavirus pandemic has limited the volume of international tourists, which further affects the tourism market such as but not limited to, aviation, hospitality, and entertainment. As the commissioner company only having started up shortly before the pandemic hit, they were unfortunately affected by the consequences of the pandemic quite harshly. Hence, with the travel restrictions gone in Europe in the summer of 2022 (Valtioneuvosto, 2022), this would be an ideal time to seize the opportunity to aim for the international markets.

Although a large part of the thesis is directly related to the commissioner, the theory and the methods can be utilized to create a similar study for another destination as well, which gives opportunity to use the format for other theses, or research.

First in this thesis the topic will be presented, with the commissioner introduction, the methods used, and the research questions presented. The theory presented in chapters four and five will explain the main concepts of this thesis, as well as explain the analysis methods used in chapters six to eight. The analyses will study the marketing situation thoroughly, by first examining the internal environment of the company, followed by the external macro- and microenvironments.

2 COMMISSIONER

The commissioner is a lakeside accommodation provider in Iitti, Finland. They are situated around 130 kilometres from Helsinki, 40 kilometres from Lahti and 20 kilometres from Kouvola. They are easily accessible by a car, and when arriving via public transport only the last five kilometres from the Kausala train station requires a taxi.

They offer accommodation for twenty people overall in small lakeside cabins, fifty in hotel rooms, and ten in mansion rooms, resulting in a capacity of eighty without counting extra beds for adults and children by request and extra cost. In addition to accommodation, the commissioner's offering includes restaurant services, meeting services, saunas, and it is situated with many outdoor activities on hand. Despite the facilities being well-known and having existed in the tourism industry for a long time, the commissioner only began operations there in the year 2019, making the company still very new as of 2022.

The commissioner's strengths come from the surrounding nature and solitude, excellent for a weekend trip with quite traditional Finnish landscapes, not far away from Helsinki. It is also family-operated, which adds a certain charm to the business that many of its competitors lack, which adds more to its uniqueness as compared to hotel chains for example. A more thorough understanding of the commissioner's offering will come from their marketing mix examined in chapter six.

This thesis will analyze the current marketing situation of the commissioner in order to consider the ideal methods of developing their marketing to reach international markets. As of 2022, the visitors have been in large part domestic tourists, but as the commissioner is expanding their facilities and there is a recent addition of more accommodation room, their wish is to grow their market into Central Europe as well. As Central Europe is a large area to take on at once, the focus of this thesis will be on Germany and France, as based on statistics by Tilastokeskus (2021), they were the

most prominent countries in international lodgings to Finland from the Central Europe region in 2021.

3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODS

3.1 Research questions

“How could the commissioner company increase their marketing and visibility toward the target markets?” Is the main research question, which is followed by the sub question of; “What is the marketing environment like?”

These questions will be answered by first examining the marketing environment and situation of the commissioner company thoroughly via internal and external analyses. Based on these analyses the main research question can be answered and the development proposals may be given.

3.2 Objectives

The objective of this thesis is creating development suggestions for the commissioner based on the analysis of the current marketing situation. The result will be development suggestions for the commissioner in the form of a thorough analysis as well as a conclusion to identify and propose developmental opportunities, and modifications to the marketing mix. This will include analysis of the company offering, its intended target markets, and the marketing environment, including their competitors, and the company itself.

As creating a marketing plan is an extremely broad process, the author has decided to restrict this thesis to focus on the current marketing situation and simple proposals for developing the marketing. Each proposal may need further planning to execute,

as the objective of this thesis is to simply identify these development opportunities on behalf of the commissioner.

The KymiRing, a motor sports racing track nearby the commissioner company has hosted plenty of events which have helped to attract international tourists to the resort. However, other than the international tourists that are brought in by the events, there have only been domestic guests as of spring 2022 (Kouvo, 2022). So, the commissioners would be hoping to change it by identifying their marketing environment and comparing it with their competitors to create equal, or preferably more value, especially with the target market's profile in mind. As the KymiRing has been the sole international tourist attractor as of spring 2022, it is especially important to study new ways to attract the target markets. This is due to the fact that the KymiRing is many millions in debt as of summer 2022 and has declared bankruptcy, and their future is quite unclear (Kauppalehti, 2022).

In the end the commissioner will be provided with the conclusions of all the conducted research and analyses that they will be able to use to plan for their future marketing endeavors, as well as product development. Therefore, the overall goal is to help the commissioner analyze their marketing situation and help them reach into new target markets.

3.3 Methods

This thesis is qualitative research about studying the different factors affecting the commissioner company's marketing, and therefore the methods are in large part qualitative analysis methods. The qualitative research approach to the thesis is about the future, about different ways to develop, better, or renew the studied company. Not only is the ending conclusion important in qualitative research, but the whole process leads to that, and all of the analysis are important for a complete understanding of the studied entity. (Pitkäranta, 2014, p.1,2.)

As a qualitative research the process is not as linear as a quantitative research would be, but this thesis starts with the core idea that the offering is not attracting enough

international customers. The process then goes on to understand why that is, and how could the offering and the marketing communication be modified, while using the information and conclusions from the other analyses to build on each analysis. Therefore, the analysis process ties each part of the marketing environment together, to end up with the most important conclusions with each section in consideration. So, as often a qualitative research is meant to increase understanding of the subject or phenomenon and explain it, this fits the purpose of this thesis as the purpose is to research the marketing situation to gain a more thorough understanding of the main issues regarding the research questions, and conclude it by explaining some ways of how to deal with said issues. (Pitkäranta, 2014, p. 6, 20, 26.)

This thesis will also be using secondary data analysis as a major method. The reasoning for this is that there is already a lot of data about the subjects, and there is no need to duplicate this research (Thought Co, 2019). By analyzing secondary data, the author will be able to link the pre-existing data, such as target market consumer behavior and information on the competitors, into the research task of this thesis, and the commissioner company. In addition, though, there are the qualities of qualitative research mixed into the secondary data analysis. These qualitative methods are especially visible in the micro environmental analysis parts, when studying the current satisfaction levels of customers based on the online reviews, to identify any dissatisfaction among them, which may reflect badly for the target markets. Different methods such as the PESTLE and SWOT analysis are also used for qualitative research to analyze the commissioner's marketing situation better.

4 MARKETING

4.1 Definition

The American Marketing Association defines marketing as: "The activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging

offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large” (Ama, 2017).

It is about attracting customers by creating value in the product or service for the target market. Creating value for the customer ends up bringing value to the company in return and managing these customer relationships is essential for profitability. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017, p.22.) Therefore, it is not only the act of delivering the marketing material to the consumers as one might think, but it includes the whole process of thoroughly planning the marketing material, segments, methods, and channels.

As mentioned, marketing is not just about creating an advertisement and selling the product, but it is a larger ongoing process about engaging customers, responding to their needs, and creating a relationship with them. When a well-created product is reasonably priced and aimed to meet the needs of the target audience, the value of the product will be greatly boosted and result in a higher demand for it. Methods such as promoting through social medias or video-sharing applications to engage audiences, would help to significantly boost the popularity and interactions with the product, however if the product is not of quality or need, it would not be sustainable long-term. So, rather than just selling the product, although visibility and promotion are essential, the most important thing is customer satisfaction in all regards, making the product attractive and valuable to both new and old customers. It can be considered an ongoing process as for the product to maintain its value and attractiveness, it may need to be adjusted to keep responding to the customer needs and following the trends in marketing may require adjusting the marketing strategy. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017, p.25.)

Marketing is both a strategy, and a tactic, it is a way of thinking and a way of acting. On a strategic level the most important thing is current and future customers, their needs, values, and wishes. Creating value to the customers is essential, and is the first goal of marketing, not only should the company’s offering line up with the customer’s needs, but also creating value to other stakeholders and the company

itself is necessary. Although often the value and profitability to the company comes after gaining the customers, it is necessary to make sure in the strategy part that the business also brings value to the provider. The marketing tactic on the other hand comes from the marketing mix of different actions that the company can use as a competitive advantage. The marketing mix will be discussed more thoroughly in later chapters. (Bergström & Leppänen, 2021, p. 20, 166.)

4.2 Market development

Instead of the initial marketing process of launching a new product into the selected target segment, market development is about expanding the existing product into a new market. The company needs to determine a new target market where it could get a larger market share in addition to the existing. Examples of how to achieve this would be to identify new potential customer segments within the already targeted area, they could add new distribution channels to reach new markets in their current area, or they could decide to start marketing in completely new geographical locations. (Kotler et al., 2019, p. 81-82.)

Market development requires creating a new strategy, as the target market has expanded. The market development strategy differs slightly as there is already an existing customer base. Therefore, changing the product, and its marketing too much could hurt the current market. For this reason, identifying a new target market should come from analyzing the offering, and how it could fit a new market with only slight, or no changes at all. When altering the marketing methods of the product, it is important to ensure that the value proposition for each target market is not too different from each other and does not hurt the other by contradicting. (Indeed, 2021a.)

Next the market development strategy should decide on how they want to grow from the market development. This could for example be about generating more sales, taking over new geographic areas, creating new products, or getting more customers. For each growth goal it is important to set a measurable goal, such as increasing sales by a certain percentage by the end of a specific time. The goal should also be

achievable, which requires careful consideration, but is necessary so that the performance can be measured properly and clearly. (Indeed, 2021a.)

As with any marketing strategy having the proper resources is important, for example funding for marketing communication, or having enough capacity in a hotel that adding the new target market is even necessary, or profitable. Market development also requires a new marketing plan for the new targeted groups. This may require adding new marketing channels that the targeted groups are known or expected to use or changing the current marketing communication methods in a way that they would also be attractive to the new market, without taking away from the current one. After the marketing plan and offering have been launched for the new market, it is important to follow the results, match them against the goals set in the strategy, and improve when necessary. (Indeed, 2021a.)

4.3 Marketing research

Marketing research is about gathering information that the marketing management can then make marketing decisions based on. As so, the main goal of marketing research is lowering the chance of errors or uncertainties that could be faced in the decision-making process. It is about understanding the marketing environment, the company, as well as the industry. There are a variety of tools that can be used to conduct marketing research, but rather than focusing on the research techniques the main thing to start from is having a research question, as when one researches too broadly, they might have a lot of information, with the main point and solution missing. (Stevens et al., 2012, p. 1-3.)

Typical marketing research topics include a large variety that can be categorized so that the first category includes the company's own **customers**, their needs, demands and wants, customer satisfaction, consumer behavior and loyalty. The next category is the **competition**, what are they offering, what is the price, how is their marketing communication, their strengths and weaknesses, or their customer satisfaction. Third category is the **market**, which includes analyzing the different market segments, their needs, values, consumer behavior, and what are the differences and similarities

between them. Additionally analyzing the company's own market placement and potential are a part of the market research, as well as the consumers in the market and their purchase reasonings and amounts. Researching the company's own **marketing mix** is also a part of marketing research. (Bergström & Leppänen, 2021, p. 36-37.)

Marketing research is an important part of the marketing process, and even the most basic concepts of market segmentation and targeting are dependent on the marketing research (Tarver, 2021). It requires a lot of information on the target market and different marketing methods in order to define a suitable marketing strategy, and therefore a lot of the refining will be done after the initial marketing launch. This means that in addition to researching the marketing environment beforehand, the research will not stop once the advertisements are published. When doing marketing research, it is essential to evaluate the process throughout to be able to define where improvements could be implemented. It is also necessary for the marketing strategy and plan as they can be adjusted based on the research results. (Ama, 2017.)

