

EXPLORING AAVA SKY VILLAGE'S CUSTOMER JOURNEY – CUSTOMER JOURNEY MAPPING

Creating a customer journey map for Aava Sky Village Oy

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis focuses on creating a customer journey map for Aava Sky Village, an evolving company in the Lapland travel industry. By envisioning the customer journey, the company receives valuable information about their customers for future service design and development. It is also intended by this thesis to provide development ideas for the company.

The author gathered information on the topic and utilized a variety of sources, including books and international articles. In the literature review this thesis explains the usage and creation of a customer journey map. To support the idea of enhancing the customer experience, the theory of customer-oriented service design and customer behaviour in travelling were explored.

The work of this thesis is viewed as a case study, a qualitative research approach. To create the customer journey map for the company, research was conducted using qualitative research methods. The thesis findings were put into the customer journey map constructed from the research results.

Based on the final customer journey map, development recommendations were given to Aava Sky Village. These recommendations included improving social media visibility and collecting customer feedback.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The travel industry in Lapland is a valuable source for incoming tourism in Finland, and tourism can be a key driver of vitality in small municipalities. To ensure the continuation of tourism in Finnish Lapland, making sure the travellers have an experience that lives up to expectations is essential. The travelling companies can accomplish this by defining their customers' journey across the experience. Understanding the customer experience and behaviour in the travel industry plays a crucial role for travel businesses to make the experience as proficient and satisfactory as possible for their customers. By composing a customer journey map, better service design methods can be implemented in the company's processes.

The customer journey refers to all the interactions a customer has with a service or a product. Every customer journey and customer experience is different, and they are affected by emotions and environments. When designing a service, customers should always be included by some means, because a successful company's priority is the customers.

Although previous research exists on customer journey mapping, there is still limited information specifically related to its application to travel behaviour in Lapland.

1.2 Case company

Aava Sky Village is a growing travel company in Finnish Lapland. In 2022, the company's turnover was 168 000€. It increased by 64.3% in 2023, reaching 276 000€. (Finder.fi, 2025.) Aava Sky Village is located in Aavasaksa, Ylitornio, a known fell that has attracted travellers for centuries. As the name of the company implies, it is a resort village, and they provide a comfortable place to stay in 19 newly renovated cabins all year round. The cabins accommodate up to 80

persons altogether. In the village there is also a restaurant, outdoor sauna and a traditional wooden hot tub with great views down the fell. In summer, their customers are mostly domestic travellers, and there is a place for caravanners to stay. In winter, for mostly their international customers, together with their cooperation partner Aavasaksa Adventures, they offer activities such as husky- and reindeer excursions, snowmobile rides, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing.

In the winter season Aava Sky Village employs approximately ten employees and in summer they have four permanent employees.

1.3 Objectives

The purpose of this thesis is to gather an understanding of the customer experience and actions while using Aava Sky Village's services and apply the knowledge to a customer journey map for the company's further development. The customer journey map gives great opportunities for Aava Sky Village to stand out and be competitive in the travel industry, as well as customer acquisition and retention. For the literature review, it's intended to gather as much information about subjects related to the topic. These subjects are customer journey mapping, customer-oriented service design, and travel behaviour in the travel industry. The goal is to reflect the literature review contents in the research process. Additionally, this thesis aims to give constructive recommendations for the company based on the created customer journey map.

1.4 Research methods and implementation

Qualitative research was conducted to gather an understanding of customer perceptions of the service and identify the key factors affecting their behaviour. Since this thesis is viewed as a case study, the author decided that conducting a group interview with the entrepreneurs of the company suits the best. The interview covered different stages in the customer journey with insights into the

customer behaviour. Research results were directly incorporated into the customer journey map along with additional explanations.

2 CUSTOMER JOURNEY MAPPING

A Customer Journey Map (CJM) provides a simple and structured visualisation of a service user's experience. Customer journey maps are used by businesses and organizations to understand the customer's point of view. Creating a Customer Journey Map helps businesses stand out and show customers that they genuinely care about their experiences. This understanding can then be used for future development work.

