

## **Sport Tourism in Lahti and Lahti region**

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<p>The commissioner of this thesis is Lahti Region Ltd. The objective of this thesis was to study basics of sport tourism, sport tourism marketing and especially active sport tourism in Lahti region.</p> <p>Travelling and sport tourism is growing business area in Finland, however it was quite difficult to find literature, source material and numeric data concerning sport tourism in Finland. Lahti has strong reputation as a sport city, although it is not well-known sport tourism destination. The aim was to discover sport tourism in Lahti and Lahti region and how to develop the area more attractive sport tourism destination. The main goal was to find out all the sporting facilities, sport related products and services in the region for active sport tourist and also discover the possible existing cooperation between the operators.</p> <p>Active sport tourism is only marginally researched phenomenon, at least in Lahti and Lahti region, therefore phenomena that does not have an in-depth understanding is usually examined with qualitative methods which was also chosen for the research method for this study. The research approach is deductive based on extensive theory, which is supported by interviews of experts in sport branch. The methodological approach in this research is a case study. For data collection semi-structured interviews were used where the respondent were intentionally selected. This thesis was written between August 2014 and March 2015.</p> <p>The key findings of this study exposed that there are good possibilities and facilities for an active sport tourist around the year in Lahti and Lahti region including some sport-related services and products. However, Lahti cannot be considered as an active sport tourism destination, because people come to do leisure activities at the area of Lahti only if they are aware of the sports supply by themselves. Active sport tourists are mainly from the Finnish metropolitan area. For a foreign tourist it is hard to find activities in Lahti due to lack of information even in English.</p> <p>The company Lahti Region Ltd manages the marketing of the city of Lahti and Lahti region. The focus of the company is to increase the attractiveness of the region, to bring more residents and tourists to the area and increase the jobs in service sectors. It indicates that the goal of Lahti Region Ltd is to get new residents to Lahti area. To improve the attractiveness of the city of Lahti and Lahti region the general opinion was to commercialize the sports and the sports premises in Lahti and Lahti region by building even stronger image around the sports. Branding could be the key to get Lahti to be better known amongst the active sport tourists all over the world. With a clear vision, hard work, well-organized cooperation and right focused marketing, it is possible to make Lahti and Lahti region a world known destination for active sport tourism.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b> Sport, tourism, active sport tourism, sport tourism and destination marketing, Lahti	



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# 1 Introduction

Sport tourism is one of the fastest growing markets in tourism industry. Currently well-being and health are important issues to people. In western world people have more money and free time and they like to spend it in new experiences and well-being to balance their every day life. There are three kind of sport tourism: active, event and nostalgic sport tourism. Now it is possible to go to a sport event as a spectator or perform yourself what ever sport you like, or enjoy the moments of previous events in special places. Sport tourism is a growing sector in tourism industry in Finland too. Even though it is not separated as an own sector in tourism by Statistics Finland. The literature and research in sport tourism concentrate mostly on international large-scale sport events. My thesis concerns the active sport tourism in Lahti and Lahti region, because there has not been a lot of research from the aspect of the active sport tourism either the sport tourism in the region.

The city of Lahti, as well as Lahti region has a lot of options to offer for local people and for the tourists. There are different kind of sports facilities surrounded by nature and water. However, Lahti is better known as its winter sports events, even though there are many other possibilities for active sport tourist. The potential in sport tourism can be an opportunity for companies. The aim of this study is to discover sport tourism in Lahti and Lahti region, and how to make the area more attractive from the view of active sport tourist. The main goal is to find out all the sporting facilities and sport related products and services in the region for active sport tourist and also to find out the possible cooperation between the operators. For that reason the main questions are: "How to develop sport tourism in Lahti and Lahti region?", "What sports can an active sport tourist do and where?", "How to develop cooperation and how to do marketing? What are the strengths and weaknesses?"

In chapter 2 the concept of sport tourism is introduced with basic principles of sport marketing and sport tourism in Finland in general. The chapter 3 covers the sports, sport and destination marketing on a common level. In chapter 4 the city of Lahti and the main sports facilities, places and sports are introduced as a case study. The research methods are passed in the chapter 5. The case study is carried out through interviews with special picked up representatives. The representatives are individually interviewed and the material thereafter analyzed and read through by themes. The results are introduced in the chapter 6, wherein the answers are divided into subchapters according to the interview questions. Every subchapter includes short conclusion of the questions. The last part of this report, chapter 7, sums up the main results of this thesis with suggestions for future research.

Interest to this subject arose when I moved to Lahti and as an active sportswoman I started to look out what I could do in Lahti. Because it was quite difficult to find out what sports can I do and where, I decided to make myself a map with existing sporting facilities (Appendix 2, Image 15, Table 5). I travel a lot because of my work and do sports wherever I can. During these trips I have learned a lot of the life of an active sport tourist, and what kind of services and products there should be. Because the research about active sport tourism in Finland does not exist I familiarized myself with the subject with international literature related to sport tourism. With this interesting subject and my eagerness to get Lahti a more attractive sport tourist destination I presented the idea of this thesis to representative of Lahti Region Ltd.

Commissioner of this study is Lahti Region Ltd, a regional marketing company that is in charge of image, housing and tourism marketing, selling travel services and providing tourist information in Lahti region. The regional travel company Lahti Travel Ltd was established in 2003 that merged with Lahden Matkailu at the beginning of 2005. On 1 January 2013, Lahti Travel Ltd merged into the new Lahden seutu, Lahti Region Ltd marketing company, which was established from Lahti Regional Development Company (LAKES) by changing the company's name and articles of association. There are totally eight owner municipalities that are from Hollola, Orimattila, Nastola, Asikkala, Kärkölä, Padasjoki and Hämeenkoski of which city of Lahti has the biggest shares ownership with 51,7 %. Lahti Region Ltd employees 11 persons including 2,5 project personnel. Budgeted turnover was 2,3 million euros in 2013. (Lahti Region Ltd 2014.)

## **2 Sport tourism**

Sport related tourism has grown one of the biggest and fastest growing niche markets of tourism since the 1990's. Even 15-30 % of all international tourism today is related to sport and physical activities and the share of sport tourism industrial is approximately 1-2 % of the GDP's. (Vehmas 2010a, 171.) Sport tourism is a new growth industry recognized by government agencies and partners, who are committing raised resources to its development increasing positive development of economies of the destinations and countries. (Higham 2005, 73.)

### **2.1 Definition**

Sport is defined as activities, experiences or business enterprises that focus on athletics, health and wellness, recreation and leisure time opportunities. (Schwarz, Hunter & LaFleur 2013, 4.) Sport tourism is defined as leisure-based travel that takes individuals temporarily outside their home communities to participate in physical activities, to watch physical activities or to appreciate attractions associated with physical activities (Funk, Bruun & Tennille 2007, 806-819). According to Hinch & Higham (2011) sport tourism is sport-based travel away from home environment for a limited time in which: sport is characterised by unique rule sets, competition related to physical ability and play, as well as it is characterised as a major travel activity whether it is a primary, a secondary or a tertiary feature of the journey.

Sport tourism includes travel to participate in a passive sport holiday or active sport holiday that can involve occasions where either sport or tourism are the dominant activity or reason for travel (Ritchie & Adair 2004, 8). The passive market concentrates on sport events and on nostalgic sport tourism (Papathanassis 2011, 78).

A sport tourist is an individual or a group of people who actively or passively takes part within competitive or recreational sport while travelling to and staying in places outside their everyday environment (Hinch & Higham 2011).

### **2.2 Sport tourism markets**

Sport tourism is divided into three categories based upon different behaviours: active sport tourism, event sport tourism and nostalgic tourism (Func & al. 2007, 806-819). In active sport tourism, the traveller actively participates in physical activities, while in event tourism the reasons and motives for travel relate to travelling as a spectator. Nostalgic sport tourism refers to travelling to destinations that are sport historically or fan culturally

significant. (Vehmas 2010a, 171.) Novelli's (2005, 160) figure (Figure 1) clarifies the sport tourism segments and categories.

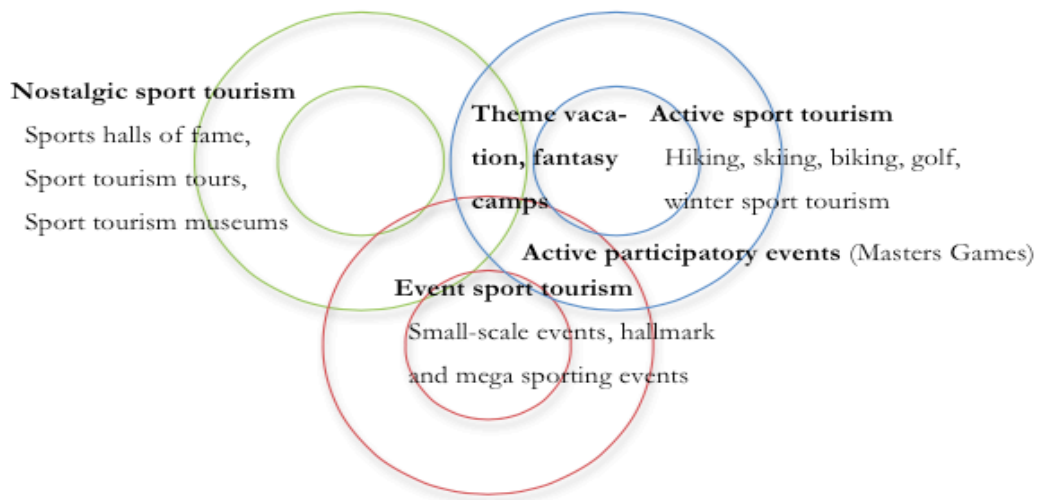


Figure 1. Sport tourism segments and categories (Novelli 2005, 160)

Active sport tourism can cover various activities such as: skiing, biking, hiking, golf and winter sport tourism. Event sport tourism is mainly participation in sporting tournaments, Masters and Olympic games. Nostalgic sport tourism consists of visits to sports halls of fame, sport tourism museums and sport tourism tours. (Novelli 2005, 159-160.) According to Ritchie & Adair (2004, 9) active sport tourism covers approximately 10-30 % of the total sport tourism market, but Higham (2005, 40) states that the most common market researched in the literature is anyway event sport tourism.

In literature and studies there is not clear definition of the target group of sport tourism, since all kind of sport fascinates a different kind of customer segment. In general active sport tourists are between 15-34 years old belonging to the upper socioeconomic class, mostly men, but nowadays also women and older people, who are aware of health and fitness issues. (Papathanassis 2011, 78.) Demand groups are top-performance athletics, mass sports, occasional sports women and men and passive sport tourists (Hinch & Higham 2011). The top-performance athletics are searching access to competition and suitable training facilities and conditions whereas the main aim of the mass sports group is maintaining health and fitness. Also easy accessibility of the destination and the quality of sports facilities mean a lot for the mass sports group. The occasional sports women and men focus on less demanding sports like skiing or bowling while the passive sport tourists are not seeking for active participation in a sport during the holidays but instead of it the focus is on mega sport events and different sport sites. (Papathanassis 2011, 79.)

This study concentrates on occasional sport women and men, active amateur sport tourists, in which compensation and prestige play greater role than sporting ambition in the pursuit of occasional sports. Sporting activities gain no greater priority over cultural sight-seeing and other interests within this market group. (Hinch & Higham 2011.)

### **2.3 Reasons and motives for sport tourism**

There are many reasons that motivate sport tourism travellers. Some well-known trends such as increasing participation in sport, interest in health and fitness and extended and social participation in sports into middle age and beyond, are explaining the phenomenon of sport-related travel. The trends have been driven by changing social attitudes and values, and changing political and economic circumstances which all have been facilitated by technology. (Higham 2005, 2.)

Among the push factors, the factors that encourage visitors to travel are for example the want to achieve sporting goals and the possibility to do things that the tourist cannot do in their home environment. According to Milne and McDonald (1999, 21-33) there are thirteen extensive sport motivations which are physical fitness, risk taking, stress reduction, aggression, affiliation, social facilitation, self-esteem, competition, achievement, skill mastery, aesthetics, value development and self-actualization where as Higham (2005, 59) continues listing with escape, self-exploration, relaxation, prestige, regression, social interaction, enhancement of kinship relations and cultural motives. Physical fitness is obviously one of the main reasons for exercising in order to be in good physical condition and health. Risk taking refers to the willingness to look for excitement through activities such as mountain climbing or parachuting, while stress reduction is a process of reducing nervousness, fear and tension. Affiliation means connecting with others with the need to socialize, to interact and belonging in a group. Same interest to the same activity is clarified with social facilitation when friends, colleagues or family members for example can spend more time together. Achievement refers to accomplishing desired results, losing weight by doing sports for example and in skill mastery it is on contrary where the outcome is regardless, just perform as well as possible. (Milne & McDonald 1999, 21-25.)

Pull factors, the factors that attract tourists to a destination, are the image of the destination, the price level, marketing and promotion. Different destinations offer specific sport tourism experiences because they are characterised by distinct sport and tourism resources. The resources can relate to tourism infrastructure, levels of service development, tourist attractions and information services. The sport resource includes sport venues like stadia and arenas, training facilities, sport science resources and sport medicine facilities.

(Higham 2005, 17.) According to Higham (2005, 19) the issues of resource quality and market demand are of great relevance to sport tourism destinations. The resource requirements of a given sport differ based on types of sporting pursuit, with the distinctions between amateur/professional, novice/elite and recreational/competitive participants particularly evident.

#### **2.4 Active sport tourism markets**

As mentioned earlier, this study concentrates mainly in active sport tourism, active amateur sport tourists, women and men, although the literature and the other materials were not easy at hand of this particular topic.

The active sport tourism is formed of individual who pursue physical involvement in competitive or non-competitive sports while travelling. The term "sportlover" describes the growing travel market represented by individuals who are physically active and prefer to remain so while travelling for business and/or leisure. More remarkable are those who are motivated to travel to specific locations to actively engage in their sporting passions. A profile of active sport tourist can be described as physically active, college educated, relative affluent and 18-44 years old. (Hinch & Higham 2011.)

#### **2.5 Active sport tourism market segmentation**

Active sport tourism markets can be categorized as geographic, socio-economic, demographic, psychographic and behaviouristic segments (Hinch & Higham 2011). According to Middleton, Fyall, Morgan & Ranchhod (2009, 103-114) travel and tourism markets are generally segmented by purpose of travel, buyer needs and motivations, buyer behaviour, demographic, psychographic and geodemographic profiles and price methods. It is important for destination marketers to understand the motivational and behavioural profiles of sport tourism market segments (Hinch & Higham 2011).

Geographic market segmentation of the active sport tourism market is a popular approach to the practice of sport tourism. It established the link between place of residence and opportunities to take part in certain sports in specified locations. Nearness to sport resources, natural or built or combination of these two, affects the propensity to consume certain sports, as competitors, participants and/or spectators. Geographic segmentation is based on important differences in the preferred destinations, tourist activities, spending patterns and travel seasons. (Hinch & Higham 2011.) In recent years there was developed in USA a software system based on satellite technology that links mapping techniques and customers databases generally. This Geographical Information System (GIS) com-



bines mapping software with customer databases provided by census and market survey data and detects the customer interests. This advanced system is expected to develop and spread worldwide that would assist in practice of the analysis of demographic, economic, geographic and life-cycle segments. The title of this kind of data can be called geodemographic. (Middleton & al. 2009, 113.)

Socio-economic market segmentation is based on variables such as income and occupation. Participation in low-priced, team-based contact sports such as Frisbee golf and street basketball is typical of lower socioeconomic urban youth for example in Finland. In contrast, expensive, individual and no contact sports are preferred by the upper social classes such as golf. (Hinch & Higham 2011.)

Segmentation based on subdividing the population on the basis of demographic factors has indicated particularly popular in tourism. Active participation in sports varies on the basis of age, for example the younger ones likes to play football and the older ones likes to run a marathon. Also marital status, family type, gender and sexuality might have impacts on demographic market segmentation. (Hinch & Higham 2011.) These before mentioned types of segmentations could be called simple demographic profiles, which are still very useful when deciding media for advertising purposes. Some companies divide customer profiles even deeper and more detailed. (Middleton & al. 2009, 110.)

Psychographic markets are targeted on the basis that the lifestyle, attitudes and personality of people define their behaviour as consumers. The psychographic profile of sport-for-all participants is different from that of those who chase technical challenge or competition through active involvement in sports. Sport-for-all highlights the joy of sport participation and health-related fitness in which every participant is a winner. Values such as excitement, spontaneity, rebellion, non-conformity, sociability and creativity are assumed to be very important within the context of youth culture. (Hinch & Higham 2011.) Understanding of the lifestyle of the targeted people is an advantage when formulating new products, developing branding or creating messages to motivate such people. Lifestyle segmentation has turned out more important in present-day reflecting the growth of consumer affluence and sophistication. (Middleton & al. 2009, 111.)

Behaviouristic market segmentation categorizes consumers according to the behavioural relationship with a product, with impressions for the visitor experience. For instance, profile the growing number of participants in adventure tourism can be further differentiated based on the behaviours and motivations. (Hinch & Higham 2011.) Travelling for sports

can be a consuming passion and the consumer might live for sport travelling, exploring new experiences. (Middleton & al. 2009, 106-110.)