It is also important to note how it is not only about analyzing errors, but it is also about researching the things in the marketing process that are going well, to ensure that they are maintained and when possible, they could be broadened. Therefore, keeping track of customer satisfaction and conducting research, such as surveys, is a valuable tool in marketing research. (Bergström & Leppänen, 2021, p. 36.) For example, if from a customer satisfaction survey, or online reviews it comes clear that a big part of the customer base has expressed delight in the mattress quality, it would not make sense to change brands, but when the situation is reversed, of course a change is needed to improve customer satisfaction.

4.4 Value proposition

Value in its different meanings is a very essential element in marketing. The value proposition of a company shows what it has to offer to the consumers. It is about the benefits that it proposes, or values that the company has. It should show to the customers that the offering will be able to satisfy their needs, and/or share their values. It will tell the customer the reason to buy the company's offering, instead of

another one, and determining the ideal value proposition with the selected target market in mind is essential for the greatest competitive advantage. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017, p. 31.)

The value proposition should be something that the target market especially will find valuable, and something that promises to satisfy their needs specifically. Picking a value proposition is important for differentiation purposes, as to be the first choice among competition, the consumers need to notice the company around the others, and to have a reason to choose their product. This is really about what the target market is like and requires careful research of them. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017, p. 30-31.) As the advantage the offering may have could be real or perceived, with the value proposition customer perceived value is what is the defining factor, be it real or not, the target market needs to find value in the offering.

4.5 Differentiation

Positioning the brand in a way that the consumers will recognize it, and know what they can benefit from it, and how does it differ from other brands is important. This is where differentiation comes in. As often different companies share, or their target markets overlap in some ways, a way for the consumers to tell the companies apart is necessary. Differentiation is really one of the steps of creating a positioning strategy, as differentiation is about selecting or identifying competitive advantages against competition to be able to differ from them somehow in the consumers eyes. Without differentiation positioning is rather difficult, as positioning consists of identifying the ideal value proposition toward the chosen target market, but without differentiation this may be too close to what the competition is already offering. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017, p. 222.)

Differentiation strategies that the company could use to gain a competitive advantage include **personnel differentiation**, which as the name suggests is about having superior employees as opposed to the competition, with better training, great customer service, and a good reputation. **Channel differentiation** is about the distribution channels of the offering, and by being the most visible company and

offering the consumers may be more likely to purchase the offering that seems to have the most coverage. (Kotler et al., 2019, p. 330-331.) **Image differentiation** on the other hand is about how the offering and the company is seen, with a clear brand image and good reputation it will be easy to differ from the competition, but this is something that takes a lot of time to establish. Lastly, product differentiation is about the concrete offering that the company has, what is it, what are its features, design, and how well does it perform. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017, p. 222-223.) This may be the most obvious differentiation strategy for newcomer companies, as the others require more time, reputation, and capital, but by establishing early on what the company is striving for it can focus more on image building for example from the start.

Differentiation is not only about differing from the competition's product though, but it can include differentiation from the company's own offerings as well. To attract more customers within the target markets a **versioning** strategy can be a great tool to make the offering more attractive toward larger customer groups. Price can often be a deciding factor in the consumers purchase decision, and customers with less purchasing power may go for the cheaper alternative, while people with more will be willing to spend more for a superior product. By having different versions of the same product, the company can find it easier to get more people of differing purchase potential to choose their product, and therefore having a larger potential customer base. (Sanders & Huefner, 2012, p. 50.) Many hotels for example can be seen using this strategy, by having different room options available for the customers, making it so that there is less need to target customers based on the purchase potential, as there are options for individuals of different profitability levels.

4.6 Internationalization

Market development for the company offering can be about attracting a market from another country. Many companies may wish to enter international markets for example to better match with their competitors, or because in the hospitality sector especially, due to globalization people are finding new destinations more interesting than their home country, which may turn away domestic travelers more, and bring in

the appeal of attracting international travelers, who may stay for longer and be more likely to spend more money as well. (McCabe, 2010, p. 50-51.)

When choosing a target market within a new country it is important to study the economy of the area, the economic factors that should be considered are the industrial structure, and income distribution. The industrial structure refers to the service and product needs, employment, and income levels. This is important to note to understand their needs for new offerings, and their potential for purchase. The income distribution is more strictly about the income, but more clearly about how it distributes among the households. A country with generally a higher income level it may be easier to find people who are willing, and able to purchase services abroad, but it is dependent on the type of service whether it fits in the category of interest for a large number of consumers in the area. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017, p. 556.)

The political and legal environment of the target destination is also important to note to consider the country's attitude toward international companies, government bureaucracy, monetary regulations, and political stability. But more importantly for tourism services comes the cultural environment of the country. Each country may react differently to marketing strategies and the offering, so it is important to study the country's culture first to see that it is a fit for the offering, and to plan the marketing strategy accordingly. In a tourism setting it should be considered do they have a need for the services in the company's country, and how to communicate the product and the value proposition in a way that they will be attracted to it. Cultural differences may also affect how the consumer likes to be treated in the service setting, so respecting cultural boundaries in customer service is also important to ensure customer satisfaction. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017, p. 559-560.)

4.7 Understanding the customer

When marketing any product, it is important to understand the marketplace, as well as what the customers require. In order to provide what the customers require, it is necessary to understand their needs, wants and demands. Their needs can be either physical, social, or individual, but are very general human needs that anyone requires

for survival. Wants differ from needs, as they are shaped by the individual, as anyone would *need* food to survive, different people may *want* different foods. Buying power from the customer will then transform these wants into *demands*. With their resources a want for pizza will turn into a demand for it. And with the existing demand, a supply is needed. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017, p. 26.)

With these distinctions in mind the marketer can start the marketing process by contemplating what are the customer needs and wants, and how are they being fulfilled. The market offerings for different products and services can be huge, so knowing the customer and marketplace is essential to provide a product that ideally brings something new into the marketplace and provides value and satisfaction for the customer. By answering to their needs as well as wants, and by satisfying the customer there will be a demand for more, and the customer may share their experience, and thus spread the demand to other consumers. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017, p. 27-31.)

Understanding the demand is essential to determine when and what the target market requires, for some products or services the targeted markets may even change during different time periods and seasons, as with tourism services seasonality is very high in some areas based on the weather and activities (Nemec-Rudez et al., 2014, p. 661-662). Knowing the target market well is important to have an advantage in the marketplace. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017, p. 30-31.)

To create lasting relationships with the customers it is essential for them to be satisfied with their service. The value derived from the product needs to amount to all their wishes and expectations, and to attract them they need to deem the company value proposition as the highest possible according to their priorities. To make the customers as satisfied as possible the product would need to go beyond their expectations, which is why a strategic value proposition can be important to not over promise. The line between having an attractive value proposition and attracting customers, yet still leaving room for improvement in the actual service is quite thin, but the more satisfied the customers are the more likely they are to come back and leave better reviews. Therefore, it is up to the service provider to decide, do they

intend to exceed the customers' expectations and create customer delight, or stick to their value proposition, which will keep the customers satisfied as well and is also a valid method, with only perhaps higher threats. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017, p. 34-36.)

With social media at everyone's reach marketing is not only about what the service providers show and advertise, but it is also important to note that engaging the customers will be an important marketing tool and can be even more effective than what the company themselves say. Customer satisfaction is one of the most important marketing methods in this day and age, as to other consumers the customers word is often a more reliable source on the customer experience. Making the consumers into brand advocates by engaging them by social media and internet, as well as by providing superior value is essential for a good brand presence. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017, p. 36-37.)

Customer loyalty comes from satisfaction, which is perhaps why it would be favorable for a company to always attempt to exceed the consumers expectations. Any dissatisfaction is deemed to drop the customers loyalty significantly, and if the company is only attempting to perform exactly as the value proposition states any incident or mishap could drop the satisfaction level under the line of their expectations. Therefore, if a company is not already working extra hard to keep the satisfaction levels beyond the expectations, the threat is higher for any unexpected issues. Even for a company that perhaps is not counting on the customer lifetime value of returning customers, a customer leaving dissatisfied may cost a future customer as well due to word-of-mouth marketing. (Kotler & Armstrong, p. 2017, 39.)

4.8 Profiting

The last step to the marketing process is where the profits come in, which is the end goal of customer relationship management, to build as much equity as possible. Equity is not only about the current sales of the company, but it also measures the lifetime value of the customers, not just the current ones but all potential customers,

and who may be attracted from the previous satisfied customers. Therefore, different from current sales, it is largely based on customer satisfaction with the future profits in mind. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017, p. 40.)

Kotler and Armstrong divide customers into four groups based on their possible profitability, which can be helped to assess which customers should the company build relationships with. **Strangers**, as the name suggests, are an unknown customer base, they should not be invested on long term, but they should be profited from at every possible step. They do not promise any loyalty and the estimated profitability is quite low. **Butterflies** are not a loyal customer base, but they may be profitable. The company value proposition and product fits well with their needs. They are only around for a while, but often go for good deals and are not likely to be loyal to a single brand. Therefore, they should not be invested on either, but enjoyed while they are present. **True friends** are a customer base which is both loyal and profitable. The value proposition and product fits well with their needs and the company should invest in a customer relationship with them by creating customer delight to get them to return and share their experiences with others to attract more of them. **Barnacles** are the final group who are very loyal but do not generate much profit. The company's offerings may not fit as well with their needs, but they keep coming back. Their profitability could be raised by selling them more, or raising their fees, but sometimes service to them should be limited in favor of true friends, or other more profitable customers. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017, p. 41-42.) With tourism and hospitality services these may differ though based on the product, a restaurant may turn away customers who only order a drink and stay for hours, but a hotel is likely to still get profit from a customer if they only get a room and no additional services. With international customers as the target market for tourism services though, it is easier to target butterflies, than only aim for true friends, as it is oftentimes unlikely for tourists to return to the same destination for every trip, but the company should always work hard to satisfy the customers in a way that were they to return, they would likely choose their service again, as well as review and market their offering well to other potential customers.

5 MARKETING ENVIRONMENTS

5.1 External environment

The external marketing environment refers to the outside environment around the company which may impact their marketing and their ability to create profitable customer relationships. It needs to be considered for the company to be able to understand the environmental challenges and opportunities of the marketplace, and to face them. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017, p. 86.) Analyzing the external environment can be difficult as it is changing constantly, but that makes it all the more important to keep analyzing it to account for any changes and respond to them (Bergström & Leppänen, 2021, p. 48).

The microenvironment consists of actors that impact the company's operations, which are not necessarily directly prone to the company's control, but may be influenced by it, such as the stakeholders. While the macroenvironment is a larger entity, which consists of economic, ecologic, technological, political, cultural, and demographic forces. This cannot be controlled or influenced by the company, but it can be understood and adapted to, and sometimes foreseen and planned for, to make sure that it has a minimum negative effect towards the company's profitability. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017, p. 86, 90.)

The microenvironment can be analyzed further by using a variety of different methods, with each focusing on a different part of the microenvironment. The microenvironment is very wide with actors close to the company affecting their ability to create superior value to its customers. It consists of the company itself, its suppliers and business partners, marketing channels, customers and customer markets, as well as the competitors. Analyzing the microenvironment is essential to determine threats, as well as opportunities and create, or improve strategies. (Kotler & Armstrong, p. 2017, 86.) For the sake of this thesis the author has restricted the microanalysis to include the current customers, the target markets, as well as the competitors, due to the author evaluating them as the most important factors with the

topic in question, as well as the other factors being partly included in the commissioner's marketing mix analysis.

