



**Enhancing customer satisfaction through implementation of meaningful leisure activities. Case: Hotel F6, Helsinki.**

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## Abstract

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<p>The commissioner for this product-based thesis is Hotel F6 in Helsinki. The study was conducted by an employee of the hotel. The main goal of the author was to offer practical recommendations to Hotel F6 regarding the planning and implementation of leisure activities that cater to the diverse needs of different target groups. Additionally, the author aimed to assess the current state of leisure activities at the hotel and develop unique and innovative suggestions that distinguish it from its competitors. To accomplish this, the author examined key concepts and definitions related to leisure and experience, global trends in the leisure industry, and the role of additional services in improving the overall hotel experience. The author used the triangulation research model, which included conducting qualitative research through semi-structured interviews with hotel staff, as well as secondary research using pre-existing data from literature, academic journals, articles, and online and offline resources, and benchmarking other hotels that offer exceptional leisure and entertainment supplementary services for guests. The research results emphasized the importance of personalized leisure activities providing extra value to guests and creating unforgettable experiences.</p> <p>The author generated a list of recommended activities for guests based on both theoretical and practical aspects of the study, which incorporate modern trends such as ecotourism, staycation, female solo travel, bleisure travel, educational tourism, wellness tourism, and active tourism. To protect sensitive information, the provides a sample of two pages. The Commissioner company insist on exclusive access to the complete list. Additionally, the hotel should expand its collaboration with other companies to provide a wider range of activities to guests and increase revenue by receiving commissions from those companies. The study's results could be utilized for the successful development of hotel services and the creation of packages.</p>
<b>Keywords</b> Leisure, leisure activities, experience, additional services, leisure industry trends

## Table of contents

1	Introduction .....	1
1.1	Objectives .....	2
1.2	Company info.....	2
1.3	Introduction of the research methods .....	4
1.4	Key definitions.....	5
1.5	Structure of the thesis .....	6
2	Leisure ,experience, additional services, and leisure industry trends.....	7
2.1	The role of leisure in human life .....	7
2.2	Leisure industry trends.....	10
2.3	Experience .....	18
2.3.1	Four realms of an experience .....	19
2.4	Additional services to the hotel.....	21
3	Boutique hotels .....	25
3.1	Description of the studied hotel .....	26
3.2	Benchmarking .....	28
4	Planning and execution of the product .....	35
4.1	Project Management.....	35
4.2	Methodology .....	36
4.2.1	Qualitative semi-structured interviews .....	36
4.3	Results.....	37
4.4	Limitations and Risks .....	45
4.5	Product results and evaluation .....	46
5	Discussion.....	48
5.1	The thesis process.....	48
5.2	Learning outcomes .....	48
	References .....	50
	Appendices.....	58
	Appendix 1. The list of activities for recommendations to guests.....	58
	Appendix 2. Interview questionnaire.....	59

# 1 Introduction

A contemporary hotel is more than just a temporary residence; it serves as a cultural center where guests can seamlessly transition from work to leisure. Among the key elements that greatly influence customer satisfaction is the hotel's organization of leisure. To effectively cater to the diverse needs and preferences of guests, it is crucial to offer expertly crafted and unique leisure activities. The organization of leisure activities within the hotel holds great significance for both guests and the hotel, as it plays a pivotal role in driving guest satisfaction and motivation for customers' decisions.

To effectively plan and execute a leisure activities for hotel guests, managers must first gain a thorough understanding of their guests' individual needs and preferences. This includes evaluating factors such as lifestyle, habits, hobbies, life values, and current trends. In contrast to the traditional approach of focusing solely on demographic characteristics such as gender, age, and social status, this holistic approach allows managers to tailor the hotel's leisure to the specific needs and desires of the guests.

This product-based thesis, commissioned by boutique Hotel F6, aims to enhance the leisure activities offered to guests and provide innovative proposals and recommendations how to improve the organization of leisure activities at Boutique Hotel F6 in Helsinki. The study is conducted by an employee of the hotel. To achieve the goal of the thesis, semi-structured interviews were conducted with hotel employers to gain insight into their perspective and understand the current state of leisure activities. Additionally, data was collected through surveying previous requests for leisure activities from hotel guests, as well as benchmarking other hotels that already provide leisure activities. The author utilized a variety of resources including literature, academic journals, articles, commercial publications, as well as online and offline sources. The key concepts and terms explored in this thesis include leisure, trends in the leisure industry, the concept of an experience and additional services offered by hotels. Given the increasing competition in the hotel market in Helsinki, the findings of this study have practical value for Hotel F6.

## 1.1 Objectives

Leisure and entertainment programs in the hotel create a hospitable, comfortable and friendly environment in the hotel, satisfy the guests' needs in physical and spiritual development and contribute to emotional enrichment through pleasant experiences, states Garanin and Bulygin (2006,126).

The primary goal of this bachelor's thesis is to improve the leisure activities offered to guests at Boutique Hotel F6 in Helsinki and develop innovative proposals and recommendations for enhancing the overall guest experience through the organization of leisure activities. The author's main objective is to provide practical suggestions to the hotel on how to effectively plan and implement leisure activities that cater to the diverse needs and preferences of different target groups. The key focus areas of the thesis include understanding the current state of leisure activities at the hotel, identifying ways to improve them in the future, and developing unique and novel leisure activities that set the hotel apart from its competitors. To achieve this aim, the following actions will be undertaken:

- Study of key concepts and definitions related to leisure and experience
- Analysis of global trends in the leisure industry
- Examination of the role of additional services in enhancing the overall hotel experience
- Analysis of the current state of leisure activities offered at Hotel F6, including the preferences of guest and the hotel's vision
- Study of hotels that already offer exceptional leisure for guests

The findings of this thesis can be used to detect and develop new leisure activities offers that can enhance the hotel's competitive advantage in the market.

## 1.2 Project background and company info

This thesis is commissioned by Hotel F6, a member of the Nordic Choice Hotels chain, located in Helsinki, Finland, where the author is currently employed. The focus of this product-based thesis is to examine the significance and relevance of organizing leisure for guests of the boutique hotel.

Hotel F6 is a family-owned boutique hotel that is part of the Nordic Choice Hotels chain, one of the leading hotel chains in the Nordic countries. Located in the central area of Helsinki at Fabiankatu 6, the hotel offers guests easy access to popular tourist attractions. Since its opening in June 2016, the hotel has established a good reputation and has a steady flow of guests. As of September 2022, the hotel's Net Promoter Score (NPS), a measure of customer loyalty and satisfaction, is 98.4. The mission of the hotel is to create a positive work environment and provide the best customer service experience. The hotel features 76 stylish rooms, including Standard, Superior, and Deluxe options, as well as a well-equipped gym and bar "Runar", named after the architect Runar Finnilä. A home-style Finnish breakfast buffet is offered every morning. The hotel does not have a restaurant, but instead offers a food delivery service through WOLT, having each room equipped with a special tablet accessing the WOLT site. Property amenities include free high-speed internet, a fitness center, highchairs in the breakfast area, pet-friendly accommodations, taxi service, baggage storage, room service, wake-up service, minibar, and flat-screen TV (HotelF6, 2022).

Due to today's competitive hotel market, providing additional entertainment services and leisure activities has become a crucial factor in shaping a hotel's market attractiveness. Many hotels around the world now offer packages that include a range of entertainment and leisure activities for guests. Hotel F6 is no exception, offering a variety of packages for guests to enhance their stay. These packages include:

- Wedding package
- Hotel F6 and Allas Sea Pool package that includes entrance to swimming and sauna at Allas Sea Pool
- "Make me a cocktail" package that includes a cocktail from the hotel's bar menu for every adult guest
- "Cheers to your stay" package that includes a bottle of house sparkling wine and late check-out
- "Romantic stay in love package" that includes champagne, handmade chocolates, and a room service breakfast
- "Those wonderful slow mornings" package that includes room service breakfast and late check-out (HotelF6, 2022)

In recent years, many hotels worldwide have elevated their level of service by implementing organized leisure and entertainment programs for guests, however, this aspect is still underdeveloped in the Finnish hotel industry. The significance of this topic lies in the growing demand of hotel guests for well-organized, engaging, and high-quality leisure activities during their stay.

With the increasing competition in the Helsinki hotel market, the findings and recommendations of this thesis will be of great value to Hotel F6.

### 1.3 Introduction of the research methods

The main research question of this thesis is the following:

- What trendy, out-of-the-ordinary leisure activities will be interesting and relevant for boutique hotel guests??

However, to fully understand and develop these leisure activities offers, the following sub-questions will also be addressed:

- What can the hotel offer to guests to create a "wow" experience when planning their leisure activities?
- What leisure activities does the hotel currently offer and how can they be improved?
- What is the current customer experience of the leisure activities offered at the hotel?
- What unusual requests for leisure have hotel guests made in the past?
- What trends may impact the development and improvement of leisure activities?

To ensure the validity of the research findings and to refine the proposed ideas, the author used the triangulation research model which includes multiple methods of data collection. The chosen methods for this research are:

- Qualitative research using semi-structured interviews to gather qualitative data from hotel staff. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with the general manager, sales manager, and front desk duty manager to understand the current state of leisure activities, gather professional insights, and learn about previous requests for leisure activities from hotel guests.
- Secondary method, which relies on pre-existing data, gathered from literature, academic journals, articles, commercial articles, online and offline resources.

- Benchmarking other hotels that already have successful leisure activities offers. Benchmarking helps a company to identify areas for improvement as well as strengths, and understand performance compared to others (Blanes, 2022). This approach will help to identify areas for improvement and determine how to stay ahead of the competition.

## 1.4 Key definitions

The key definitions of this thesis are leisure, experience, additional services, and trends in the leisure industry. These concepts will be thoroughly examined in the theoretical section of the thesis.

**The "Serious Leisure Perspective" (SLP)** posits a way of looking at leisure activities and how people experience them. The author advocates that utilizing the framework of SLP in the development of leisure activities offers for guests allows for a comprehensive consideration of various aspects. "Serious leisure" enables guests to experience a sense of uniqueness and gain new knowledge and impressions during their stay (Stebbins, 2014). In practice, this means that hotels should not view leisure activities as a secondary function, but rather try to elevate the content and depth of leisure activities offerings, promoting the development of the individual.

**Leisure industry trends.** Staying current on leisure industry trends is crucial for delivering outstanding guest experiences, that is why companies that research and adapt to emerging trends have a competitive edge over those who do not. According to Team (2021), it is critical to keep up with the current trends in order to get an advantage and stand out from the competitors.

Hotels constantly strive to attract picky tourists by introducing innovative concepts and services. In order to develop new forms of leisure activities for hotel guests, it is necessary to stay informed about emerging trends. These trends provide insight into what will be popular in the near future. By utilizing this information, hotels can introduce leisure activities and attract a wider range of guests.

**Experience.** Experience is a crucial aspect of a consumer's interaction with a product or service, according to Pine and Gilmore (2011, pp. 24–26). For hotel guests, unique and unusual experiences are particularly appealing. People are no longer satisfied with just overnight accommodation; they want something that evokes emotions, feelings, and new exciting experiences. A unique experience has become the most valuable offering for guests. It is essential for hotels to impress and wow their guests. Those that cling to traditional methods of designing customer experience may be left behind. Many hotels assume that providing a clean and comfortable room



is sufficient, but they need to think outside the box and get to know their customers better and understand what it takes to truly delight them (Barker, 2019).

**Additional services to the hotel.** Offering additional services is a common strategy for hotels to attract more customers. In order to stand out, hotels are constantly seeking to increase the variety and uniqueness of their services. These can include various forms of leisure activities, entertainment, personal services, and packages tailored to specific groups such as couples, business travelers, or VIP clients (HMS, 2020).

The demand for hotel services is high, but consumers' expectations are constantly evolving. Organizing leisure activities for guests is an effective way to attract customers and create positive experiences. These leisure activities aim to elicit happy feelings and deliver unique experiences.

## 1.5 Structure of the thesis

The introduction of this thesis provides an overview of the topic, including the reasons for choosing it, the objectives, the project background and company information, as well as the methodology in brief and key definitions.

The theoretical framework of the thesis, presented in the second chapter, is based on key concepts such as leisure, leisure industry trends, experience, and additional services. This framework is researched through the use of literature, internet sources, academic journals, and articles.

The third chapter delves into the topic of boutique hotels, providing background information and benchmarking of hotels with leisure activities.