Touchpoints are moments of customer interaction with the service. These points help map out the customer's journey as they navigate the service. The map tells a story of their interactions and emotions they experience from the first encounter with the service to their post-service reflections and continued engagement. (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2011, 158-159.)

Pain points are challenges or issues customers may come across using the service, causing negative impact on the customer experience. Understanding these pain points from the customer's perspective is crucial for customer retention. Pain points can be identified by collecting feedback and monitoring social media channels. An effortless customer journey makes it more likely that customers will come back. (Synthetix, 2024.)

Other key aspects that should be considered when designing a CJM are channels and emotions. Channels where the customers interact with the company can be for example websites, social media and phone calls. Customers' positive emotions and experiences increase loyalty and customer retention. (Stuart, 2024.)

2.1 Creating a CJM

There are many ways of creating a customer journey map, but to create a suitable customer journey map it is essential to have the touchpoints identified. After that, a visual presentation of the overall experience can be made. To start, one

approach is to base the map around a persona, a fictional character that represents a customer. This makes it easier to perceive. If it is possible, a map can be uniquely crafted around materials created by the customers themselves. (Rosenbaum, Otolora & Ramirez 2017, 144.)

A basic customer journey map outlines the touchpoints along a timeline of the process. The timeline consists of three periods: pre-service, service and post-service. Pre-service period refers to the stages of the customer before using the service, such as awareness and consideration. In the service period the customer has decided to use the service, and is taking steps forward, as in purchasing and experiencing the service. Post-service period closes up the experience and focuses on strategies for engaging customers with your service and encouraging them to return. This kind of simple map is easy for everyone to understand. (Rosenbaum, Otolora & Ramirez 2017, 144.)