## **2.6 The impacts of sport tourism**

Sport tourism has both negative and positive impacts on the tourism destination. The impacts connected with sport tourism are naturally seen subjectively by involved stakeholder group. The impacts of sport tourism can be described as economical, sociocultural, environmental and health. (Standeven & De Knop 1999, 167-286; Higham 2005, 224-230.)

The exact economic impact of sport tourism is not easy to find since there is not available detailed and sufficient results of tourism surveys of the purpose of the trips (Standeven & De Knop 1999, 173). Sport tourism brings economical benefits as a result of sales of accommodation, food and beverages, hire fees, admission fees, use of transports and other spending at the facilities (Weed & Bull 2009, 223-236). Standeven & De Knop (1999) highlights the growth of employment due to sport tourism. Higham (2005, 223-224) adds the interest in return on government investment in sports facilities, expenditures of professional sports teams, construction, media and sport-related business travel. Sport tourism is also benefiting the local businesses (hotels, restaurants) and other businesses not related to tourism. Furthermore, sport tourism helps in increasing the profile of the destination and as a result, it attracts new business relating to sports (e.g. smaller sport activity supply chains, sports equipment merchandisers) and other businesses not related to sport.

The sociocultural impacts are generally viewed as short-term effects where the travel and tourism affects individual behavior pattern lifestyle, values and quality of life and community structures. Social impacts can also be either negative or positive. As positive social impacts can be considered self-actualization, opportunities to witness the effect of good health and fitness-style lifestyle, sense of pride, entertainment, and family and community integrity. However, sport tourism also results in negative social impact on destination including community displacement, crowding, crime, vandalism, anti-social behaviour and disruptions in the normal live of the local people. (Higham 2005, 225; Standeven & De Knop 1999, 204-230.)

Generally the impact of sport tourism on the environment can be negative as a result of excessive use of nature, for example all kind of outdoor sports increases waste and carbon emission. The increasing participation as well as overcrowding in different sport activities with noise pollution causes danger to the natural environment. Therefore all stake-

holders within sport tourism industry should consider the importance of the environmental protection and sustainability. (Standeven & De Knop 1999, 236-266.)

It is evident that physically active people show a lower incidence of most of diseases such as: cardiac function, pulmonary diseases, diabetes, many types of cancer, joint diseases, gout, hypertension and stroke and especially coronary heart problems, that seems to indicate that doing sports normally lowers the risks. Regular activity of low or medium intensity has been shown to promote health, reduce stress and add wellbeing in the most appropriate way. Well-designed and prepared sport tourist experiences offer several physical and psychological health benefits even though the opposite may cause risk and danger. (Standeven & De Knop 1999, 272-286.)

## **2.7 Sport tourism in Finland**

Sport and activity tourism is a societal and economically significant phenomenon also in Finland, because both tourism and physical activities play an important role in the free time of Finnish people. There are around 30 000 sports facilities in Finland that are available for tourists, which is supporting the potentials of sport tourism in Finland. (Vehmas 2010a, 171.)

Although tourism and travelling are growing business areas in Finland, it was quite difficult to find literature and source material concerning travelling for sports inside or to Finland. Material available is about sport tourism generally with examples mainly of the United States or about some specific sports and events. The best way to search and gather current information about sport travelling to Finland was to request it directly from the organizations that operate with the tourists here in Finland. After sending several emails and making phone calls to the organizations that are involved in travelling industry I find out that there is no statistics, either other material available on sports tourism and sports travelling concerning Finland or especially Lahti. I first contacted with Finpro, which helps Finnish SMEs in internationalization, stimulates foreign direct investment in Finland and promotes tourism, second with Visit Finland, that is a Finnish tourist board agency under the Ministry of Employment and the Economy responsible for actively promoting Finnish tourism in its capacity as a national expert in the sector and then with Statistics Finland that is the only Finnish public authority specialized in establishing of statistics. (Finpro 2015; Visit Finland 2015; Statistics Finland 2015.) Material that exists is about travelling for health and well-being, culture, nature and tourism in general.

I also approached directly with the Ministry of Employment and the Economy (TEM) searching extensive material on sport tourism in Finland. From the Ministry I finally received written material and reports on sport tourism in Finland. According to the Minister of Employment and the Economy Mr. Jan Vapaavuori (Manninen 2014, 15-20) the sport tourism is rapidly growing despite the recession. Sports business sector has grown in Finland for several years and it has a lot of potential for heavy international growth, he continues in the article of the magazine *Ekonomi* 2014. The market size of the sports business sector is more than 5,5 billion in Finland, of which the sport tourism and events is accounted for 120 million euros.

TEM (2014) commissioned a research on the changes in sports business ecosystem. Ecosystem means networking with other companies and operators. According to the report of the TEM (2014, 12-13) sport tourism and events is one of the growing market in Finland which is influenced by trends such as increased health awareness, emphasis of social and physical needs, increase in the number of senior citizens, increasing competition of leisure time and polarization, that brings along people in the worst condition. The potential of sport tourism does not appear in the classifications of Statistics Finland. The international studies show that for example sport tourism alone grabs already about 10 % share of the world tourism market and in Finland the revenue of sport tourism has increased from 2008 to 2013 about 40 %. (TEM 2014, 14.)

Factors attracting sport tourists to travel are services and products that refer to themes and adventure, health and wellness, big sport events, functional and themed vacations. Strong growth is noticed by self-participation in sports and mass events such as marathon and triathlon, therefore my study focuses on active sport tourism too. Companies offering products and services related to sport tourism are usually quite small, but they have networks with bigger operators like hotel chains and et cetera. Working together and cooperating to expand their networks that benefit all. Potential customers can be categorized as senior citizens, since they are in good condition, wealthy and have a lot of free time. Working active sport exercisers should be taken into account, because they are often very affluent and health conscious. Sports tourism industry revenue model is influenced by the quality of the product, potential differentiation of the product and cost, competition, the volume and value-added services. Distribution channels are entirely changed over to the Internet, where interactive social media acts as marketing channel. Competitiveness of the operators depends directly on networking with the other operators and specialization of the networks. Examples of competitive and strong together businesses in Finland are the sports centres in Lapland (Ylläs, Saariselkä, Levi, Ruka) and Vierumäki. (TEM 2014, 19-20.)

The strengths of sport tourism of Finland are good domestic and international flight connections, security and stability of the nation and internationally excellent sport facilities. Also clean and wide nature areas, natural parks and trail networks create a lot of options for the travellers on their own. Future potential generates the fact that Finland is not yet found as a sport tourism destination. The biggest challenge and at the same time the weakness of sport tourism and tourism in general is to succeed in global competition. Due to digitalization, the traveller can easily search and compare destinations, services, products and prices through the same distribution channel online. High price level and not so smoothly operating networks can also be considered as weaknesses. (TEM 2014, 21.)

Minister of Employment and the Economy Mr. Jan Vapaavuori admits in Iltalehti (2014a) that tourism is more significant business in Finland than commonly thought, as its share of the Finnish GDP is already 2,7 %. However, the state cannot support in all actions either in tourism sector but the entrepreneurs should cooperate and take responsibility independently for their products and services inventing something special to tempt more tourists to Finland where efficient marketing plays a big role, Mr. Vapaavuori continued. (Iltalehti 2014b.)

### **3 Sports and sport marketing**

Sport is characterized as activities, experiences or business enterprises that focus on athletics, health and wellness, recreation and leisure time opportunities. The sport business industry is unique, since the products and services are intangible and experimental. Sport management is the collection of skills related to the planning, organizing, directing, controlling, budgeting, leading and evaluation of an organization whose primary product or service is related to sport and its related functions. (Schwarz & al. 2013, 4.) In the following chapters sport marketing and destination marketing are described only in general terms as well as the marketing strategies are clarified with suggestions for this particular case. Use of social media has become important in the business world especially in marketing and sales functions, which are also pointed out in the next chapters. Literature of sport marketing, especially from perspective of active sport tourism marketing was quite limited.

#### **3.1 Marketing**

Marketing is usually defined by its components, such as advertising, sales, promotions, product management, pricing, publicity and so forth. These components are told to be improving the application of marketing elements. The very simple definition of marketing is the functions that involves in the transfer of goods and services from the producer to the consumer. Sport marketing is a process of developing and implementing activities related to the production, pricing, distribution, promotion and publicizing of a sport product. These sport products run the gambit, from sport drinks to sport clothing with team logos, to ticket packages, to the activity itself and so on. The goal is to satisfy the needs and wants of consumers, achieve the goals and objectives of the company in relation to their philosophy, vision and mission and stay ahead of the competition to maximize product's and company's potential. (Schwarz & al. 2013, 12.)

The key point of the functions is in four specific areas known as the 4Cs of marketing analysis: the consumer, the company itself, the competition and the climate (Schwarz & al. 2013, 5). Whereas, Middleton & al. (2009, 139) defines the 4Cs as customer value, cost, communication and convenience. This type of classification sits on consumer-oriented marketing, where the consumer's point of views activates the marketing operations of the company.

### 3.2 The 4 Cs

The consumer is an individual or organization that acquires goods or services for direct use or ownerships. To obtain sport consumers, sports marketing professional go through many processes. Segmentation is the concept of allocation a large, diverse group with multiple attributes into smaller groups with special characteristics. Targeting tries to find the best way to get a product's image into the minds of consumers and thereby persuade the consumer to buy the product. This is executed by focusing on the four Ps of marketing: product, price, place and promotion, the evolution of publicity as a fifth P and the ongoing influence of people as the sixth P. Positioning concentrates in how a company tries to influence the awareness of potential and current customers about the image of the company and its products and services. Delivery is the concept of producing or achieving what is requested and expected by the consumer. (Schwarz & al. 2013, 5-8.)

With relation to the company and completion, the framework is focused on the SWOT analysis. The management of the company is most concerned with internal strengths and weaknesses, while the leaders of the company are focusing on the external opportunities and threats caused by competition and the environment. Also the climate that affects the sport marketing functions of an organization has to be directed including internal (organizational structure, culture and change) and external (the economy, information technology, legal and political forces, social and ethical influences) factors. All this information is gathered together into a marketing plan and improved with primary and secondary research, economic and financial considerations and an evaluation of the products and services to be offered. (Schwarz & al. 2013, 8-12.)

A strategic plan is a broad and integrated plan that is outlined to look at the long-term projections of a business. The strategic sports marketing plan is an all-inclusive, synergistic, forward-looking process in terms of where the sport business is going to attain their vision. Strategic planning is centred on creating a consistent mission for an organization, evaluating its internal operational strengths and weaknesses, assessing external opportunities and threats, creating relevant goals and objectives, crafting an appropriate organizational structure to move the business forward and developing an action plan to carry out the process. The strategic sport marketing plan goes still deeper that includes inputs, constituencies, key success factors, assumptions, key result areas and strategies. (Schwarz & al. 2013, 13.)

Characterized for sport marketing is that the principal sport product is forever intangible, subjective and variable. The consumer experience is constantly subjective, which makes

sport marketing difficult since there are so many different consumer perceptions and it becomes difficult and challenging to guarantee the satisfaction of consumer. (Schwarz & al. 2013, 22.)

As with most demand-based products, consumer demand of the main sport product may vary highly. The economic concept of supply and demand is considered with most products. Therefore it is difficult to develop a marketing strategy, as the consumer minds should be read and the needs and desires identifies as related to the sport product. (Schwarz & al. 23.) Thereby, sport tourism is a niche market full of gap in the market for the variety of needs and requirements that potential sport tourists have (Papathanassis 2011, 79).

### **3.3 Destination management and marketing**

The strategic planning of sport tourism destinations needs integration and cooperation between the public and private sector involved in the tourism industry. In order to success in this, both regional and national destinations have to recognize the key players of the planning process with mutual interests. Partnership networks has to be built in cooperation with private and public sectors by setting common goals and objectives and combining human and financial resources. (Higham 2005, 98.)

Destination marketing or management organizations (DMO) act as the community or local authority leader in tourism marketing and development. An organization's primary mission is to market cities or regions to potential visitors. Further, they provide local visitor meeting planning services and act as a catalyst and/or builder in ensuring the development of appropriate attractions, facilities/services and infrastructure needed to provide destination experiences. The DMO is an umbrella organization that solicits and services all types of travellers. It is an information clearinghouse, convention management consultant and promotional body for the community. The DMO's are also coordinating entity that brings together the interests of local government, trade and civic associations and individual travel suppliers to build outside visitor traffic to an area. They are acting as a tourism economic development agent, which assist in increasing an area's income and employment and enhancing the quality of life for its residents. (Wang & Pizam 2011, 17.)

Destination management concerns many stakeholders that are explained as groups and individuals having a direct or indirect interest in the management of a destination for tourism. Figure 2 below shows the main groups of stakeholders in destination management. Directly influenced by tourism in the destination are tourists and tourism sector organiza-



tions with a direct interest in destination management. The rest of the stakeholder groups do not have so direct contact in tourism in the destination, although a few of the groups or individuals are more or less in contact with tourism than the others.

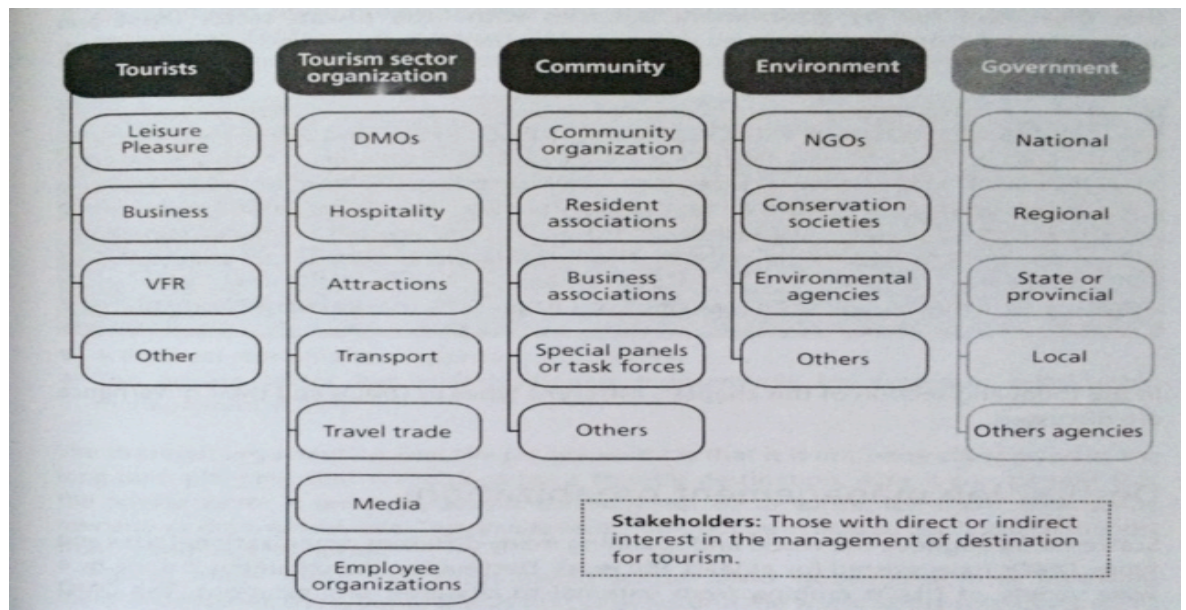


Figure 2. Stakeholders in destination management (Morrison 2013, 23)

The DMO have to be aware that all these groups of stakeholders have to pull together somehow to the common goal; doing one's bit, which is the success of tourism in the destination. (Morrison 2013, 23.) Achieving effective and coordinated planning between the stakeholders, it is important to remember every direction, continuous communication (Higham 2005, 98).

Other important functions of the destination management are leadership and coordination, planning and research, product development, partnership and team-building and community relations (Morrison 2013, 34).

### 3.3.1 Partnership and team-building

A partnership is a cooperative relationship between a DMO and other organizations or individuals, inside or outside of the destination. Team-building refers to DMO's attempts to build, support and maintain teams of people and organizations to carry out specific strategies, programmes or actions. It is achieved more when working together and all the things could not be done on your own. (Morrison 2013, 191-192.)

A large range of benefits generate from destination partnership, for example, increasing budgets and market appeal, sharing information, combined expertise, sharing facilities,

better serving customer needs, accessing customer databases, entering new markets, improving image and developing social responsibility. Potential partners might be found from the private sector and thru non-profit organizations and individuals with an interest in tourism. Although there are many potential benefits from destination partnerships, also some limitations can be detected such as inadequate financial recourses, communication problems, unequal benefit distribution and uncertainty to cooperate. (Morrison 2013, 201-205; Higham 2005, 136-140.)

Many types of destination partnerships can be found around the world today. Just to mention a few of them which would suit for sport tourism are: cooperative promotions, event sponsorships, customer care, DMO organizational structures, product clubs, strategic marketing alliances, themed routes or circuits and websites and social media. (Morrison 2013, 208-210.)

In my opinion, Morrison (2013) indicates very well, why destination partnership is important.