In the fourth chapter, the research methodology, survey results, limitations, and risks are discussed. The author also describes the product and its potential for future implementation, as well as suggestions for improvement in Hotel F6. The thesis concludes with a discussion of the process, the learning outcomes, and a final summary. The bibliography, appendices, and the product of the thesis can be found at the end of the document, following the Harvard referencing style.

## **2 Leisure, leisure industry trends, experience, and additional services.**

In this chapter, the theoretical framework is presented, which commences with the definition of leisure and "The serious leisure perspective" (SLP). The purpose of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the key concepts and factors that can influence the development of leisure activities offers in hotels. The focus is on understanding the nature of leisure and how it can be used to enhance the guest experience.

### **2.1 The role of leisure in human life**

Leisure has always been an integral part of human life that aid to maintain a positive outlook, relieve stress, and improve physical health. According to Iwasaki and Mackay (2006, 163–80), leisure contributes to general well-being and buffering stress.

It is important to note that free time alone does not necessarily equate to leisure. Boredom and unfulfilling activities can occur during free time, which makes it crucial to distinguish leisure as activities that are intentionally chosen and enjoyed. According to Stebbins (2003), for most people, leisure is associated with a good mindset that includes, among other things, pleasant expectations and memories of activities and events.

The idea of leisure is based on the different levels of meaning and importance it holds for both individuals and society. Utilizing leisure time wisely can have positive effects for both the individual and society. Engaging in creative activities such as music, art, hobbies, education, and community service is more fulfilling than passive forms of entertainment like television, radio, or sports watching. Leisure can lead to feelings of happiness, pleasure, creative self-expression, the possibility of self-development and self-realization, goal achievement, experiment, adventure, and pure satisfaction (Nash 1960, 115-120). Studies have shown that incorporating active leisure activities, such as physical activity and being in nature, can help the brain focus on challenges, learning, and pleasure (Fredrickson, 2000). The needs and interests of tourists are constantly evolving, and the structure of leisure is becoming increasingly complex.

The "serious leisure perspective" (SLP) is a theory that separates leisure activities into three categories: "casual leisure," "serious leisure," and "project-based leisure." "Serious leisure" is an activity that is regularly pursued by an individual who has a passion for it and possesses specific skills

and knowledge. The rewards of this activity can be personal, such as self-actualization, self-gratification, and self-expression, or social, such as establishing and maintaining social connections and a sense of belonging to a community. Additionally, "serious leisure" is often a central aspect of an individual's self-identity and is distinct from "casual leisure" in that it involves spiritual growth, a sense of achievement, a sense of belonging to a community, and a creation lasting product, for instance, a painting or a scientific article (Stebbins, 2015).

"Casual leisure", which is also called "unskilled", is an activity that does not require specific skills or abilities and provides immediate pleasure. The main motivation for engaging in this type of leisure is the pursuit of joy and pleasure (Stebbins, 1997). Examples of casual leisure include playing, relaxing, watching media, spending time with friends, attending sports or entertainment events, and shopping. These activities are usually common and easy to access for most people and do not require any specific knowledge or skills.

"Project-based leisure" is a short-term, one-time or occasional creative activity that requires planning and specialized skills or knowledge. Examples include planning a birthday party or creating a special project for a national holiday. Unlike "serious leisure," project-based leisure activities are limited in time and do not consume all of an individual's free time. However, it still can provide similar personal and social rewards such as deep satisfaction, self-presentation and a sense of success from working with others, and also maintaining and strengthening group unity (Stebbins, 2005).

As shown in the figure, the three forms of leisure are combined into a typological map of the nature of leisure, which illustrates the structure of the "serious leisure perspective." Each manifestation of this perspective has a unique spirit that arises during the formation of a group's social world within the realm of free time. Within the category of casual leisure, there are eight types of activities: play, relaxation, passive entertainment, active entertainment, social conversation, sensory stimulation, casual untethering, and pleasurable aerobic activity. Project-based leisure activities, which are one-time or occasional projects, include activities such as making and tinkering, liberal arts, participating in activities, volunteering, and art projects.

The "serious leisure perspective" identifies four groups of people who engage in serious leisure activities. These include:

1. Amateurs, who participate in activities such as arts, sciences, sports, and entertainment. They may have relationships with professionals who do the same activities publicly for business purposes.

2. Hobbyists, who engage in activities such as collecting, making and tinkering, participating in activities, playing non-professional sports and games, and liberal arts hobbies. Unlike amateurs, hobbyists do not typically have relationships with professionals.
3. Volunteers, who provide assistance for free through voluntary efforts in various fields, among which are popular, idea-based, material, floral, faunal, and environmental ones.
4. People involved in Devotee Work: individuals who choose to follow a specialized career in their spare time, such as liberal professions, consulting, skilled trades, and small businesses. These activities may also provide an income for the individual (ResearchPad 30 March 2022, min. 3–5).

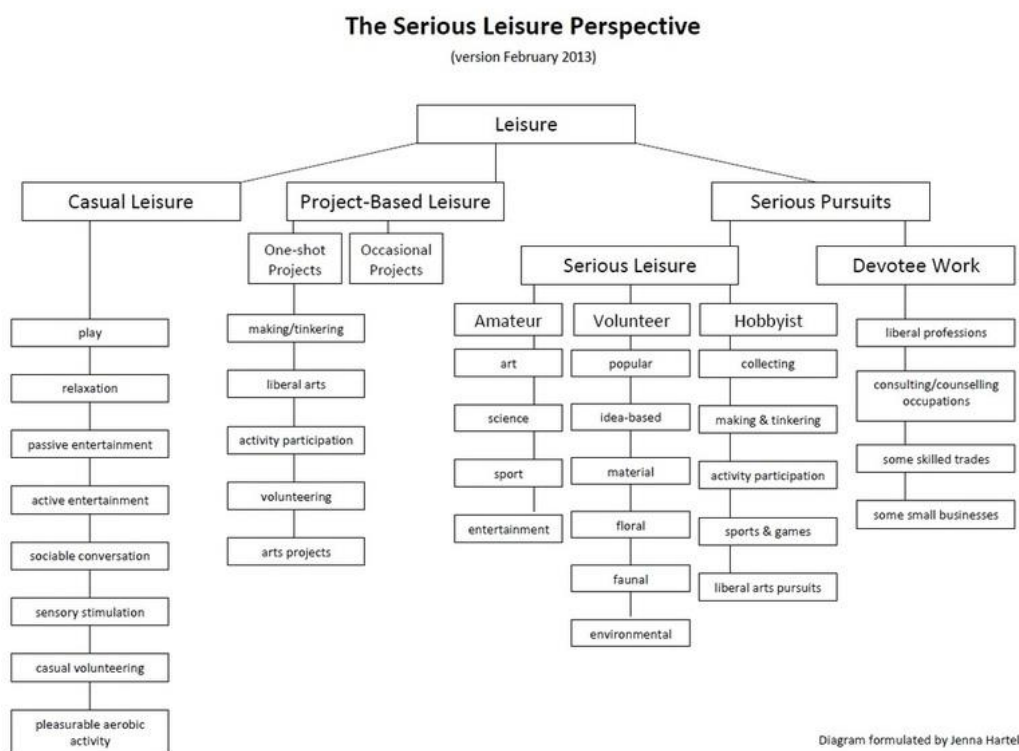


Figure 1. Diagrams of the Serious Leisure Perspective (Hartel, 2013)

According to Stebbins (2015), the role of serious and project-based leisure is increasing due to changes in the way work is organized, for example, the social organization of labor is shifting from stable forms of employment to short-term and flexible employment, life expectancy and retirement period are increasing as well. "Serious leisure" activities do not primarily serve as a way to make money or improve one's standard of living, but they have become an important aspect of life that fulfills many of the same functions as work. Through participating in these activities and connecting with others who share similar interests, individuals can find a sense of belonging and purpose in communities of like-minded individuals.

Serious leisure activities provide various personal benefits, such as personal growth, self-fulfillment, the ability to express oneself, rejuvenation, feelings of accomplishment, improved self-esteem, social connections, and tangible outcomes from the activity, like a finished work of art, research paper or a piece of furniture (Elie Cohen-Gewerc, 2013).

When traveling, tourists not only plan for physical and mental relaxation, but also for unique and extraordinary experiences. The hospitality industry now focuses on providing not just comfortable accommodations, but also customized services that cater to the individual interests of guests. This includes options for serious leisure activities such as sports and outdoor activities, equipment rental, golfing, biking, artmaking, gardening, fishing, etc.

The previous chapter discussed various forms of leisure. In hotels, arranging leisure activities for guests is crucial. This can help guests grow, connect with others, and express their creative and spiritual potential. "Project-based leisure" and "serious leisure" play a vital role in generating innovative ideas for enhancing leisure activities in hotels. These types of leisure can shape and enrich a person's life, providing personal and social benefits. The hotel can partner with local tournament organizations to offer a tournament package, collaborate with local businesses for cooking or painting classes, or encourage guests to participate in volunteer work for "serious leisure". For "project-based" leisure, the hotel can organize events such as birthdays and national holidays for guests. Adding leisure like music, art, hobbies, education, community service, physical activity, nature, making and tinkering, liberal arts, participating in activities, volunteering, and art projects can enhance guests' experiences by creating positive emotions and satisfaction.

The author will analyze current trends in the leisure industry in the next chapter. Hoteliers should stay current and adopt the latest trends to enhance leisure activities for guests and improve the organization of leisure. Trends in leisure are crucial for creating innovative proposals and recommendations.

## **2.2 Leisure industry trends**

In daily life, trends are omnipresent and play a significant role in the hospitality industry. They drive the creation of new services, provide guests with new experiences, and help hotels differentiate themselves from the competition. To determine which trends are suitable for a particular hotel, it is crucial to observe guests' reactions to innovations and to be innovative. Currently, there are numerous emerging trends in the hospitality industry. The question is how hotels can stay current by following these trends and developing trendy proposals to enhance leisure activities for guests.

**Local experience.**

Local experiences are crucial for attracting guests. Only 3% of tourists consider them unimportant (Xotels, 2022). Tourists are seeking unique experiences and are tired of standard vacations and destinations. They want to immerse themselves in the culture and traditions of their chosen holiday destination and blend in with locals. They prefer places where locals spend time, dine, and socialize. They may also be interested in activities such as language lessons, local cooking classes, or anything that will help them become a part of this place (Tiger, 2022).

Hotels can provide guests with culinary master classes, local food packages, cultural activities, tastings of local drinks, excursions to authentic locations with local guides, and in-room language lessons on TV. Hotels can partner with guide and tour agencies and recommend specific guides, for which they receive a commission or offer discounts to hotel guests.

**Ecotourism.**

In recent years, changes in tourists' values have driven the growth of a new trend – ecotourism or responsible tourism.

Local experiences are a key component of ecotourism. To support this trend, guests buy local products, use public transportation and bicycles, dine at local restaurants, use local guide services, and engage in volunteering and supporting local conservation and community projects (Whitman, 2020).

Tourists seek unique experiences and lower environmental impact, which leads them to lesser-known destinations (EcoFriend, 2020). Traveling to little-known places is also part of ecotourism.

Overtourism, or excessive growth of tourism, causes severe problems when limits are not established. "Tourist-phobia," characterized by rejection, mistrust, and contempt for tourists, has been described by Manuel Delgado over a decade ago. Overtourism harms local communities, landscapes, beaches, and infrastructure (TheConversation, 2018).

86% of global travelers are willing to engage in activities to mitigate their environmental impact, according to a Booking.com survey (EcoFriend, 2020). This shows how attractive ecotourism is.

Ecotourists think it is crucial to protect the environment and culture of the visited country for future generations. They opt for eco-friendly transportation, buy from local vendors and support environmentally conscious businesses. Hotels can provide guests with eco-friendly menus, guides to local markets, and information on where to buy local products. They can also offer bike rental services, hiking trips, and encourage the use of public transportation (by providing information and offering discounts or free tickets). The hotel can sell local goods and souvenirs, collaborate with local guides for excursions to off-the-beaten-path destinations, and provide information about local volunteer projects. The hotel can also host events promoting eco-tourism and encourage guests to engage in activities that reduce their impact on the environment.

### **Staycations**

Staycations are becoming more popular as people opt for rest breaks within their own cities. They involve taking a vacation within one's own country or hometown, reducing stress, visiting local museums, and participating in events, staying at local hotels and boosting the local economy (Weavers, 2020).