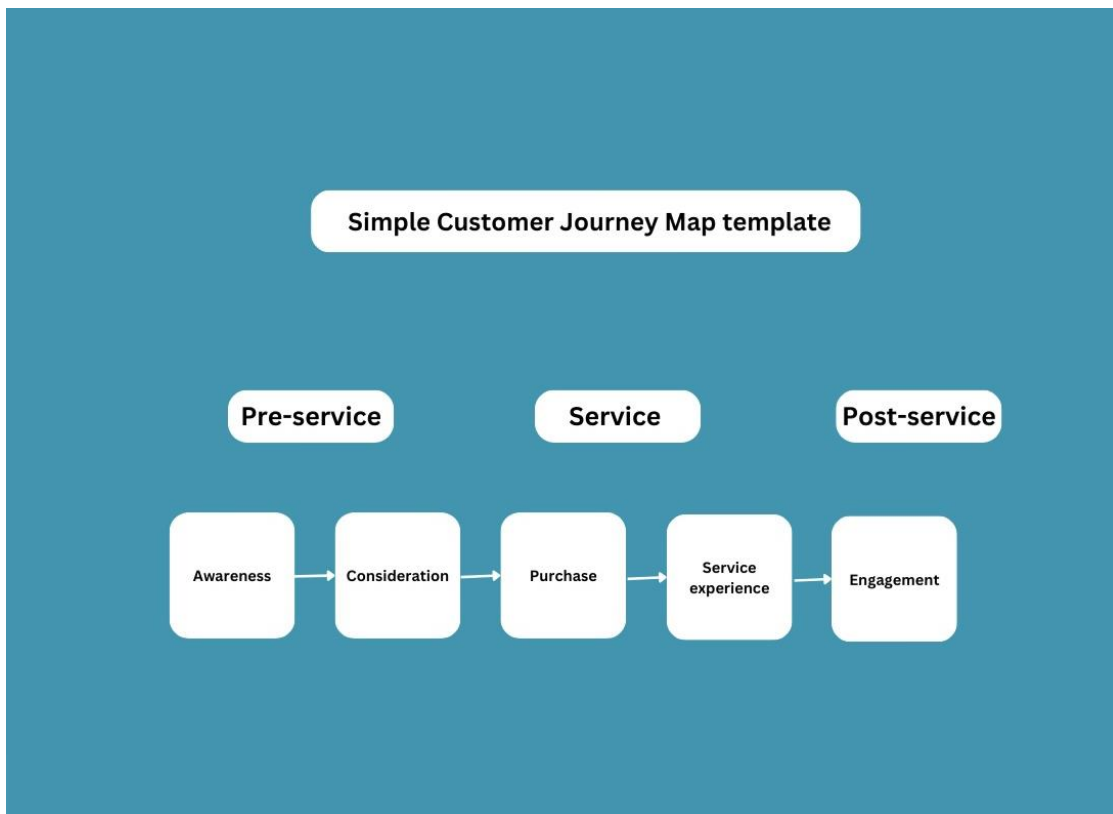


FIGURE 1. Simple Customer Journey Map template

More complex customer journey maps can be created for management teams. After creating a basic customer journey map, categories are put into vertical axis that show key strategies or actions related to each touchpoint. A basic, horizontal customer journey map is easier to understand and create. The vertical axis on the other hand is more difficult to develop because it's more specific and includes more information. (Rosenbaum, Otolara & Ramirez 2017, 144.)

2.2 Usage of CJM

The customer journey map is one of the many service design tools. It offers an overview of the stages and factors influencing customer experience. The map shows insights into both challenges and opportunities for innovation, providing an experience path to follow from the customer's perspective. This representation enables easy comparisons between a service and its competitors. It helps the company understand the overall experience of their customers and identify key factors to consider in order to make the experience as smooth as possible from the customer's perspective. (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2011, 158-159.)

Creating a customer journey map alone doesn't lead to better customer experiences, the value comes from applying the right practices and acting on the insights.

Practice	Description
Sharing the CJM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involving stakeholders and decision makers in the process • Highlighting strengths • Activate customer data for real impact
Taking action on the insight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen and extend executive support • Focus on the most important interactions • Prioritizing improvements valuable for customer and the company
Maintaining long-term learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring customer feedback • Refreshing the map over time

FIGURE 2. Practices using the CJM (Temkin, 2010, 10.)

It is crucial that the CJM is actively integrated across different parts within the organization, and that it is regularly updated. The CJM should be shared with stakeholders and key decision-makers to ensure their active involvement and understanding in the process. Additionally, executive support should be further strengthened. (Temkin, 2010, 9-10.)

While customer journey maps may identify challenges, it is equally important to highlight strengths alongside weaknesses, particularly those interactions seen as most important. Prioritizing improvements that add value both for the customer and the organization is essential. Furthermore, the CJM must be periodically reviewed and refreshed to remain relevant and aligned with changing business needs. (Temkin, 2010, 9-10.)

3 CUSTOMER-ORIENTED SERVICE DESIGN

3.1 Service design

“Service design research acknowledges the importance of experience when designing a new service “ (Teixeira et al., 2012). It helps companies to improve their service to make it more desirable for customers, and to make it effective and useful for the company itself. The main objective of service design is to ensure that your service delivers premium quality to customers. Service design turns innovative ideas into reality and new service solutions. (Trischler et al., 2018, 77.)

Service design involves multidisciplinary approaches and uses different methods and tools from various fields. “This cross-disciplinary practice combines numerous skills in design, management, and process engineering” (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2011, 30-31).

3.2 Customer experience

Customer experience is the overall impression a customer gets from interacting with a company's or brand's products and services during the buying process. These impressions include cognitive, emotional, behavioural, sensory and social responses. (Okazaki & Inoue, 2022, 5.)

Designing any service requires some level of customer participation. Since service design aims to benefit the end user, it is essential to gather their actual experiences and insights. Customer experience is defined as a subjective response customers have when interacting with a service or a company. (Teixeira et al., 2012). The customer's experience is the core of the services. Companies that compete in optimizing customer experience are at the top of the market. Customers are willing to pay more and recommend the service to others if a good experience is guaranteed. (Lawrence, 2019.)

3.3 Including experiences and expectations in service design

In customer-oriented service design the goal is to create value for the customers. This is done by offering the customers different resources such as tools and support for them to get valuable experience in return. (Trischler et al., 2018, 78.)