Successful destination partnerships tend to have certain common ingredients. They have widespread support from all partners who share the same or similar goals or interests. The partners want to focus on specific markets and see the wisdom of joining forces to appeal to these markets. They are willing to make an investment in each other and share information freely. (Morrison 2013, 216.)

Kanter (1994) describes the basic ingredients for partnership development with her famous 8Is, which can be seen in the table 1.

Table 1. The 8 Is of partnership development modified from Kanter's (1994) article

The 8 Is	The basic ingredients of successful partnerships:
Individual excellence:	The partners are strong and have something to contribute to the collaboration.
Importance:	The partnership fits with the goals and strategies of the partners.
Interdependence:	The partners need each other and they have complementary resources, skills and experiences.
Investment:	The partners invest in each other.
Information:	The partners share information and communications are open.
Integration:	The partners create linkage and shared ways of doing things.
Institutionalization:	The partnership is given a formal status with a contract.
Integrity:	Mutual trust is increased because partners behave in an honourable way toward each other.

Hereby the 8Is by Kanter (1994) are described as follows. A flourishing destination partnership is like a good marriage that lasts. Motives for entering into the collaboration are positive to chase future opportunities, not negative to hide weaknesses or escape a difficult situation. Partners have long-term goals in which the partnership plays a key role and they want to make it work. Neither can accomplish alone what both can together. Investments are important, for example equity swaps, cross-ownership or mutual board service

to demonstrate the respective stakes in the cooperation and each other by showing tangible signs of long-term commitment by devoting financial and other resources to the partnership. Partners share information required to make the collaboration work, including objectives and goals, technical data and knowledge of conflicts, trouble spots or changing situations. The partners build broad connections between many people at many organizational levels. Partners become both teachers and learners. Formal status is given for the partnership with clear responsibilities and decision processes. Mutual trust is improved and all behave toward each other in honorable ways. Information gained is not abused and nor do undermining of each other. (Kanter 1994.)

The cooperation in the tourism sector is diverse, but the most common form is marketing, sales and production cooperation, which improve the competitive landscape. In cooperation with the parties involved on a voluntary basis take joint actions to achieve the common objectives. The most common types of bilateral partnerships in tourism are subcontracting relationships. Commitment to cooperation is the key to effective networking in the tourism industry and is dependent on the development of knowledge, feeling and will. (Boxberg, Kompola, Korhonen & Mutka 2001, 27-31.)

Problems that might hinder the fruitful partnership development are: changes in priorities, insufficient communications, nonrealistic timetables, lack of time, investments in the destination partnership, unrealistic expectations of partnership benefits and inadequate and detailed partnership planning (Morrison 2013, 212).

Team-building is an important sub-role and the teams can be either short-term or long-term. The main task of the teams is to gather together to process specific issues and tasks from the DMO. The teams are just completing the role of DMO's in destination management. (Morrison 2013, 216.)

Building, maintaining and operating of sports facilities asks large sums of money over their lifetime. Because of this the authorities or the owners of the expensive sport and recreational facilities are willing to find ways for protection. (Higham 2005, 75.)

The key drivers of sport tourism destination development have been city developers, government agencies, facility owners and event organizers. Nowadays, active sport tourists including amateur athletes, professional athletes and professional sporting bodies are emerging drivers of sport tourism. The requirement or the need is easy access to the sport venues, not completely isolated from the attractions of the local destinations including the opportunity to participate in tourism activities with friends and relatives. (Higham 2005,90.)

### **3.4 Social media as a marketing tool**

Use of social media has become important in the business world especially in tourism marketing and sales functions, which is presented next.

#### **3.4.1 The basics of social media**

Social media refers to the Internet services and applications that combine the communication between the users and their own content. Social media is not a standard definition, even though the use has spread rapidly in the business world, non-governmental media and teaching. Social usually refers to the interaction between people and the media information and channels, through which the information is distributed and transmitted. Social network users are not only recipients but can also do things by themselves: comment, get to know each other, mark favourites and share content. Activity increases sociability, networking and community. In social media it is all about mutual influence, interaction, that technology and through it formed services, networks and communities supports in new ways. (Heinonen 2009, 6-7.)

Social media is easy to use and quick to learn, mostly free of charge and there is a possibility of collective production. Social media tools can be divided into high-speed messaging services, photo sharing and video sharing services, as well as interactional community service for personal and professional purposes. Examples of quick messaging services are Twitter and WhatsApp and of image and video sharing services are Flickr, Instagram, Pinterest and YouTube. Interactional personal social media formats can be read Facebook, Wikipedia, MySpace, Second Life and Habbo Hotel, while the professional social community can be maintained, for example, in LinkedIn. Other forms of social media include blogs, podcasts, wikis, RSS, SMS and texting with Messenger. (Heinonen 2009, 6.)

Use of social media is associated with a lot of benefits and opportunities, but also disadvantages and risks. Risks are not coming from the technology or the Internet, but they brought out by the users themselves. Problems and risks are arising from the fact that in the Internet the speed, the spread and the ease availability of harmful information are making difficult to control the communities. It is absolutely impossible to create a social media and its contents without too many restrictive rules and control on the other hand focus should be on critical content interpretation and on compliance of the existing netiquette. (Heinonen 2009, 11.)

### **3.4.2 Social media in the business world**

Social media is used in the business world for example in marketing, sales, customer service and internal and external communication. (Dagmar 2014). For the companies it is important to react and respond to customer feedback and participate in the discussions, as like this the company and brand services their customers. This increases customer loyalty and continuous input, which admittedly requires the company's continued presence and monitoring of social media. (Someco 2014.)

The presence, listening and dialogue are important, for example when marketing a new product. The right social media channel has to be chosen and debate courageously with customers. Reputation management involves listening and in dialogue it is necessary to be receptive, fast and direct, as it often reinforces positive images and good customer relations. (Aller 2014.)

This kind of business model consists of a company and a customer where the customer spreads out experiences and information about the company in social media within his networks. Sharing does not occur without of compelling content that requires from the company structured content strategy and culture of open communication. (Aller 2014.)

Social media channels share information about job vacancies quickly and effectively. Information finds customers through networks and at the same time, as well as the right applicants to create and build a modern image of an employer. In selling social media helps you to understand how to take advantage of sellers own social networks, and how to share valuable information. In social media it is easy to identify potential sales situations or buying groups. (Aller 2014.)

In customer service, the customer wants a quick solution to the problem, friendly and honest service, but also the opportunity to choose the service channel. Service in social media allows companies to stand out from the competition, but also to strengthen customer loyalty and to get information about what your customers want. (Aller 2014.) To quality of customer service should be paid attention, as the client will share information about the service received, whether it is good or bad, of which, if successful, may form the company's business card. (Isokangas & Kankkunen, 2011, 7.)

Due to digitalization of the environment companies shall cooperate and modify their business models. Today, many of the key processes, such as sales, marketing, customer service, product development and HR (human resources) work in the digital and social me-

dia. Business is based on data analytics and continuous dialogue. (Sigala, Christou & Gretzel 2012, 89.)

According to Sigala & al. (2012, 73) social media is becoming increasingly vital to hospitality and tourism businesses as a result of the intangibility and the experiential nature of tourism products and the lowering the technological barriers for average travellers allowing them to supply information online. For example, travel blogs identified by tourism marketers are effective tools for promotion, product distribution, management and research because of the narrative stories and experiences of the travellers. Online travel reviews and communities are having a big role in tourism business too that offers support when making travel planning and decision-making. (Sigala & al. 2012, 191-192.) Social media is essentially changing the way travellers and tourists search, find, read and trust, as well as together in several kinds of communities produce information about tourism destinations and tourism suppliers (Sigala & al. 2012, 1).

Social business is an opportunity, if the time, method and place are said to be in control. This requires a lot of advance planning, testing, rational strategy for its implementation, skilled people, the right channel, transparent and reliable content that is in line with the company's strategy and other activities.

The use of social media has a lot of potential if succeed, it reaches out to people, it is fast, it will save travel costs and time. Social media is still no substitute for personal contact interactions in addition the business world has a lot of protocols that require personal interaction where social media is not usable, for example, at the signing situation.

Social media is a great marketing tool, for example, advertising is so far free of charge, using of social media does not require more than username. The possibilities are practically endless, requiring continuous real-time updating and monitoring. The disadvantage is that social media is a very addictive and work and leisure separation is more difficult, since the same social media channels are used for work and leisure.

### **3.5 Marketing strategies**

Marketing strategies that would be suitable for this particular case are discussed using the examples of the object being examined. The more specific presentation concerning Lahti as a sport tourism destination is given in the chapter 4.

Vision is to develop city of Lahti the sport tourism centre in Finland. To achieve this goal it is needed to gather up all possible operators to build up the connection network between

them. With the help of efficient marketing mix and the right people the goal could be achieved in a reasonable time. This project would benefit Lahti region, city of Lahti and all the participant operators involved, not forgetting the sport tourists.

After studying several sources it is not easy to implement a specific and well-defined marketing strategy for this demand-based sport tourism product since consumer's requirements and intentions are not easy to predict. Instead of this specific and well-defined marketing strategy there are many combinations of marketing strategies that could be used.

Marketing strategies that could be used for this product, Lahti as a sport tourism destination, are Michael Porter's (1980, 35-46) defined differentiation and focusing strategies. The goal of differentiation strategy is to provide a variety of products, services or features to consumers that competitors are not yet offering or are unable to offer. In the differentiation strategy, company is required to provide the customer orientation and adaptation to customers' wishes and needs. It should be noted that the uniqueness does not mean differentiation, unless it is in some way valuable to the customer.

According to Michael Porter (1980, 35-46) in focusing strategy the company ideally concentrates on a few target markets that are also called a segmentation strategy or niche strategy. These should be distinct groups with specialized needs. The choice of offering low prices or differentiated products or services should depend on the needs of the selected segment and the resources and capabilities of the firm.

Destination branding is about how customers perceive the destination in their minds. Branding a destination is not just about creating a logo or a slogan. It is about capturing the distinct elements of the destination in the brand and communication these elements through the brand's components: identity, essence, personality, image, culture and character. Managing these components in order to create a unique position of the destination brand in the consumer's mind is called brand positioning. (Beech, Kaiser & Kaspar 2014, 99-102.)

In this Lahti case, the product marketing strategy will be quite unique. The strategy is based on differentiation, because it is totally new model to active sport tourists. The strategy is also supported by the geographic position of Lahti. When starting marketing this product, it will be focused on for example wealthy active adults that are searching something new. With destination branding Lahti could create an image of being the center of well-being and sports, which gives a picture for active sport tourists that Lahti is the center point of this.

A sport marketing plan has to be developed to address consumers' and non-consumers' needs and wants. Sport marketing plan is a framework for identifying and achieving an organization's marketing goals and objectives. I have collected ten steps to demonstrate marketing plan for the city of Lahti based on books from Schwarz & al. (2013, 3-37) and Jobber & Lancaster (2006, 46-74) that is readable in appendix 3.

The sales process directs on taking the sport tourism products or services, experiences available for sale and developing the best methods attracting the sport tourist to plan and buy a trip to a destination to do sports by prospecting for customers, communicating with the sport tourist, making contact and inputting the idea of a sale, closing the sale and servicing after the sale is complete if needed. Great, skilled and motivated sales personnel are the face of the company or the destination who makes good at the same time for the company and the consumer of the sport product. The company and the destination gets the profits and the consumer satisfaction and well-being from the doing sports. The selling of sport product is very unique since the typical supply and demand model is significantly different. (Schwarz & al. 161-177.)



## 4 Lahti and Lahti region as a sport tourism destination

### 4.1 Lahti

The city of Lahti (Image 1) is located in Southern Finland in the county of Päijät-Häme with area of 154,8 km<sup>2</sup>.

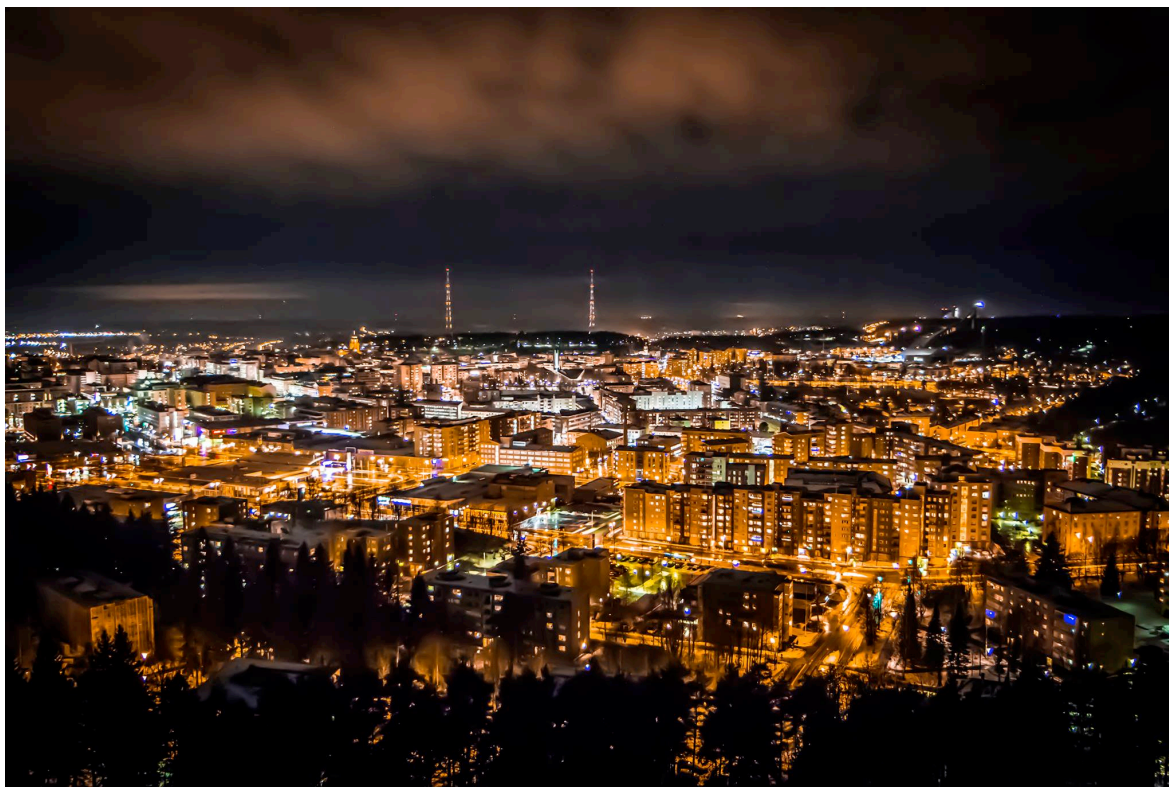


Image 1. City of Lahti on 1.1.2015 (Mäkijärvi 2015)

According to Population Register Centre (2014) there was 103 667 inhabitants in Lahti in the end of September 2014 and over 200 000 inhabitants in the Lahti region which Asikkala, Hollola, Hämeenkoski, Kärkölä, Nastola, Orimattila and Padasjoki forms. The proximity of the municipalities of Päijät-Häme can be seen on the map in the image 2. All these areas are just within 15 minutes drive from Lahti and each other.



Image 2. Location of Lahti (Hyvä happi 2014)

Lahti is the fifth largest region in Finland forming part of the Helsinki metropolitan region. In Lahti there is beautiful nature and water around, great sports facilities and it is nearby of Finland's capital city. Lahti (100 km north of Helsinki) is reached by motorway in approximately one hour, by bus in just over an hour by daily at 30 minutes intervals and by train in 48 minutes. Helsinki-Vantaa Airport is also very close with direct hourly bus connections. The central location of Lahti area close to the growing markets of southern Finland and Russia provides a cost-effective business environment. Lahti is easily reached from St. Petersburg by train, just in 2 hours and 45 minutes. (Lahti Region Ltd 2014.)

There are many advantages of the Lahti region for business:

- Excellent road and rail connections
- A wide choice of industrial and logistical sites
- Lowest cost of business premises and industrial sites amongst major urban areas
- Availability of skilled, capable professionals
- Lahti University Consortium
- Public funding available for business development
- Natural gas, alternative energy source
- A pleasant living environment; accommodation at affordable prices and
- A wide choice of recreational activities. (Lahti Region Ltd 2014.)

The Lahti area is full of activities for travellers. All different sports, nature activities, outdoor areas with skiing tracks, the many lakes in the area and comprehensive sports services provide the active individual with option all year long. (Lahti Region Ltd 2014.)

#### **4.2 Options to do sports in Lahti and Lahti region**

The city of Lahti has a lot of options to offer for the local people and for the tourists. The Lahti region is the metropolitan area's centre of well-being and one of the most well known winter sports cities. The ski jumping towers and their silhouettes are a major part of the Lahti cityscape. From the wide range of services produced by the city of Lahti, the sports clubs and organizations as well as private service providers, individually and collectively, can be found a lot of alternatives to practice sports at all ages throughout the year (Lahti liikkuu 2014). In Lahti you can find all three sport tourism markets active, event and nostalgic, but this research is concentrating in active sport tourism and the sports facilities where the participant can involve in sports by themselves. For example, an active sport holiday can consist of almost everything that Lahti region supplies bringing added value from non-sports well-being activities too. The biggest sports facilities are presented in the

following chapters in which the author has taken part in many sports too. Lahti Sport Tourist map can be found in the appendix 2 (Image 15, Table 5) compiled by the author.