Hotels can cater to the trend of short and intense trips by offering customized full-day packages tailored to specific groups, with a focus on experiences such as food, drinks, and activities. They can also provide guests with a guide to the must-see destinations in the city. Tourists appreciate themed collections, such as romantic walks, family-friendly parks, and major city attractions. To add convenience and save time for travelers, hotels can offer services such as in-room breakfast, transportation, entertainment programs, and rental of outdoor equipment. By partnering with local companies, hotels can also support local tourism and promote the area.

### **Female travel**

The trend of women traveling alone is growing, with a 230% increase in women-only travel companies. Women seek experiences and freedom, as well as socializing and adventure. According to 27% of travel agents sightseeing and shopping are the most popular activities for women. 17% of women travel for historical, cultural, and educational purposes. 16% of women travel to escape to the beach. 15% of women travel in search of adventure. 13% of women love to travel on cruises. Safety is a top concern when choosing a solo travel destination. According to travel agents, Europe is a popular destination, with Finland being one of the safest for women (Condor, 2021).

To cater to solo female travelers, hotels can offer tailored packages and activities. These can include group and individual packages, social gatherings, workshops, yoga, Finnish sauna experiences, and adventurous excursions like snowmobiling or skiing with locals. By doing so, hotels can provide women with the opportunity to make new friends, learn about themselves, engage in new hobbies, witness breathtaking scenery, try different foods, and immerse themselves in different cultures.

Position the hotel as a "Female-Friendly" hotel and advertise this on the website by offering amenities and services geared towards women. They might be:

- A night-time transfer, hair styling tools.
- Finnish skincare products, yoga mats, eye pillows, and women's magazines.
- A local guide that highlights places of interest for women.
- Offer personal shopping services and discounts at local brand shops.
- Collaborate with local businesses to offer female-oriented packages that include sightseeing, social events, workshops, yoga, sauna experiences, and adventurous excursions.
- Provide beauty services, such as blowouts and manicures/pedicures, as well as shopping gift cards.

## **Bleisure travel**

Hotels should cater to the needs of bleisure travelers, who are a mix of business and leisure travelers. Bleisure travelers often combine work trips with leisure time, and 89% plan to do so this year. They often travel with family and friends, and are willing to spend more on food, entertainment and activities as their flights are covered by their company (Morgan, 2022).

To cater to bleisure travelers, hotels should offer services and amenities that make it easy to switch from work to leisure.

The trend of "bleisure travel is on the rise and is becoming a priority for American travel management companies. 31% of companies surveyed named it as their top growth opportunity (Bohnet, 2022).

Due to COVID, people have adapted to remote work, allowing them to blend work and leisure while traveling. Hotels can cater to these travelers by offering coworking spaces and comfortable rooms



for work, and then offer outdoor activities such as hiking or picnics in the evenings. To attract bleisure travelers, hotels can provide tour packages and pre-arranged itineraries for a fun and relaxing self-guided vacation.

86% bleisure travelers are looking for a festival or cultural event. 76% enjoy sports activities. Festivals and music events also attract bleisure travelers (Mandich, 2017).

Hotels can provide guests with opportunities for physical and creative activities such as dance or yoga classes, bike or SUP board rentals, tickets to local events or attractions, gift cards for spas, and after-work cocktails. They can also create a city guide highlighting entertainment options such as bars, cafes, nightclubs, parks, and family-friendly activities. To promote this trend, hotels can feature bleisure travel on their website, offer bleisure tour packages and pre-planned itineraries, and provide discounts or coupons in pre-stay emails.

According to studies, this style of travel is becoming more common. 57% of companies have a policy of extending business trips for young employees through vacations (Travel, 2022).

### **Augmented reality and virtual reality**

With the introduction of advanced interactive technology, the hotel industry has undergone significant transformation, providing guests with innovative and exciting experiences.

Augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) have gained popularity in recent years, attracting attention from investors and the general public. AR, a more recent technology than VR, involves the overlay of virtual objects onto the real world in real-time during user interaction. The user experience in VR can be measured by factors such as presence, realism, and reality. VR and AR differ in terms of the level of technological complexity (Jianghao Xiong, 2021).

Virtual reality creates a completely artificial environment while augmented reality adds virtual elements to the real world. Both VR and AR can enhance guest experiences by providing extra information, inspiring guests, and creating memorable moments that influence customers' decisions.

Augmented reality technology can make it easier for guests to access information quickly, eliminating the need to search the internet. By using AR, guests can view ingredients in the hotel bar or restaurant menu simply by pointing their smartphone or tablet camera at the menu, or they can easily find public transportation by pointing their device in the desired direction. This technology provides a more convenient experience for guests.

Virtual reality is one of the strongest current trends in the hospitality industry, with 58.9 million users using it. The use of virtual reality technologies to explore any room or resort is a common trend. VR allows not only to fully recreate the number of rooms, but also to see the sights in the neighborhood (LibraHospitality, 2022) .

The use of AR and VR also helps guests better understand their surroundings and plan their trip, making their stay more enjoyable. The Hub by Premier Inn in the UK serves as a prime example of how AR can be implemented in a hotel setting to enhance the guest experience. There they have an AR map of the area on the wall where guests may learn about local attractions, get recommendations on the finest things to do, and all of these by pointing their smartphone at the map. A number of hotels having these services are seeing increased customer satisfaction and booking rates (Morgan, 2020).

How can hotels keep up with this trend? One strategy for hotels to stay ahead of the competition is to adopt and utilize advanced technologies. This can be done by creating a mobile app or enhancing their existing app.

Ways to utilize augmented and virtual reality in the hotel:

- Providing tips and simple navigation
- Using gamification to enhance the guest experience
- Including the hotel's location in a popular game
- Creating a game for exploring the hotel or nearby area
- Offering unique experiences like decorating the room virtually, taking photos with famous characters or visiting ancient cities (Revfine, 2022).
- Collaborating with Finnish designers to host digital AR exhibitions and fashion shows.
- Providing VR headsets and smart glasses for guests to explore, entertain, and immerse themselves in virtual reality, as well as for mental health through meditation and learning.
- Showcasing virtual tours of the hotel to give guests a preview before they arrive.
- Allowing guests to explore different parts of the world through VR glasses in their hotel room.
- Incorporating VR glasses into the gym for workout experiences.

- Enhancing the bar experience by offering virtual tours of wineries, wine tastings, and the history of winemaking through VR glasses for cocktails, beer, and wine.

### **Wellness tourism and educational tourism**

Wellness tourism: A concept of promoting active lifestyle and personal well-being through practices such as healthy nutrition, exercise/fitness, body and mind rituals, outdoor recreation, and connection with nature and culture. It is based on local treatments, traditional and spiritual practices, natural resources like minerals, mud, and water, architecture, street environment, and culinary traditions. The goal of wellness tourism is to provide travelers with a comprehensive physical and mental rejuvenation experience. It can also help to reduce over-tourism (Institute, 2022).

Ways for hotels to stay in trend:

- Offer wellness packages with a focus on daily routine, healthy food, physical activity and relaxation
- Provide leisure activities such as spa, yoga, gym, massage, hiking and outdoor activities
- Employ trainers or provide in-room and gym programs with video workout options
- Maintain authenticity by offering Finnish saunas to guests and providing information on saunas in Helsinki.

Educational tourism is a type of travel where the acquisition of new knowledge is a primary or secondary goal, providing both an educational experience and unforgettable memories. It promotes intellectual development, depending on the season and format of the hotel, such as learning a foreign language or acquiring new skills like skiing, dancing, golf, drawing, etc. Students can also benefit from visiting foreign institutions for potential study options (TravelDailyNews, 2021).

Ways for hotels to stay in trend in educational tourism:

- Rent equipment to facilitate learning activities
- Provide free electronic or paper books, movies

- Offer cooking classes with restaurant chefs or partner with local restaurants
- Provide in-room program options with video workouts and yoga classes
- Offer in-room language lessons
- Cooperate with well-known training sites in the city
- Create educational packages for different target groups

Keeping up with emerging trends can help hotels offer what guests are willing to pay for in the future. To stay trend-focused and appealing, hotels need to be open to various partnerships. Co-marketing strategies can help expand reach, such as introducing guests to local businesses and vice versa. Collaborations and joint promotions allow for audience exchange, cost savings on promotions, trend promotion, and unique experiences for guests (Sarmah, 2022) .

### **Active tourism**

Leisure activities provide a great life experience and there's a growing trend of people seeking active tourism. Active tourism involves a trip where the tourist engages in physical activities for recreation or sports, such as mountain climbing, hiking, water sports, skiing, cycling, etc. The most common form of active tourism is weekend trips organized by travel agencies and sports clubs in areas close to cities (Silence, 2015).

During quarantine, physical activity and spending time outside have become vital. Active tourism has become a way to recover. People are now relying on bikes as a mode of transportation. In summer, active tourism can include outdoor activities like cycling, canoeing, hiking, paragliding, surfing, etc. Winter activities include skiing, snowshoeing, ice climbing, etc. To provide a unique experience, guests can be offered national parks with their hiking trails. An app called Runnin' City provides audio-guided running routes and has built-in green trails. Organizations, such as MY Adventure, use their outdoor adventure profits for various community projects. (Thibodeau, 2020).

The previous chapter discussed the trends in the leisure industry. Tourists easily grow tired of monotony, so changes are necessary. Trends are critical as they drive the development of new leisure activities for guests, allowing quick responses to customer demands and maintaining service relevance. Hoteliers should focus on trends to continuously search for new service opportunities and development. In the next chapter, the author will examine the phenomenon of experiences and

their importance in shaping leisure activities and creating memorable experiences for customer satisfaction.

## 2.3 Experience

The hospitality industry has seen significant transformations in recent years, and now requires innovative and unique solutions. Simply selling rooms is no longer enough. Customers are looking for unique experiences and hotels must find ways to capture and retain their attention. With fierce competition, hotels must offer memorable experiences to stand out from others. People no longer just want a product; they want meaningful travel experiences.

Pine and Gilmore's (Pine & Gilmore, 1998) regard experiences as a distinct economic offering and suggest using theatrical techniques to enhance the customer's experience. They advise treating the product as a secondary aspect and instead focus on the overall experience of the sale. This requires a shift in the traditional relationship between the company and customer, where the salesperson becomes the director of the experience, and the customer becomes the audience.

The core idea is that to increase profits and customer satisfaction, standard service must be elevated with emotions, feelings, and experiences. Emotions play a crucial role in creating high levels of customer experience (CX). Research shows that 54% of customers who experience positive emotions such as happiness and gratitude will forgive a company for making mistakes (Forrester 2022).

The hospitality industry should aim to offer customers unforgettable experiences. The Experience Economy values time spent by the customer as the defining factor (Walker, 2018).

Some companies specialize in creating exceptional experiences, with clients willing to spend significant amounts of money. Examples include dining on an iceberg, partying in an Egyptian pyramid, birthday celebrations on a desert island, large-scale flash mobs in cities, and personal interaction with royalty (Profvest, 2021).

Today, hotels have the opportunity to create personalized services for guests to provide memorable experiences. This can include leisure activities in collaboration with tour companies or local guides (such as river rafting, hiking, biking, fishing, canoeing, climbing), hosting masterclasses

(such as making Finnish Karelian pies), inviting Finnish folk artists for performances, and more. These experiences allow guests to immerse in the local culture and have a unique personal experience.

The next section of this paper will examine the four elements of experience to better understand guest needs.

### **2.3.1 Four realms of an experience**

J. Pine and J. Gilmore (1998) identified the four realms of an experience, that they present in their model Experience Realms (Figure 2): the horizontal line represents the level of participation and the vertical line the consumer's relationship to the environment - Absorption and Immersion. Absorption occurs when the impression is transferred to the inner world of a person and holds his attention, e.g., walking around the town, randomly becoming a spectator of an event. In immersion, the person physically or virtually becomes part of the experience itself, e.g., a person who purposefully goes to some kind of event will be personally immersed in this process. Customer participation refers to the active or passive participation of customers in the experience that businesses offer to their customers. In other words, active participation means that the customer participates in the experience and performs certain actions, getting a memorable experience, while passive participation consists of the customer participating in the experience as a listener and observer. The second dimension of experience -relationships to the environment involve a combination of experience and customer involvement. Accordingly, the behavior of the client is characterized by varying degrees of involvement in relation to the environment. In absorption, the customer is fully aware of the experience, but is experiencing it from a distance and does not affect the environment. An immersive experience invites customer to physically participate in the experience (Pine & Gilmore 2011; Jurowski 2009, 1-6.) According to Pine and Gilmore (1998), the optimal experience is achieved when the customer participates in all four realms. This is referred to as the "Sweet Spot."