5.1.1 PESTLE method

The external macroenvironment can be evaluated very thoroughly with the PESTLE method, which is used to identify factors surrounding the marketing environment. It consists of six parts which are Political factors, Economic factors, Social factors, Technological factors, Legal factors, and Environmental factors. (Nelke, 2012, p. 118-119.)

The PESTLE analysis as mentioned includes six different factors, which together make up the key external factors of the macroenvironment. They should be carefully analyzed to determine any potential or current threats for the industry or organization studied. As the studied factors are within the macroenvironment, they can not be directly controlled by the company, but the potential threats may be determined in advance to plan a better response for them. It is a method used for either studying the current operational environment of the company or for planning for a new launch, meaning the operational environment will be a new one. (Battista, 2021.)

In this thesis the PESTLE analysis will be used more generally to study the current operational macroenvironment of the commissioner company, and therefore largely the tourism industry in Finland. But the analysis could also be directed toward a specific industry, location, or company, in a more focused way. The reason of including it in this thesis is to understand the larger marketing environment of the company to determine any contemporary threats to tourism in Finland. The PESTLE analysis and conclusions may be compared to other destinations, and the target markets to understand the push and pull factors of the destination, and therefore to perhaps respond or prepare for some of them.

5.1.2 SWOT method

The internal and external environment of the company is often studied with a SWOT-analysis, which considers the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the company. The strengths and weaknesses part of the SWOT-analysis studies the internal marketing environment and its factors. The external environment on the other hand is analyzed in the opportunity and threat part of the SWOT-analysis. (Kotler et al., 2019, p. 88.)

The internal part of the SWOT analysis considers the Strengths and weaknesses that the company has and can be evaluated for example by using the checklist as shown in figure 8. This includes the main internal factors that could either be a strength or a weakness to the company. By this method the neutral factors may also be identified, and perhaps developed to in the future become a strength. (Kotler et al., 2019, p. 91.)

In this thesis in particular the SWOT analysis is done by considering all of the other internal and external factors mentioned in this thesis. It is situated after all of the other analyses as a conclusion of the results to explain the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats before the final concluding chapter of this research, which better explains the development propositions with the SWOT and other analyses in consideration.

5.2 Internal environment

The internal environment refers to the factors within the company which impact the company's marketing. These include for example the business idea, company culture, marketing objectives, and the marketing organization. The company analyzes it to determine any growth opportunities within their operations. (Bergström & Leppänen, 2021, p. 49.)

Studying and analyzing the internal operations within a company is important for the leaders to understand and determine any improvement possibilities within the company operations. It is used to identify, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and

threats, which the SWOT analysis is very useful for. Although the opportunities and threats analyzed within a SWOT analysis are often mainly external, studying the external threats within an internal analysis can help the company prepare for them, while the opportunities may even be internal in their own merit. Often though, the goal for internal analysis is not only the identification of these factors, but to find ways to differentiate the company's offering from the competitors. (Indeed, 2021b.)

5.2.1 GAP method

In addition to the SWOT analysis, the internal environment can be analyzed in a variety of different ways, depending on which suits the company objectives and the reason for the analysis the best. For the sake of this thesis and its objectives the focus will be on the GAP method. The GAP analysis is about comparing the company's current state to the goal of where the company wants to be in the future and estimating whether the current measures will lead the company there, and when identifying a gap in the performance, how can the strategy be modified to fix it (Weller, 2021).

In this thesis the author will be using the GAP analysis to identify the major gaps in regard to the end goal of attaining more overnight guests from the target markets. This will be done by focusing on the ways that the commissioner could internally do more to achieve this goal.

5.2.2 Marketing mix

The marketing mix at its core consists of the four Ps of marketing, which are Product, Price, Promotion, and Place. The marketing mix can be used in combination to research, promote and sell the company's offering to the target markets, and attempt to gain the best results. (Bravo Sellés, 2016.)

Product refers to the offering that the company has and is at the center of the marketing mix as without a proper product to sell no matter how well the other elements of the marketing mix are considered if the product does not create value to the customer the effort is put to waste. Therefore, the product should create value and satisfy the target markets needs better than the competition's offering does. In a service environment the product often includes other elements in addition to the core product, such as information and hospitality in the form of customer service. (Wirtz et al., 2018, p. 18.)

Price, as the name suggests is about the pricing of the product, which may be influenced by factors such as the target market, capacity, demand, and the time and place of the product delivery. The price should be of a level that the target market would be able, and willing to pay, and the product should be perceived as worth the money. This can be influenced by making the product as efficient as possible, by minimizing any additional costs for the customer, mental, physical, and monetary-wise. Pricing also involves estimating both the demand, and capacity, in so that there would be minimal need to turn away customers at high demand seasons due to lack of capacity, and that at low demand seasons the capacity would still be used. This may mean that the pricing should be adjusted based on these factors, which is especially common with hotels, as the room prices can vary greatly. (Wirtz et al., 2018, p. 21.)

Promotion is about how the company communicates their product to the consumers. The role of promotion is therefore to provide information, get the target markets to purchase the product, and to get them to do so at a particular time. With a tangible product it is often easier to promote the benefits and give a clear reasoning for the consumers to purchase the offering, but with an intangible product, such as most services, it may be more difficult to showcase in the advertisements, as the value gained from a service cannot be seen. To help the consumers with assessing the quality of the intangible product with the marketing communications the service company can use guarantees to promise a certain benefit to the consumers or use metaphors in the marketing to show the benefits of the product in an indirect manner. But as promotion is the way to gain the target market's attention, it is essential to

find a way to best market the product with the target market in mind, better than the competition, and in a way that shows the value proposition and gives a reason to purchase. (Wirtz et al., 2018, p. 22.)

Place is the final element of the four Ps, and it is about the distribution place of the product. There are a variety of different distribution channels, both electronic and physical, and with the internet it is easy to distribute information all over the world, making it easier to reach markets anywhere. Often the consumers may get the initial information and service electronically, but the physical distribution place of the core product, such as the hotel, will be physical. The company will need to determine which methods and channels they will use to reach the target market best, and where and when is each element of the offering provided. (Wirtz et al., 2018, p. 18-19.)

6 INTERNAL ANALYSIS

6.1 Marketing mix

The marketing mix of the commissioner company's offering as it currently stands to gain a larger view of the company offering and all that it involves, to compare with the competitor's offerings. The summary for this marketing mix can be found in figure 7 with the competitors marketing mixes.

Product: The tangible product of the commissioner company is providing lakeside accommodation in the Finnish countryside in the form of hotel rooms, a manor house, or cabins directly in the lakeside. In addition to the accommodation there are restaurant services, event venues, and saunas, as well as many opportunities for outdoor recreational activities. The company offers overall 40 rooms for accommodation, each with beds for 2 people, the hotel rooms with an option for adding an extra bed as well.

The intangible part of the product is much wider and includes the brand of the company, for local customers the old company which operated in the same place may still mix with the current company, but for visitors from further away the brand that they see is the one created by the current company and their reputation (Kouvo, 2022). The values that they push forward are being responsible and reliable, as well as a family ran business. In addition, nature is a huge part of the brand and value proposition, and the activities in the area are largely promoted to attract nature lovers. The activities offered vary somewhat based on the season, as well as the restaurant, which is mainly closed except for events in the wintertime, but the services otherwise are available year-round. Other than their own offered rental bikes there is a third-party provider renting SUP boards in their premises. Other activities such as boating and fishing trips are available through third party providers as well, but they are not directly sold on the premises. They also have a golf resort and an archery range as neighbors. The product is also situated so that there is no public transport leading directly to it and requires either own car or a taxi to get to from either the Kausala or Kouvola train stations, which are respectively 7, and 23 kilometers away.

The facilities consist of multiple different buildings, of which the main building, an old white mansion from the 1800's is the pride jewel, it includes the restaurant and mansion accommodation, as well as a terrace and sauna. In addition, there are two red sauna buildings, one in the shape of a hut, a blue meeting house, a blue hotel building, dark modern lakeside cabins built in 2022, and a large wooden building up for renovation. From the outside the buildings, with the exception of the to-be-renovated one, look renovated and clean, but not very united, due to the large variation in the building colors, as well as the building materials. (Radalla Resort, 2022.)

The inside of the buildings varies as well based on the building, which is made so that the rooms inside match the outside, in a way that the mansion rooms are much more regal looking than the typical hotel rooms, and the cabins decoration match the modern outside of them. The sauna's follow the same pattern somewhat with the cellar sauna located in the mansion being very fancy which suits the mansion well,

but perhaps a bit more modern with the decoration as opposed to the rest of the mansion. The hut sauna is exactly what would be expected of it, the building being rather small, with just the sauna, but the inside of it being utilized well with it being very roomy with the stove being in the center of the hut. The third sauna is very typical of a Finnish sauna, with the indoors matching the outdoors as well, but it being nothing special, a bit outdated, dark and small especially during the common sauna time for all guests, would likely lean the favor to the other saunas.

Price: The pricing of the accommodation varies in part based on the booking channel, as well as the date, but it always includes the breakfast, which is positive as the customers may deem it as an additional cost otherwise, and it adds value to the offering. The minimum pricing is as according to figure 1. In addition to the accommodation cost, some of the other services such as the restaurant and private sauna cost as well. The restaurant pricing is near to the same level standards in Finland, and the sauna prices can be seen in figure 1. In addition to the private sauna, the hotel guests do have the option to use the common time slot for the sauna's, which is of no additional costs, but is shared with other guests. The meeting packages are with a starting price of 33 euros per person, but the prices vary based on the meeting package purchased. Additionally, transport to- and from the hotel costs money, as well as some of the nearby activities and destinations. (Radalla Resort, 2022.)

| Accommodation costs | | Sauna costs |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • THE HOTEL ROOMS • Hotel room from 103€ /night • Adult's extra bed 40€ /night • Children 5-14y extra bed 30€ /night • Child under 4y in a travel cot free • Pets 15€ /night • Rent the whole hotel from 1.575€ /day • 25 two-person rooms for your private use. Incl. linen, towels, sauna 2h, cleaning. • Later check in / check out 10€ /h | <p>THE MANOR HOUSE ROOMS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Two-person manor house room from 135€ /night •Two-person room with balcony from 205€ /night •Rent the whole floor from 780€ /night •3 two-person manor house rooms and 2 two-person suites with lounge space. •Later check in / check out 10€ /h <p>THE LAKESIDE SUITES (CABIN)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Two-person lakeside suite from 240€ /night •Pets 15€ /night •Later check in / check out 10€ /h | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Log cabin sauna for private use 150€ /3h •Additional hours 20€ /h •Cellar sauna for private use 150€ /2h •Additional hours 20€ /h •Sauna and barbecue hut for private use 200€ /3h •Additional hours 30€ /h •Towel rent 4€/ towel •The log cabin sauna and the sauna and barbecue huts can be rented for private use for a combined price 280€/3h •Additional hours 40€/h |

Figure 1, Adapted from Radalla Resort, 2022

Promotion: The commissioner advertises their product in addition to being visible on the booking channels, and local destination marketing organizations (DMO's), more broadly with the domestic tourists in consideration. For example, even on the English Trip Advisor site, similarly to the competition, the promotional text is still only in Finnish, while it would improve attractiveness to include an English introduction. For tourists arriving to the area, it is easy to find the company, as Iitti does not offer many other accommodation services, and their services will be among the first found when searching. When driving nearby there are signs advertising the company as well. When knowing the name of the hotel it is easy to find information about it, or when searching among the region, but when searching for accommodation more broadly it is harder to come across.