#### 4.2.1 Lahti Sports Centre

Internationally known Lahti Sports Centre is the heart of the Salpausselkä Ski Games. The ridges of Salpausselkä offer many activities during all year round. Lahti Sports Centre is in just 4 km away from combined Lahti bus and railway station Matkakeskus (ready fall 2015). (Lahti uudistuu 2015.) Lahti Sports Centre has a really central location, only 2 km to the downtown making the accommodation, restaurants and other activities easy to approach.

In winter you can go cross-country skiing directly from the Lahti Stadium. The ridges of Salpausselkä offer variable ski tracks up to 170 km and up-and-down limitless terrain for snowshoeing too. During summer time the out-run of the ski jumping hill serves as an outdoor swimming pool (Image 4). Other summer sports that can be practiced in Salpausselkä include trail running, running, hiking, mountain biking, walking, Nordic walking, trail orienteering, motocross, enduro and speedway. (Lahti Region Ltd 2014; Winter 2014-2015, 10-15.) Image 3 illustrates the guide map of Sports Centre Lahti and the variety of sport premises.



Image 3. Lahti Sports Centre (Autio 2015)

At the area of Lahti Sports Centre there is sports hall consortium for indoor sports consisting of Lahti Suurhalli Sports Hall, Salpausselkä Hall, Lahti Hall and Vesijärvi Hall. These halls offer many options to do sports all year round, for example, floor ball, football, gym, basketball, gymnastics, rink bandy, volleyball and badminton. (Lahden Hallit Oy 2015.)

At the area of Lahti Sports Centre can also be found places for skating, figure skating, ringette or ice hockey, combat sports, track & field, swimming and so forth. (Lahti liikkuu 2015.)

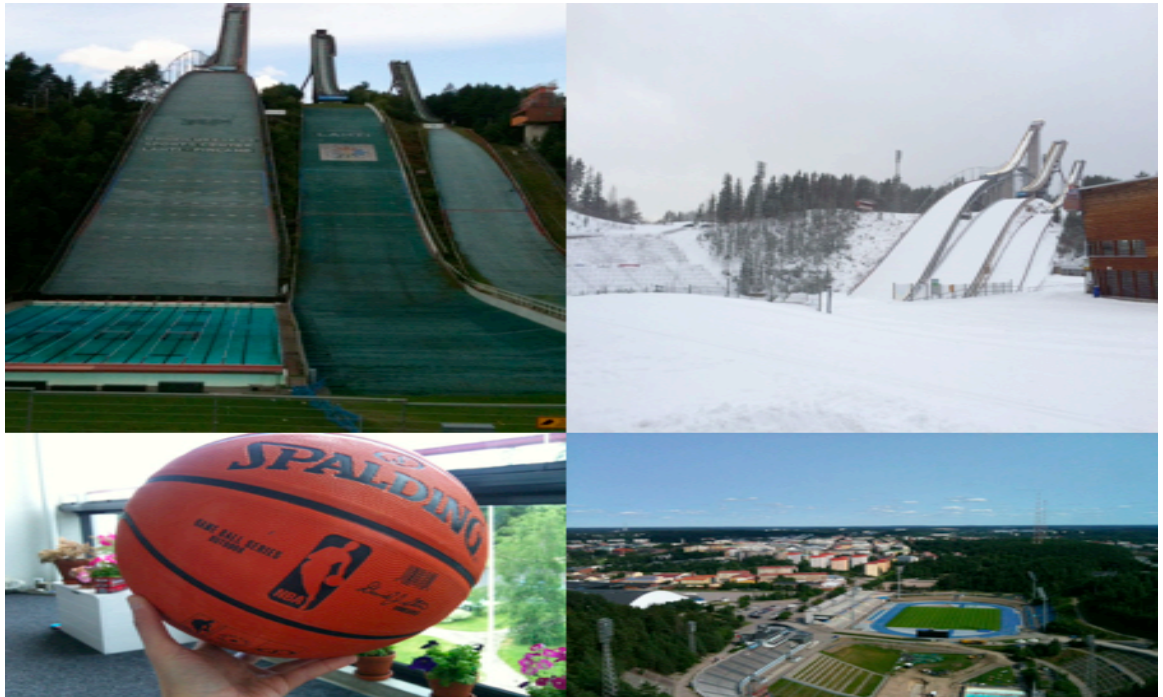


Image 4. Lahti Sports Centre (Autio 2014)

#### 4.2.2 Vesijärvi

The biggest lake of Lahti, Lake Vesijärvi lies between Lahti, Hollola and Asikkala and the first and second Salpausselkä ridges have an area of 109 km<sup>2</sup> and a length of 25 km (Image 5). The lake has an average depth of 6 m, the maximum depth of no less than 42 m. Vesijärvi catchment area size of 515 km<sup>2</sup> of which the shoreline water lake is 181 km and the population of the area is about 150 000. Vesijärvi can be seen as a gateway to the Finnish Lake District, the bridge is connected to Päijänne, Jyväskylä and Keitele, which is 300 km away from Lahti. Vesijärvi is nationally known for the problems of bioremediation and eutrophication the wastewater pollution. (Puhdas Vesijärvi 2015.)





Image 5. Lake Vesijärvi (Puhdas Vesijärvi 2015)

During summer time the environment of Vesijärvi is full of activities. You can go rowing, canoeing, paddling, sailing (Image 6), surfing, stand up paddling (SUP), swimming and driving watercrafts or aqua jets. Lahti Passenger Harbour acts as a gateway to Finland's lake district. And in winter the water surface turns to ice creating options for kite skiing, skating, cross-country skiing, Nordic skating, ice fishing and snowmobile riding. (Lahti Region Ltd 2014.)



Image 6. Lake Vesijärvi (Autio 2014)

### 4.2.3 Other sites in Lahti

Lahti region is full of options to do outdoor and indoor sports during all seasons; spring, summer, fall and winter with or without sports equipment, on your own independently or with a guide. Just to mention here a few of these sports and the facilities. All of these can be found within a radius of about 5 km from combined bus and railways station, Matkakeskus, in Lahti.

Kisapuisto is nearby centre of Lahti and it is famous of all kind of ball sports (Image 7). In Kisapuisto there is football stadium with different kinds of fields for use of beach volley and lacrosse too. There is also a sport hall in the area of Kisapuisto offering options for squash, tennis, badminton, volleyball and basketball. (Lahti 2015a.)



Image 7. Kisapuisto (Lahti 2015b)

In Laune, nearby the city centre of Lahti, there is a diverse park area where you can enjoy a variety of sports, the nature or have a picnic. In this family park, the Laune Central Park, there is a water park, the city traffic and play area for children and dogs too. In addition, the region includes a bowling alley, skating rink, Frisbee golf area, mini-golf course, a 1500 m<sup>2</sup> skateboarding park and place where to do parkour, if your are a traceur. The sports such as curling, ice-hockey and roller-skating are also possible at this area in the facilities nearby. (Guide Summer 2014, 56-57.)

In Joutjärvi, Möysä, Lahti there is a paddling centre, Joutjärven Melontakeskus Wellamo, where you can paddle (Image 8), canoe, stand up paddle, and of course, swim. The pad-

dling centre Wellamo offers also courses to learn the techniques of the paddling and the place for organizing paddling competitions. (Wellamo melontastadion 2015.)



Image 8. Canoeist in Joutjärvi (Wellamo Melontastadion 2015)

Bicycling, roller-skating or roller skiing, walking and running are possible all over in Lahti since the sidewalks of the roads are wide and in good condition. You can choose beforehand planned route from the guide made by Ina Ruokonen or run or cycle for example as long as you can and wherever you like. The guide presents routes from 14 km up to 100 km. (Lahti Region Ltd 2014.)

If you like to try something else and maybe more exotic that you are usually doing, you can choose from sports such as trail running during all seasons, sumo, paintball, boxing, karting, wall climbing, yoga and summer time park yoga, winter swimming, disc golf, dancing, cross-fit at special premises, pole fitness or horse riding. Hiking or other outdoor activities in nature could be a nice experience too (Image 9). The sky is the limit! (Lahti liikkuu 2015; Guide Winter 2014-2015, 8-15, Lahti Region Ltd 2014; ESS 2015a; Outdoors Finland 2015.)



Image 9. Hiking trail (Outdoors Finland 2015)



#### 4.2.4 Messilä

Messilä is located in Hollola, which is 8 km from Lahti, on the ridge of Salpauselkä, by the lake Vesijärvi. From Helsinki it is only one hours drive or on Saturdays during the season a charter bus is taking the skiers directly to Messilä with 40 euros fee. (Messilä 2015a.) There is also a special daily driving ski bus (1M) from Lahti to Messilä; the route was opened again after seven years (ESS 2014). Messilä is southern Finland's largest ski center with 150 000 visitors serving its the customers in proper winter seasons from the end of November till April. Messilä can be considered also as a meeting and leisure centre in a traditional manor setting.



Image 10. Skicenter Messilä (Messilä 2015b)

Messilä has southern Finland's largest and highest slopes, totally 10 including street plus mini street for snowboarders. Ski center illustrated in image 10 is described in figures as follows: 10 illuminated slopes, 9 lifts, 222 m from sea level (top point 111 m), open daily between 10 am and 8 pm, 70 km ski tracks and 20 of them are illuminated, ski school, ski rental and so on. During winter time the area of Messilä Skicenter offers down hill skiing, snowboarding, Telemark skiing, slalom, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and during summer time golf tracks (Image 10). Accommodation in Messilä is arranged with traditional hotel rooms, old storehouses and log cabins. One á la carte restaurant and one bistro with pizza and burgers serve the customers at the area too. The manor restaurant is mainly in use for private parties.



#### 4.2.5 Pajulahti

Pajulahti is located in Nastola just 15 minutes drive from the city of Lahti and an easy access from any direction, for example within one hour from Helsinki. Pajulahti is a physical education-, training- and recreational leisure centre offering high standard education, training facilities, conference and meeting facilities and fitness and wellness experiences to the visitors around the clock in any season of the year. Typical visitors are: sports student, top athletes, recreational sports visitors and other customers. Beautiful nature around, lake scenery and warm atmosphere makes the stay enjoyable. At the area there is also accommodation available, as well as restaurant. In Pajulahti there is many possibilities to do sports: Pajulahti Hall for track and field, swimming pools, ice stadium, combat sports, football, variety of indoor sports, tennis, canoeing and so on. It is also worth of mentioning that Pajulahti acts as a training place for disabled athletes (Image 11). The fifth annual Pajulahti Games will be held in January 2015 in Pajulahti Sport Institute consisting of competitions such as goalball, sitting volleyball, showdown, judo, athletics, powerlifting and wheelchair rugby. (Pajulahti 2014a.)



Image 11. Happy trainee in Pajulahti (Pajulahti 2015b)

#### 4.2.6 Tallukka

Tallukka is a wellness and convention hotel in Vääksy, Asikkala. It takes 30 minutes drive from Lahti and one and a half hours from Helsinki to this hotel situated between two big lakes, Vesijärvi and Päijänne. The hotel offers a nice location for parties, different occasions and meetings. In privately owned wellness centre Tallukka, in image 12, there are

many sports to choose from the group exercise, gym or many outdoor activities, not forgetting the golf course that is in the immediate neighbourhood. The exercise premises are up high in 135 m with the view to the lakes, where it is possible to train independently or with the instructors. After the training the Day Spa offers treatments and pampering such as salt room, physiotherapy, massage, treatments and cosmetology services. Sauna with peat, honey or infrared or swimming pool is also available for the guests. (Tallukka 2015a.)



Image 12. Wellness and convention hotel Tallukka (Tallukka 2015b)

#### 4.2.7 Vierumäki

Vierumäki is located in southern Finland, 12 km from the centre of Heinola and 25 km to north from Lahti. There are daily buses from Lahti Matkakeskus to Vierumäki which is unique as a producer of services associated with wellness, an active lifestyle and sports-related leisure activities for both individuals and organizations receiving more than 400 000 visitors each year. All year round Vierumäki hosts diverse visitors: junior athletes, families, top athletes, sports teams, companies and other organizations, sports managers and students. Vierumäki offers different kind of accommodation varying from dormitories to villas.

At Vierumäki, you can exercise, participate in various fitness activities, eat well and enjoy the great outdoors in the middle of Finnish lake scenery shown in image 13 surrounded by 10 000 ha of wilderness, forests and varied ridge terrain. Vierumäki offers planned activities for every day all year round and for every age and fitness level. At Vierumäki, there



are many sporting activities, from floorball to salsa, golf to curling, and rollerblading to horseback riding with a guide or on your own. Indoor facilities include courts for various ballgames, shooting ranges, tennis courts, gymnasiums, a golf driving range, a dance hall, two ice rinks, and a swimming hall with several recreation pools. Outdoors, there are options for nature trails, skiing trails and orienteering routes, a suitably surfaced rollerblading route, 45 golf holes, ball courts, and an artificial-turf football pitch with underground heating. (Vierumäki 2014.)



Image 13. On the ridge at Vierumäki in 2007 (Vierumäki 2014b)

## **5 Research methods**

The author conducted an empirical research on the topic based on the theory discussed in the beginning of this report. Hereafter, the chosen research method, research strategy, the type of data collection, the validity, reliability and transparency with some limitations of the research as well as conducting of research are described.

### **5.1 Research methodology**

Leisure and tourism research includes the collection, analysis and presentation of statistical information. The main approaches for a research are qualitative and quantitative. The quantitative approach to research contains numerical data. It depends on numerical evidence to draw conclusions or to test the hypotheses. The reliability of the results often requires studying relatively large numbers of people and use of computers for analysing the data. The quantitative data is gathered for example from questionnaire surveys, from observation involving counts or from administrative sources. (Veal 2011, 34.)

The qualitative approach to research is in general not concerned with numbers but with information in the form of words, expressed orally or in writing. Qualitative research methods enable to collect a relatively large amount of information about the research subjects such as individuals, places or organizations. The methods used to collect qualitative information include observation, informal and in-depth interviewing, participant observation and analysis of texts. (Veal 2011, 35.) Active sport tourism is not much studied phenomenon at least in Lahti and Lahti region therefore phenomena that do not have an in-depth understanding are usually examined with qualitative methods which was also chosen for the research method for this study. Therefore the research approach in this study is deductive, based on extensive theory, which is supported by interviews of experts in sport branch.

### **5.2 Research strategy**

As research strategy a case study was selected for this research, which realizes the study of an example, a case of the phenomenon being researched. Qualitative case study is an approach to research that facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources. Aim is to trace for understanding of the phenomenon by studying single examples. Case can deal with individuals, communities, organizations, places, projects, events or whole countries. (Veal 2011, 128.) The case study method can be explained as an intensive study of a single case or a spatially delimited phenomenon that is

observed at a single point in time or over some period of time using a variety of methods and knowledge acquired. (Veal 2011, 128.) The case study aims to explore, describe and explain the cases mainly how-and why-, what-questions and the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context. (Yin 2009, 2.) Descriptive methods do not necessarily aim to explain the links of phenomenon, to test hypotheses, to make predictions, but the goal of the study is to describe the characteristics of the object systematically, accurately and truthfully. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2009, 164.)

There are many benefits in using the case study methods:

- The ability to set people, organizations, events and experiences in their social and historical context
- Multiple methods, triangulation, are unstated and seen as a strength
- It is not essential to generalize to a defined wider population
- The ability to treat the subject of study as a whole, rather than abstracting a limited set of before hand selected features
- The single or limited amount of cases offers a manageable data collection effort when resources are limited and
- Flexibility in data collection strategy allows researchers to adjust the research strategy as the research proceeds. (Veal 2011, 341-348.)

### **5.3 Data collection**

Selection of the case or cases is very important in the case study method. Case should have a purpose it should be illustrative, typical or atypical, pragmatic or opportunistic. For a case study it is generally used many data sources and data collection techniques: the use of documentary evidence, secondary data analysis, in-depth interviews, questionnaire surveys, observation and participant observation. Pattern matching, explanation building and time-series analysis are forms of analysis that are used within a case study context when pulling together of the results of analyses of different sorts to form coherent conclusions. (Veal 2011, 341-348.)

It is good to remember that the case study is not itself a research method, but researchers select methods of data collection and analysis that will generate material suitable for case studies such as qualitative techniques including unstructured interviews, participant observation, diaries, personal notes, letters, photographs or official document and so on. The data collected can be analyzed using different theories: grounded theory, interpretative phenomenological analysis and text interpretation. There are also some limitations of case studies. The results cannot be generalized to the wider population and the research-

ers own subject feeling may influence the case study. The study is difficult to replicate and conducting a case study it is very time consuming. (Yin 2014, 103-130.)

Due to the fact that the case study aims to trace for understanding of the real-life phenomenon in-depth, it was natural that this research strategy was chosen for studying Lahti and sport tourism in Lahti and Lahti region as it can be seen as an organization and a place. The author tries to explore, describe and explain the case, Sport tourism in Lahti and Lahti region, intensively with how and what questions using a variety of methods and knowledge acquired. In this study the main question to be asked are: "How to develop sport tourism in Lahti and Lahti region?", "What sports can an active sport tourist do and where?", "How to develop cooperation and how to do marketing?" and "What are the strengths and weaknesses?"