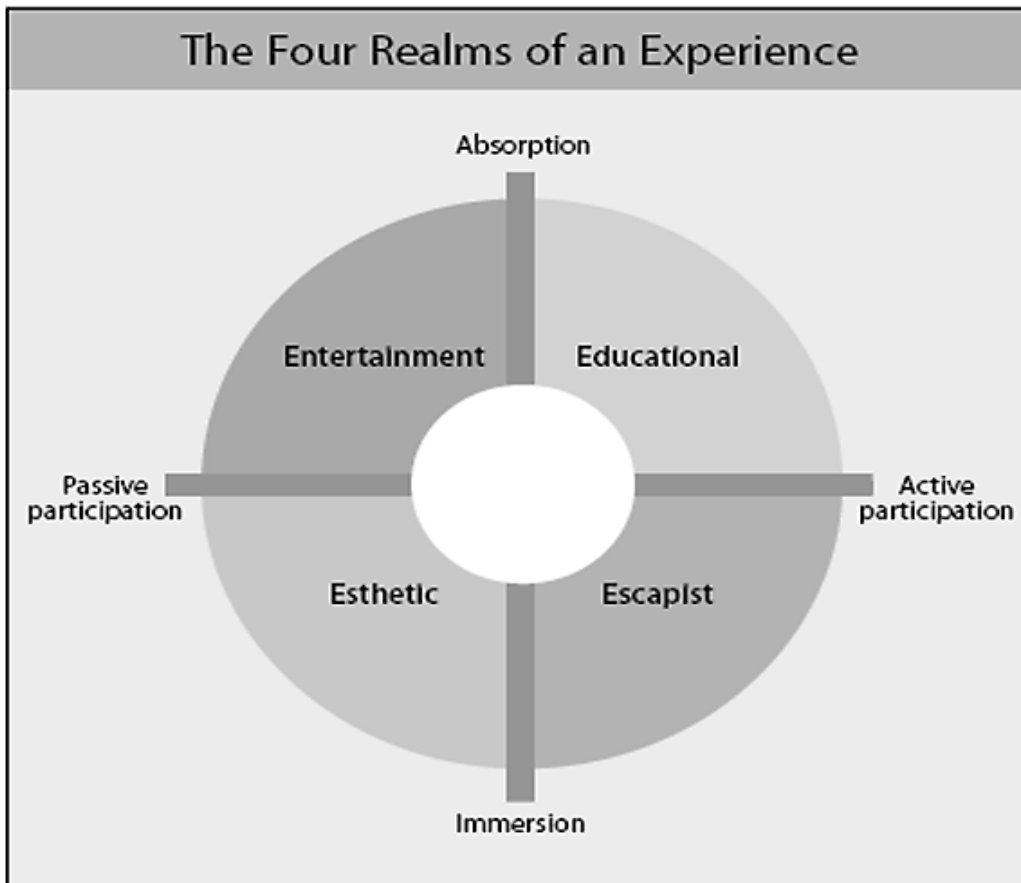


Figure 2. Experience Realms (Pine & Gilmore, 1998)

These dimensions have four different realms: entertainment, educational, esthetic, and escapist (Pine and Gilmore, 2011, pp. 45–54):

1. The entertainment experience involves passively taking in the experience, with the customer being a passive participant, and is focused on immersing them. This includes activities such as watching a game on TV, listening to music, or attending a performance. The studied hotel can offer entertainment experience through hosting events in the bar, featuring local bands, providing tickets to concerts or sporting events, hosting music festivals, and offering movie watching in the rooms.
2. The educational experience involves a weak connection with the environment and active participation, with the primary goal being for customers to learn something new. Examples of this type of experience include taking tennis or golf lessons or visiting art galleries. The studied hotel can provide an educational experience by offering golf or tennis lessons, chess courses, dance classes, yoga and other group activities, in-room training videos, conferences, workshops, guided tours to provide information about local attractions and restaurants, as well as opportunities to learn about Finnish culture, and spa experiences in collaboration with spa centers.

3. The esthetic experience involves a strong connection with the environment and passive participation from customers, who simply observe and are not actively involved. This type of experience is created by the appreciation of aesthetically pleasing objects. In the case of the studied hotel the esthetic experience can come from transforming the hotel into an art gallery to showcase the authenticity of the town and flavor of Finland, offering hiking or walking trails, cultural and historic sites, observation viewpoints for tours in central Helsinki, providing tickets to art exhibitions or museums, having a bouquet of flowers in the room, and decorating the rooms. These experiences are considered passive immersion as guests enjoy their surroundings but do not affect or alter them.
4. The escapist experience is confirmed by the intensive involvement of the environment and active participation. Customers actively participate rather than just observe (Pine, & Gilmore 2011, 50). Examples of this type of experience include playing video games or gambling. Travelers seeking escapist experiences participate in various activities. The studied hotel can provide escapist experiences by offering bike and camping equipment rentals, collaborating with an escape room in Helsinki, organizing fishing day tours, offering recreational vehicle stays, and providing opportunities for indoor, outdoor, or virtual reality.

In the previous section, we discussed the concept of experiences, which helps us understand what kind of experiences are relevant for the product of this thesis. Guests have varying desires in different areas: in escapist experiences, they want to be active, in entertainment experiences, they want to enjoy, in educational experiences, they want to learn, and in aesthetic experiences, they want to immerse. Through these experiences, guests can gain new skills and knowledge. To provide the best experiences, leisure activities should incorporate elements from all four areas. Additionally, it is not just the leisure activities themselves that are important, but also the emotions and unique experiences associated with them.

Leisure activities are centered around experiences. Leisure activities have certain emotional experiences. If these experiences are positive, they will have a desire to use the service again. The next chapter will discuss the importance of leisure activities as a component of additional services for the hotel.

## **2.4 Additional services to the hotel**

In the hotel industry, a popular area of innovation is the creation of new types of services, also known as product innovations. However, in the context of the hotel business, product innovations refer to the improvement of an existing hotel product by adding additional services, rather than creating a completely new product.



Product innovation refers to the introduction of a new product or service, or an updated version of an existing product, to the market. This type of innovation enhances product quality, attracts new customers, strengthens market dominance, and drives business growth (Paddle, 2022).

The main purpose of hotels is to offer accommodation and various services to their guests. In addition, hotels can also provide extra services and serve as a gathering space for both guests and local people. As human needs become more complex and diverse, the range of additional services has become more extensive and advanced (Juhász-Dóra, 2017).

The successful enhancement and evolution of hotel supplementary services require the right combination of external and internal factors, available resources, and innovative approaches. A wide range of supplementary hotel services gives the hotel business a competitive advantage in the crowded accommodation market. These services must be designed to meet the evolving needs of guests. The list of supplementary services must be continually updated and modified to keep up with the changing market demands. The expansion of the range of supplementary services is a priority for the hotel industry, leading to increased revenue.

The hotel offers both basic and additional services. Some of these additional services may be provided at no cost. The hotel caters to a variety of guest requests when organizing these services, offering rather than imposing them. Guests are often given the option to use the hotel's additional services, such as those provided by restaurants, stores, a disco, casino, nightclub, video game room, billiard room, as well as outdoor activities like a sauna, bath, massage, swimming pool, gym, playground, mini-golf, basketball and volleyball courts, sports equipment, and excursion and guide-interpreter services. Additionally, the hotel can assist with purchasing tickets for events such as theater performances, circuses, concerts, etc. The trend in the industry is now focused on providing high-quality extra services (Delachieve, 2022).

Hotels offer extra services to enhance the comfort of their guests during their stay. These services aim to provide maximum comfort, unique experiences, and a chance for self-expression and relaxation. Some hotels offer truly original and surprising services and leisure activities that are a way to attract guests. People are willing to spend significant amounts of money on unique services and leisure activities that make their vacation memorable and extraordinary.

Belgian Hotel, Van der Valk Hotel Charleroi Airport offers the option of renting a goldfish for the night, in case of loneliness. A fish named Nemo will give a feeling of happiness and cheer up (Poel, 2017). Ashford Castle hotel-castle in Ireland offers a lot of unique services, for example to

present an engagement ring in a memorable way. An owl named Dingle will bring the ring. Hotel offers a bespoke service for juniors where they can choose any kind of Lego and Lego Butler delivers to the room in white gloves, on a silver tray (AshfordCastle, 2022). Boutique hotel QT Melbourne offers the declaration of love on Valentine's Day with "Room for Dessert". It is a dessert option; a specially designed sweet treat for two served in one of the signature restaurants of Melbourne with a hotel room key and with a gift from the Swarovski Crystal Wishes Collection (Qhotels, 2017).

The Nine Zero Hotel caters to animal lovers, providing top-notch services for pets including an orthopedic pillowtop dog bed, complimentary treats upon arrival, breakfast, lunch, and dinner boxes, doggy daycare (with advanced reservation), a map of dog parks, massage services, and other pet-specific entertainment options (NineZeroHotel, 2022).

A hotel package is a bundle of services offered at a single price. These packages demonstrate the hotel's unique partnerships with local businesses and proximity to popular attractions and allow the hotel to showcase its value proposition and reach new audiences. To create these packages, the hotel should collaborate with local businesses. Some popular package ideas include "romance" packages, "museum" packages, "gastronomy" packages, "metro" packages with one-day tickets, "movie night" packages with free in-room movies and popcorn, and "shopping" packages that offer guests coupon booklets and discounts from nearby shops, especially before Christmas (Smith, 2019).

Some hotels offer unique and creative packages to their guests. The Plaza Hotel in New York offers the "Knights of The Plaza" package, which includes a room designed like a castle tower, a picnic, princess and knight costumes, and a \$100 gift card (ClassyMommy, 2012). The Hilton West Palm Beach offers the "Holidays at the Hilton" package, which includes a Christmas gift, make-your-own-stocking supplies, a Christmas movie, CD, reindeer-shaped ice cream, and the option for Christmas cocktails in the room. The Kimpton Hotel Allegro in Chicago offers the Winter Wonderland package with winter-themed activities, holiday decor, a bag of treats from the North Pole, hot chocolate in the room, and a \$20 Uber credit. The Grand Nemaquin Woodlands Resort in Pennsylvania offers the Build Your Holiday Experience package, which includes an elf visiting the room to read the story "How to Catch an Elf," with a presentation of the book and reindeer dust, as well as Breakfast with Santa before Christmas (Mettler, 2017).

The development of package offers should focus on creating appealing deals that boost profits and increase the hotel's occupancy rate, especially during holidays, festivals, and long weekends. It's

important to keep track of competitors and create packages tailored to different target groups that the hotel caters to (Joshi, 2021).

The key to developing successful package offers is to create packages that are appealing, increase profits and occupancy rates, and target specific customer groups. These packages can include unique additional services and leisure activities that lower the price of services, increase demand, and compete with other hotels. In today's market, guests are looking for luxurious and unforgettable experiences. By offering bold and innovative packages that include unique services and leisure activities, hotels can attract more guests, boost sales, differentiate themselves from competitors, and enhance the customer experience.

### 3 Boutique hotels

This chapter provides information about boutique hotels, including a description of the specific hotel being studied and an analysis of its competitors. Boutique hotels are renowned for their cutting-edge design, luxurious atmosphere, unique characteristics, privileged service and exclusivity.

The concept of boutique hotels dates back to the 1980s, with the Blakes Hotel in London and the Bedford Hotel in San Francisco being among the first to embody this idea. The Morgans Hotel, widely regarded as the first true boutique hotel, was established in New York City in 1984 by Ian Schrager. Boutique hotels are distinguishable by their contemporary or minimalist design and a range of amenities, offering highly personalized services that reflect the character and style of the owner, designer, or entrepreneur. (Tiffany M., 2017).

There has been a growing demand for boutique hotels as consumers are focusing more and more on the experience and emotions they will receive, rather than just the cost of services.

People choose boutique hotels for the unique and personalized experience they offer, including a stylish atmosphere, unique themes, and high-quality service. Boutique hotels typically have fewer than 150 rooms and cater to guests aged 20 to 50 with middle to upper-income levels (Anhar, 2001). They are known for their exceptional service and the ability to provide guests with an exclusive, memorable experience.