Promotion further in the Kouvola and Kymenlaakso region can be seen for example in the local newspapers, such as Kouvolan Sanomat, and other mailed magazines, such as Hyvä Yritys, a freely distributed magazine displaying different companies in the Kouvola region. (Kouvolan Sanomat, 2022; Hyvä Yritys, 2022). These bring visibility to possible domestic tourists from nearby, but as they are in Finnish and only distributed so near, they are unlikely to bring longer term visitors, and more short-term stayers, or restaurant visitors.

The DMO's that are currently promoting the commissioner are Visit Iitti, Visit Lahti, and Visit Kouvola. There are all regional DMO's that are situated less than an hour away. The promotion in their websites is also in English, such as the commissioner's own website, and they provide the basic information of the commissioner business, but are lacking on some as of July 2022, such as the lakeside cabins, which could be a selling point to many.

Overall, the marketing communication is focusing on the proximity of the lake, and other recreational or nature activities, such as the nearby hiking path, biking routes, archery range, and golf field. From this the importance of the nature in the value proposition is clear. As the nature of Finland is one of the most important pull factors

for inbound tourism, it is indeed important to communicate the natural possibilities in the proximity of the company (Business Finland, 2022).

Place: Out of the most popular online booking websites the company is offering their services on Booking, which also means they are visible on Trivago, and other websites that get their information secondhand. Booking.com is used largely by the target market as well (Similarweb, 2022), which makes selling there an ideal marketplace. Booking from the commissioner's website is also possible, it has the most information about all the services they offer as well as the ones located in the area, it also has the email address from which booking, and inquiries are also possible, and a link to Hotellinx for room booking. When there are rooms available, walk-in customers will also be accepted. (Radalla Resort, 2022.)

6.2 GAP analysis

The GAP analysis for the commissioner company is performed by estimating the main gaps that could be causing the performance issues with international tourists. Therefore, when considering the lack of international tourists, it can be deduced that major reasonings for this gap are its lack of visibility and attractiveness toward the international markets. To ease this gap the commissioner company may have to adjust their marketing to better answer to what the new target markets of Germany and France are looking for in Finland. Without changing the product, the value proposition can be adjusted for each target market, and this needs to be marketed for the target audience by perhaps even promoting completely different things towards different target groups (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017, p.71, 202, 216). While domestic tourists can be sold by the lakeside view alone, international tourists may need to be convinced more. Finnish people are aware of how the company location fits the traditional Finnish landscape and culture, but international tourists need to be told this and sell them on how it is not just accommodation but a true Finnish experience, and really give them a reason to travel there, especially due to the slightly inconvenient location when moving without own car, where just a place to sleep is likely not what the tourists are looking for.

Additionally with the amount of French and German tourists in Finland adding information in their languages on the company website can be a way to win them over, and although many tourists speak English, it will be appreciated (PXcom, 2022). Using the channels for marketing that the target segments are likely to use for information retrieval is necessary to adjust to the new markets. All of these changes come internally from the company, and although some marketing, such as word of mouth, is hard to control internally, it can be influenced by perfecting the organizational operations and always attempting to provide superior service.

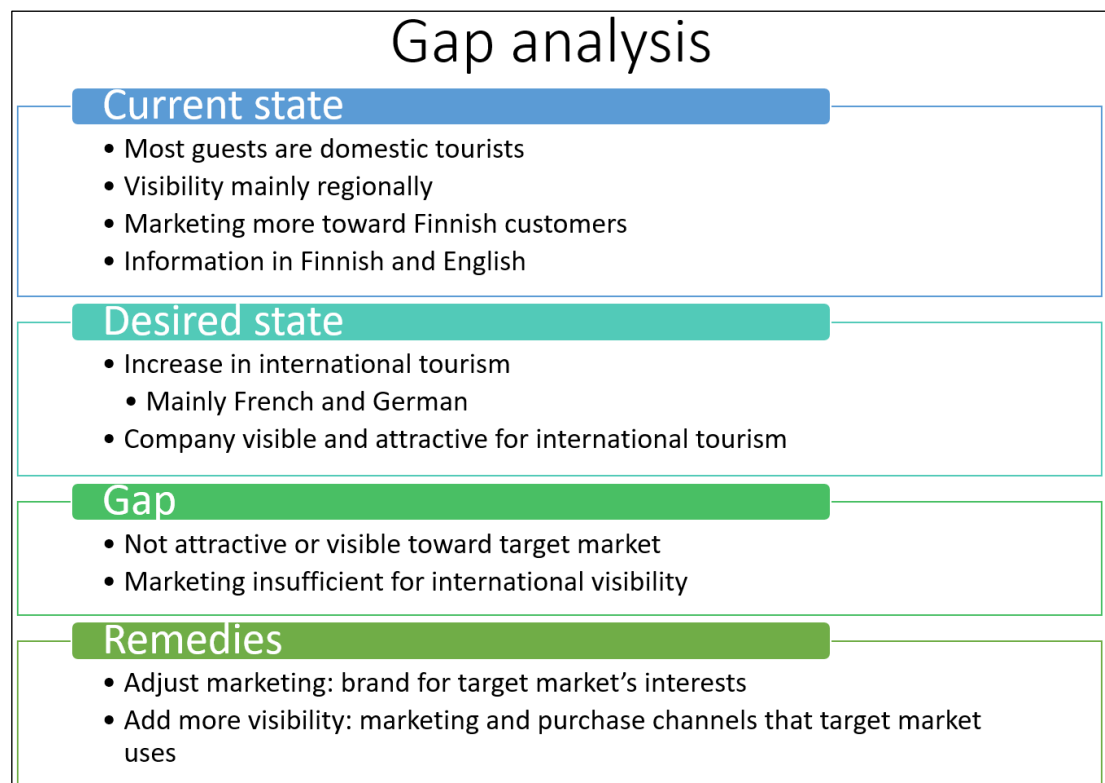


Figure 2 GAP analysis based on the desired state of the commissioner

7 EXTERNAL ANALYSIS

7.1 Macro environmental analysis

The macro environment of the commissioner company includes the larger external environment around it that is completely out of their control. These factors may

cause issues for the company, or they may influence tourism and business in other ways. The macroenvironment can make a big difference in the attractiveness of the destination on a larger scale and determine some of the push and pull factors of it.

As the external environment changes all the time it needs to be followed intently, for example, as of July 2022, the **political** situation is slightly unstable, and may impact business, but this may change even very quickly. The main political issue is the war between Russia and Ukraine, which causes unrest in the whole of Europe, but with Finland's shared border with Russia, as well as comments from Russia against Finland joining NATO (BBC, 2022), there is a larger perceived threat. Additionally, comments from Finland's armed forces in the news about being prepared for an attack to Finland (Yle, 2022), could cause tourists to steer clear of Finland due to fear. Additionally, although the NATO membership may have different views on it, both the target markets are a part of it as well, which could increase the perception of security in Finland if/when the NATO application is finalized. Although, as the target markets of Germany and France are further away from the conflict, there is a possibility that they would prefer traveling elsewhere during the uncertainty, as would possibly other international tourists as well, therefore it is possible that the target market's profitability would increase only after the conflicts have been resolved. Lastly for the political situation in July 2022 there are currently no entry restrictions due to Covid-19 when arriving to Finland (Valtioneuvosto, 2022), but as the past has proved the restrictions may change even rapidly, and the cases may surge again in the autumn, so changes should be prepared for.

As for **economic** factors the largest contributor is the inflation rates which has grown up to 7,8% overall for June 2022, but for tourists this is less alarming as the majority of this is due to the increase in gas and electricity prices. Although, it is important to note that transportation is an important part of tourism services and travel costs can be impacted. Additionally other European countries have been experiencing similar inflation, which lessens the consumers purchase potential. (Tilastokeskus, 2022.) Even so, Finland's economy has been stable and is quick to rebound even after times of great peril, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, but the taxation is rather high, which

can be seen in not only income tax, but VAT as well, impacting EU tourists (Heritage, 2022).

Social factors affecting the macroenvironment include the language capabilities of Finns, which can be a very positive pull factor for tourists when there is no worry about getting service in at least English, if not even their native languages, as especially the younger generations have been learning foreign languages from a young age. (Stenger, 2018.) Culture in Finland tends to respect boundaries a lot, Finns value their own space and tend to also provide that to others, while perhaps even seeming a bit shy and reserved due to that. Despite this Finns are generally understanding and value equality, and although sometimes silent, they are generally welcoming of tourists. Therefore, when traveling to Finland there is less worry about cultural barriers than some other destinations, as Finns are rather socially aware, and usually mind their own business, without being too formal either. (Info Finland, 2022.) Although Finland is generally welcoming, there is a problem with casual racism, as the perceived racist harassment in Finland has been studied to be the highest in Europe (FRA, 2019, p. 3). This reputation may be a push factor especially for non-white tourists deciding on a travel destination.

Technologically Finland is very advanced and has the means for embracing the latest technological trends and advances as a first world country. This can be seen for example in the public transport which covers the whole country to some extent. But although the public transport in Finland works generally very well especially in larger cities and going from one city to another is easy (Discovering Finland, 2022.), the distances can be rather long, and as Finland has a very low population density in some areas, understandably so it would not be very profitable to have consistent bus schedules to every small town with lower demand. This though can influence these destinations by lowering their tourism potential significantly. Additionally, Finland is easy to travel in with plenty of information and assistance offered online on DMO's websites for example, and with most services bookable online. With automation in services increasing in popularity as well it is important to utilize the internet to its full extent. Automation not only includes the booking and information services, but many tourism service providers are also starting to add automated services in the

physical service scape as well. (Tussyadiah, 2020, p. 4-5.) Although for an accommodation service like the commissioner company, with a focus on being a small family business with nature as a main value, too much automation and robotic butlers may not fit the brand, these technological advances should still be followed, and if for example a fully automated check-in becomes a larger trend, it can easily be responded to.

The **legal** factors include visa requirements, or lack there-of, as many countries, including all EU countries are exempt from visa requirements when traveling to Finland, making it an easy travel destination (Migri, 2022). Additionally, for legal factors is the safety in Finland, which is perceived generally as very high, without accounting for the political worries from outside. This can be seen as Finland has a very low crime index (Numbeo, 2022), which is important for tourism as many people would prefer a destination which is deemed as safer. Finland also has discrimination laws against discriminating based on any personal characteristics adding into the safety and equality factors (Oikeusministeriö, 2022).

Environmental factors can be seen the most clearly in the weather and climate which varies greatly in Finland based on the season. This can even make the customer segments change based on the season, as the activities availabilities vary. It is also very hard to determine beforehand, as the temperatures in each month can differ yearly as well, making it important to prepare the activities and services to fit all the possible weather conditions, as well as market them properly with each season in mind. Environmentally it is also preferable to amount for sustainability and climate change, as a sustainable service may be a dealbreaker for some tourists, and the purchase choices may even depend on having environmental certificates for example. In fact, over half of the tourists would feel better about staying in an accommodation if they had a sustainability certificate, and over 70% of tourists studied by Booking.com plan to make more effort to travel sustainably. (Booking.com, 2022, p. 4-5.) This also applies to using more sustainable transportation, such as public transport instead of rental cars and taxis, which is perhaps a downside of this with the commissioner company in mind, which

otherwise is great for sustainable nature tourism, but requires one or the other for reaching usually.