An in-depth interview, also known as semi-structured interview, is characterized by length, depth and structure. It is used in three different situations. First, where the subjects of the research may be relatively few in number so a questionnaire-based, quantitative style of research would be inappropriate. Second, where the information likely to be obtained from each subject is expected to vary considerably and complicated. In reporting the research it would be the unique nature and structure of each of these accounts, which would be of interest data on that would not be relevant. Third situation, where a topic is to be examined as a preliminary stage in planning a larger study, like a questionnaire-based survey. (Veal 2011, 240-241.)

A checklist is used as an instrument for semi-structured interviews, although some pre-determined prescribed key questions might be included. It helps the interviewer to ensure that all the relevant topics are covered, although the questions can be asked in different order. More detailed checklist concerns semi-structured interview, while very short or none at all is for unstructured interview. (Veal 2011, 240-241.) There are two approaches to conducting an in-depth interview: standardized and informal or unstructured. In standardized or in other words semi-structured approach, the elements of the traditional scientific approach are replicated. The interaction between researcher and subject is similar for all subjects. Prescribed questions are used interviewer can improvise, depending on the flow of the interview. Some researchers prefer informal or unstructured approach when interviewing. (Veal 2011 243-244.) Interviews should be recorded, sound or video, in order to remember totally the conversation, if not possible at least notes should be done in written form. (Veal 2011, 245.) For data collection of this study semi-structured interviews were utilized since interview usually allow new ideas and detailed and describing information when discussing in informal way.

#### 5.4 Conducting the research

The starting point of this study was to examine sport tourism in Lahti and Lahti region. Relevant theoretical base was planned and collected based on literature review and various other sources. With the help of the thesis instructor the qualitative research method and case study research strategy was chosen. Hereafter the data collection was made through semi-structured interview with pre-planned research questions.

The author faced subtle problems in finding the interviewees although a list of possible persons provided by the client in this case Lahti Region Ltd was given. It took some time to find right persons, since there were no replies to the author's e-mails or call requests from the companies or organizations dealing with any kind of sport matters. The author had to resort the power of social media, the Facebook and a group inside of the city of Lahti, in order to find suitable participants for the interview. It was very surprising that so few people show interest toward this kind of research in a sport city like Lahti. It was also disappointing that the author did not get any contact from Vierumäki and this is why the point of view of a leisure centre is missing.

Finally ten persons were interviewed individually, two by telephone of which one was supplemented through e-mail interview, seven in person, face-to-face and one via e-mail. One interview was held at home of the author, four at the offices of the respondents, one in café, one in a restaurant and the rest over the phone or by e-mail. The respondents represented tourism professionals, former athletes, sports centre employee, school, local destination marketing organization and other sports and tourism professionals and were intentionally selected despite of the difficulties in the beginning. Altogether interview included seven prepared open-ended questions, which was supplemented by additional specifying questions. The interview questions can be found in appendix 1. Interview framework with prepared questions was considered easier since the interviewer was inexperienced which also ensured that all the important topics would be passed. The interview questions were not sent to the interviewees in advance.

All interviews were recorded in order to make transcription easier, which was, of course, approved by the respondents. The interviews were conducted in Finnish and translated later by the author into English. The transcribing does not include any repetition, filler words, laughing or voices of thinking of the interviewees. All respondents will remain anonymous and a special interview coding was implemented that is illustrated in table 2 below showing the organization, title, date, length and form of interview. Timing of the interviews was challenging, because of the variable work shifts of the respondents and the



author. The schedule was tight in every way; all the interviews were conducted between December 2014 and March 2015. The number of answers was regarded valid since the received data was quite similar regardless of the respondent's origin or representing company.

Table 2. Interview coding

	Organization, title	Date	Length	Form of interview
R1	Visit Finland, Representative	19/12/14	16:00	Phone
R2	Private person: former athlete of Lahden Hiihtoseura and Lahden Ahkera	9/1/15	40:00	Face to face
R3	Messilä Ski Center, Representative	26/1/15	14:31	Face to face
R4	Messilä Ski Center, Representative	26/1/15	19:26	Face to face
R5	Lamk, Head of Sports	2/2/15	31:35	Face to face
R6	Private person: former athlete, ex-worker of sports and wellness center	6/2/15	21:12	Face to face
R7	City of Lahti, Representative	11/2/15	1:14:48	Face to face
R8	Lahti Region Ltd, Representative	11/2/15		E-mail
R9	Lamk, Expert of R&D, specialist of Outdoors Finland	13/2/15		E-mail
		17/2/15	16:34	Phone
R10	Lahti Region Ltd, Representative	9/3/15	54:32	Face to face

The data collected from the interviews was checked, completed and organized. Transcribing was used as a method to organize the data, which helped me to use the material in my analysis. The key points of the research are analysis, understanding and conclusions of the collected data, because it is the point where the results of the study are exposed. Analysis can be done for example by explaining or understanding. Explaining is used when analysing statistical data whereas understanding is used for qualitative data. Analysis of qualitative research is generally considered difficult. The most common analysis methods are: thematic approach, typology, content analysis, discourse analysis and conversational analysis. (Hirsjärvi & al. 2009, 221-229.) Content analysis is analysing and interpretation of the content of published and unpublished materials such as company documents, advertising material, websites and letters. (Veal 2009, 135.) In this research content analysis was chosen as a method for analysis where the written form material was studied and tried to find differences and similarities from these. The interview material in this research was divided into similar themes as the interview questions. The results were closely reviewed and then I made conclusions based on those results.



## 5.5 Validity and reliability

When analysing the results of the research, the validity and reliability has to be considered. Validity measures the relevancy of the research meaning that the used methods actually measure those factors that it was supposed to measure. Reliability means that the results are repeatable and not coincidental. (Hirsjärvi & al. 2009, 231.) Concepts of reliability and validity are generally used in quantitative research. In qualitative research using these concepts in the same sense is challenging; even if these exact terms are not used, it is still important to evaluate, how reliable and valid the research is. In qualitative research the researcher can try to do this by explaining the research process and conditions in detailed way, for example describing the interview circumstances, assessing someone's own actions as interviewer and discussing about possible misunderstandings that might affect the results. When interpreting the research results, the researcher should be able to tell on which grounds his conclusions are based on. (Hirsjärvi & al. 2005, 221-232.)

However, validity and reliability of qualitative methods cannot be considered using strict quantified tests of quantitative methods, but the issues can be addressed and determined to give an evaluation of what can be used the term trustworthiness. (Veal 2011, 251-252.) It has four components: credibility, transferability, reliability and objectivity. A thorough reporting of the process and the results of qualitative data collection and analysis is the key to justifying and assuring that trustworthiness exists in the research. (Veal 2011, 47.) Reliability, in the sense of exact replication of research, is impossible in case study research. The assembling of evidence from many case studies may build a consensus around the findings of a programme of case study research and other proof. (Veal 2011, 345.)

The goal of this study was to describe the characteristics of the object systematically, accurately and truthfully. The data in this study is collected through semi-structured interview, which is always subjective and interpretable to some extent. Therefore, the validity and reliability of the answers has to be assessed from different perspectives. Credibility is applied by interviewing experts in sport branch. The interview questions were neutral, easy and common about the researched topic and for this reason the number of answers was regarded valid since the received data was quite similar regardless of the respondent's origin or representing company. After reading the theory and many books, articles and information about sport tourism and the city of Lahti, the author may have been biased by forming opinions when interviewing. Due to this the interviews were held as neutral as possible. Also the interviewees background, different experiences, age and per-

sonality has to be taken into consideration when evaluating the results of the interviews. The research process is described in detail in the previous chapter, 5.4, which affirm the trustworthiness of this study. Additionally, the trustworthiness of this qualitative study can be added by maintaining high credibility, meaning demonstration that the evidence for the results reported is trustworthy and when the argument made based on the results is strong.

## **5.6 Transparency**

Transparency of the analysis means that the reader is able to follow the researcher's reasoning that the necessary information is given for accepting the researcher's interpretations or challenging them. The demand for transparency in qualitative research is of crucial importance. The process of interpretation and analysis can never be fully formalized. It is above all a question of working step by step so that the process of interpretation can be made visible to both the researcher and the reader. The research process should be transparent, which is the first objective for building trustworthiness and credibility for qualitative research. In order to write up a transparent research, the presentation and dissemination of findings need to be explicit, clear and open about the methods and procedures used. This is to be done in publicly accessible manner meaning that the researcher has to describe and document the qualitative research procedures thereby that other people can review and try to understand them. All the data has to be available for examination too. The idea is that others should be able to inspect the author's work and the evidence used to affirm the author's findings and conclusions. The inspection can lead in criticism, support or processing. Furthermore any person should be able to launch into such an examination. (Yin 2011, 19; Given 2008, 891-892.)

In this study I have described the assumptions and methods used in designing and performing my research and the methods used in analysing my data as well as the ways in which my findings and conclusions follow from the data with sufficient transparency. The interview data, transcripts and notes are available for independent inspection. The research is repeatable so that another researcher would be able to reach the same conclusions.

## **5.7 Limitations of the empirical research**

There were some limitations concerning the conducted research. First of all, the interviewees were from different organizations, some were even private individuals having

different kind of experience on the issue. Some replies might be biased since the current position of the person in the organization. Furthermore, the interviews were held in Finnish, since it is the mother language of all the interviewees and then later on translated in English, that may have caused some communication gaps. All the interviews were recorded, in a few there was some background noise making the quality of recordings poor, but fortunately the most important thoughts of the respondents were understood.

## 6 Results

This chapter will introduce the key results of the interviews and answer the research questions. The idea of interviews was to encourage the respondents to share their knowledge and ideas related to sport tourism in Lahti and Lahti region based on their own experiences. The aim was also to gather information about the strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities of Lahti and Lahti region as a sport tourism destination, as well as about marketing and marketing development ideas and in addition about the operators and companies and their cooperation. There are seven interview questions, which are shown in the beginning of each topic. Interview questions can be found in appendices, appendix 1, and the interview coding was shown in the previous chapter in the table 2. The respondents are coded as R1-R10 in the results chapters.

### 6.1 The concept of active sport tourism

The first question was about the concept of active sport tourism. R1 and R2 did not have clear understanding about the meaning of active sport tourism. R1 has experience in nature and wellness travel in Finland but did not identify sport tourism, travelling for sports to or inside Finland. Discussion with R1 also revealed that sport tourism is not the first category for the organization in question when promoting travelling to Finland. R3 told that active sport tourism means people who travel for doing physical activity somewhere and who has a target to go for example to the slopes or skiing trail.

R4 associated wellness travel with sport tourism, where you are interested in your own well-being and want to invest in it, by travelling in a wellness centre. Nowadays the trend is to invest more in your own health and well-being.

R5 explained that active sport tourism means travelling to a destination that motivates to do physical activities or sports. Travel could include for example a mountain where to climb or to downhill ski, beach with waves to surf, leisure centre or in general, conditions that enable doing sports. The destination can be also a forest, nature or other setting, where you can practise activities related to sports and which is pre-planned. It can be independently designed complete travel package, where the focus is on physical exercise or sports.

In R6's opinion a travel destination is chosen depending on the interest of the traveller, what sport you would like to engage in or if you even want to try something new. The trip lasts longer than a day, R6 stated.

R7 and R8 had opinion that in Lahti and Lahti region you can find nostalgic, active and event sport tourism. As my study concerns active sport tourism, both respondents, R7 and R8, described an active sport tourist as a traveller who travels to a destination to do sports and other leisure activities when having free time.

R9 explained sport tourism in two different ways. There are tourists that travel to do different kinds of activities during their free time and sport tourists that work out more goal-oriented.

It seems that almost all of the interviewees had similar understanding of the features of sport tourism as it was discussed in the chapters 2.1 – 2.3. Active sport tourism is leisure-based travel where the individual participates in physical activities away from home environment. The activity can be something that you already do, for instance running in different places and terrains or totally something new sports that you never tried before, for instance surfing when there is the waves for that. Reasons for sport tourism are related to health and well-being.

## **6.2 Active sport tourism in Lahti and Lahti region**

Respondents were asked to describe the active sport tourism in Lahti and Lahti region in the second question. They were asked to name the most important places to do sports, the existing and potential users and the origin of the users. R1 did not take sides in this question since the respondent did not have any knowledge about sport tourism in Lahti and Lahti region.

R2 told that there are a lot of skiers in Salpausselkä from Russia, Sweden, Estonia, Norway, Austria and Germany and also from Helsinki and the rest of the metropolitan area during wintertime. According to R2 Messilä Skicenter is getting clients from Turku.

R3 named the people from metropolitan area as the most important target group for the use of sports facilities in Lahti, especially in Messilä Skicenter, not forgetting the people from the provinces of Kymenlaakso and Päijät-Häme. R3 also mentioned that there are not visitors in Messilä from Western either Northern Finland, because the sporting facilities there are quite similar. According to R3 the amount of foreign visitors is only 5 % in Messilä Skicenter and quite often the visitors are coming from Russia. When discussed about the main activities that are possible to do in Lahti and Lahti region, R3 mentioned skiing as the main sports, where the starting point may be from several locations such as Hollola, Messilä, Tapanila and Lahti Sports Centre. R3 noted that at Vierumäki there are a

lot of possibilities like curling and ice hockey since it is a special sport and leisure centre. As per R3 in Messilä you can find sports such as golf, cross-country and trail running and swimming too, but this interviewee talked mainly about winter sports because of the position of the respondent.

R5 praised the nature of Päijät-Häme and having four different seasons. In the same place you can practice different types of tourism and sports for example in the nature. On the lake you can row or paddle in summertime and during winter you can skate or ski. Lahti and Lahti region consists of numerous forests, lakes, nature protection areas and national parks. In well-known Lahti Sports Centre there are many possibilities especially during wintertime it offers variable and long cross-country skiing trails, R5 continued. In this respondent's opinion the nature is the main tourist attraction. Educational institutions and companies offer a variety of activities and physical exercise options, for example the faculty of Social and Health Care of Lahti University of Applied Sciences (LAMK) and LAMK Sports, Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences in Vierumäki and in Pajulahti, especially for students. R5 expressed his thoughts and ideas as follows:

“The strength would be cooperation between different actors... Great facilities for various sports. The sky is the limit, what you can do in Lahti and Lahti region... Implementers should be found for different forms of tourism in collaboration with a variety of operators... Expansion in the direction of foreign visitors could be done... Finnish nature attracts... Various high-quality packages, products and services and accommodation, guided tours to nature, canoeing and kayaking... Geocaching and photographing is where you go to see beautiful scenery through difficult terrain for example and take photos. Geocaching could be a voluntary course at educational institutions that external parties could buy as a travelling product... Russians travel to some extent to Lahti too for sport tourism, but mainly to Lapland, Rovaniemi... Nature in Finland is different perhaps the target groups could be selected Japanese, Chinese, Central European and English tourists.” (R5 2.2.2015.)

R4 mentioned as a sport tourism destination the whole Lahti area and municipalities surrounding it. There are so many possibilities that R4 did not want to separate sports one by one, but raised anyway Vierumäki, Pajulahti and Messilä as well-managed and known sports centres in Southern Finland. Mainly the users are from Southern Finland. Foreign groups or individuals travelling to Lahti or Lahti region are coming from Russia and Estonia. Finlandiahihto, skiing event, gets participants from these countries too. R6 had similar thoughts than R4, but added Chinese that might be interested in Finnish beautiful nature.

R9 noted Vierumäki, Messilä and Pajulahti as active sport tourism centres, but also praised other sites, where to do sports in Lahti and Lahti region, such as the beautiful and diverse nature and terrain. Main users of sport facilities come from Finland that can be called day Trippers, foreigners undoubtedly from Russia. R9 also knew to tell that statisti-

cal material is not available, since Statistics Finland is still not classifying sport tourists separately from other forms of tourism in Finland. The actual market for active sport tourism is in Central Europe: Germany, Austria and Northern Italy, which is not noticed at all in Finnish tourism strategies, claimed R9.

The respondents R7 and R8 representing the sports facilities of the city of Lahti and the commissioner company Lahti Region Ltd verified the main and biggest sports, sports facilities and places in Lahti and Lahti region that are presented in the chapter 4. Both respondents agreed that there is not collected statistics of sport tourists in Lahti or Lahti region, either the origin of the tourists. They knew that there are Russian, German and Finnish people from other cities inside Finland participating the activities but did not know the amount. Perhaps leisure centres such as Vierumäki and Pajulahti specify the visitors by country and by cities. Potential users might come from Russia or Nordic countries, R7 and R8 stated.