The Boutique and Lifestyle Lodging Association (BLLA) claims that boutique hotels offer a unique and personalized experience, catering to every wish of their guests and providing exceptional services, products, and experiences. These hotels differentiate themselves by offering special services that are unmatched by other types of hotels. They aim to provide guests with a memorable and unforgettable stay, often promoting community belonging through hosted events such as wine tastings, music performances, and cultural excursions (Sumona, 2022).

### 3.1 Description of the studied hotel

Hotel F6 is part of Nordic Choice Hotels and is highly rated with a 9.3 score on Booking.com (Booking, 2022). The hotel is family-owned and located in the heart of Helsinki, on Fabianinkatu 6. It opened its doors in June 2016 and now offers 76 stylish rooms in Standard, Superior, and Deluxe categories. Each room is equipped with air-conditioning, a flat-screen TV, desk, kettle, slippers, hair dryer, iron, minibar, safety deposit box, and free Wi-Fi, as well as a special tablet with WOLT access. Guests can enjoy a home-style Finnish breakfast buffet every morning, served between 7:00 – 10:00 on weekdays and 7:30 – 11:30 on weekends, using local and organic ingredients. A breakfast includes Finnish delicacies Handmade Karelian pies, porridge, yogurts, bread, homemade smoothies, eggs, cheeses, cold cuts, and a selection of coffees and teas. The hotel also has a well-equipped gym for its guests to use (HotelF6, 2022).

Hotel F6's bar, "Runar," has been recognized as one of the world's best restaurants and bars in the World's 50 Best Discovery in 2019 (Discovery, 2022). The bar is open from 5 p.m. to 11 p.m. from Monday to Thursday and from 4 p.m. to 2 a.m. on Fridays and Saturdays, featuring DJ performances on the weekends.

Hotel F6 prioritizes environmental responsibility and implements "green thinking" into its operations and beliefs.

The hotel places a strong emphasis on its personalized service, with staff that acts like family and makes guests feel at home (HotelF6, 2022). The hotel invests in its employees to provide exceptional experiences, with a team that boasts strong interpersonal and communication skills.

Hotel F6 has a solid reputation and a steady flow of guests. Its Net Promoter Score for September 2022 was 98.4, and it was named the #1 hotel in the Tripadvisor Travelers' Choice Awards for 2022. The awards are based on the reviews and opinions of travelers and diners from around the world collected over a 12-month period. According to Tripadvisor reviews, the most highly praised aspects of Hotel F6 are its central location, stylish design, friendly staff, delicious breakfast, and exceptional cocktails at the bar (Tripadvisor, 2022).

The following are examples of guest reviews that highlight the unique and exceptional services offered by Hotel F6 and the significance of memorable experiences for visitors:

*The staff found for my wife a restaurant that served bear meat (Tripadvisor, 2022).*

*Dog-friendly hotel, with a dog bed and bowls welcoming our dog (Tripadvisor, 2022).*

*It is easy to navigate, sometimes sitting playing chess in reception, then the beautiful courtyard for lounging, the hallway for cooling down, and finally the bar and breakfast room where you will always find a spot fitting your daily mood (Tripadvisor, 2022).*

*Everything in the room shouts understated luxury. There's even a tablet computer in the room where you can order drinks from the bar downstairs, book tours, and order food to be delivered from local restaurants via the Wolt app (Tripadvisor, 2022).*

*I used the gym whilst I was there, and it's small but well appointed, with a combination of cardio machines and free weights. There's also a separate workout studio for floor exercises etc (Tripadvisor, 2022).*

## **Vision and customer segment**

The vision of Hotel F6 is to deliver top-notch customer service and maintain a positive work environment. According to the General Manager of the hotel, Virkkala (2022), the goal is to offer the best customer experience possible.

The customer segment for Hotel F6 was determined by geographic, behavioral, demographic, and psychographic factors. In terms of geography, the hotel's guests used to come from countries such as Germany, Great Britain, Australia, and Sweden, but due to the pandemic, 90% are now Finnish locals. Behavioral segmentation includes guests who seek personalised, comfortable, and quality services and are environmentally conscious. Demographic segmentation includes middle-income earners, middle-aged individuals (40-50), people of all nationalities, ethnicities, and genders, as well as business travellers and solo travellers. Psychographic segmentation includes travellers who prioritise experience and value, and those looking for a rejuvenating staycation. These guests seek a personal and memorable experience, high-quality service, a home-like atmosphere, and a good price-performance ratio.

## **Additional hotel services**

Today's travelers seek hotels that offer not only top-notch services but also take into account the individual preferences of the guests making their stay personalized and memorable. In addition to the basic amenities, Hotel F6 offers a range of free and fee-based services to meet the needs of its guests. These services include paid public parking nearby, free high-speed internet, a fitness centre with a gym, dog beds and bowls, taxi service, room service, wake-up service, laundry service, and complimentary bicycles for guests to explore Helsinki.

In order to attract a wider range of guests and become more competitive, Hotel F6 has created several packages that cater to different needs. These packages include the "Hotel F6 and Allas Sea Pool" package which comes with access to the swimming and sauna facilities at Allas Sea Pool, the "Make me a Cocktail" package which offers a cocktail from the bar's menu for every adult staying, the "Cheers to your Stay" package which includes a bottle of house sparkling wine and a late check-out, the "Romantic Stay in Love" package which includes champagne, handmade chocolates, and a room service breakfast, the "Those Wonderful Slow Mornings" package which features room service breakfast and a late check-out, and the hotel also offers 20% discounts for guests who are staying for three or more nights or for wedding guests (HotelF6, 2022).

Nowadays, leisure activities is highly valued by guests. It allows for interaction between guests and various groups, promotes a closer connection to local culture, makes the most of vacation time, highlights the unique skills and abilities of participants, and creates memorable experiences. There are various forms of tourist leisure activities, such as participatory activities where guests are fully engaged (such as dancing, crafting, theatre productions, and board games), contemplative activities where guests enjoy watching (such as shows or sporting events), socio-cultural activities such as yoga classes, spa treatments, bingo, board games, and sports entertainment for those who are always looking for athletic activities (Slate, 2022).

## **3.2 Benchmarking**

The provision of superior quality services compared to competitors is crucial for hotels to establish a strategic advantage in the industry. Benchmarking is a vital method used in the hospitality sector for evaluating and incorporating successful practices. It allows for the analysis of trends, identifies areas for improvement, and helps to implement new services. Benchmarking involves comparing one's products, processes, and services to those of other companies within the same field, with the

goal of enhancing the business. This tool helps to reduce costs, increase profits, and enhance customer satisfaction (INNOVATUREBPO, 2022).

The benchmarking study was conducted in November 2022 and involved four hotels offering leisure activities and packages for guests. The information was collected from their websites. Two of the hotels were located in the center of Helsinki, while the other two were located outside of Finland but still in central locations near major attractions. All of the hotels had high ratings on Booking.com. The purpose of the benchmarking was to compare and analyze the leisure activities offerings provided by these hotels and to provide insights for the boutique Hotel F6 to improve its leisure activities offerings. The data collected was analyzed and compared to provide suggestions for improvement. The descriptions of the competitor hotels are detailed below.

The first one is the Scandic Grand Central hotel is located in the heart of Helsinki and is rated 8.9 (Fabulous) based on 2,046 reviews on Booking.com (Booking, 2022). The hotel has a classic style and features nearly 500 stylish rooms, with views of the National Theatre, Ateneum Art Museum, and the city surroundings. The hotel provides a restaurant, bar, a spacious Grand Ballroom banquet hall, conference rooms, and event rooms. Breakfast can be enjoyed in Brasserie Grand or outside in the courtyard. Room service breakfast is available until 9 PM. The hotel offers hybrid events and streaming services, as well as coworking spaces with 24/7 access and private office spaces operating from 8.00 to 18.00 and providing unlimited coffee and tea. Additionally, the hotel has a sauna for both men and women, a well-equipped gym, and a yoga room with free mats. Guests can borrow bicycles or walking poles for outdoor activities and get tips for jogging or walking routes. (Scandic, 2022). The hotel has a partnership with SaaS company Touristy, offering guests the option to book a variety of customized and private tours and activities directly from the hotel's website. The hotel also offers In-Room training videos, in partnership with Casall, for guests to bring wellness into their lifestyle.

Touristy and Scandic aim to showcase the top experiences and activities Finland has to offer to visitors of all backgrounds. Guests can pick from a range of options including thrilling adventures, helicopter tours in Helsinki, boating and sailing excursions, culinary experiences, sightseeing, wellness activities, winter sports, and even unique experiences like spending a day with Wolfdogs near Rovaniemi. Both English and Finnish language tours, activities, and attractions are available. When a Scandic guest purchases a service from a travel experience provider, the supplier will pay a commission (Jackson, 2021).

The second benchmark is Klaus K hotel, which is the first design hotel in Helsinki and a part of the Nordic Choice Hotels chain and Preferred Hotels & Resorts in Finland. The hotel is situated in the



center of the city, close to various cultural attractions. Based on 1,797 reviews on Booking.com, Klaus K has earned an impressive 8.0 rating, labelled as "Very good" (Booking, 2022). It offers 171 diverse rooms and features an Italian restaurant, Sky Terrace with stunning views of the city, a casual Italian-designed Klaus K Bar and Lounge, a gym, and various event spaces suitable for weddings, family gatherings, business meetings, fashion shows, art exhibitions, and other events. Guests can pre-order snacks, drinks, and flowers for their hotel room through the hotel's website.

Guests at Klaus K have the opportunity to stay in special rooms designed in collaboration with prominent Finnish artists and designers. The Nympheus Suite takes guests on a journey to the early 20th-century Art Deco world, featuring a design collaboration with the well-known British designer brand GP&J Baker and Finland's leading fabric retailer Eurokangas. The Katja Tukiainen suite immerses guests in the vibrant artwork of Finnish artist and cartoonist Katja Tukiainen, and comes with a bottle of champagne, speciality sweets, and a signed card from the artist. The Riiko Sakkinen Art Room showcases "The Hong Kong Curry Flavor Cup Noodle Robot", an artwork by Finnish artist Riiko Sakkinen exploring consumer culture and politics, and guests staying in this room will receive a painting from the artist. The Jani Leinonen Art Room features tattooed heart artwork on the walls by Finnish artist Jani Leinonen, and guests can select a colour and have their names painted in the same style. The Nature room, designed by Pro Finlandia medal-winning Finnish designer Harri Koskinen, takes guests into a forest landscape and is called Urban Nature by Harri Koskinen. Other rooms are inspired by the Finnish epic poem, Kalevala (KlausK, 2022).

The Klaus K hotel offers various packages and leisure activities for its guests. On Christmas Eve, the hotel invites customers to enjoy dinner in the Klaus K Dine space. Guests are encouraged to bring a gift and leave it in a gift bag near the restaurant door, where Santa will surprise them with a gift in return. The hotel also offers a Christmas package that includes a Christmas Eve dinner, a buffet breakfast, and access to the gym. For information on winter activities, Finnish Christmas traditions, Christmas markets, and saunas, guests can consult the My Helsinki website through a link on the hotel's website. The hotel has a partnership with the charity organization Hope, and guests can donate gifts for families in need at Christmas by placing gifts under a tree in the hotel.

In the summertime, the hotel collaborated with the Finnish brewery Pien, offering a "Taste of Pien" package for two that includes a one-night stay, buffet breakfast, four craft beers per person, and a discount at the Pien Shop in Helsinki. The hotel also donates 10% of all "Taste of Pien" packages sold to Trasek ry, a trans person's human rights organization. The hotel has a collaboration with the Asian restaurant Lily Lee's, located in Helsinki, offering a Klaus K X Lily Lee dinner package that includes a one-night stay, breakfast, and a signature tasting menu. The "Sparkling Night" package

includes a one-night stay, a bottle of sparkling wine, a buffet breakfast, and access to the gym. The Klaus K staycation package includes a one-night stay, dinner for two, a glass of sparkling wine, and breakfast. The hotel also offers a "Tom of Finland" package, honoring the famous Finnish artist and master of homoerotic art, Touko Laaksonen. The package includes a one-night stay, buffet breakfast, glass of wine or beer, towels and bed made with Tom of Finland-themed linens by Finnish textile manufacturer Finlayson, and a Tom of Finland goodie bag. Guests can also book a guided walking tour, the "Tom of Finland Experience," in English. The hotel donates 10% of all Tom of Finland packages sold to the nonprofit Tom of Finland Foundation (ToFF) (KlausK, 2022). Klaus K has collaboration with one of the day spas in Finland Helsinki Day Spa (HDS, 2023).