7.2 Microenvironmental analysis

The microenvironment analysis will consider the target markets, the current customers, as well as the competitions offering. Analyzing their current situation can help in determining any gaps that might need to be considered to improve business operations.

To correctly target the products towards the chosen market it is necessary to study the consumer behavior in this case. As the targeted market is geographical it is harder to market toward them all by branding but raising visibility in their respective countries in the Central European region would be beneficial. For this studying their travel behavior is important to note what do they look for when traveling, and where do they look for it. Analyzing the current consumer behavior of the target markets to see how well their needs and demands match the company offering, as well as to determine how best to penetrate the markets. Additionally, the current customers of the commissioner company should be considered, as the value proposition stays mostly the same for the international markets as well, the current customers satisfaction is likely to somewhat reflect the target markets as well.

7.2.1 Germany

In recent years as of 2022 German tourists have been the most traveled market within the Central Europe region when it comes to overnight stays in Finland (Tilastokeskus, 2021). This makes them an ideal market to target, as there are already many German tourists, they only need to be attracted. As with any market, their consumer and purchase behaviors are unique to them and to target them properly they need to be understood.

German travelers are often likely to plan their trips well in advance and spend plenty of time in deciding each part of their trip. This applies to booking accommodation as well, which means being the most visible option isn't enough, but being the best one is just as important. Additionally German travelers often book holiday packages, which simplify the decision making for them, and many utilize travel agencies and tour operators as well. (Koptyug, 2022.) This means that being known by travel agencies will definitely be an advantage and selling holiday packages to either the travel agencies or the individual travelers will increase attractiveness and make purchase easier. The holiday packages can for example include all-inclusive accommodation, transport, multiple nights at a discounted price, or additional services such as the sauna and outdoor activities. For the segment that books their own accommodation and trips, the most used websites in order are Booking.com, Airbnb, Hometogo, Fewo-direkt, and Trivago (SimilarWeb, 2022). Out of these the commissioner company is visible on Booking, Trivago, and Hometogo, which leaves Airbnb and Fewo-direkt, which are more popular for individual room rentals, but include others as well. Fewo-direkt specifically caters to the German audience, and as a part of the Expedia Group it brings visibility globally as well (Fewo-direkt, 2022).

Majority of German tourists choose to stay in hotels during their vacations, and the most important criteria when selecting a hotel accommodation is the size of the breakfast buffet, which needs to be marketed as well to inform them of it. Many Germans read online reviews and trust other guests' recommendations, which brings out the importance of customer satisfaction. Other important criteria for many include seaside, or pool access, which for many can surely be substituted by the lake. Additionally, it is important for many to have information and services available in their own language. Food-wise they appreciate healthy local cuisine, again, preferably with the menu in German. Although cultural and historical travel is the most popular among Germans, a substantial amount enjoys bicycling in the nature and water related activities as well. (PXcom, 2022.) According to a Swedish study about German tourist behavior there, a survey revealed that right after culture, hiking and other nature experiences are the most popular leisure activity, after which comes travelling around Sweden, and overall, the first six most preferred ones involving

nature activities (Zillinger et al., 2018, p. 23). As Finland and Sweden are rather similar for their tourist attractions, it can be estimated that the tourists' interests are likely similar as well, making the commissioner company's services inviting for the tourists with the proximity of nature. Although, if traveling around Finland is preferred instead of staying in place for long a few nights stay is likely enough for many, which could be considered with holiday packages.

7.2.2 France

Not only are the French the second most visited Central European nationality in Finland (Tilastokeskus, 2021), but their travel motivations align well with the commissioner company's offering, making them a likely profitable target audience. This is because French tourists as of 2021 furthestmost seek nature and outdoor experiences in their travels. Additionally for French travel trends they tend to prefer independent hotels, as their number one accommodation choice, as opposed to hotel chains or other accommodation options. (Kabanoff, 2021.) The French also gain the second most paid days off from work worldwide, with the annual leave and public holidays combined, which means that they have one of the best means for longer vacation trips, making them a great investment (Buchholz, 2022).

Many French people prefer booking package holidays for simplicity, but this preference is more prevalent with older generations while the younger prefers organizing their own trips, so they may have more variation and freedom for the destinations and activities. As with many other nationalities, most French tourists tend to be in the babyboomer generation (GlobalData, 2018), which is still more likely to organize their own holidays rather than using a package holiday. (Hillaireau & Khiati, 2017, p. 1.) For a destination such as the commissioner's company the ideal segment may fall right in the same babyboomer generation, or slightly younger, whom will have the correct motivations for a vacation partaking in outdoor activities in the region, while still having the money for the accommodation and transport expenses. Although with the generations ranging 50 and younger the preference for organizing one's own trips is prevalent (Hillaireau & Khiati, 2017, p. 4), the French could benefit from the same type of holiday package of a few days, as the Germans.

By lasting for only a few days the tourists will have the opportunity to continue their holiday elsewhere to see and experience more as they prefer, while having the ease of the accommodation package including other services which could make their stay easier.

As with Germany, Booking and Airbnb rank among the most used accommodation purchase channels, with the additions of Gites, Abritel, and Accor to create the top five (SimilarWeb, 2022). Gites would not necessarily be a good fit for the commissioner's offering as it is not suitable for hotel marketing, although it could be used for example the lakeside cabins or the mansion rooms. Overall, it is used extremely little in Finland, which could be an advantage for visibility among the French but could also be difficult to manage and waste more resources than it is worth. Abritel is available only in French, which makes managing the listings there difficult, perhaps why there are very few listings in Finland, but overall, it is for private listings only, making it unsuitable, or at least hard to adapt to, for the commissioner. Lastly Accor does not offer listings in Finland and is only offering hotel chains accommodation. Therefore, currently the commissioner's offering is only available on one of the top five French accommodation searching sites, but it is the most used one, while two of the other ones could be a new opportunity.

7.2.3 Customer satisfaction

Evaluating the current customer satisfaction will be done via examining online review sites. The reasoning for it is to determine any flaws that they may have found, to help address to raise the overall level of service and offering to better attract more customers and new markets. Out of the three review channels examined, all have granted the commissioner company very high ratings of 5/5 on Facebook, 4,5/5 on Google, and 8,7/10 on Booking. For many this could be enough of a selling point, but others examine the written reviews more. From the written reviews the following analysis is created, as there are many reviews, and singular people may experience things differently from others, the analysis only considers issues that have been expressed multiple times, and due to the company being new and evolving, only considering the reviews left within the past year, as the situation from even two years

ago has changed greatly. The issues are evaluated by a matrix as shown in figure 3, to evaluate the likeliness of it affecting potential guests purchase decisions, as well as how difficult would it be to fix these issues. If the impact could be high, or it could be easily fixed, it would be preferable to solve these issues, if it is a minor issue that is more difficult to solve, it is of less importance.

From this matrix we can observe that the most influential issues that may be difficult to fix have to do with renovations. This is both the landscaping of the yard area, as well as renovating the indoors of some of the facilities which are yet to fit with the otherwise freshly renovated and furnished buildings. This is a very time-consuming effort though, which means that not all will be finished at once, and while they are being done it may cause more distress toward guests. Therefore, finishing renovations in the off season to cause as little disturbance as possible will cause the overall renovation period to take more time. Although this may cause some dissatisfaction in some parts of the service, it is essential to otherwise provide superior service, and aside from some aesthetic issues, to attempt to minimize any disturbances due to noise or service quality. Most of the issues established by the customers are rather small though, and although they do not prove much threat to the potential customers, they would be easy to fix, to increase customer satisfaction upon visitation, which is why none of the issues stated fits in the 'ignore' category. The issues listed that would be rather easy to fix and are something that could largely influence the purchase decision are the restaurant opening times, and the lack of rental row boats. The restaurant opening times may be very important for customers arriving without their own car, as especially on a multiple day stay, they may require restaurant services multiple times a day, while the lack of row boats may sound like a minor issue, but when reading it as a larger gap in rental equipment as opposed to the competitors it can largely push the customers towards the competitors. But altogether there are very few improvement suggestions from the customers, and ultimately the feedback is overwhelmingly positive, which shows how the company is delivering superior value to the target markets, but even so there will always be something to improve.

It is important to note that majority of the previous guests have been domestic travelers, which means that their experiences and wishes may vary from the target market and evaluating the new markets satisfaction will be necessary separately from the domestic markets to understand their wants and needs better. Despite this, studying the customer satisfaction of the domestic markets can still be beneficial from the international market development standpoint as well for understanding more generally what the service is lacking, and what is it excelling in. It is important to remember that these reviews can also be read by other potential guests, especially as many services automatically translates them, so they can impact other consumers purchase decisions.

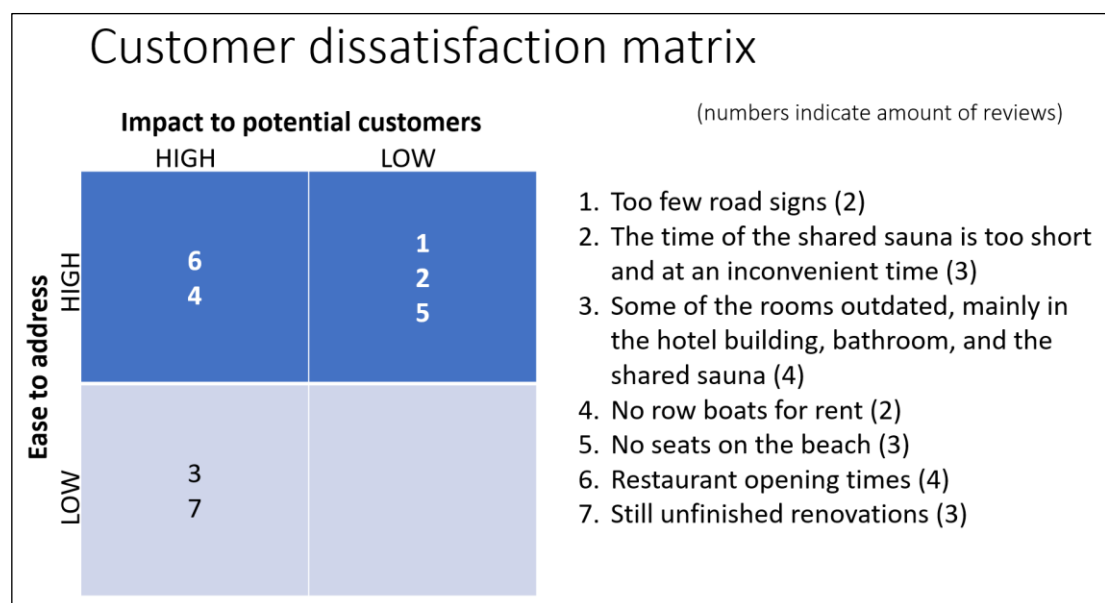


Figure 3 Based on Booking, 2022, Google, 2022, and Facebook, 2022.

7.2.4 Competitor analysis

The competitor analysis is very important in order to compare the marketing efforts, as well as the products and services offered by the company (Entrepreneur, 2020). This is done using the same marketing mix of the four P's as was used in the internal analysis.

Although there are competitors not only in the general region, but also countrywide and further, the focus will be on some of the most direct competitors in the area with a similar value proposition and analyzing their marketing mix. This is to find

competitive advantages on either the competitor's side, or the commissioner's side, to determine growth opportunities when compared with the commissioner's own marketing mix. The marketing mix summaries for each of the competitors and the commissioner company can be seen in figure 7 for comparison.