The main sports facilities and options of sports in Lahti and Lahti region were presented in the chapter 4 of which many came up in discussions with the representative too. This means that there is awareness about variety of possibilities to do sports in Lahti and Lahti region during all seasons. Lahti as a winter sport city was mentioned several times, likewise beautiful nature with many possibilities to practice different types of tourism and sports. Whether there is sport tourism in Lahti and Lahti region was not so clear to the respondents, although there are for example skiers in Salpausselkä and Messilä Skicenter from Russia, Estonia, Nordic countries and Germany too, but mainly from Southern Finland. Also people from the capital city of Finland are seen in participating leisure activities here in the region. As potential foreign sport tourists were mentioned Central European, British, German, Italian, Chinese and Japanese people and domestic sport tourists who are coming from the metropolitan area. Even though there are good options to do sports in Lahti and Lahti region, this area cannot be considered as a sport tourism destination, because the amount of sport tourists is not available. It seems that people come to do leisure activities in Lahti and Lahti region only if they are aware of the supply by themselves.

### **6.3 SWOT analysis**


SWOT analysis can be used as a planning method for evaluation the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for a product, place or industry. The strengths and weaknesses identify internal origin attributes of the organization that can be either helpful and harmful to achieving the objective whereas the opportunities and threats recognize

external origin attributes of the environment that are also helpful and harmful to achieving the objective. The SWOT analysis headings provide a good framework for reviewing strategy, position and direction of the company or business position. The strengths are the characteristics of the business or project that give it an advantage over others. The weaknesses can be described as characteristics that put the business or project at a disadvantage relative to others. The opportunities can be the elements that the project could develop to its advantage. The threats are the elements in the environment that could cause trouble for the business or project. (Mind Tools Ltd. 2015.)

Question number three was about the strengths and weaknesses and the threats and opportunities of Lahti and Lahti region as an active sport tourism and sport tourism destination. In the following table (Table 3) the SWOT analysis is made partly by the author and Lahti Region Ltd and supplemented with the information that appeared from the interviews with the respondents. The code of the respondent after the lines in the SWOT analysis, R1-R9, is a sign of respondent's opinions and sayings, A is the author and LR is Lahti Region Ltd. Therefore one line can contain more than one respondent code.



Table 3. SWOT analysis

Strengths	Respondent	Weaknesses	Respondent
Location	LR, R3, R4, R6, R9	Bad contacts with co-operators	A, R2, R9
Easy accessibility for Finnish and foreign travellers by bus, train or by car	A, LR, R1, R2, R4, R6, R7, R9	Narrow accommodation, only 12 hotels in radius of 25 km	A, R1, R2, R3
From Helsinki or capital region in one hour	A, LR, R1, R2, R4, R6, R7, R9	Too little parking space	R2, R7
Helsinki-Vantaa airport nearby	A, R5, R6, R7, R9	People usually know Lahti only by winter sport events, but not as a destination for active participants sport tourism all over the year. Internationally Lahti is known only as winter sport city.	A, LR, R1, R3, R4, R9
A lot of opportunities to do sports around the year	A, LR, R2, R4, R6, R9	Too many events happening at the same time	R2
Possibility to do sports by yourself or take a part in an event or both during the visit	A, R2, R7, R9	Web pages cover detailed information only in Finnish language	A, R5, R6, R7, R9
Lahti is aware of its possibilities	LR, R3	Poor language skills: German, Russian, Swedish, English	A
Strong sporting traditions	LR, R3	Bureaucracy	LR, R3
The certainty of snow due to the Salpausselkä ridges	R3	Economical state	LR, R3, R7
Nature	LR, R5, R6, R9	Location, too close, no need for staying over night	R4, R7
Cooperation, a lot of companies, operators, sports clubs	R5	Poor tourist information	A, LR, R5
		Low level of cooperation	A, R7, R9
		Short-sighted supply	A, R9
		Lahti, Hollola and Nastola are located at groundwater formation area, that complicates planning of motor sports	R7
Opportunities	Respondent	Threats	Respondent
Great facilities to do many different kind of sports or participate in an event around the year	A, LR, R2, R4, R5, R6, R7	Economical state	A, LR, R3, R5, R6, R7
Four seasons; spring, summer, fall, winter	A, LR, R5	Climate change, no more clear four seasons	A, R4, R5
Beautiful nature	LR, R1, R2, R5, R6, R9	Global warming, no snow or frost	A, R1, R2, R3, R4, R5
Lake Vesijärvi	LR, R1, R2, R5, R6, R7, R9	Loosing the contacts, co-operation	A, R2
1000 ways to do sports or even more	A, LR, R3, R4, R5	Lahti Sports Center: easy accessibility, system responsiveness	R7
New foreign target groups (Russians from St. Petersburg, Estonians, German, Chinese and Japanese people)	A, R2, R4, R5, R6, R9	Old technology	A, R6, R7, R9
Twin cities	A, LR, R7	Staff	A, LR, R5
Technology: marketing via social media: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, web pages of the city and Lahti Region, mobile apps	A, R7	Financing of maintenance	A
Share opinion and do suggestion about sporting possibilities with twin cities	A, R7	Entrepreneurship is not encouraged	A
Triangle Riihimäki rail connection to Tampere and Circle railroad to the airport of Helsinki-Vantaa	A, R1, R7	Tourism is not seriously considered as a business sector	A
More accommodation; villas, hotels	A, R7	Quality and quantity of accommodation is not meeting the demand and international standards	A, R1, R3, R4
Pull together, achieve more with cooperation and networking	A, LR, R1, R5, R6, R9	Companies, educational institutes, sports clubs are concentrating on their own businesses, no cooperation, which result that information does not spread further, alone you are not able to produce high-quality products and services, that would tempt tourists to stay in Finland	A, R5, R6, R7, R9
Possibilities to offer training camps	R1	<p><b>SWOT</b></p> 	
Collective learning and community	R5		
A lot of different professional expertise in the field of welfare, sports, tourism for development of well-being	A, R5		
Possibility of a project	R5		
Using idols, professional or former athletes in promoting (Ilonen, Bottas)	A, R5		
Former military area garrison in Hennala, ready obstacle course and exercise facilities	R5, R6		
A spa	R3, R4		
Productise	A, R5, R6, R9		
People from Tampere area	R7		
New Lahti marketplace	R7		
Combined Lahti bus and railway station, Matkakeskus	R7		
New sports: drag racing, biathlon, budō sports, mōlkky, kettlebell (girya), yoga in Radiomäki with beautiful views and peaceful surroundings, Kymi Ring (liitti), geocaching	A, R5, R7		
Wild and unforgettable sporting experiences: Fly Lahti Ski Jump – Zipline (Image 14.)	A		

Conclusions can be made based on this SWOT analysis: how to use existing strengths, how to turn the weaknesses to strengths, how to develop the future possibilities and how to avoid threats. As a result there will be a strategy, how to act with this matter in future. In the future the purpose of this SWOT results are brainstorming and developing.

#### 6.4 Sport tourism-related products and services

In this question the respondents were asked to describe what sport tourism-related products and services there already is in Lahti and Lahti region taking into account different seasons; spring, summer, fall and winter.

R1 was not aware of the services or products that are related to sport tourism in Lahti or Lahti region. R2 told about the possibilities to rent equipment, for example suitable for downhill skiing (skis, boots, poles and ski helmet) from SkiMac in Messilä Skicenter. From the same place you can find also service and maintenance for the skis. R2 mentioned about several training courses that many sports clubs organize around Lahti and Lahti region for sports like skiing, running, swimming and downhill skiing, providing at the same time technical skills along with practical hands-on tips for gear maintenance. Accommodation is also available, but not enough, stated R2.

R3 talked about the services and products in Messilä Skicenter during wintertime. Again downhill skiing and cross-country skiing was mentioned with ski schools. In Messilä there is free entrance on the ice of the Lake Vesijärvi for example for all terrain vehicle or snowmobile safaris. The families can have fun with the children in toboggan slope. R3 revealed that you can also find programme provider 4event that arranges group activities for instance for companies such as well-being weekends all year around at Messilä area. R4 added that snowshoeing is a sport, where the demand has increased recently. On the ice of Lake Vesijärvi you can ski kite or Nordic skate and in varying terrain of Messilä for example it is possible to run in trails or ski in unbeatable deep snow.

R5 stressed the importance of the nature. Lahti Sports Centre offers great facilities especially for winter sports, but it is also very usable place during summer time. Lahden Hiihtoseura, a sports club that is concentrated in winter sports that is divided into four divisions: ski jumping and Nordic combined, cross-country skiing, biathlon and alpine sports (alpine skiing, freestyle, snowboarding) offers ski schools for the club members and on request for outsiders too. In the shopping centre Trio, in Lahti city centre, there is a good and serving tourist information office providing information about the city of Lahti, the mall itself and environmental advice, but the visibility of the information desk could be better and information could be more comprehensive and even more specialized on matters concerning tourism and for example sport tourism. Maybe the companies could come along developing cooperation with tourist information desk and increase the visibility in this way, R5 continued.

According to R5 services and products related to sports that could be developed in future to attract travellers could be:

“A rising sports, Frisbee-golf, you can find Finland's best track in Mikkola, Lahti. Geocaching... Not just skiing, but also mountain biking, trail and cross-country running, winter triathlon... New innovations, for example the amount of enthusiastic of endurance sports is increasing all of time... Sports clubs organize the happenings partly, but companies, educational institutions, communities and the third sector should support cooperation, which would lead to a clear product development and further... Development of endurance sports club service packages, such as winter cross-country skiing, trail running, cross-country running, anything... ” (R5 2.2.2015.)

Typical sports facilities can be found here in Lahti like in other cities, maybe different skiing sports distinguishes Lahti from the others, but which are not commercialized anyhow, told R6. There is for example Ski Museum, karting, surfing and huge amount of possibilities but how they can be achieved when the local residents necessarily do not know all of them, R6 noted. Marketing problem, R6 claimed.

According to R9 there are many outdoors sports routes for example for hiking, biking and paddling and a few sports tourism centres in Lahti and Lahti region. About the other facilities for example for an indoor sports, the traveller himself has to be aware of what and where a particular sport can be practiced, as these opportunities are hardly presented, introduced or marketed. As an example R9 mentioned cross-country skiing trails that can be found in the Internet from the pages of city of Lahti, but which are specified only in Finnish language, which is not giving information at all for a foreign skier. Outdoors Finland provides in the Internet route maps and specified information with classifications and so on for paddling, biking and hiking in Lahti and Lahti region, as well as a downloadable mobile application.

R7 mentioned climbing on the wall of the highest ski jumping hill (K116), the observation deck at the top of the Lahti Ski Jump tower and the view over the Lahti city, Ski Museum and steam train to Salpausselkä during Lahti Ski games in March 2015 as the services and products related to sport tourism of Lahti Sport Centre. The importance of the possibility of renting cross-country skis in Lahti Sports Centre popped up in discussion with R7. Also a warm tub could be added to winter swimming places such as Mytjäinen bringing added value to the winter swimmers. It would be important to get local busses to drive such routes that sports facilities are easy to reach and update the signposts with relevant languages. The Internet pages, both city of Lahti and Lahti Region Ltd, should serve travellers better, especially sport tourists. At the moment the web pages are quite confusing and mainly information can be found in Finnish. Of course there is different kind of sport

clubs in Lahti and Lahti region that offer sport school around the region, where the clubs are making all the arrangements independently, R7 continued.

R10 spoke about the programme providers and sports clubs when discussed about sport tourism-related products and services.

Most of the respondents mentioned ski equipment rental, different training courses and guided experiences as sport tourism-related products and services. Tourist information office popped out from the answers, especially the location and the visibility of the information desk and professionalism was criticized. Both city of Lahti and Lahti Region Ltd have their own Internet pages including wide range of information for local people and tourists. In Lahti there is Ski Museum and occasionally running steam train to Salpausselkä. Also accommodation was brought out. It seems that the services exist, but hard to find by a foreign tourist due to lack of information in English. Sport tourism is not branded. Most of the service providers act individually and for some reason the cooperation between them seems to be difficult to establish. There is a need for more active and efficient tourist information and tourism information point should be located better. A mobile application that includes what to do and where would assist both tourists and locals.

## **6.5 Developing and marketing of sport tourism products**

Question five tries to clarify how the sport tourism products and services are marketed and to whom. In addition was asked how the marketing should be developed.

R1 represents Finnish state owned travel agency that promotes Finland as an attractive tourist destination to international travellers around the world. When interviewed R1, it appeared that marketing is done with simple formula: identity of the destination, tourism theme based on core values, target group, destination selection. The interview with R1 brought out that the primary advertising media for campaigns for promoting travelling to Finland is the Internet that are highlighted on social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube, Pinterest and Flickr. Printed or outdoor advertising is also not forgotten. Social media is powerful marketing tool, which has huge possibilities, it is quick and coverage is wide, stated R1.

R2 told that Lahti Region Ltd manages tourism marketing in Lahti and Lahti region, but did not know about the tools.

R3 said that Messilä Skicenter manages marketing through social media since it is fast, reaches out to people and save the costs. The coverage area of social media is huge and

the information spreads through customers mainly in Facebook and Instagram. These pages consist mainly of beautiful pictures posted by the customers which was for example viewed up to 17 000 times a week, R3 continued. According to this respondent, printed media is used also, but the world has changed and people want more and more digitalized services, not anymore printed materials such as maps. Lahti Region Ltd is involved with the marketing and promoting of Messilä Skicenter too, briefed R3.

R4 described that marketing has to be allocated to be regional and to the metropolitan area, because this area is the home of the potential users. Russia and St. Petersburg should not forget and Central Europe is under consideration. Messilä Skicenter and Lahti Region Ltd uses social media, electronic weekly messages and letters as marketing tools, R4 continued.

“Sportive collaboration. Come here, here you can breathe.” (R4 26.1.2015.)

R4 mentioned that Heinola did not want to take part in common tourism marketing and stayed out from Lahti Region Ltd. Despite of the reputation city of Lahti would like to get rid of the sport city brand, because in Lahti there are a lot of other things to do. Do sports in the morning and go to a concert in the evening, which could be called as mental refreshment among physical activity R4 punned.

R5 explained that all the companies and educational institutions have their own marketing channels, however great advertising campaigns have been seen. Lahti Region Development LADEC Ltd and Lahti Region Ltd can be called as collecting organizations that take care of the marketing and development of tourism for example in its entirety. R5 pointed out that there is lack of pulling together to the same goal in Lahti and Lahti region. All the actors are concentrating in their own businesses and the others can be easily missed. Lahti and Lahti region have great sports facilities with various possibilities, which companies, sports clubs, travel agencies and other actors could benefit by networking, teamwork, there should be just time to sit together and start planning. Sports clubs, companies, educational institutions and societies operate on different principles that might hinder starting a project. People are working under different working conditions and regulations, as teachers are hourly workers, entrepreneurs have their own limitations, reflected R5. A project could be a solution bringing clear win-win-situation that benefits everybody, also tourists. In order to get companies involved, the product or service has to bring in money that it is worth trying, suggested R5.

R6 knew to tell that Lahti Region Ltd does not cover all municipalities, although it is the marketing company in charge of image, housing, tourism marketing, selling travel services et cetera in Päijät-Häme province, missing Sysmä and Heinola and so leaving Vierumäki out too. Marketing should be done together in cooperation, which would be in everyone's interest. Cooperation between all province municipalities in marketing would make this region more attractive and interesting option.

When interviewing R7 it appeared that marketing in all sections (tourism, living, meeting and event) has been very traditional, but the world around has changed radically and new innovations should enhance the marketing too. Lahti Region Ltd acts as a regional marketing company that takes care of image, housing and tourism marketing, selling travel services and tourist information of eight municipalities. However, active sport tourism is not directly marketed, only in the form of sport events. Lahti Region Development LADEC Ltd is in charge of developing and marketing the region as a business environment, while the city of Lahti makes little or no marketing at all. Companies and sports clubs take care of their own marketing via tools such as traditional newspapers, magazines, Internet, social media and so on.

According to the material provided to me by Lahti Region Ltd (R8) concentration is in marketing of housing, business life, events and tourism. The company describes itself as a regional marketing company that is in charge of image, housing and tourism marketing, selling travel services and providing tourist information in the Lahti region. Printed material and conversation with representatives of Lahti Region Ltd, R8 and R10, complement each other. According to R10 mission of Lahti Region Ltd is to increase the attractiveness of the region, to bring more residents and tourists to the area, and increase the region's tourism income and tax revenues, as well as jobs in service sectors. Travel, meeting, event and living, each of them are performed with their own marketing strategies, stated R10. As this research concerns tourism and travelling, to be exact sport tourism, the respondent was asked to describe the strategy of sport tourism marketing. R10 told that the marketing strategy of travelling is manifested in the mission of Lahti Region Ltd and the form how it is handled includes establishing uniform brochures, appearing at trade fairs and sales events and involving the operators of the branch in joint marketing and sales events. Sport tourism is not directly emphasized in tourism marketing of Lahti Region Ltd, at least not in the active sports enthusiast's point of view, and certainly not an international sport tourist. According to the material sports and many possibilities to do sports are highlighted in a number of occasions to increase the migrating to the city of Lahti or Lahti region only.