To include customer experience in the service design, the customer behaviour must be researched. There are lots of different aspects to be examined, target customer profiles, their hopes and expectations and the overall customer journey. By customer experience modelling (CEM), a thorough and structured representation of a customer experience is provided. (Teixeira et al., 2012, 363.)

Every customer experience is unique, therefore experiences can't be predicted or designed, but services can be developed by co-creating with customers through their interactions with the service. Service designers carefully plan and arrange different elements in service design, such as touchpoints and interactions, throughout the customer's journey. (Teixeira et al., 2012, 364.)

In travel industry, customers have high expectations for their vacation experiences. These expectations can be related to relaxation or new experiences, and they are formed before the actual service experience. Trust between the company and a customer is confirmed if these expectations are met. Shaping customer expectations through information and online reviews is essential, because happy customers effectively market brands or services. (Siller & Zehrer, 2016, 272.)

Customer loyalty builds up on an emotional connection for the customer and a successful experience makes the customer feel important. Positive experiences lead to a bond with customers, and it carries on to customer loyalty. (Lockwood, 2009, 252.)

4 CUSTOMER BEHAVIOUR IN TRAVEL INDUSTRY

Consumer behaviour in the travel industry, in this case tourist and travelling behaviour, refers to the choices and decisions that the traveller makes before, during and after the travel. The tourism behaviour changes and develops over time, due to different trends and global conditions.

4.1 Traveller's stages

According to Zhang (2019), a traveller goes through three stages in their journey: pre-service, on-site stage and post-visit stage.

In the pre-service stage before the travel, the traveller develops a desire for a trip. Motivation to conduct the trip can come from travel advertisements or an acquaintance's positive travel experience. The traveller starts to search for information and recommendations for destinations. After researching and finding the wanted destination, the traveller will be booking flights and accommodations. The traveller might also want to book activities and tours beforehand. In this stage, the traveller can contact travel agencies and resorts directly to get more detailed information and recommendations. Sometimes the traveller might want personalized offers and packages. (Zhang 2019, 57.)

The traveller has now purchased the trip and is transferring to the on-site stage, travelling and arriving at the destination. Here they start their planned travel activities. Some decisions are made during the trip impulsively, such as what places to eat in and tourist sites to visit. To make these decisions, the traveller needs to do more researching about the destination and might require help from the resort personnel. During the trip, the traveller can share their experiences and thoughts on different platforms. Sharing the experience with others can lead to information exchange for new ideas for travel. Shared experiences can also influence others to make their own travel. This is called customer-to-customer co-creation, and it is increasingly popular among travellers. Other travellers perceive that shared experiences are the most reliable. (Zhang 2019, 57.)

After the travel, the travellers tend to give reviews and feedback. This can happen in their own network, or it can be given directly to the travel agency or resort in question. Shared information can be used by the company to develop the experience for new travellers. (Zhang 2019, 58.)

4.2 Travelling in Finnish Lapland

Maintaining active tourism in Lapland is crucial for the sustainability and growth of northern businesses. The employment impact of the industry in Lapland is approximately 5,000 person-years. The tourism industry in Lapland thrives on the Arctic nature, the local Lapland culture, ski resorts, Christmas attractions, and the growing interest in the northern lights. (Akimo & Suomalainen, 2017.)

The tourism culture in Lapland has recently started to develop into a luxury travel destination. This can be seen as a strategy to attract more travellers to Lapland. The services would be luxurious and expensive, targeted at specific groups. The experiences would be once-in-a-lifetime experiences, and the intention is not for tourists to return to the destination, but rather to spend more money. Pricing of the products is important when marketing the destinations. This way, it is possible to guide who is desired at the destination and at what time of year. (Akimo & Suomalainen, 2017.)

There are various factors that may affect the travelling culture in Lapland in the future. These megatrends are for instance globalisation, economic development, climate change, environmental awareness and energy price. In addition, changing trends in travellers' hopes and expectations affect the future of travelling in Lapland as well. (Akimo & Suomalainen, 2017.)