7.2.4.1 Tykkimäki Resort

The first competitor is Tykkimäki Resort, which is operated by the Tykkimäki amusement park in Kouvola and is situated right next to the Tykkimäki water park. The value proposition is somewhat like the commissioner's with lakeside accommodation, natural beauty, and outdoor experiences as some of the main drivers, with the exception of it being the only non-family-operated company compared in this thesis. (Tykkimäki Resort, 2022.) Aside from the accommodation services the value proposition includes the whole Tykkimäki brand, which is very hard to compete with as such, but it can also work as a disadvantage for the Tykkimäki Resort for the travelers who prefer their own space and silence and would prefer not to stay next to an amusement park which may be rather loud and lively at times. Therefore, the commissioner does have a competitive chance in some ways and the marketing mix analysis, and their comparison will study the offering more thoroughly to understand how.

Product: Tykkimäki Resort offers accommodation in different forms such as, bungalows for families, glamping in huts, traditional cottages, villas, as well as a camping ground. In addition to the accommodation, they are offering different packages for meetings, as well as rental facilities for different events. They are also offering different activities for all times of year, such as cycling, canoeing, or snowshoeing, many activities are offered guided for groups, and the equipment can also be rented for private use, they are all offered by a third-party operator from the resort grounds, Saimaan Palju. The restaurant in the area operates daily for breakfast, as well as a 'la carte at least in the summer season. The guests can include breakfast in their stay for a discounted price, but it is not always included in the stay. The resort is very modern looking as it was opened in 2022 and everything in it is rather

new, and even the older parts which have been available for longer have been renovated and refurbished. In addition to the services that they directly offer the surrounding area is very activity rich, and especially in the summertime public transport allows easy transport to and from the resort grounds. Additionally, as mentioned, the brand includes the well-established Tykkimäki reputation, and all the other offerings of Tykkimäki, of which if the guests are interested in, the destination would likely be ideal. The Tykkimäki attractions make the offering very family friendly, and attractive for children, while the different more luxurious accommodation options may be more appealing for couples. (Tykkimäki Resort, 2022.)

Price: The accommodation and sauna prices are as stated in figure 4. Mostly they are set prices and include only the accommodation, with the public area usage included, such as the beach and public bathrooms. Breakfast price for adults is 12 euros for guests, and 15 euros for others, and for children ages 3-15 the price is 7 euros. Equipment rentals are prices as 15-40 euros for the first hour, depending on the equipment at hand. While the meeting packages are priced between 39.5-166 euros per person for a minimum of six 1people, and include a guided activity, use of meeting facilities, and different levels of catering based on the price. Additionally, the á la carte menu prices are very typical for a mid-level restaurant in Finland, with no dish going above thirty euros, but no adult size main course costing less than fifteen. (Tykkimäki Resort, 2022.)

| Tykkimäki Resort prices | | | | Accommodation | 1 night | 2 nights | A week | Max occupants |
|-------------------------------|-----------|------------|--------------|---------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|--------------------------------------|
| | | | | Villa | 1052 € | 1590 € | 4164 € | 13 |
| Family bungalow | 620 € | 726 € | 1572€ | 6 | | | | |
| Holiday cottage - 1 bedroom | 515 € | 516 € | 942 € | 4 | | | | |
| Holiday cottage - 2 bedrooms | 546 € | 578 € | 1128 € | 6 | | | | |
| Sauna | Rent / 2h | Extra hour | Max visitors | Glamping Laawu | 205 € | 368 € | 1104 € | 2 |
| Panoramic sauna with Drop spa | 250 € | 50 € | 8 | Minicottage Queen | 111 € | 178 € | 534 € | 2 |
| Panoramic sauna | 150 € | 50 € | 8 | Mini cottage Family | 132 € | 222 € | 666 € | 4 |
| Beach sauna with smoke sauna | 250 € | 50 € | 12 | Tent | From 24 € | From 48 € | From 120 € | Adults 7€/night Children 4€/night |
| Beach sauna | 150 € | 50 € | 12 | Caravan | From 29 € | From 58 € | From 144 € | Adults 7€/night Children 4€/night |
| Half of the beach sauna | 100 € | 50 € | 6 | | | | | |

Figure 4 Adapted from Tykkimäki Resort, 2022.

Promotion: Tykkimäki Resort has the promotional advantage of being a part of the brand of one of the biggest attractions in the region. Naturally as such it is very easy to find information about when searching for accommodation in the area, as it is prominent on the regions DMO websites, as well as the Tykkimäki website. As of 2022 the resort is newly opened, and as such is widely promoted on the news, such as Kouvola Sanomat and Yle, but therefore it is difficult to state how much promotion it will continue to have after it has been around for a while longer. As it includes the camping site and services, it is also advertised on camping sites such as Leirintäopas. Although, most of these work as promotion for mainly the domestic tourists, the main promoter for international tourists will be the Tykkimäki website, and the DMO Visit Kouvola's website. Their TripAdvisor site could work as promotion in the future, but as of the beginning of August 2022, it only has the promotional text in Finnish.

Place: The Tykkimäki Resort website is the main site for finding information about the services, and as such the booking channels for them, as not all the services are available from the same channels. The accommodation services are as of August 2022 only sold on Profit Room, which is accessible through a link on the resort's website. Additionally, bookings can be made by email, but as they are not offering their accommodation services on websites such as Booking or Hotels, they also are

not visible on sites such as Trivago. This may change in the future as the resort settles after their first summer in business though, but until then it is a clear disadvantage for their visibility.

7.2.4.2 Yli-Kaitala Resort

The second competitor is the Yli-Kaitala Resort, which is more closely related to the commissioner's offering as a family-run business located in Iitti, with strong values in the surrounding nature.

Product: The main product being sold is the accommodation, which is available in the form of cottages, rooms, and huts. All the rooms in a small hotel building are made to fit three people overall, while the hut offers room for two, and the cottages vary from four to sixteen. The hotel rooms and the hut are available for one-night stays, but all the cottages require at least two nights. The facilities are all in the proximity of the lake, with a clear view of it, with many having direct access from the front door to it, and the hut being directly in the lake. All the cottages and the hut include a private sauna and a fireplace, while the hotel has a rentable sauna. All accommodation also includes private bathroom and kitchen equipment, as well as usage of the rowing boats.

Their services also include hosting meetings and renting facilities, rentable saunas and hot tubs, as well as a private restaurant either for rent, for breakfast by additional price, or for order into the cottages. The activities offered include nature activities all the guests can do on their own, such as using the included rowboat, or renting a wide variety of equipment for any time of year. Additionally, the resort hosts different excursions that can be purchased with, or without accommodation.

The facilities are situated 22 kilometers away from the Kausala train station, and 44 kilometers away from the Kouvola station, from these there are no public transport, so own car or a taxi is required. Most of the facilities are rather similarly styled from the outside, all being wooden buildings, with the glass hut as an exception. The color

schemes for the most part are similar with the log cabins all being the same shade, but the wooden plank buildings having some variation. The most unique facilities are the glass hut, as well as a moss sauna, which is somewhat hidden in the surrounding nature with the outdoors of it covered in moss. From the indoors, all the cottages are neat, with most of them looking very balanced, but in the authors opinion there is some clashing of the furniture in some, such as their Katajarinne cottage, in which the modern kitchen does not fit the old kitchen table and chairs, which are admittedly typical of a Finnish cottage furniture, but would fit better in some of the cottages with a less modern kitchen. Overall, most of the accommodation look inviting, some even luxurious, and the sauna buildings look very standard as well, with the moss sauna offering an experience, with special lighting and karaoke, and the hot tubs adding a bit of luxury. (Yli-Kaitala, 2022.)

Price: The prices for the main offering, which is the accommodation, vary based on the room, as well as the time. As seen in figure 5, the only accommodations available for one-night stays are the hotel rooms and the hut. The figure also shows how the weekly prices go from the hundreds, into thousands, showing the large variety of accommodation available, as well as the sauna prices, which is 190 euros per hour at the lowest. Some cottages have a small indoor hot tub but starting from 140 euros it is also possible to rent an outdoor hot tub for a day, which will be delivered outside the cottage. Additionally, they have an outdoor grilling hut available for ten euros per hour.

For meetings there are different packages, starting from 39 euros per person, but by inquiry and for a higher price, there are other options, such as ones including helicopter or limousine transportation. Their restaurant offers breakfast for twelve euros per person, and other services such as food delivery to the cottages by pre-order or inquiry. Their activities vary greatly in price, and there is a wide variety of rentable equipment available. For example, renting a canoe would be 10 euros, and a stand-up paddling board 15 for three hours, while renting a bike is seven euros, and a kayak is 35 euros for a whole day.

*prices fluctuate, the listed prices are only the cheapest for 2022, but may vary

| Yli-Kaitala Resort Prices | | | | Accommodation | 1 night | 2 nights | Week | Bedrooms | Max occupants |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------------|------------|------|-----------------------|-----------|--------------|--------|------------|---------------|
| | | | | Sauna | Rent / 3h | Extra people | People | Hotel room | 85 € |
| Moss sauna | 590 € | 35 € / pax | 15 | Säveltupa cottage | - | 235 € | 575 € | 1 | 2+2 |
| Kettu sauna | 190 € | 10 € / pax | 15 | Hut accommodation | 230 € | 390 € | 800 € | 1 | 2 |
| Hot tub | 210 € | 10 € | 15 | Mäntytupa cottage | - | 380 € | 806 € | 1 | 4+2 |
| Kettu sauna + hot tub | 400 € | 20 € | 15 | Kotomökki cottage | - | - | 877 € | 1 | 4+2 |
| Mobile hot tub | 140-160 € / day 210-230 € / weekend | - | 4-10 | Katajarinne cottage | - | - | 1043 € | 1 | 4+1 |
| | | | | Kurkilinna cottage | - | 490 € | 1065 € | 3 | 8+5 |
| | | | | Isokoskelo cottage | - | 480 € | 1301 € | 2 | 6+2 |
| | | | | Beach cottages | - | 540 € | 1566 € | 1 | 7+4 |
| | | | | Joutsenlampi cottage | - | 660 € | 1599 € | 3 | 8+6 |
| | | | | Honkalinna cottage | - | 750 € | 1637 € | 5 | 10+6 |
| | | | | Auringonsilta cottage | - | 700 € | 2070 € | 4 | 8+7 |

Figure 5 Based on Yli-Kaitala, 2022

Promotion: For each of the cottages and the facilities and activities overall they have many videos displaying their offering. These are available on their website, Youtube, Facebook, as well as a promotional video on the Visit Kouvola site. Like the competition, their offer is also visible on the regional DMO's sites, namely Visit Iitti, Visit Lahti, and Visit Kouvola. Their services are also advertised on Trip Advisor, and as with all the other pre-mentioned channels the information is available in both English and Finnish.

Place: The purchase places of the Yli-Kaitala Resort include Agoda, A-hotel, FindHotel, as well as Booking, but although there is all the information about the resort on them, it appears that all of the lodging options are only available on a two-week radius as of August 2022, meaning booking their services long beforehand is unavailable from these channels. From the Visit Lahti website, it is also possible to book some of the cottages. Additionally, all the accommodation services may be booked on their website, but all other services need to be inquired about by either calling, by email, or by the inquiry form on their website.