All eight municipalities (Asikkala, Hollola, Hämeenkoski, Kärkölä, Lahti, Nastola, Orimattila and Padasjoki) work together under the same umbrella brand, Lahti region, whose marketing strategy goes hand in hand with travelling, living and the region. The emphasis of these affairs is divided so that 60 % covers the brand (the municipalities of the region), 20 % travelling and 20 % living. Same pull factors attract both tourists and potential inhabitants. Tourism purchasing decisions are easier to influence through marketing communications. Anyone who visits the area is also a potential new resident, R10 added. The main target groups in travelling sector are: Finnish people, people who are coming from the metropolitan area and who are interested in sports and well-being, event travellers (sports, culture and entertainment) and business, group and meeting customers, not forgetting the Russian markets.

R10 described complicated-sounding marketing as follows. The municipalities in the Lahti region make co-marketing that the company Lahti Region Ltd implements. First municipalities decide the things that they want to display. After that they budget it and ask the joint marketing company to do the marketing, choose the channels and do the promotions and so on with their budgeted money. Chosen marketing channels and ways are: experiential marketing, out door advertising and online presence. Experiential marketing includes promotions, pop-ups, guerilla marketing, events, ambient and interactive marketing, whereas outdoor marketing consist of advertisements in the vicinity of roads or in public transportation, at trade fairs and so on. Online presence can be defined as branded content marketing that is surprising, entertaining, real and generating a wow-effect. R10 reminded that there is still some traditional ways used in promotions such as brochures, for different kind of use, which are distributed at trade fairs, at tourist information, at the business meetings and conferences. Sports-theme can be seen in our all printed materials. Newspaper adds, newsletters related to business travel and leisure time and so on. And in addition to all these forms every municipality and the companies at the area are doing their own marketing independently too.

R10 stressed that the web page of Lahti Region Ltd acts as an information channel for the tourists, the companies and for the local people. Information can be found in Finnish, English and Russian, although all the web pages do not have the same content. "Tule ja viihdy"-section includes variety of possibilities to do different kinds of sportive activities in Lahti and Lahti region, but this information is only in Finnish language. This is due to the fact that the company does no longer have a Russian language skilled employee and the international sport tourist is not for some reason taken into account. Recently the visibility of Lahti region has been increased with the use of social media too (Facebook, VKontakte, TripAdvisor, Reddit, Blogger, Twitter, LinkedIn, Wikitravel, Wordpress and Pinter-

est), although the content production is still very limited, due to the narrow resources. R10 pointed out that Lahti Region Ltd is doing co-operation with sports clubs and service providers related to sports in marketing, but is not involved in the production of services of these companies.

R9 commented that tourism marketing in Lahti and Lahti region is too general, and it is too little paid attention to sport tourism marketing. It should be invested in both consumer and B-to-B-marketing and choose a potential target group for example from Central Europe. R9 knew to tell that B-to-B-marketing is well organized in Central Europe and that distribution channels are easy to reach, but the products are required in order to market them. Consumers are reasonably easy to find via lifestyle magazines and different kinds of social portals. Visit Finland is already taking care of the targeted consumer marketing, but Lahti and Lahti region is weakly with despite the good location and services. R9 specified her knowledge about German tourists travelling in Finland, the number of them remained unchanged in the past ten years and German tourism marketing goes content ahead, which means that the environment has to be commercialized.

The general opinion seemed to be that Lahti Region Ltd manages centrally the marketing of Lahti and Lahti region, leaving out Sysmä and Heinola. The main goal of the marketing of Lahti Region Ltd is to increase the attractiveness of the region, to bring more residents and tourists to the area and increase the jobs in service sectors. The results showed that the company's, Lahti Region Ltd, concentration is in image, housing and tourism marketing and sport tourism is not highly raised in any way, at least not in terms of international active sport tourist. Choosing the right target group arose many times in the interviews. There was also a lot of wonder why the city of Lahti does not use its reputation as the city of sport with many possibilities to do sports in order to get more active sport tourists, Finnish or foreign to the area of Lahti. Many of the interviewees discussed about used marketing methods where the note is that the marketing is considered as too general, traditional and unallocated and also networking and cooperation in marketing popped out. Active sport tourism market is diverse which can be segmented as presented in the chapters 2.2-2.5. In the interviews also came out that all the companies, sports clubs and municipalities do their own marketing too, which seems only complicate things and their management. Social media and the Internet, introduced in the chapter 3.4, were mentioned few times as a very effective marketing tool with endless possibilities. Lahti Region Ltd responded to this by appealing to the lack of resources.



## **6.6 Operators and companies involved in sport tourism business in Lahti/Lahti area**

In this question the interviewees were asked to tell about the operators or companies that are involved in sport tourism business in Lahti and Lahti region and whether there is any cooperation between the operators and how it should be developed.

R3 from Messilä Skicenter said that there is cooperation, but can it be mentioned to be involved with sport tourism, it is a different matter. R3 and R4 stated that there is In Messilä a ski equipment rental company SkiMac and a ski school of sports club Lahden Hiihtoseura, organized by the club's alpine division. Cooperation with local bus company is working again since there is nowadays a direct bus, 1M, from Lahti marketplace to Messilä Skicenter twice per hour. R3 added that from Helsinki it is also possible to arrive during wintertime once a week, on Saturdays in Messilä Skicenter with chartered bus costing about 40 euros. R3 urged small programme providers to present themselves more actively and develop cooperation, because there is demand for various special services and products by the customers such as Husky safaris in Vierumäki.

R4 named that Messilä Skicenter has cooperation with the city of Lahti and municipality of Hollola that both are acting as landowners and facility providers. Also with the hotels there is collaboration, if they want to include entrance and lift ticket prices for the accommodation fees. R4 does not see as important that there should be common products and services the customer has the choice to go to a destination and do what he wants according to his own interests.

R2 talked about cooperation in general between the operators that are involved in sports in Lahti and Lahti region, not only for sport tourism. R2 highlighted that the cooperation between team sports and individual sports cannot be praised. Different kinds of sports events or competitions are organized at the same time, when there is not enough accommodation or parking place for the cars. The divisions of, for example, ice hockey, football and track and field could discuss more about the timing of the events so that they would not overlap. The cooperation with the sports facilities of the city of Lahti works properly. The city of Lahti leases the premises for the sports clubs for training, exercising and competitions commented R2.

R5 explained that there is cooperation between educational institutions, the city of Lahti, different municipalities, sports clubs, sports facilities, transportation, companies, tourism operators and hotels, but did not specify what kind, at least not in terms of sport tourism,

because the respondent was not an expert in tourism. Moving inside Lahti without cars is developed by different fields of students like transferring from school to another by a trolley, by bike that is reversible like a library book and if you are moving on foot, you could even climb the wall in a tunnel. Those are small issues that could increase physical movement in general.

Lahti Region Ltd is doing somehow some cooperation, but R6 did not know how deep and intensive. Development should be done for collaboration, pull together, from which everybody would benefit from the joint efforts.

R9 described the cooperation of various companies, operators and sports clubs very limited and each focusing on their own businesses.

R7 told that cooperation with different kind of operators and companies is sport event organizer-specific, which means that many companies act as a sponsor of an event. Each event organizer makes an own agreement with a partner. R7 listed some of the biggest sponsors such as Mediatalo Esa, SOK Hämeenmaa and Fazer Oululainen. Hotels sell some sports packages on a small scale. The leisure centres such as Vierumäki and Pajulahti as well as sports clubs acting in Lahti and Lahti region have their own networks, co-operators and sponsors. R7 brought out the fact that the cooperation is very limited or there is no cooperation at all when everybody (companies, sports clubs, sponsors, DMO, municipalities) focuses on his own businesses. Information flow is poor. All these above mentioned stakeholders should be able to work together, network and pull together toward a common goal in order to make active individual sport tourism possible in the region of Lahti.

R10, the representative of Lahti Region Ltd, mentioned that there is collaboration with the owner municipalities of course, with many sports clubs, programme providers and some companies specialized in sports. The company Lahti Region Ltd is acting as a marketing company for the whole region of Lahti and surroundings municipalities, but the company itself is not selling sport tourism or sport activities as a product because it should be done by different sports clubs, leisure centres or sports facilities at the moment by themselves. Lahti Region Ltd is not aware of the capabilities of the sports clubs or the other companies related to sports to sell sport-related products and services or their resources. R10 told that one of the main partners is the city of Lahti, which publishes information for example about sports premises, cross-country skiing route maps et cetera. How to improve good question, R10 thought.

All of the interviewees considered that the cooperation between the different stakeholders is limited. Collaboration can be found for example in ski equipment rental, training courses of sports clubs, bus transportation (local and chartered), small programme providers, municipalities (city of Lahti and Hollola), hotels, educational institutions, sports facilities, companies, marketing company and so forth, because activities would not be possible without these. Cooperation between team sports and individual sports cannot be praised. There were also opinions that the cooperation of various companies, operators and sports clubs is restricted or there is no cooperation at all, when everybody focuses on their own businesses. Cooperation is often sport event organizer-specific, where many companies act as sponsors of the events. Many of the respondents admitted that there is room for improvement in collaboration. As discussed in chapters 3.3-3.3.1 both regional and national destinations have to recognize the key players of the planning process with mutual interests. Partnership networks need to be built in co-operation by setting common goals and objectives like in this particular case all the stakeholders (municipalities, companies, sports clubs, transportation companies, hotels, sports facilities etc.) in the Lahti region. The DMO, in this case Lahti Region Ltd, should act as a leader in active sport tourism marketing and development or name a brand-new coordinating organization to develop active sport tourism in Lahti and Lahti region. The DMO or this newly formed organization should be aware that all the stakeholders have to pull together somehow to the common goal which is the success of tourism in the destination. The most important thing is every direction, continuous communication to avoid overlap and unnecessary work.

### **6.7 How the city of Lahti and the Lahti area could become a more competitive sport tourism destination**

R2 said modestly, like typical person from Päijät-Häme, that maybe the Lake Vesijärvi could attract more tourists to Lahti. Beautiful surroundings could invite people during summer for rowing, fishing, canoeing, sailing, swimming or a cruise, as the lake continues all the way up to Jyväskylä, R2 continued. This respondent also thought that maybe some kind of a well-designed package for female and male groups, families, that would include sports done by themselves, culture, good food and accommodation, could also serve visitors.

R1 would start with construction of the image of city of Lahti and Lahti region. R1 suggested form even stronger image around the sports, because in Lahti there is so much to do and see, from sport museum to sport events and competitions and even facilities for doing many sports individually by yourself. R1 reminded also that the accessibility is very good, only one hour from Helsinki, which should be marketed out and loud. All operations

require continuous development and cooperation, joint efforts produce for all and revenue is distributed over time equally and cooperation will bring visibility.

R3 spoke in favour of building a spa to Lahti that could tempt more visitors to this area. Increase the amount of hotel and involve them in the tourism business by selling travel packages.

R4 has high expectations of new established Lahti Events Oy. In Lahti there is Nordic World Ski Championships in 2017 and thoughts are already in the future. Maybe we could have sport events in which everybody could take part. Sports clubs should make more cooperation so that Lahti and Lahti region would get national competitions round the year and that would attract tourists to annually repeated events that allows them to be active by themselves. Visibility is achieved by good and wide collaboration of DMO's and sports clubs R4 highlighted. There has been talk about building a sport hotel in the area of Ranta-Kartano in Lahti that would raise even more the profile of the sports city.

In the following there are some thoughts of R5 cited by the author about Lahti and its future as a tourist destination that arose in the interview:

“The trump of Lahti is green thinking. Green wellbeing. Does not display for basic inhabitant of Lahti, nor for extrinsic. Show the skills, be proud of what your are doing, such as the people in South...The professional would implement advertising campaigns, which requires money and time... Upcoming Nordic World Ski Championships in 2017 will be a great opportunity, which may increase the sport tourism in Lahti and Lahti region, but time after the games should already be thinking about. Plan something bold, nothing great, fancy or ridiculously massive... trial types sports such as cross-country skiing on World Ski Championship race tracks or tobogganing the out-run of the ski jumping hill... Idols should be engaged in campaigns, for example Mikko Ilonen, a golfer from Lahti, is the athlete of the year. There good fields in Lahti and Lahti region for golfing... Awareness of Lahti and quality of for example the premises for doing sports would be the message that should be let to spread further. Start from the small things, do not reach for too much, focusing on key target groups, such as Russian or Central European tourists and providing them targeted products and services according to their interests. The most important thing is to get operation started... Transport development between the capital area and Lahti... Lahti University of Applied Sciences has started a project called Future Campus Demonstration (FCD project) in which various forms of cooperation are demonstrated, tested, developed, continued, terminated and expanded... Before there was no need to co-operate, but the current economic situation absolutely requires it... There is under development a center of wellbeing expertise in Lahti... The promotion of sport tourism in Lahti and Lahti region is certainly necessary, that would bring people to the area, work places...” (R5 2.2.2015.)

R6 gave advise for marketing organizations. Marketing should be done by use of right tools, maybe with a little bit prettified picture, the truth on the basis of course. Tourism is based on images. Marketing should involve all the actors and operators and they should do it together, since all of them are competing for the same customers anyway. R6 pre-

sented as a target group such as families, friends, acquaintances and co-workers and as a product something else to do which could be a mental and physical package. The product could also be a place for experiences built into the wilderness in the middle of untouched nature and where it is possible to enjoy silence and feel the varied nature in all seasons. R6 mentioned the advertising videos of the ice hockey team Pelicans very humorous and compelling.

R9 highlighted the importance of commercializing the environment and the sports in Lahti and Lahti region. The fact is that the area has a huge potential to become a sport tourism destination, but it requires a lot of work, forward planning, cooperation between different kind of stakeholders and the will to achieve a common goal, however someone should just take the lead and responsibility. Digitalization is nowadays the word of the day, experiences to the Internet that a community can share for example in the social media with other consumers. R9 continued sharing knowledge and ideas about developing sport tourism in Lahti and Lahti region. Marketing should be internationalized. Leisure activities, especially summer activities in Finland or in Lahti and Lahti region should be brought out more, for example, in the markets of Central Europe. German and British tourists are interested in travelling to Finland in Lapland during wintertime to do winter sports and other activities related to snow, but willing to explore leisure activities, sports, in summer in Southern Finland too. The problem is that the tour operators in previous mentioned countries cannot find specified information or presentations for example of hiking routes. Information is in common level, there is 400 km of hiking routes in Southern Finland, but the difficulty level is missing, so it is impossible to know, is it suitable, for example for families with children or older people and so on. The nature should be taken into account in marketing, for example swimming in natural waters, which could be very exotic for foreigners. R9 raised also events, which can be considered also as a product, but also an effective marketing tool that increases awareness of city of Lahti and its possibilities to do sports, as well as it brings regular visitors to see an event and through that way participating in sports by themselves too. R9 urged to take into account the proximity of the airport of Helsinki-Vantaa when thinking the location of city of Lahti for example. There are flight connections from all main Central European cities to Finland and just an hour bus or train trip to Lahti. Hence this area, congested Central Europe, should be considered as a target market of active sport tourism in Lahti and Lahti region. Regional cooperation would be the keyword, when all these efforts would create service companies and bring work and money to the area R9 ends.

According to respondent R7 Lahti and Lahti region should be proud of what there is to offer including impressive facilities around the city of Lahti, close to each other, to do any

kind of sports, in the middle of people with walking distance in beautiful nature and landscape. But the supply of sports should definitely be commercialized as the leisure centres do. Nowadays you do not reach anything, if you do not make noise about yourselves. The target group should be set, maybe try somewhere else than Russian, since the situation is difficult due to Ukrainian war, Nordic people, just suggesting. Lake Vesijärvi has great potential for summertime activities. And why not to create a total package including for example sports in the morning, other activities during the day, theatre and tasty dinner in the evening and good night sleep after the active day. It could be called Body & Soul weekend concept, reasoned R7.

R10 listed things which would make Lahti and Lahti region more attractive sport tourism destination. There is a need for service providers it is the most important issue. Possibility to do sports and other leisure activities throughout the year here at the area of Lahti is the message that should be displayed and communicated to the right target groups. Construction and maintenance of basic infrastructure would help active sport tourists or local basic exercisers to find the sports and sports facilities of their interests and demands. Mobile apps and creating marketing through right channels would assist attracting the active sport tourist to the area. Good collaboration is the key to everything!

In the interviews came out many suggestions how to improve the attractiveness of the city of Lahti and Lahti region as an active sport tourism destination. General opinion was that the environment and the sports should definitely commercialize in the city of Lahti by forming even stronger image around the sports. Suggestions included for example: Selling packages including for example both body & soul. Directing the sport marketing to the right target groups such as active families, friends, acquaintances and co-workers. Marketing should be internationalized, for instance on German, Russian, English or Japanese markets. The accessibility of Lahti should be marketed unashamedly and the awareness of Lahti and quality of the premises for doing sports should be the message that should be let to spread further. Many spoke on behalf of the new and modern marketing methods. And the most important thing that was mentioned was the cooperation between the stakeholders. It seems that the respondents are aware of the possibilities of the city of Lahti as active sport tourism destination and the impacts and benefits, which the active sport tourists would bring along when visiting Lahti and the region. The impacts of sport tourism were introduced in the chapter 2.6. Only the developer is missing.