When the Covid-19 pandemic began in early 2020, the restrictions had a significant impact on tourism in Finland, especially in Lapland. There was a steep decline in the number of customers. In 2020, there were one-third fewer overnight stays registered than the previous year. After spring 2020, domestic traveling started to recover but the absence of international customers had several negative impacts on Lapland's tourism and the traveling industry. (Lapland.fi,

2021.) After the pandemic, tourism in Lapland has started to rise and continues to grow year by year. (Stat.fi, 2025.)

5 RESEARCH AND METHODS

5.1 Qualitative research

Qualitative research focuses on understanding behaviour, interactions, experiences and processes. When the topic cannot be measured, qualitative research is a more suitable form than quantitative. Qualitative research uses a range of methods to gather information. These methods include for instance case studies, interviews, personal experiences and observations. The goal is to describe and understand the routines or problems of individuals to identify underlying patterns and develop effective solutions. (Aspers & Corte, 2019.)

A case study can be used in development work when the goal is to produce new innovative ideas for development. A case study focuses on the current situation of the target company in its actual environment. This kind of study is usually conducted when a deep understanding of the case is required for the research. It is typical for a case study to have only a few or just one research target. (Moilanen, Ojasalo & Ritalahti, 2022, 69.)

5.2 Methods chosen

This thesis is viewed as a case study, because this method is suitable for development work. A customer journey map is created to understand the service from the customer's perspective, and to utilize it for future development. To research the patterns and paths of customers using Aava Sky Village's services, the author decided to conduct qualitative research and interview the entrepreneurs of the company. Although the customer journey map is constructed to understand how customers experience the service, the author wanted to gather data from the entrepreneurs to get detailed information about the service. This is a benefit when providing development ideas. The chosen interview form is a group interview, so that discussion and interaction with

participants can be achieved. In discussion, different opinions and spontaneous answers emerge to provide a richer understanding.

5.3 Group interview

The interview for this research was conducted with two entrepreneurs of Aava Sky Village. Their job titles in the company are chief executive officer (CEO) and human resources manager. They were selected for the interview due to their extensive knowledge and experience concerning customers and the services provided.

The interview was held remotely in a video call. The author had planned the questions beforehand, and they were constructed based on the theoretical base of the thesis. During the interview, the author made notes, and to ensure that the information remains accurate and reliable, she also recorded it.

The objective of the interview was to gain insights into the various stages customers experience while utilizing the service, from the pre-service phase to the post-service phase, and factors that affect them. It included productive discussion with several essential details about the experience to help the author create the customer journey map.

During the interview, the author guided the discussion step by step through the three phases of the customer journey map presented earlier in the theoretical section. This facilitated the systematic analysis of the data.

5.4 Data analysis and results

As previously mentioned, the interview was structured around three key phases: pre-service, service, and post-service. More specifically, phases awareness, consideration, purchase, service experience and engagement were discussed. This helped the author clearly understand the customer journey in its natural sequence. After the interview, the author reviewed the notes taken, and because it was a group interview with open-ended questions, the author analysed key

themes and categories that were recurring and modified them into the customer's journey. Since the analysis is based on Aava Sky Village's employees' views and thoughts, this CJM is only created for them and may not be generalizable to the entire travel industry user base.

The research findings are directly incorporated into the customer journey map created by the author in the next chapter.

6 CREATING A CUSTOMER JOURNEY MAP FOR AAVA SKY VILLAGE

This chapter presents a summary of the research findings through a customer journey map. The map has been developed by the author using data obtained from the interviews. The theoretical framework of the thesis was also utilized in making this CJM. This map is created around a fictional customer persona to describe the average customer experience in the company. Since the Aava Sky Village serves both international and Finnish customers, differences between these groups will be noted at certain stages.

6.1 Aava Sky Village's Customer Journey

In the beginning of the interview, participants were asked if they think customer journey mapping is important for companies. Both interviewees agreed on the importance of understanding the customer journey, as it facilitates the process of selling the service by providing insight into the stages of the customer experience. They also noted that receiving feedback becomes easier when the customer's perspective is taken into account. Furthermore, the company collaborates with a tour operator, and the interviewees expressed that knowledge of the customer journey supports more effective communication with this partner as well.