The third hotel to compare with is Madrid Gran Hotel Inglés, a luxury boutique hotel located in the heart of Madrid that offers an unforgettable experience with a combination of urban sophistication and 1920s glamour. With 459 exceptional reviews on Booking.com (Booking, 2022). The hotel has 48 elegant rooms with luxurious art deco interiors designed by American architect and designer David Rockwell. The hotel features a restaurant serving traditional and innovative cuisine, as well as LobByto, the best lobby bar in Madrid, where guests can enjoy authentic food and drinks. Jazzy cocktail evenings with live music are held every Thursday, Friday, and Saturday night, where guests can order tapas, small dishes, and cocktails. The hotel also offers a Great English Tea Service every afternoon from 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM, which includes English tea, mini sandwiches, homemade pastries, and cava, champagne, or a cocktail. On Sundays, guests can enjoy Show-Brunch with live music, shows, cocktails, champagne, and food at LobByto in the main lobby area.

The hotel offers guests the latest technology from Technogym in its fitness center with personal training programs, among which are pilates, yoga, performance running, stretching, and various wellness treatments and products. The hotel has multiple event spaces, including the Literary salon with a 19th-century atmosphere and a fireplace, two private halls, and two meeting rooms with modern equipment.

The hotel's concierge service aims to make guests' dreams a reality, including arranging private car transfers, tours, events, and reservations at Michelin-star restaurants (Granhotelingles, 2022).

The concierge service aims to create a customized and unique experience for guests by saving their time and providing assistance with various personal services. This can include household

management, transportation, vacation planning, and more. A hotel concierge can help with restaurant and spa recommendations and reservations, transportation bookings, special event tickets, and any other requests the guest may have (Pahwa, 2022).

Gran Hotel Inglés provides top-notch private transportation options for its guests. The concierge service can arrange transfers through the hotel's private fleet or guests can choose to rent a luxury car like a Ferrari, Maserati, or Lamborghini. The hotel also offers private tours with a personal driver and guide, showcasing the best of Spanish vineyards, historic sites like El Escorial and Ávila, and even private flamenco lessons. For sports fans, Gran Hotel Inglés offers a Bernabeu Tour of Real Madrid's stadium, which includes access to the Presidential Balcony, player's dressing room, and museum, among other places. Tour and game tickets are available for purchase at the hotel's concierge desk.

Gran Hotel Inglés welcomes pets and offers luxurious amenities for them. The hotel has a special deal with the Galería Canalejas, a luxury shopping centre located nearby, which includes a discount on the room rate, breakfast, and a personal shopper service, among other perks. The hotel's website provides information on nearby historical sites and also features a blog with articles on events, activities, shopping, and more in Madrid. The blog provides useful tips for leisure activities, such as weekend plans, movie nights, kid-friendly events, Christmas markets, scenic viewpoints, and the best museums in the city (Granhotelingles, 2022).

The fourth hotel is The Benjamin Hotel New York which is a 5-star boutique hotel located in the heart of Manhattan. According to reviews on Booking.com, it has an overall rating of 7.6, which is considered "Good." (Booking, 2022). The hotel boasts 209 rooms with views of the skyline and is housed in a Neo-Romanesque building that is a landmark in New York City. The hotel offers various amenities such as a library bar, fitness center, spa, and 24/7 business center. The Benjamin also provides additional services to assist guests with leisure activities, including a "Holiday Glow & Go Girls Getaway" package in collaboration with Nordstrom NYC. The package includes beauty services, blow-outs, manicures/pedicures, shopping gift cards, a private VIP concierge, and a minimum two-night luxury stay, along with a \$75 Uber credit.

The Benjamin Hotel has partnered with On Location Tours for the "Merry and Bright" package, which invites guests to take a guided tour of the city's holiday lights and movie locations. The package includes two tickets for the tour and complimentary hot chocolate. The hotel also offers a "Discover the Best of New York City" package with a \$30 gift card per stay. The "Rest & Renew" programme offers guests solutions for a good night's sleep, including a curated pillow menu, meditation options,

sleep aids, and 24/7 sleep support. The hotel's partnership with the Bedside Reading program gives guests complimentary access to e-books, podcasts, audiobooks, and physical books. The hotel also offers the "Small Business Perks" program and the "Work Remote with Us" program, which provides discounts, internet, mini bar credit, and other amenities for individuals or companies booking 25 or more room nights per year.

The Benjamin Hotel also features spacious meeting spaces and VIP suites with terraces for private events. The "Playtime Breaks" and "Recharge and Refocus" programs aim to increase attendees' engagement and energy during breaks. The hotel provides activities such as modelling clay, board games, and coloring books to help attendees relax and enhance focus. The "Rest & Renew" consultation by sleep medicine expert Dr. Rebecca Robbins is also available for attendees, as well as a celebrity appearance by Geoffrey Zakarian, which includes greetings, book signings, gifts, cooking demonstrations, and more. The hotel's website provides a neighbourhood guide to help guests discover new places to explore, including Michelin-starred restaurants, bars, shops, museums, parks, and other attractions in NYC (Benjaminhotel, 2022).

The table below provides the summary of all four benchmarks (Solas, 2023).

Hotel	Location	Rating (Booking.com)	Key features	Packages and leisure activities options
Scandic Grand Central	Hel-sinki	8.9 (Fabulous) based on 2,046 reviews	500 stylish rooms, restaurant, bar, spacious Grand Ballroom, conference rooms, event rooms, coworking spaces, sauna, gym, yoga room, outdoor activities, hybrid events, streaming services, tours, in-room training videos, room service breakfast until 9 PM	Partnership with Touristy for customized and private tours, wellness activities
Klaus K	Hel-sinki	8.0 (Very good) based on 1,797 reviews	171 diverse rooms, Italian restaurant, Sky Terrace, Klaus K Bar and Lounge, gym, event spaces, pre-order options	Christmas Eve dinner, Christmas package, winter activities, Finnish Christmas traditions, summer packages with Pien

				brewery and Lily Lee's, Sparkling Night package, Klaus K staycation package, charity partnership with Hope
Madrid Gran Hotel Inglés	Madrid	459 exceptional reviews	48 elegant rooms with luxurious art deco interiors designed by American architect and designer David Rockwell, a restaurant, the best lobby bar in Madrid, Technogym in its fitness centre, hotel's concierge service, luxurious amenities for pets	Jazzy cocktail evenings with live music, Great English Tea Service, Show-Brunch, the blog with useful tips for leisure activities
The Benjamin Hotel	New York	7.6 (Good)	209 rooms with views of the skyline, a library bar, fitness centre, spa, and 24/7 business centre	Packages: Holiday Glow & Go Girls Getaway, Merry and Bright, Discover the Best of New York City, Rest & Renew, Small Business Perks, Work Remote with Us, Playtime Breaks, Recharge and Refocus

According to the benchmarking, competitor hotels offer several packages and leisure activities that are not available at Hotel F6. All of the compared hotels provide conference and meeting services, as well as a 24-hour front desk, free high-speed internet, buffet breakfast, sightseeing tours, pet-friendliness, concierge service, conference and meeting facilities, a gym, and various packages and leisure activities. Each of the compared hotels also has a bar and restaurant.

In summary, each of the theoretical frameworks has been chosen to provide trendy suggestions to the hotel to make leisure activities offerings planned, meet the criteria of different target groups, and improve customer experience. In the next chapter, the author will move to planning and execution of the product.

## 4 Planning and execution of the product

This chapter presents planning and execution of the product. The author begins by the project management, then methodology where she explains method picked, data collection and data analysis, moving to the limitation and risks and explaining what they are. Finally moving to summary of product result and evaluation. Actual product can be found in the appendix 1.

### 4.1 Project Management

The author was passionate about working on their thesis every day and utilized the five phases of project management identified by the Project Management Institute (PMI):

1. conception and initiation,
2. planning,
3. execution,
4. performance/monitoring,
5. project closure (Project-Management.com, 2022).

The first phase of the thesis project was challenging and took nearly five months to establish the title of the work, define specific goals and objectives, and create a theoretical framework. The author received guidance from their supervisor and the hotel manager during this stage. In the second phase (planning), the author struggled with time management, underestimated the timeline, and faced self-doubt and feeling overwhelmed. The third phase (execution) took three months, and the author gathered data through interviews and analysis. The results obtained helped the author to create a product that would be interesting to the hotel. Phase 4 (performance/monitoring) required additional time to finalize the product, and the author sought feedback from their supervisor, hotel manager, and mentor throughout the process. This phase took almost a month. Finally, in phase 5 (project closure), the author spent three weeks fine-tuning the product, editing the work, and receiving feedback from the supervisor and commissioning party.

The author had more positive experiences during their thesis journey than negative ones, despite some challenges with time management and physical wellness. Taking breaks and finding time for

physical activity can be crucial in maintaining productivity and preventing burnout. Using time management tools like Trello or Gantt charts can also help with organization and planning. Overall, it sounds like the thesis project was a valuable personal and academic experience for the author.

## **4.2 Methodology**

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the research framework for the study aimed at creating innovative ideas and suggestions to enhance the leisure organization for guests at Boutique Hotel F6 in Helsinki. The research approach adopted in this study is qualitative, utilizing semi-structured interviews with three employees of the hotel. The data was gathered over a three-day period from December 15th to 17th 2022 to gain the employees' perspectives on key aspects related to the theoretical framework of the thesis. The semi-structured interview method was chosen as it allows for a more in-depth examination of the issue and the development of cutting-edge proposals and recommendations for improving the guests' leisure experience at the hotel. The next subchapter will describe the details of the research methodology.

### **4.2.1 Qualitative semi-structured interviews**

The author employed qualitative research method to gather qualitative data from the staff of Boutique Hotel F6 in Helsinki.

The researcher selects the research method type based on the objectives, aim, and nature of the subject, as well as the research questions, to collect, identify, and analyze information. It is critical to select an appropriate research methodology in order to conduct an accurate and successful study (Mohajan, 2021).

This research was conducted to deepen knowledge about the current state of leisure activities, learn about previous requests for leisure activities from hotel guests, analyze prospects in this field, and find a way of creating proposals and recommendations for enhancing the overall guest experience through the organization of leisure activities.

Qualitative research is a sort of social science research that gathers and analyses non-numerical data to derive meaning from it in order to better understand social life via the study of targeted populations or places (Crossman, 2020)

Qualitative data always use for understanding experiences and opinions, it gauges how people feel and why they take certain actions. The most significant advantage of qualitative data is that it provides rich, in-depth insights, and allows one to investigate the context surrounding a specific topic (Stevens, 2022).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the hotel's manager, sales manager, and front desk duty manager in English to assess the current state of leisure activities, gather expert experience and opinions, in-depth insights and understand leisure requests made by guests. The interview guide consisted of 17 open-ended questions, which were asked to all participants in a flexible order. This form of questions enables further inquiries which will be unique for every particular interview (Roulston, 2010) The participants were informed about the recording of the interviews, which were later transcribed into a written document after obtaining their consent. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes, and it took about two hours to transcribe one interview.

The questions for the interview were designed based on a theory to collect data that will be useful in generating creative ideas and suggestions for enhancing the leisure experience of guests at Boutique Hotel F6. The main goal of the study was to respond to the primary research inquiry: What trendy, out-of-the-ordinary leisure activities will be interesting and relevant for boutique hotel guests? The study also tackled the following secondary questions to support this main inquiry: What can the hotel offer to guests to create a "wow" experience when planning their leisure activities? What leisure activities does the hotel currently offer and how can they be improved? What is the current customer experience of the leisure activities offered at the hotel? What unusual requests for leisure have hotel guests made in the past? What trends may impact the development and improvement of leisure activities?

In the following chapter, the results of the qualitative interviews are presented and analyzed. Questions of the interviews are in the appendix 2.

### **4.3 Results**

The interviews consisted of 17 questions covering four topics from the theoretical framework: leisure, trends, experience, and additional services. The questions can be found in the appendix 2. The first two questions were about the respondent's job role, responsibilities, and work hours at the hotel. The next five questions focused on leisure to gauge the respondents' views on its importance for hotel guests and to gather suggestions on how to improve the leisure organization. The next three questions aimed to identify the relevant leisure trends. The following three questions focused on the experience to understand the significance of emotions and feelings for guests and the relevance of



four different aspects of an experience for hotel guests. The final four questions were about additional entertainment services to gain insight into the respondents' vision on services that could create an unforgettable experience for guests. The answers to the questions are presented in the table below.