## 7 Conclusion and suggestions for the future

Tourism is growing at rate of 4-5 % per annum while the growth of sport tourism 14 % (European Sport Tourism Summit 2015). Future possibilities and potentials of sport tourism are based on current trends, discoveries and creativity of everyday life styles and opportunities. Rapidly changing technology, human motives and curiosity, meaning of the activities of people worldwide and anticipation and prediction of values and benefits generates challenges for sport tourism. (Ritchie & Adair 2004, 287.) In order to compete in the growing sport tourism market, it is important for the business communities to develop a deep understanding of the benefits and impacts of sport tourism and the characteristics of a sport tourist as well as his or her needs and wants.

In this study the features of sport tourism and sport marketing, especially active sport tourism in Lahti and Lahti region was researched. Active sport tourism means leisure-based travel where the individual participates in physical activities away from home environment, in which the activity is already known or totally something new. According to the interview results active sport tourism in Lahti is relatively small-scale, while the amount of active sport tourists in leisure centres such as Vierumäki and Pajulahti is greater. Even though there are a lot of possibilities and great premises to do sports around the year in Lahti, this area cannot be considered as a sport tourism destination, because there is no statistics of the number of active sport tourists. People come to do leisure activities in Lahti only if they are familiar with the supply by themselves. Visitors are mainly from the metropolitan area, Finnish people.

In the region of Lahti there can be found some sport tourism-related products and services such as equipment rental, training courses, guided experiences and tourist information office, but these can be counted as very small and modest. It seems that the services exist in some way, but hard to find by a foreign tourist due to lack of information in English. SWOT-analysis, which gave the possibilities and strengths as well as threats and weaknesses of Lahti was made based on the interviews. The analysis can be found in the results chapter 6.3. The company Lahti Region Ltd manages the marketing of the city of Lahti and Lahti region where the focus is to increase the attractiveness of the region, to bring more residents and tourists to the area and increase the jobs in service sectors. Sport tourism or active sport tourism is not directly marketed to anyone, and certainly not a foreign sport tourist. Sports and many possibilities to do sports are highlighted in numerous occasions in printed materials of Lahti Region Ltd to increase the migration to the region of Lahti. These printed materials are usually distributed at trade fairs, meetings and conferences, which means that used marketing methods are still very traditional and the

target group is not well considered and that way maybe not reached. Each of the companies, sports clubs, associations and municipalities do also their own marketing, when the overall marketing and the management of marketing is even more difficult.

To improve the attractiveness of the city of Lahti and Lahti region the general opinion was to commercialize the sports and the sports premises in Lahti and Lahti region by building even stronger image around the sports. Cooperation between the stakeholders and lack of it came out in several interviews. Poor collaboration does not lead to anything, and many advantages and benefits will not be achieved.

As the key results showed, Lahti or Lahti region cannot be considered as an active sport tourism destination. Lahti is a well-known winter sport city for winter games, but all the efforts seems to go for the bigger events, not for the individual active sport tourists. Branding could be the key to get Lahti to be better known amongst the active sport tourists all over the world. In Lahti and Lahti region all the main sports can be found and also a big number of smaller sports as well. With a clear vision, hard work, well-organized cooperation and right focused marketing, it is possible to make Lahti and Lahti region a world known destination for active sport tourism. The marketing strategies were presented more specific in the chapter 3.5. As an example in Finland there is Ruka and under that brand you can find all what you can do at the Kuusamo area and closer and a bit smaller there is Vierumäki and when you do the same in Lahti you could build a sport centre under one brand name including sport-related services and products.

The website of Lahti Region Ltd acts as an information channel for local people, tourists and companies, but the web pages do not have the same content in different languages. "Tule ja viihdy"-section includes variety of possibilities to do different kinds of sports and activities, but unfortunately this information is only in Finnish language. In order to serve foreign active sport tourists it would be important to create the same content in English, even in Russian and display clearly that it is about sports and recreational activities. How about inviting new group of active people from new destinations? Use of social media as a marketing tool has a lot potential, it reaches out to people, it is fast and will save costs. The possibilities are endless but require continuous updating and monitoring. The target groups are easy to reach through the Internet where the information is spread out through numerous networks. It seems that the goal of Lahti Region Ltd is to get new residents to Lahti area. In my opinion there should be also focus on attracting by passers to visit Lahti and enjoy staying there as a tourist. Vierumäki has been successful in their marketing as the families from Southern Finland changed destination from Lapland ski resort during children's winter holidays to the supply of leisure centre Vierumäki (ESS 2015b).



Prerequisite for vital growth is cooperation between public and commercial service providers. It can be called as a partnership, in which private, public and third sector has to work together. Despite of the great potential of Lahti and the area, the local operators are a little bit introverted. In the sport field private and public sectors compete for the same customers. Open-minded way of thinking can be colliding with each other surprising brands and generate something new. (Manninen 2014, 19.) In order to success in this, partnership networks need to be built in by setting common goals and objectives, not forgetting every direction continuous communication. When all stakeholders in sport tourism business pull together to a common goal, it will benefit all, one way or another. The positive impacts of sport tourism can be described as economical, sociocultural and health. Sport tourism brings money to the destination as a result of sales of accommodation, food and beverages, equipment rental fees, admission fees, use of transports and other spending at the sports premises. Sport tourism increases working possibilities, and benefits the local businesses (hotels, restaurants) and other businesses not related to tourism too. Sociocultural impacts are self-actualization, sense of pride, entertainment, family and community integrity. Sport tourist experiences offer many physical and psychological health benefits that lowers incidence of most of disease.

Sport tourism is one of the growing markets in Finland, which is influenced by trends such as increased health awareness and leisure time. Developing and maintaining good infrastructure with the help of technology, mobile applications and so on, sport tourism could grow significant business in Finland as its share of Finnish GDP is already 2,7 %. It has been researched that only 30 % of Finnish people do enough oxygen workouts, which is the basis for the wellbeing (Mähönen 29 Jan 2015). Therefore in sports business, especially in leisure activities, there is a large market and the opportunities. Running or other fitness activity, for example is not only relaxation and work balancing, but at the same time a way to develop the features required by the work such as continuous energy levels, efficiency and willingness to take hard-projects completed. (Vehmas 2010b.) Lahti and the region of Lahti have a great potential to become an active sport tourism destination, because the products and services could be tailored for everyone, who is interested in. It is challenging to find out the potential customers for the first steps to start the product, but little by little all turn out to be fine. Innovations, networking, cooperation and pull together are the keywords for the success. Happiness and wellbeing do not have to be expensive. Everyone shall enjoy doing sports as they are, because exercising creates good atmosphere, gives taste of success and experience that you are relaxed. You will experience good feeling of the small successes when exercising. All these factors together will get people to do sports more. (Vainio 10 Feb 2015.) In Lahti there is so much to do, come to Lahti... **L**eisure **A**ctivities **H**ealth **T**ogether **I**n Lahti!

To summarize the discussion about suggestions for development the following should be done according to the table 4 below.

Table 4. A summary of the discussion about suggestions for future development

<b>Branding</b>	<b>Organizing</b>	<b>Communication</b>
Name a brand-new organization to develop active sport tourism in Lahti and Lahti region	Build up partnership networks by setting common goals and objectives	Choose the right target groups, direct the marketing to the right target groups
Commercialize the sports and sports premises in Lahti and Lahti region	Improve cooperation between all the stakeholders	Marketing should be internationalized (Marketing plan can be found in appx. 3 and strategies in ch. 3.3)
Build a sport tourism centre under one brand name including sport related services and products	Share the work on the stakeholder's abilities	Develop more active and efficient tourist information stand
Plan and sell packages including for example both body & soul	All stakeholders have to pull together	Innovate a sport destination related mobile application that would assist both tourists and locals
Dare to innovate new active sport tourism products and services		More informative web pages: create the same content in different languages (Finnish, English, Russian) and display clearly that the content is about sports and recreational activities
		Use social media in marketing, advertising and informing
		Focus on attracting by passers to visit Lahti and enjoy staying there as a tourist/an active sport tourist
		Communicate in every direction continuously

It will be soon three years since I moved to Lahti. As an active sportswoman, “sportlover”, I have searched and looked at the sports supply that Lahti and Lahti region offer by collecting and marking the main sporting facilities on a map (Appendix 2, Image 15, Table 5) to make it easier to find the places. When I was finding out what sports I could do and where, the idea of doing a master’s thesis about sport tourism in Lahti and Lahti region came to my mind. Because there is not research about active sport tourism in Finland, or in Lahti, I introduced my idea to the representative of Lahti Region Ltd. My proposal was accepted and Lahti Region Ltd acted as a commissioner of this study. I started to collect and read literature and other source materials for my study and to plan of the interview questions. During the process I faced small challenges. First, it was quite difficult to find literature about active sport tourism, because almost all of the literature is about sport tourism generally with examples mainly from the United States or about event sports. Second, I had difficulties in finding the interviewees, which was quite surprising in the sport city like Lahti. I finally managed to organize the interviews with 10 people, received the needed data for further analysis and started to write my report. It was interesting to arrange the interviews although there were small problems to get suitable respondents. This was first time for me to make an interview research, which of course developed my interviewing skills. Writing of the report took approximately eight months hence it was fascinat-

ing to combine the theory and the empirical research. I think that this project was successful and on my behalf I am happy with the outcome. This project was very interesting from the beginning till the end despite of the momentarily disadvantages. During this process I learned many things about sports, sport facilities, sports and sport marketing and sport tourism overall through many different sources and the interviews gave more specific views to this subject. I hope that the commissioner will find this study profitable to develop sport tourism at Lahti region as well as the others who might need information about active sport tourism in Lahti and Lahti region. I look forward to use these skills and the knowledge I got from making this study in future opportunities either in further studies or further work life.

A suggestion for further study in future could be branding of the city of Lahti as a sport tourism destination. Sport tourism seems to be a very attractive opportunity for future business with the main focus on the active sport tourism market in Lahti and Lahti region in creating products which fit exactly to the needs of sport tourism customer.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Interview questions

1. Discuss the concept of active sport tourism.
2. Describe active sport tourism in Lahti and at Lahti area.  
(Name the places, the existing users, potential users, origin of the users)
3. Tell me about the strengths and weaknesses and the threats and opportunities of Lahti/Lahti area as an active sport tourism & sport tourism destination.
4. Describe what sport tourism-related products and services there already is in Lahti/Lahti area. Seasons: spring, summer, fall, winter?
5. How are the products and services marketed and to whom? How should the marketing be developed?
6. Tell me about the operators or companies that are already involved in sport tourism business in Lahti/Lahti area. Is there any co-operation and how it should be developed?
7. Discuss how the city of Lahti and the Lahti area could become a more competitive sport tourism destination.

Haastattelukysymykset suomeksi.

Haastateltava ja haastateltavan taustatiedot.

1. Selitä käsite aktiivinen urheilumatkailu.
2. Kuvaile aktiivista urheilumatkailua Lahdessa ja Lahden seudulla.  
(nimeä tärkeimmät paikat ja lajit, ketkä harrastavat ja alkuperä (olemassa olevat asiakkaat), ketkä olisivat mahdollisia uusia asiakkaita, alkuperä.
3. Luettele Lahden ja Lahden seudun vahvuuksia ja mahdollisuuksia, sekä heikkouksia että uhkia aktiivisen urheiluturismin kohteena.
4. Nimeä, mitä urheilumatkailuun liittyviä tuotteita ja palveluita Lahdessa ja Lahdessa jo on. Vuodenajat: kevät, kesä, syksy, talvi?
5. Miten tuotteita ja palveluita markkinoidaan ja kenelle? Miten markkinointia pitäisi kehittää?
6. Kuvaile urheilumatkailuun liittyvistä/osallistuvista toimijoista/kumppaneista ja yrityksistä. Tehdäänkö yhteistyötä ja miten sitä pitäisi kehittää?
7. Kerro, miten Lahdesta ja Lahden seudusta tulisi vieläkin kilpailukykyisempi ja houkuttelevampi urheilumatkailukohde.

Huom. Tämä tutkimus ei koske urheilutapahtumia, vaan liikuntamatkailua, johon matkailija itse osallistuu harrastaen erilaista liikuntaa kohteessa.

## Appendix 2. Lahti Sport Tourist Map and locations of the sports facilities



Image 15. Lahti Sport Tourist Map

Table 5. Locations of sports facilities

<b>Disc Golf Park</b> Mukkulantie 15240 Lahti	<b>Kisapuisto</b> Kariniemenkatu 21 15140 Lahti	<b>Pajulahti</b> Pajulahdentie 167 15560 Nastola <a href="http://www.pajulahti.fi">www.pajulahti.fi</a>	<b>Yoga Rocks</b> Saksalankatu 26 15100 Lahti
<b>Energiahalli</b> Ilmarisentie 3a 15200 Lahti	<b>Lahti Sports Center</b> Salpausselänkatu 8 15110 Lahti	<b>Sol Areena Lahti</b> Launeenkatu 7 15100 Lahti	
<b>Joutjärven Melontakeskus</b> <b>Wellamo</b> Joutjärvi 15150 Lahti <a href="http://www.vesisamoilijat.fi">www.vesisamoilijat.fi</a>	<b>Laune Central Park</b> Kaarikatu 26 15100 Lahti	<b>Takkulan Talli, Ratsastuskoulu</b> Takkulantie 29 15230 Lahti	
<b>Kamppailulajikeskus</b> Sammonkatu 6 15140 Lahti	<b>Messilä Skicenter</b> Messiläntie 308 15980 Messilä <a href="http://www.messila.fi">www.messila.fi</a>	<b>Tallukka</b> Tallukantie 1 17200 Vääksy <a href="http://www.tallukka.fi">www.tallukka.fi</a>	
<b>Kartingkeskus Lahti</b> Valimonkatu 2 15100 Lahti <a href="http://www.kartingkeskus.fi">www.kartingkeskus.fi</a>	<b>Mytäjäinen</b> Varikonkatu Sopenkorpi 15800 Lahti	<b>Vesijärvi</b> Passenger Harbour 15140 Lahti	
<b>Keilahalli</b> Launeenkatu 5 15100 Lahti	<b>Okeroisten Talli, Ratsastuskoulu</b> Kunnantie 129 Lahti	<b>Vierumäki</b> Urheilupuistontie 400 19120 Vierumäki <a href="http://www.vierumaki.fi">www.vierumaki.fi</a>	

### **Appendix 3. Marketing plan**

Step 1. Recognizing the purpose of the marketing plan. All stakeholders have to be involved in the process of issuing mission and vision and developing goals and objectives.

Step 2. Analysing the sport product.

Step 3. Forecasting the market climate can be done with SWOT-analysis assessing the strengths and weaknesses of an organization and threats and opportunities faced by organization. Budgeting.

Step 4. Positioning the sport product. The markets are divided into primary and secondary markets. Active sport tourist is considered as primary market while as secondary market can be considered all that is supporting the sports.

Step 5. Segmentation and targeting of consumers is analysed using demographics (age, gender, income, education and place of living) and psychographics (consumer's attitudes, interests and lifestyle).

Step 6. Packaging the sport product. In this case the active social media or other advertisement modes can be considered as the main promotion media in implementing a new brand for active sport tourist.

Step 7. Pricing the sport product. Create suitable price range for the different needs of the sport tourists from the guided services with hotel accommodation to hiking campers.

Step 8. Promoting the sport product. Activities in all kind of media such as:

- Advertising: a paid TV-add about the sporting possibilities at Lahti area on prime time in the evening when all the family are for example at home at the same time watching TV.
- Community relations: activities and programs arranged by a sport organization to meet the interests and needs of the sport tourists.
- To maintain good relations with networks in the media
- Personal selling: direct face-to-face communication with individuals; friends, groups or organizations to sell Lahti as a sport tourist destination.
- Promotions to individuals and travel agencies.
- Social media: to create a network for example in Facebook between a sport tourist and the destination of doing the sports creating comprehensive and up to date

content about the product the sporting possibilities. The marketing scene has witnessed a massive breakthrough during the last decade when social media has become part of people's everyday life, wanted they it or not. Social media is a great opportunity for companies as it allows targeted marketing at almost no cost. Taking this into account, every sports organization should also be engaged in social media marketing. Social media marketing is getting a bigger and bigger role in all kind of business. It also makes it easier to discard some of the more traditional and in certain respects more expensive marketing methods.

- Twitter. Short messages.
- Instagram. Nice and beautiful promotion pictures.
- Well-updated "Lahti Liikkuu"-portal and printed media.
- Sponsorship: Connecting small individual service providers under the bigger name.
- Lifestyle magazines with add in Germany, United Kingdom etc.
- Distribution of sport tourist map. (Attachment 1)
- Web pages of Lahti Region Ltd updated regularly in Finnish, English and Russian languages. Same content in every language.
- Visibility outside of Lahti. Pop-ups.
- Social media is not just about connecting people, when people put their lives online on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, or whatever social network they like to use, they leave a huge trail of data for a sport marketer to use.

Step 9. Place of the sport product. The location of this product is Lahti and Lahti region and its sporting facilities all the year round as per attached sport tourist map (appendix 2).

Step 10. Assessment and feedback about the sport marketing plan. Feedback from inside and outside of the organization about the marketing plan is analysed and evaluated in accordance with the company mission. Results of this work lead in future development; positive feedback encourages and negative feedback it is something to learn from. Keeping everything (workers, operators, portal, advertising etc.) up to date.