7.2.4.3 Aurantola

The third competitor whose marketing mix will be analyzed is Aurantola, another family-run company operating in Kouvola. It is located further from the city center from the others, but the value proposition is yet again, very similar, and their offering is valuable to compare with despite the distance.

Product: The main product being sold, as with the others, is the accommodation, which comes in the form of hotel rooms located in a manor, different size cottages, or a similar glass hut as the Yli-Kaitala Resort has. The hotel rooms are in the mainland, while the cottages are on an island accessible by a bridge, and the hut floating directly on the lake. The interiors of all except the hut are very similar, with a lot of plain wooden furniture, perhaps a bit outdated, but matching the wooden floors and walls, and advertised on their website as “resembling grandma’s attic”. The hut on the other hand is very modernly furnished yet with a comfortable atmosphere. Their facilities are located around 40 kilometers from the center of Kouvola. They also have a camping site where guests can either travel to with caravans or stay in a sleeping shed. Different from the other accommodation options, the camping site has a common bathroom. In addition to accommodation, they offer sauna, meeting, and event services, and the camping site has a public cooking and grilling area. Differing from the other competitors their meeting packages only include things such as the facilities, catering, and sauna, but all activities that can be arranged to be included are hosted by their partners. They are not offering any excursions or other activities directly, but they are renting equipment such as canoes and stand-up paddle boards. They also have free bikes for borrowing, as well as outdoor games such as beach volleyball, and the cottage accommodations come with a rowing boat. For the main part the activities advertised are summer activities, and they do not offer rentals for the winter season, although accommodation is still available then. (Aurantola, 2022.)

Price: The prices listed for the different accommodation options can be seen in figure 6, as well as the sauna prices. The cheapest one-night accommodation is starting from 15 euros per person for the sleeping sheds, and 70 euros for the cheapest rooms and cottages, while the most expensive cottage is 100 euros. All the

other prices are set, but the hut accommodation prices start from 220 euros and can go up based on the season and demand. (Aurantola, 2022.) The hut accommodation and hotel room prices include breakfast, but only the hut includes use of the lakeside sauna for no extra charge, as well as snowshoes and stand-up paddle boards (Visit Finland, 2022). As the cottage accommodation does not include breakfast it may be purchased for example via Booking.com while reserving the accommodation for the price of eight euros per person.

Aurantola Prices

*The listed prices are only the cheapest for 2022, but may vary

| Accommodation | 1 nights | Max occupants |
|------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| AuroraHut Aurantola | 220 € | 2 |
| Rooms | 70 € | 2 |
| Bridal suite / Room Six | 80 € | 2 |
| Cottage One, Eight | 70 € | 2 +2 |
| Cottage Two-Seven, Nine, Ten | 100 € | 6 + 2 |
| Sleeping shed | 15 € / person | 2 -4 |
| Caravan | 20 € | - |
| Sauna | Cost / hour | Max occupants |
| | 25 € | 5 |
| | 50 € | 10 |

Figure 6, Based on Aurantola, 2022

Promotion: The promotion channels of Aurantola include the Visit Kouvola site, as the other competitors do, but in addition they also have an advertisement on the national Visit Finland site, mainly advertising the hut accommodation, but also bringing light onto their other offerings. In addition to the DMO's, they are listed on TripAdvisor, but its function is to mainly get reviews, as it does not offer much information other than pictures. Their own website is useful for information, although slightly hard to navigate, while their Facebook is updated regularly, but it is only posted on in Finnish.

Place: The purchase places for Aurantola’s accommodation, other than their own website include Booking, A-hotel, and Agoda. The other services are booked, and queries are sent via their homepage inquiry box.

7.3 Marketing mixes for comparison

For an easier comparison of the marketing mixes of the commissioner company and their competitors they are all listed in this chapter. As the marketing mixes are only summarized in figure 7, the full text and analysis to each company can be found in the earlier chapters.

This figure can be used by the commissioner as such to compare their offering to the competitors, but it is also referred to in the SWOT analysis and the conclusions. As many of the development propositions have to do with competitor analysis and comparison between them, the summary is especially useful to quickly consider the strengths, weaknesses, and growth opportunities for the company

| Commissioner company | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Product | Price | Promotion | Place |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation in hotel rooms, manor house, or lakeside cabins • Facilities for meetings and events, as well as meeting packages • Three different saunas: hut sauna, modern cellar sauna, and a more standard beach sauna • Other than booking the sauna there is a common sauna time 16-18 at the beach sauna • Good means for nature activities • Third party organization provides SUP board rentals in the summer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hotel rooms from 103 euros • Manor rooms from 135 euros • Cabins from 240 euros • Beach sauna 150 euros for 3 hours • Cellar sauna 150 euros for 2 hours • Sauna and barbecue hut 200 euros for 3 hours • Meeting packages starting from 33 euros per person • SUP-board for 15 euros for the first hour, 10 for additional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visible on local DMO’s: Visit Kouvola, Visit Iitti, and Visit Lahti, both in English and Finnish • TripAdvisor, but the promotional text is only in Finnish • Local newspapers, but again only in Finnish • Marketing communication focuses on the nature activities • Own website has plenty of information in both Finnish and English | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Available for purchase through Booking, and as such also visible on third party sites such as Trivago • Their own website links to Hotellinx, where a booking can be made • Other services than accommodation can only be purchased through inquiry, and the commissioner’s homepage also has information on the partnered businesses for booking, such as the fishing trip organizers |

| Tykkimäki Resort | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Product | Price | Promotion | Place |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accommodation in bungalows, glamping huts, cottages and villas Camping ground Very modern Sauna options: panoramic, smoke, or beach Many activities and equipment rentals from a third party for all seasons Restaurant daily breakfast Tykkimäki brand Family friendly | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accommodation starting from 111€ (2 person cottage) to 1052€ (13 person villa) per night Breakfast 12€ for guests, 15€ otherwise 2 hour sauna rental 100 € to 250 € A 'la carte dishes 15-30€ Equipment rental 15-40€ per hour Meeting packages 39,5-166€ per person | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoted with other Tykkimäki products As a new destination many adverts and information on newspapers Mainly targeting domestic tourists, by mainly promoting on Finnish platforms in the Finnish language International information on Tykkimäki website, their own website, and Visit Kouvola site | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accommodation booking only available through the Tykkimäki Resort website Link to the equipment rental third party company from the resort website as well Restaurant bookings and meeting enquiries by email |

| Yli-Kaitala Resort | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Product | Price | Promotion | Place |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accommodation in cottages, rooms, and a glass hut on the lake Cottage and hut have a private sauna Free use of rowing boats Rentable equipment, and hosted excursions Hot tubs Special moss sauna for rent in addition to a more traditional sauna Meeting services and rentable facilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accommodation for a week 575 – 2070 € Cheapest night 85 € Sauna 190 – 590 € for 3 hours Hot tub 210 € / 3h Mobile hot tub from 140 € per day Grilling hut 10 € /h Equipment rentals vary, for example canoe for 3 hours is 10 € Meeting services from 39 € / person | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Video advertising on YouTube, Facebook, and Visit Kouvola websites Regional DMO's websites; Visit Iitti, Lahti, and Kouvola TripAdvisor All of the mentioned promotion channels include both English and Finnish advertisements Their own website is the most useful for overall information about all services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agoda, FindHotel, Booking; Only available on a two week radius Some cottages available for purchase on the Visit Lahti website Own website for bookings and inquiries The activities and meeting services may be purchased by calling, emailing, or by the inquiry form on their website |

| Aurantola | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Product | Price | Promotion | Place |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accommodation in a manor, cottages, a glass hut, sleeping shed, or caravan area Rooms for 2 people, cottages for up to 8 Meeting services Renting equipment like canoes and SUP-boards Free bikes and games to borrow No winter activities or equipment except for snowshoes at the hut | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sleeping shed 15 euros per person Rooms and cottages 70-100 euros Other prices are set but hut price varies starting from 220 euros Hut and rooms include breakfast Hut price includes lakeside sauna Sauna price 25 euros for five people, 50 for ten | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visit Finland and Visit Kouvola, both in Finnish and English TripAdvisor, but only for reviews and pictures, no information Own website for information, but hard to navigate, available in Finnish, English, and Russian Facebook updated regularly but only in Finnish | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accommodation can be purchased on their website, Booking, A-hotel, or Agoda Other services only bookable through inquiries through their webpage |

Figure 7, Marketing mix comparison

8 COMPANY SWOT ANALYSIS

As mentioned, the SWOT analysis includes both internal and external factors, and as so it includes factors from both and thus comes after them in this thesis as well. The strengths and weaknesses represent the internal factors, and the threats and opportunities the external ones. Together they can show the core environment around the company. The SWOT analysis is based on comparing between the competitor's offerings, and the customer satisfaction levels, which are more thoroughly explained in the external analysis parts. For the sake of this thesis the SWOT analysis will be examined from the standpoint of the target markets, and therefore whereas some parts would perform excellently domestically, internationally they may be lacking. The importance of each part is also calculated as for the target market. The purpose of the swot analysis is to help the commissioner determine their marketing situation and is attempted to be purely from the potential standpoint of the target market. Figure 8 also shows the process of determining the major strengths and weaknesses, with also regards to the more minor ones not included in the end result SWOT analysis shown in figure 9.

The main strengths are the excellent reputation gained from highly satisfied customers and good quality products and service offered, as can be deduced from the customer satisfaction study. The resort is well promoted in the area, and it is difficult to not hear about when researching accommodation, especially in the proximity of outdoor activities and nature. The employees and owners dedicated to the success of the company are also an important factor in creating the best possible value for the customers, and the new possible customers will be sure to know this from the overly positive reviews. Lastly, the proximity of nature is still a strength, although many of the main competitors share this, but the commissioner is still well able to compete with this paired with their other strengths.

The weaknesses on the other hand come from the competitor comparison for the most part. The pricing of the products is slightly on the higher end, as can be seen by comparing the prices to the competition. Although they are not extremely high, it is a

slight disadvantage as the competitors tend to have more options for different budgets. This also affects the competitiveness of the facilities, which offer accommodation room for many, but the different options in accommodation are less when compared. Additionally, many of the competitors include innovative accommodation options that only they offer in the region, which the commissioner company lacks. Another weakness which many tourists traveling for nature activities may find important is the difference in equipment rental available as opposed to some of the competitors.

The opportunities for the commissioner are using new marketing channels, that the competition is not using, to specifically target the new target markets, and become their number one option by increasing visibility. The company's offering has already been recently expanded in 2022, but as some of the competitors especially are also not standing still and they are constantly improving it would be beneficial to also do the same, and perhaps use some of the competitions offerings as improvement ideas to better match their competitive advantage, and perhaps even go above it eventually. This could be in attempting to create an innovative accommodation option or other pull factor that would make the company and its offering stand out more, or even just matching the activity opportunities of the competition better. The company is offering sup-board rentals from a third party already in the summer of 2022, and some of the competitors are also using third party equipment rental services, so perhaps this could be an opportunity to match them better and expand their offering as well. Another opportunity comes from the exceptionally positive customer feedback and satisfaction, which creates the opportunity to further encourage the customers to share their experiences to help market the offering.