6.1.1 Awareness

International customers typically discover Aava Sky Village's services through the tour operator. Many of these customers have previously used the same operator to book their vacations and are familiar with attending fairs organized by this operator. Aava Sky Village also participates in these fairs to promote their services. At the fairs, potential customers receive information about various destinations from the tour operator, allowing them to choose their preferred travel destination. The tour operator is also active on social media, where it engages

with international customers and enhances visibility through posts and campaigns. The company is well-known in its target countries.

Although Aava Sky Village is visible at fairs in Finland, Finnish people primarily discover it due to its location. Aavasaksa is a well-known destination throughout Finland, and the limited accommodation options nearby make Aava Sky Village stand out when searching for Aavasaksa. Additionally, Aava Sky Village can be found on Aavasaksa's website. Aava Sky Village is now renewing their own websites and travel booking system to make it easier for the customer. This will also benefit the company in data collection and monitoring website statistics.

There are also other ways Aava Sky Village promotes itself. The company sponsors events, such as ice hockey, and is advertised in a magazine for caravanners. Some customers find them through their own social media platforms and websites.

6.1.2 Consideration

When it comes to the consideration and the decision-making process, international customers pay attention to the whole content of the vacation. They are typically very interested in vacation packages, preferring pre-planned activities and seeking an action-filled experience during their stay. However, Finnish customers are more interested in the price range and the appearance of the cabins. A mutual, positively affecting factor for both sides are the Aavasaska ski slopes, that are located nearby.

Aava Sky Village describes themselves as a family-friendly destination. Customers travelling with family find the location suitable for its peace, quiet and safety. Other factors that attract travellers are the nature of Lapland, history and the overall culture of Finland. Aava Sky Village is a very traditional Finnish location, where Finnish tradition and culture are respected. The owners would also like to keep it very traditional, although the idea of luxurious travelling has been continuously increasing in Lapland. The company is a small family business where the owners are also employees. For some customers it's a very important aspect.

In addition, Aava Sky Village includes crafting a kuksa, a traditional Finnish wooden cup, in their packages. For this experience, especially international customers have chosen Aava Sky Village over other destinations.

Customers can contact Aava Sky Village or the tour operator during their decision-making process for more information. The contact may occur by phone or email. Customers can receive answers to their questions or get personalization to their experience. For instance, if a customer requests an interpreter in their native language for a particular activity, it can be arranged. Customers' special occasions can also be acknowledged upon the customer's request. Additionally, positive public feedback has a beneficial effect when customers are seeking for information about the company.

Challenges that customers might face during awareness and consideration stages are challenges related to accidental misinformation or misunderstandings. The company, however, mentions that any potential issues are minor and can be resolved.

6.1.3 Purchase

Customers can find the vacation packages on the tour operator's website. They can select their preferred dates for the stay and see pre-planned schedules for activities during their time at the destination. The packages also include flights. The customers can choose from different options regarding activities, flights, and dates.

When the customer has found the preferred package for them, they make a reservation on the website. The tour operator sends a confirmation request to Aava Sky Village, and once the company approves it, a confirmation message is also sent to the customer. Sometimes a customer might already make the booking in the fair, when the decision of the wanted destination is made.

6.1.4 Service experience

Upon arrival at the airport, customers are welcomed by a guide who leads them to the designated bus. During the bus transfer, guests receive a comprehensive welcome briefing, including essential information about the area, available facilities, and their accommodation. They receive winter clothing for the duration of their stay, as well as their schedules. Once they arrive at Aavasaksa, dinner will be served.

Activities begin on the first full day of the stay. Activities during the vacation include traditional kuksa crafting, snowmobile rides, snowshoeing, as well as husky and reindeer excursions. Customers appreciate small group sizes in the activities. The duration of these excursions may vary depending on the length of the customers' stay at Aava Sky Village. In some cases, guests may also enjoy a free day to spend during their vacation. Sometimes customers hope to have modifications to the schedule and activities.

Some customers may wish to visit additional places during their stay, which requires assistance from the staff. They are available to help with arrangements such as taxis, buses and other relevant services. There is also an existing WhatsApp group that includes both staff and customers, where mutual plans are coordinated. The staff is always available to assist customers.