Table 1. Interview result summary (Solas, 2023)

	1	2	3
Job description	Sale manager: group reservations, reporting of reservations, social media, marketing.	General manager: Day-To-Day operations, financial responsibilities.	Front desk duty manager: check-in and check-out procedures, coordination of exceptional services for guests.
Work experience	Since 2018.	Since the opening 2016, working as a general manager for the last 11 months.	Since 2018.
<b>Themes</b>			
Leisure:	<p>Leisure is everything that is not related to work: meeting with friends, good time with yourself.</p> <p>Guests can enjoy their time staying in comfortable rooms, cozy bar, gym, and the hotel's objective is to help to organize leisure: book sauna, cruise, tours, or just give right recommendations.</p> <p>From leisure, guests can gain pleasure, happiness, personal growth, self-care (such as enjoying time</p>	<p>Leisure is no rush, no strict timetable, rest, new experiences.</p> <p>Guests can feel at peace and relaxed, free from the stress of a hurry, when they stay in a comfortable room with top-quality beds.</p> <p>Guests experience pleasure, relaxation, and social</p>	<p>Leisure is one's free time without conducting any work, it is relaxing and having fun.</p> <p>Guests can enjoy their time in the comfortable rooms and the hotel staff is always available to assist with any questions.</p> <p>Guests receive personal rewards such as relaxation,</p>

	<p>without kids or visiting a spa), creating shared memories, meeting new people, and feeling a sense of belonging to a common cause.</p>	<p>interactions through interactions with other guests, locals, and hotel staff.</p>	<p>holiday experiences, and a break from stress, as well as social benefits like opportunities to meet new people, learn about new cultures, and present themselves.</p>
<p>Partner- ships</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helsinki card, which provides transportation within Helsinki, access to attractions and museums, and discounts on dining and shopping.</li> <li>• Helsinki Bike Tour.</li> <li>• Allas Sea Pool.</li> </ul>	<p>WOLT for food delivery Hotel U14 for conference facilities.</p>	<p>The hotel used to cooperate with a design museum.</p>
<p>Sugges- tions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• dinner package in collaboration with hotel U 14 (dinner in the restaurant Version)</li> <li>• Collaboration with Nuuksio National Park “Finnish Nature Centre Haltia” to provide tour packages.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• spa treatments</li> <li>• massage in the rooms,</li> <li>• hairdresser’s services,</li> <li>• manicure.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tours in Porvoo, Lapland (riding husky sledges),</li> <li>• Nuuksio National Park,</li> <li>• dinner packages,</li> <li>• some new experiences in or out of Helsinki.</li> </ul>

Trends:	<p>It is crucial to stay updated on current trends and apply them appropriately. Not all trends are suitable for the hotel and using too many can lead to confusion for guests and detract from the hotel's established image and values.</p> <p>In order to effectively incorporate trending elements into the business, the hotel may seek to enhance their marketing and advertising efforts specifically for trends that align with the hotel's image and values.</p> <p>The hotel can benefit from leisure trends by offering a local experience for guests. This can involve connecting them with locals, visiting restaurants, small cafes, and going on walks. The hotel staff can suggest places to visit. Other popular trends include ecotourism, staycations, travel for women, combining business and</p>	<p>It is crucial to stay up-to-date with the latest trends and assess their relevance to the hotel. If a trend is popular and in demand, the hotel should determine if it aligns with their image and values and consider implementing it in their offerings.</p> <p>The hotel stays updated on trends by reading relevant articles and magazines, maintaining communication with customers, and keeping track of what's happening not just in the Helsinki market but in general.</p> <p>One trend that emerged during the pandemic was staycations. To offer augmented reality, the hotel should form a partnership with a capable provider. Other popular trends that would benefit the hotel include bleisure travel, wellness tourism, and ecotourism</p>	<p>Staying current with trends is crucial for the success of the hospitality industry, as they greatly influence daily operations. By staying up to date, a hotel can add value and attract more customers. It is also important to try out new trends and see if they fit with the hotel's image and values.</p> <p>The hotel tracks trends by monitoring social media, staying informed about seasonal and public holidays such as Mother's Day and Christmas.</p> <p>The hotel can benefit from various leisure trends such as offering a local experience for guests, promoting ecotourism by taking care of the environment, and accommodating staycations. They can also tap into the growing market of female travel, bleisure travel, and wellness tourism. However, the hotel does not have its own spa, which may limit its appeal</p>
Leisure trends			

that work for the hotel	<p>leisure, educational tourism, and active tourism. While the hotel does not currently have augmented reality or virtual reality, these could be potential opportunities for the future. For wellness tourism, the hotel should partner with someone who has a well-equipped gym. A significant trend in the industry is a focus on the environment, and the hotel has already made efforts in this area.</p>		<p>to wellness tourists. They can also cater to educational tourism. The use of augmented reality and virtual reality may be considered if there are promising ideas.</p>
Experience	<p>While staying in the hotel, guests always experience some emotions and feelings. They will return to the hotel if they have a positive experience.</p> <p>The hotel can provide entertainment experiences for guests through events in the bar, such as Christmas markets in the yard and birthday celebrations. An educational experience can be offered through a cocktail school and providing information about Helsinki through</p>	<p>Guests do not purchase products or services, they purchase emotions. The overall experience is influenced by all the little details...</p> <p>The hotel can provide entertainment experiences for guests through artists or musical performances in the bar. An educational experience can be offered through yoga courses, which could be interesting during the summer or on Sundays. The hotel can</p>	<p>Guests return because of the positive emotions and experiences they have, not just because of the accommodation itself.</p> <p>The hotel can provide entertainment experiences for guests through various activities, such as watching TV with Chromecast, movie nights, DJ performances in the bar, attending concerts and theaters. The hotel may offer educational experiences in the future,</p>

	<p>tablet devices in the rooms and a city map app. The hotel can also offer an aesthetic experience through its stylish and elegant décor, including nice pictures in the bar and rooms. An escapist experience was offered in the past with a mobile phone escape game created by an Escape room in Helsinki specifically for KAMP Collection Hotels. Packages can be designed to include elements from different areas of experience.</p>	<p>also offer an aesthetic experience through permanent pictures displayed in the hotel. An escapist experience can be arranged for guests upon request, including activities such as fishing.</p>	<p>such as guided tours, cooking courses, utilizing its space in collaboration with schools like Helsinki Design School, or hosting conferences (although there are limitations as the hotel does not have meeting rooms). An aesthetic experience can be offered through museum tours and in-house art exhibitions, as well as utilizing the hotel's courtyard for events. An escapist experience can be offered through an escape package in partnership with an escape room and can incorporate elements from various areas of experience.</p>
Additional services	<p>The hotel can create unforgettable experiences for guests through offering services such as baby showers, room treatments, decorations, and drinks in the room. Packages can also be designed to enhance the overall experience. In the future, the hotel can improve its selection of board games, which are especially popular with children. Guests</p>	<p>The hotel can add extra value for guests by offering discounts in local shops (such as Marimekko), airport transportation, and recommendations from hotel staff, such as local guides. The hotel should consider offering additional services specifically for domestic travelers to differentiate itself from other hotels that only offer bed and breakfast. The hotel has</p>	<p>The staff of the hotel provide personalized service to guests, helping them find what they need and making it easy to customize services to their needs. The small size of the hotel makes it flexible and able to quickly adapt to changing customer demands.</p> <p>Having personalized and unique additional services and leisure activities can at-</p>

	<p>often inquire about saunas, and hotel staff can provide recommendations for saunas in Helsinki. The hotel can diversify its leisure activities by considering customer segmentation and providing offerings for different groups, such as families, couples, kids, older people, and business travelers.</p>	<p>implemented new technologies, such as the STEP tours application for automated digital guided tours and Chromecast, to enhance the guest experience. Before the pandemic, the hotel organized a Christmas market in its courtyard and may consider hosting similar events in the future.</p> <p>The hotel strives to cater to the diverse needs and interests of its guests by offering a range of leisure activities, such as renting a helicopter or submarine and arranging special birthday greetings by famous artists. Spa facilities are also a popular request among guests. The hotel follows trends and tailors its services to different target groups, such as families (with collaborations with amusement parks like Linnanmaki), eco-travelers, couples, and business people.</p>	<p>tract more guests and differentiate the hotel from its competitors. Offering packages for popular sport events, concerts and other special events can create a memorable experience for guests. The hotel's staff being helpful in finding what guests need and offering personalized services, also adds to the overall guest experience. Additionally, promoting the hotel's leisure activities through marketing can help increase its visibility and attract more guests, especially during slower seasons.</p>
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Based on the analysis of the transcripts, it appears that all respondents have a good understanding of the importance of providing a personalized experience for guests and how this can be achieved through offering leisure activities. The respondents emphasized the need for the hotel to cater to

different segments, such as families, couples, business people, and eco-travelers, and to follow the latest trends in the industry. Some of the ideas mentioned by the respondents include offering yoga classes, cocktail schools, art exhibitions, and escape packages. The respondents also recognized the importance of offering value-added services such as airport transportation and discounts at local shops. Overall, the respondents appeared to have a clear understanding of the importance of providing a unique and personalized experience for guests, which can help the hotel stand out among its competitors.

The theory highlights that boutique hotels should offer exceptional and personalized guest services (Tiffany M., 2017). During the interviews, the respondents mentioned that Hotel F6 excels in offering personalized service and high-end amenities. They also talked about the helpfulness of the hotel staff and the uniqueness and value of staying in a small hotel. Not only did the guests appreciate the comfortable rooms, but also sought assistance from the staff to plan their leisure activities. The hotel provides guests with amenities such as a TV with Chromecast technology, newspapers, and information about local attractions, restaurants, and other entertainment options. Guests can also attend cocktail school at the hotel bar and enjoy music played by a DJ in the evening. However, these services may not be sufficient to fully meet the guests' needs for diverse leisure and recreation activities.

The research and theory both support the idea that the hotels should place a high value on unique, personalized, and exceptional experiences (Walker, 2018). This is reflected in the respondents' comments, who agree that offering leisure activities is important. The hotel is already collaborating with local businesses to provide guests with a one-of-a-kind experience, but there is potential for further collaboration with local restaurants, national parks, spas, and beauty specialists to further enhance the guests' experience at the hotel.

The employees of the hotel recognize the importance of keeping up with the current trends in the hospitality industry. They understand that not all trends are suitable for the hotel, and it is the responsibility of the manager to assess which ones would align with the hotel's image and values. Based on the interviews, some of the prevalent trends that should not be ignored are local experiences, staycations, women-centric services, wellness tourism, business-leisure travel, educational tourism, and active tourism. The hotel should partner with organizations that specialize in virtual and augmented reality and wellness. Furthermore, the hotel places a significant emphasis on sustainability and has already taken steps towards environmental sustainability, indicating that ecotourism is a rising trend that the hotel should focus on.

Based on the research, it is evident that the hotel is aware of the importance of staying up-to-date with trends in the hospitality industry. However, the hotel can enhance its marketing efforts and tailor

its promotions to seasonal events and public holidays in order to make its offerings even more relevant to guests.

It is clear from the answers of the respondents that emotions and feelings play a crucial role in enhancing the customer experience. This aligns with the theory that states that customer satisfaction goes beyond just providing standard services and adding emotional and personal touches. In the case of Hotel F6, the respondents believe that guests can experience different realms of the experience like entertainment, education, aesthetics, and escape. Entertainment can be provided through events in the bar, TV or games, concerts and theaters. Educational experiences can be provided through courses, masterclasses, conferences, and guided tours. Esthetic experiences can be provided through museum tours, in-house art exhibitions, and outdoor exhibitions during summer. Escapist experiences can be provided through cooperation with escape rooms or arranging different activities for guests. As it was said in the theoretical part, to provide the best experience, the hotel could offer a package that includes elements from all four realms.

The results emphasize the importance of additional entertainment services in creating unforgettable experiences and providing extra value to guests. All of the respondents agree that the hotel should diversify these services by staying current with trends and selecting those that are appropriate for the hotel. The findings suggest that the hotel should focus on its target groups to attract more guests. They also reveal that guests often inquire about leisure activities such as saunas, spa treatments, Lapland husky tours, concert tickets, and restaurants, as well as unique and personalized requests. Additionally, some respondents believe that packages with leisure activities can help the hotel differentiate itself from competitors and attract more guests, especially during slower seasons.