The threats as the last part of the SWOT analysis mirror the opportunities in such a way that just as the commissioner may expand their offering, the competition may do the same. As the Tykkimäki Resort for example is rather new, they are likely to be currently in the stage of testing their offering, and likely to expand or modify it even quickly, as well as the other competitors as well, with a new powerful actor emerging in the market they are likely to be looking for differentiation possibilities, new markets to penetrate, or other ways to gain a larger market share. As previously

discussed, the current consumer trends can also prove to be a threat, although the commissioner's offering can be considered sustainable tourism in many ways, an increasing number of tourists are being stricter with their purchase decisions and may even demand sustainability certificates from their accommodation. Additionally were the trend kick off even further, more people may be only traveling to destinations which they do not need to use a taxi or own car, which could create difficulty for the commissioner with no public transport leading there, as well as were people start preferring train travel much more to airplanes, tourists from the target markets may prefer locations in the Central Europe location as well, which is much easier to reach by train. Although it may be unlikely for all this to completely abolish tourism, it is especially important to market the sustainable parts of the offering, which may make up for the less sustainable parts. Lastly it is also important to note in this part the issues pointed out in the macroenvironmental analysis, with the issues regarding the Russia-Ukraine war in Europe in 2022.

| Checklist for performing strenghts/weaknesses analysis | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|---------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|--------|-----|
| Marketing | Performance | | | | | Importance | | |
| | Major strength | Minor strength | Neutral | Minor weakness | Major weakness | High | Medium | Low |
| 1. Company reputation | | X | | | | X | | |
| 2. Market share | | | X | | | | | X |
| 3. Customer satisfaction | X | | | | | X | | |
| 4. Customer retention | | | X | | | | X | |
| 5. Product quality | | X | | | | X | | |
| 6. Service quality | X | | | | | | X | |
| 7. Pricing effectiveness | | | | X | | | X | |
| 8. Distribution effectiveness | | | X | | | | X | |
| 9. Promotion effectiveness | | X | | | | | X | |
| 10. Sales force effectiveness | | | X | | | | X | |
| 11. Innovation effectiveness | | | | X | | | X | |
| 12. Geographical coverage | | | X | | | | X | |
| Finance | | | | | | | | |
| 13. Cost of availability of capital | | | X | | | | | X |
| 14. Cash flow | | | X | | | | | X |
| 15. Financial stability | | | X | | | | X | |
| Manufacturing | | | | | | | | |
| 16. Facilities | | | | X | | X | | |
| 17. Economies of scale | | | X | | | | X | |
| 18. Capacity | | | | | | | | |
| 19. Able, dedicated workforce | | X | | | | | X | |
| 20. Ability to produce on time | | | X | | | | X | |
| 21. Technical manufacturing skill | | | X | | | | | X |
| Organization | | | | | | | | |
| 22. Visionary, capable leadership | | X | | | | | X | |
| 23. Dedicated employees | X | | | | | X | | |
| 24. Entrepreneurial orientation | | X | | | | | | X |
| 25. Flexible or responsive | | X | | | | X | | |

Figure 8, Checklist for strengths and weaknesses based on the previous analyses

| Company SWOT analysis | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good reputation • Satisfied customers • Good quality • Well promoted • Employee dedication • Nature | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pricing • Current distribution effectiveness • Lack of innovation • Facilities • Equipment |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New marketing channels and better distribution effectiveness • Expansion of offering • Use customers as brand ambassadors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competitors expand business • Consumer trends, proof of sustainability, no planes or taxis • Proximity to Russia |

Figure 9, Company SWOT analysis based on the previously conducted analyses

9 CONCLUSIONS AND DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

This bachelor's thesis has studied the marketing situation of Radalla Resort and analyzed the marketing environment in its different forms. The conclusions from this thesis will be explained by listing the most notable points acquired from the different analyses, as well as by proposing different ways to respond to some of the shortcomings and threats detected from the standpoint of international market development.

The sub question presented "What is the marketing environment like?" is answered in this thesis through multiple analyses considering both the internal and external marketing environments. The most important factors to do with this arise when comparing the commissioner's offering to the analyzed competitions. Although they

match very well in some regards, there are some clear disadvantages, such as the accommodation sizes being a very standard two person for all accommodation options, lacking variety. Although this may be ideal for couples, for small groups and families the favor may go to the other accommodation providers where extra beds are not needed. Another clear disadvantage is with the equipment available for either rent or loan, which is clearly less as opposed to many of the competitors. Some of the competitors are using third-party equipment rental services, quite like the commissioner is, but while the commissioner is only renting stand up paddling boards in such a way, the competitors have a variety of different options. The amount of equipment available may be a defining factor especially for tourists who plan to stay a longer time and partake in many outdoor activities.

Outside of Booking.com, which is a very universal accommodation booking site, the commissioner is not selling their offering on many of the most used channels by the target markets, which neither are the competitors, but using more targeted marketing as opposed to the competition may help create a niche in the area for the target markets. Though, out of the marketing sites that the competitors are using, the commissioner is not visible on A-hotel nor Agoda as of August 2022, which although are not the most used sites by the target markets, are still internationally used. Marketing-wise though, the commissioner is doing excellently with the Finnish customer segments, but with international visitors in mind there needs to be more of an effort in attracting them, as within an area not well known as an international tourist destination the tourists need to be well informed and persuaded to visit.

Additionally, to the sub question regarding the marketing environment, the macroenvironment is not directly under the commissioner company's, or any company's control, they may be very difficult to respond to, but as there are many factors in 2022 causing uncertainty, it is especially important to keep track of the situation and plan accordingly. Due to the inflation rates for example mid-range tourists may prefer to use more budget friendly accommodation options than before, while political unrest and war may push tourists further away, making it especially important to attract the segment that travels despite this, although the amount may be fewer, making the competition to gain their patronage tougher. Some of the

macroenvironmental factors, such as the weather and climate though may be much easier to respond to, by ensuring the value proposition and offering is attractive enough no matter what season it is.

More specifically when studying the suitability of the commissioner's offering to the target markets there is definite potential in attracting them with the offering, as especially the German tourists have a strong interest in nature tourism. Especially the younger generations of both nationalities are very independent and prefer to book and plan on their own, but as the older generations have a preference for holiday packages the author would suggest creating premade packages, sold or advertised on the commissioner's website, lasting a few days, with some activities or equipment included, the accommodation paid for, as well as perhaps some meals or transportation. This can combine both the younger generations want to not stay in one place too long and to be able to book everything independently, as well as the older generations want to have things a bit simpler for them by having a prepackaged deal.

Therefore, to answer the main research question of "How could the commissioner company increase their marketing and visibility toward the target markets?" the main development propositions are to invest on more international marketing, for example by contacting travel agencies within the target markets region, or even just using the channels they are known to use for selling, or at least sharing the offering. It is also important to remember that using the target markets national language when possible is a good way to catch their attention, as well as trying to move the value proposition into a more international direction, such as marketing the traditional Finnish summer experience with sauna, the lake, barbecue, and summer games.

Investing on the equipment available is also preferable, for example games such as volleyball, darts, and M \ddot{o} lkky are a rather cheap investment but help ensure that the customers do not run out of activities. While equipment such as kayaks, snowshoes, and motorboats are more expensive investments, having them available either by a third-party service or by owning them, can already greatly increase competitive ability.

10 SUMMARY

Validity and reliability are used to prove the research quality, or trustworthiness, to be acceptable. The reliability of research is about the consistency of the results, meaning that the same results will take place even after multiple analyses. While the validity of research is about the accuracy of the research, meaning it calculates whether the analysis method used is measuring what it is intended to. To deem a study as reliable or valid is easier for quantitative research, as there are no common criteria for validity in qualitative research, and as previously mentioned it is a less linear process. Therefore, to prove the reliability and validity of qualitative research each study needs to be looked at individually. (Hayashi et al, 2019, p. 98-102.)

The validity and reliability of this thesis then comes from the consistency and accuracy of the results, which requires looking at each analysis section on its own. Many of the analyses are done with secondary data analysis as the main method, meaning that the validity of the references used is especially important for them. The marketing mixes, both the competitors and the commissioners, get their information mainly from the companies' websites. This is in one way a very reliable site, as this is most likely where the customers will be getting their information as well, so the comparison will be rather similar to what they might see. Of course, it is important to remember that on their own website they are likely only showing what they want the consumers to see, but due to the beforementioned consumer view, the author still classifies it as reliable information.

The GAP analysis is based on the commissioner's current situation and their problem, which this thesis is tasked to assist with. The reliability of this is more difficult to determine, as this type of analysis can have multiple different outcomes. Although all else is based on discussions with the commissioner and deducing the smaller gaps from the broader one the commissioner introduced, the remedies are propositions that could be different, but are still valid as there is no one correct answer. The PESTLE analysis on the other hand is based on references that the author has deemed as valid references from reliable websites or published writings

that are no older than 10 years for the sake of relevancy, and therefore is also reliable and valid. The target market analyses for German and French tourists are entirely based on secondary data analysis from previously conducted analyses for the consumer behavior of these markets, and other general information about them. The reliability of them depends mainly on whether they information is still true and up to date, which as of 2022 is still the case, but with consumer behavior of such a large group it may change fast and depends on things such as trends and contemporary issues. The dissatisfaction matrix is not entirely valid, due to the fact that there is not enough data to go on to create any larger studies on the topic, and more previous customers would need to be contacted, preferably anonymously. It is mainly included to give the commissioner and other readers an idea on the current situation of the company from the customers point of view but is not intended to give any indication that all customers, or even a majority or a large percentage of them would think a certain way. Lastly, the SWOT analysis is quite like the GAP analysis in the way that it would not necessarily come out the same way were the research replicated, but that is because in qualitative research, or in this case at least, there are no numbers indicating what is the biggest strength or weakness, but it is up to the researcher to use both the information accessible, and their own deduction based on the information to determine them.

Research ethics have many different principles and codes that the researcher should consider and follow, which Shamoo and Resnik (2015, p.18-19.) have summarized as; Honesty, objectivity, integrity, carefulness, openness, respect for intellectual property, confidentiality, responsible publication, responsible mentoring, respect for colleagues, social responsibility, nondiscrimination, competence, legality, animal care, and human subjects' protection. As there are many types of research, not all of these are applicable to every study, but when applicable it is the researcher's duty to ensure consideration for them all.

In the case of this thesis the main principles that are the most applicable are objectivity, carefulness, and respect for intellectual property. Objectivity when making any types of comparisons is difficult, especially in the case of having a commissioner, which creates a certain bias for them when comparing them and their

competitors. The author of this thesis made sure to stay objective, which in the end is more useful for the commissioner as well, as constructive criticism is more useful than false praise. Carefulness requires careful and critical examination of the work conducted, which is something that is perhaps an issue with many bachelors' thesis, and the author of this one also struggled with carelessness, but for the sake of the commissioner company the author has attempted to put their utmost care into the work so there are no mistakes by the final publishing. Lastly respect for intellectual property is especially important to note in a thesis that uses secondary data analysis as such a major method. All of the references have been marked to avoid plagiarism, and to differentiate the author's own thought from loaned ones.

After reading this thesis the commissioner has given short feedback, which roughly translated goes as follows;" We are satisfied with the work done. The development proposals are very clear and for the most part easily implemented and relevant, which are also on par with our own thoughts and development work." (Tikkanen, 2022.)

The author's own reflection on the other hand of the work done is satisfied in the sense that the goal of the thesis was to satisfy the commissioner with the thesis. There are things that upon reflection the author would have done differently, mainly the planning phase of the thesis, which could have needed more consideration. The methodology as well should have been planned thoroughly before writing the thesis. But the thesis is done according to the author's own goals, and leaves the author satisfied with it.

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