When their stay in Aava Sky Village is coming to an end, customers will have breakfast, after which the guide will accompany them back to the airport.

One challenge customers may face during this stage is realizing that the destination may not meet their initial expectations. Other challenges are usually related to cultural differences and practical problems, but these are addressed with the assistance of the staff.

6.1.5 Engagement

Customers receive a feedback form right after their stay, usually during the transfer to the airport. Some customers provide feedback through the tour

operator, who then contacts Aava Sky Village. Others give feedback directly, often orally.

Aava Sky Village has regular Finnish customers who have been visiting for many years. Some international customers have also returned during the summer season. The company encourages the customers to consider visiting at a different time of year to get new experiences. Some customers have shared photos on social media and recommended the destination for friends and family which has inspired them to visit as well.

A challenge customers may face during this stage is that if they wish to return without booking a package, it can be difficult due to the contract between Aava Sky Village and the tour operator. In such cases, every effort is made to arrange things as good as possible for the customer.

6.2 Visual CJM

The author collected the most important touchpoints in the Aava Sky Village's customer journey and created a visual representation based on them. (See FIGURE 3.) The map connects all the customer's stages and highlights the key touchpoints following a line, arranged based on the customer's point of view.

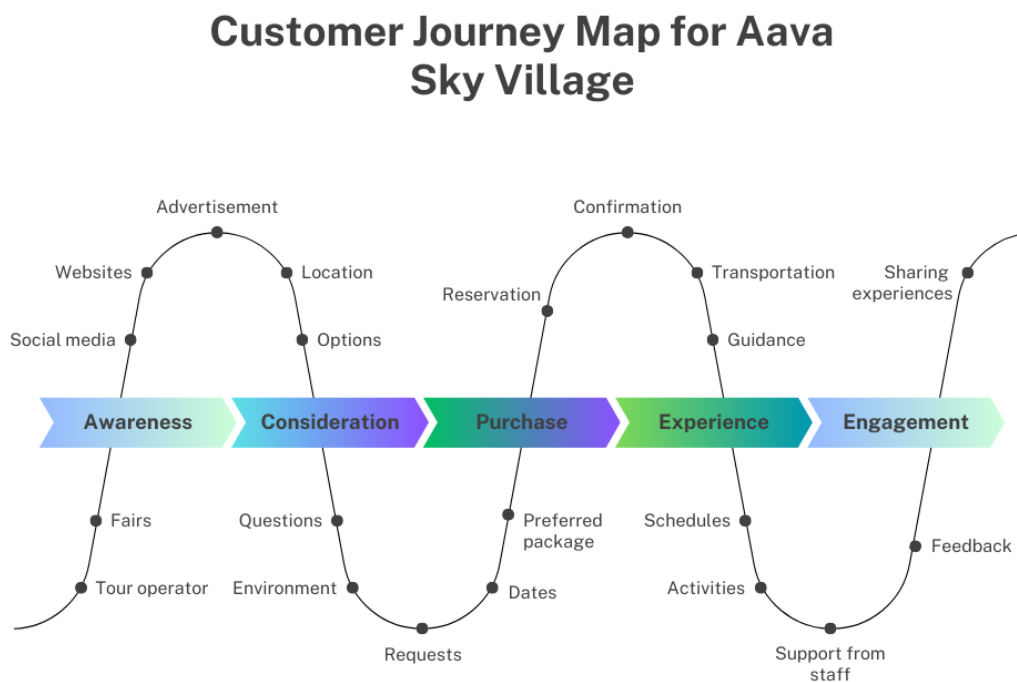


FIGURE 3. A visual CJM for Aava Sky Village

6.3 Designing services

At the end of the interview, the entrepreneurs were asked how they consider their customers' perspectives and emotions when designing these services.

The customer's point of view is considered throughout the entire design process. It became evident that personalization, from the size of activity groups to small atmospheric details, is carefully planned.

Emotions are actively considered in the activities, with the company remaining flexible and responsive to the customer's wishes in the moment. Additionally, the staff aims to share their own positive emotions during the experiences, creating a sense of connection and shared enjoyment.