The results of the survey and the theory framework both indicate that offering leisure activities is crucial for creating unforgettable experiences for customers and providing high levels of customer satisfaction.

In the following chapter, the limitations and potential challenges will be evaluated.

#### **4.4 Limitations and Risks**

This study has limitations. To provide more comprehensive suggestions and recommendations to the hotel, the research needs to be more extensive. The author, who was conducting qualitative research for the first time, acknowledged the lack of previous experience. According to Robson (2002, 176), the reliability of qualitative research depends on how thorough, careful, and honest the research is conducted. The results of the study would have been more comprehensive if the author had taken into account the views of hotel guests. A guest survey using a quantitative method, such



as a questionnaire, would have increased the validity of the research, but the hotel declined to allow it to avoid disturbing guests. Additionally, fewer interviews were conducted than originally planned due to the high season. Despite these limitations, the author still collected enough relevant and reliable information to achieve the goal of the bachelor's thesis.

The hotel F6 does not have many opportunities for leisure activities and expanding its offerings, such as adding a restaurant, spa, or meeting rooms.

#### **4.5 Product results and evaluation**

The "Serious Leisure Perspective" (Stebbins, 2014) helps in comprehending the essence of leisure and how hotel leisure activities contribute to the growth of guests. The concepts of "Project-based Leisure" and "Serious Leisure" were used to create ideas for enhancing leisure. According to the theoretical framework, leisure activities have the power to shape and enhance a person's life, providing both personal and social benefits. Research shows that individuals attain social and personal rewards from leisure activities such as joy, happiness, self-improvement, self-care, creating memories, meeting new people, and feeling a sense of belonging. In light of this, product development focused on "Project-based Leisure" and "Serious Leisure".

As mentioned before, following trends is crucial and hotel managers should aim to incorporate them in their leisure activities offered to guests. The study shows that hotel trends are continually being monitored. However, not all trends can be applied by hotels, as the research results highlighted the most appropriate trends for the hotel during product development.

It is noteworthy to mention that Pine and Gilmore's (1998) four realms of experience had an impact on the creation of the final product. The product were made taking into account at least one of the realms outlined in the theoretical framework, as well as the opinions of those interviewed. According to the participants, the optimal experience can be achieved by creating a package that incorporates all four realms, forming a "sweet spot."

The significance of additional services in the hotel experience and the examination of the current state of leisure activities offered at Hotel F6, as discussed in the theoretical part of the work, including the views of those interviewed about leisure activities and the preferences of guests, aided in answering the questions of the study. These certainly helped in the development of the final product.

All proposals made by the participants for organizing the leisure activities of guests at the hotel were also taken into account in the creation of the product.

Furthermore, benchmarking results are essential in identifying trends and competitors, as well as in improving the quality of services. The author collected data and made comparisons to apply them in the final product, which gave a better understanding of how to create the product.

This information played a role in the development of the work. The author believes that the study will contribute to the improvement of leisure activities offerings for guests at Boutique Hotel F6 in Helsinki. As demonstrated in previous chapters, the majority of the theoretical framework supports the findings of the study. The author also believes that the selected theoretical frameworks have been instrumental in achieving the final result. The final product can be found in Appendix 1.

The dissertation aimed to answer the question of what unique leisure, trendy activities would be appealing to guests of a boutique hotel. Through research, the author discovered what the hotel has to offer their guests to create a "wow" experience and also identified different groups of guests who stay at the hotel. The author learned about guests' unusual requests for leisure activities from conducted interviews and identified trends that could influence the development of leisure activities through research. Based on the findings, the author developed a product to enhance customer satisfaction and provide a personalized experience. The research helped to create a "wow" factor for guests when planning their hotel stay. The last chapter presents the process of the thesis and the outcomes of the learning experience.

## **5 Discussion**

This chapter discusses the whole thesis process and learning outcomes.

### **5.1 The thesis process**

During the thesis process, the author utilized relevant skills and knowledge acquired during the Bachelor studies and reviewed various materials. The thesis writing process was both challenging and enjoyable. The idea for the thesis started in March 2022 during the Thesis 1 course, but the actual work began in June 2022. It took longer to complete the thesis than expected and was originally planned to be finished by October 2022. The process of forming the theory framework was demanding, taking place in the summer and autumn of 2022. The survey was conducted in December 2022 and the remaining work was completed in March 2023. The overall experience of working on the thesis was challenging, especially due to a lack of prior experience. The study required a lot of focus and perseverance. At times, the author struggled with writing certain chapters and felt unsure, but guidance from the thesis advisor was very helpful. The thesis writing process provided an excellent opportunity for the author to expand their knowledge of the hotel industry, potentially serving as a starting point for a future career.

### **5.2 Learning outcomes**

The objective of this thesis was to offer practical recommendations to Hotel F6 regarding the planning and implementation of leisure activities that cater to the diverse needs of different target groups. It also served as a learning opportunity for the researcher to gain more knowledge in the field. The process of writing this thesis taught the researcher valuable skills, such as time management and effective writing techniques. The researcher discovered that for large and time-consuming projects in the future, it is essential to allocate more time and stick to deadlines to perform efficiently and decrease stress. All the knowledge gained during the thesis process will be useful in future projects and career. The author was given the chance to comprehend the writing process and learn the product-based thesis paper framework and how to work with it during the thesis process.

It can be concluded that having innovative leisure activities for guests in hotels plays a significant role in creating a positive atmosphere and enhancing the guests' experience, leading to repeat visits and improving the hotel's reputation and income. Additionally, the hotel should expand its collaboration with other companies to provide a wider range of activities to guests and increase revenue by receiving commissions from those companies. The list of activities for recommendations to guests, based on both the theoretical and practical aspects of the work, which incircle the modern trends of ecotourism, staycation, female solo travel, bleisure travel, educational tourism, wellness tourism,

and active tourism in Appendix 1. The product includes a total of 15 pages. To protect sensitive information, the provides a sample of two pages. The Commissioner company insist on exclusive access to the complete list.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. The list of activities for recommendations to guests based on the theoretical and practical aspects of the work.

Company	Activities	Details	Included	Price	Target group
<p><b>Eco-conscious helicopter tours:</b> The only helicopter company in Helsinki to receive the Sustainable Travel Finland certification. We offer private Citycopter flights for travel between any locations within the Nordic region and for airport transfers. The cost of the flight varies based on the type of helicopter and the number of individuals travelling.</p> <p><a href="mailto:info@helsinkicitycopter.com">info@helsinkicitycopter.com</a>  <a href="https://www.helsinkicitycopter.com/">https://www.helsinkicitycopter.com/</a>  +358 (0)10 200 7950 (9.00-18.00)</p> <p><b>REDRIB experience:</b> archipelago tours, survival suit swimming, ice floating.  <a href="https://redrib.fi/en/index.html">https://redrib.fi/en/index.html</a>  <a href="mailto:info@redrib.fi">info@redrib.fi</a>  +358 40 500 5271</p>	<p><b><u>Nature and active tourism:</u></b></p> <p><b>Private flight to see city sights and Nordic views</b> (archipelago and natural forests)</p>		<p>a 25-minute helicopter flight, with complimentary champagne, drinks and snacks onboard.</p>	<p>6 p / 200 € per person  5 p / 240 € per person  4 p / 250 € per person  3 / 280 € per person  1-2 p / 365 € per person</p>	<p>Families, couples, <u>business</u>, <u>people</u>, and eco-travelers</p>
	<p><b>A flight above Helsinki and archipelago with a cruise on a private yacht back to Helsinki.</b></p>	<p>On a secluded private island, a range of Finnish delicacies is presented on a natural rock table, accompanied by a bottle of champagne. You will then return to the city around midnight with a 1-hour ride.</p>	<p>30-minute helicopter flight, and a two <u>hours</u> cruise yacht, complimentary drinks and snacks during the flight.</p>	<p>12 p / 507 € per person  11 p / 553 € per person  10 p / 608 € per person  9 p / 676 € per person  8 p / 760 € per person  7 p / 869 € per person  6 p / 825 € per person  5 p / 990 € per person  4 p / 1237 € per person  3 p / 1650 € per person  2 p / 2475 € per person</p>	<p>Families, couples, <u>business</u>, <u>people</u>, and eco-travelers</p>
	<p><b>Redrib sunset lounge experience.</b> Private Tornado Multipurpose RIB drive to own Sunset Lounge.</p>		<p>Boat ride, passenger equipment for the drive, floatation suit or jacket, life vest, speed goggles, guide, private own island, archipelago snacks, 6 hours.</p>	<p>850 € per 2 persons</p>	<p>Couples, <u>business</u>, <u>people</u>, and eco-travelers</p>

Company	Activities	Details	Included	Price	Target group
<p><b>EMS training studio in Helsinki (electro muscular stimulation)</b></p> <p>Mannerheimintie 40, 00100 Helsinki  <a href="https://tekfit.fi/ems-personal-training-in-helsinki/">https://tekfit.fi/ems-personal-training-in-helsinki/</a></p> <p><b>Helsinki Wellness Center</b> is a wellness center equipped with professional staff that offers complete body care.</p> <p><a href="https://helsinkiwellnesscenter.fi/wellsemoy@gmail.com">https://helsinkiwellnesscenter.fi/wellsemoy@gmail.com</a>  +358 40 160 77 77  from 10:00 to 20:00  Kamppi, Köydenpuolejankatu 15, 00180 Helsinki</p> <p><b>Praan Spa - an authentic oriental spa in the heart of Helsinki.</b></p> <p><a href="https://praanspahelsinki.com/">https://praanspahelsinki.com/</a>  Pursimiehenkatu 11, Helsinki  +358 45 624 6602  Monday 11:00 - 18:00  Tue to Sat 10:00 - 19:00  Sunday 12:00 - 20:00</p>	<p><b><u>Wellness and beauty</u></b></p> <p><b>Goal tracking with InBody Scan</b>, 500 calories burned training.</p>		<p>A 20- minutes session personalized by a coach.</p>	<p>The first training session is complimentary.</p>	<p>Families, couples, <u>business</u>, <u>people</u></p>
	<p>Classic, sports, couple, foot, Indian style head, hot stone massage, dry needle massage, osteopathy, physiotherapy, acupuncture.</p>			<p>Price starts from €35 depending on the selected service.</p>	<p>Families, couples, <u>business</u>, <u>people</u></p>
	<p>Stress-fix massage, spa for women and for man, body scrubs, ginger hot compress, head massage, Thai foot and traditional massage, oil, and herb-oil massage, mama massage, aromatherapy massage, hot stone massage.</p>			<p>Price starts from €70 depending on the selected service.</p>	<p>Families, couples, <u>business</u>, <u>people</u></p>

## Appendix 2. Interview questionnaire

- The main research question: What trendy, out-of-the-ordinary leisure activities will be interesting and relevant for boutique hotel guests??

Supporting questions: sub-questions will also be addressed:

- What can the hotel offer to guests to create a "wow" experience when planning their leisure activities?
  - What leisure activities does the hotel currently offer and how can they be improved?
  - What is the current customer experience of the leisure activities offered at the hotel?
  - What unusual requests for leisure have hotel guests made in the past?
  - What trends may impact the development and improvement of leisure activities?

1. Job description / responsibilities.
2. How long have you worked at the hotel?

Leisure:

3. What is the word leisure for guests associated with?
4. How hotel ensure the rest of the guests, and organize of leisure?
5. From your point of view which kind of rewards guests can get from leisure?
6. Does the hotel have collaborations with local businesses to offer guests unique experience?
7. Do you have any suggestions for organization of leisure of guests in the hotel?

Trends:

8. How trends are important for the hotel? Why?
9. Are trends being followed? What are you doing to support it?
10. What leisure trend works for the hotel?

Experience:

11. Do you think emotions and feelings of guests are important for high levels of customer experience? Why?

12. How do you think guest can get four different realms of an experience

- Entertainment experience
- Educational experience
- Esthetic experience
- Escapist experience

13. For the best experiences, leisure activities should contain elements of all four areas realms of an experience. What kind of activities it can be?

Additional services:

14. What leisure activities make unforgettable experiences for guests in the hotel?

15. How do you plan leisure activities for guests?

16. What previous requests of leisure activities did hotel guests have?

17. How can the hotel diversify leisure activities for guests?