6.4 Development recommendations

The author came up with development recommendations for the customer's journey. Some of the suggestions were already discussed in the interview with the entrepreneurs.

Aava Sky Village's own social media visibility could be enhanced by increasing its presence during the awareness stage of the customer journey. Social media marketing strategies, such as creating interesting and diverse content, developing branded hashtags, and launching entertaining campaigns, could help connect with new customers. Additionally, offering fun photo opportunities for customers during their stay can encourage customers to post more on social media. By encouraging customers to share their experiences and tag the company, visibility can be significantly boosted.

During the interview it was pointed out that the entrepreneurs wish to receive more detailed feedback for themselves. This could potentially be addressed by reaching out to customers a few days after they return home, rather than providing the feedback form during the transportation to the airport. Some customers may not feel comfortable giving detailed feedback while still experiencing the service. The contact could be made via email, with a warm thank-you message while highlighting the importance of their feedback.

Further research for the company could focus on how to develop services that attract more tourists during the quieter seasons, such as summer and autumn.

7 CONCLUSIONS

This thesis analysed how the customer journey is constructed in the travel industry, with a main focus on the stages and key touchpoints that define the traveler's experience. This study also discussed how including customers in the service design process improves the overall quality of the service. To understand how customers perceive the service and identify the factors influencing their behaviour, an interview was conducted with the entrepreneurs.

The research findings were directly incorporated into the customer journey map created by the author. It included five stages: awareness, consideration, purchase, service experience and engagement. For each stage, the relevant touchpoints were identified and explained. Additionally, potential pain points were discussed. The intention was to construct the customer journey as detailed and realistically as possible. The results indicate that personalization, flexibility, and supportiveness are essential qualities for delivering the best possible customer experience. It was also found that Aava Sky Village's traditional style and identity as a family business evoke positive emotions in customers.

This thesis was successful in constructing Aava Sky Village's customer journey and a visual representation of it. The author also managed to give development recommendations based on the findings. This summary of the customer journey enables the company to gain a clearer understanding of the customer's stages and behaviour, providing a valuable tool for future service design and enhancing the overall experience.

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Artificial intelligence was used in this thesis to rephrase and improve the fluency of the author's text.

APPENDICES

Interview questions:

- What are your job titles and how long have you been working at the company / how long has your company been in operation?
- Do you think it is important for companies to understand their customers' journey? Why? How do you think a company can benefit from it?

The timeline of the customer journey consists of three phases: before the service, during the service, and after the service. The first stages of the customer are awareness and consideration - so,

- How do your customers usually find your company?
- Can you tell what kind of marketing has positively influenced customer acquisition/how to get attention?
- What role do you think your social media and website play in reaching customers?
- What do your customers pay the most attention to / what is the first impression?
- What makes your customers choose you over competitors?
- What are important features of your services for customers?
- Are you somehow involved in the customer's consideration phase? How? (e.g., answering questions, providing more detailed information, personalization) - If yes, how has supporting the customer in the consideration phase helped in making the decision (positively or negatively)?
- Do you believe that previous customer feedback about your service affects a new customer's decision? How do you collect customer feedback and is it visible?
- What kind of challenges have your customers faced at this stage?

When the customer has decided to use your services, the next phase is the "purchase/acquisition" of the service, and the actual experience.

- What is the booking process like from the customer's perspective?
- Do you offer different options for the customer, e.g., in terms of travel, accommodation, or payment?
- How do you welcome your customers upon arrival?
- What is the most common plan for the customer during the trip? Are the plans realized?
- How do you support your customers during the trip?
- What do your customers appreciate in the experiences you offer?
- What kind of challenges can your customers face at this stage?

After the service and experience:

- When the customer goes home, do you contact them regarding customer feedback, or do you send them some other material (thanks, social media marketing, etc.)?
- Do old customers return to you? Are there "regular customers"?
- Do you try to get customers to return? How?
- Have your customers shared their experiences with their network, for example on social media?
- What challenges can your customers face at this stage?

Questions about service design:

- How do you take your customers into account when designing your services?
- How much do you think your customers' emotions affect their choices?