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ADVENTURE TOURISM IN VAASA REGION

Demand for a new business

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Tämän opinnäytetyön tavoitteina oli selvittää onko kannattavaa perustaa seikkailumatkailuun keskittynyttä yritystä Vaasaan ja olisivatko nuoret ikäryhmästä 18–30 sopiva segmentti sille yritysasiakkaiden lisäksi.

Teoreettinen viitekehys koostuu matkailutuotteen määritelmästä ja tämän lisäksi on käsitelty seikkailumatkailua ja sen kehitystä, kuluttajakäyttäytymistä turismissa, segmentointia ja niche osa-alueen luokittelua. Myös SWOT-analyysi ja turismin sosiokulttuurilliset vaikutukset ovat käsitelty sekä teoreettisesti että käytännöllisesti. Seikkailumatkailuyritysten nykytilanne Vaasassa on myös esitelty.

Kvantitatiivista tutkimusmenetelmää käytettiin empiirisessä osassa ja kysely toteutettiin internet-kyselynä. Tuloksia käytettiin selvittämään Vaasan ammattikorkeakoulun opiskelijoiden kokemusta seikkailumatkailu aktiviteeteista ja kiinnostusta niitä kohtaan. Lisäksi selvitettiin heidän tietämystään nykyisistä seikkailumatkailu yrityksistä alueella.

Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittivat että uudelle seikkailumatkailu yritykselle olisi suurta kysyntää Vaasassa. Kuitenkin herää kysymys, että onko yrittäjää jolla olisi riittävä pääoma ja rohkeutta ylläpitää kohtuullisia hintoja tällä vaikealla alalla.

ABSTRACT

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The aims for this thesis were to figure out if it would be viable to set up a new adventure tourism company in Vaasa, and if young people in the age group 18-30 could be a suitable segment for it, in addition to companies.

The theoretical framework consists of a basic definition of tourism product, insight into adventure tourism and its development, consumer behaviour in tourism, segmentation and categorised niche market. In addition, SWOT-analysis and socio-cultural impacts of tourism are discussed in theory and in practice, and the current situation of adventure tourism companies in Vaasa is introduced.

The quantitative research method was used in the empirical part and the questionnaire was conducted as an Internet based survey. The results were used to figure out the experience and interest of students in Vaasa University of Applied Sciences in adventure tourism activities and their knowledge about current adventure tourism companies in the region.

The findings of this research revealed that there would be high demand for a new adventure tourism company in Vaasa. However, the question is, if there is an entrepreneur who has the capital and courage to have reasonable prices in the tough industry.

Keywords	consumer behaviour, segmentation, adventure tourism, SWOT-analysis, impacts of tourism
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1 INTRODUCTION

Adventure tourism is a growing niche market in tourism nowadays when people are more independent, adventurous and want to get out of their comfort zone. A stereotypical adventure tourist could be described as an adventurous, adrenaline and thrill-seeking person who feels that a traditional beach holiday is not enough for him/her. People have started to demand more activities and more exotic destinations during last decade when travelling has become easier and cheaper. Therefore it is important that tourism companies offer many types of activities for different kind of needs.

1.1 Aims for the research

First aim for this study is to figure out whether it is viable to start up a new business in Vaasa, which would be concentrated on adventure tourism. Another aim is to find out if young people in the age group 18-30 could be a suitable target group (segment) for the new business in addition to companies. Therefore questionnaire aims to find out if there is a sufficient demand for a new adventure tourism business among young people in Vaasa region. This research can be used as a base for further researches on the topic and a possible feasibility study.

1.2 The structure of thesis

The thesis consists of a theoretical and an empirical part. The theoretical part includes an insight into tourism product, adventure tourism and its development, consumer behaviour in tourism, segmentation and shortly about categorised niche market. In addition, SWOT-analysis and socio-cultural impacts of tourism are discussed in the theory and in practice, and the current situation of adventure tourism companies in Vaasa is introduced.

The empirical part consists of introduction to research methods and the method chosen for this thesis. The purpose of this research was to figure out the experience and interest of students in Vaasa University of Applied Sciences in adventure tourism

activities and their knowledge about current adventure tourism companies in the region.

1.3 Restrictions

Niche tourism and consumer behaviour are broad concepts and these subjects include various aspects. Because of this, the thesis is restricted mainly to adventure tourism and adventure tourists' behaviour. The aim was to understand different levels of adventure tourism and the reasons behind the choices of certain types of activities. Segmentation, SWOT-analysis and socio-cultural impacts are included in this thesis as supporting elements in order to figure out whether the idea of a new adventure tourism company in Vaasa is viable and the segment for it is correct.

The restriction in the empirical part is the fact that the questions of the questionnaire are focused on tourist behaviour and adventure tourism activities currently available in Vaasa region. The aim was to find out the sample groups' past experiences and willingness towards certain adventure tourism activities.

2 TOURISM PRODUCT

Tourism in general and as a product is complex and it is impossible to explain it in only one way. In general the term 'tourism' has many different definitions and it has many smaller categories but the most well-known definition has been made by World Tourism Organization in 1991: "The activities of a person travelling outside his or her usual environment for less than a specified period of time and whose main purpose of travel is other than [the] exercise of an activity remunerated from the place visited."

Basically, it can be said that tourism is about visiting places outside of the person's usual environment more than 24 hours but less than one year (Page 2009, 12-13). Tourists can be divided into different groups and the basic distinction is between domestic and international tourist. Tourists can be classified also by purpose of travel; business, leisure and recreational and other purposes. Other purposes are for example studying or health tourism (Cooper, Fletcher, Fyall, Gilbert & Wanhill 2008, 15).

2.1 Tourism as a product

In general, a product can be anything that is offered to satisfy a want or need. It can be tangible, for example a bed in a hotel or intangible such as a concert. When defined more broadly, a product can also be a person, place, information, organization, idea or an experience (Kotler, Bowen & Makens 2003, 15; Lahtinen & Isoviita, 2001, 104-105). Products in tourism and hospitality are mostly a mixed package of tangible and intangible products. In other words, the product/service mix (Swarbrooke 2002, 35). There are also three features that specifically can describe the tourism product. It provides shared use rights only to the purchaser, for example if a person is buying a car, it is possible to choose who to share it with but in an airplane one does not have the option to choose who one shares it with during the flight. The second characteristic is when a customer buys the rights to a tourism product, it is only temporary. A person has a right to use their hotel room only for the time that

they have booked and paid it. The third factor is that consumers travel to the product rather than the product comes to them. Tourism products are usually located in the way that people have to travel to them, for example amusement parks are not usually located in the city centre or in every city (Swarbrooke 2002, 38).

3 CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Consumers are constantly looking for ways to satisfy their needs. They keep this in mind while looking for, purchasing, using, evaluating and disposing of products and services. Tourism is a complicated concept of sectors, which each has its own characteristics in terms of consumer behaviour and it is not a single homogeneous activity or market. Therefore, it is difficult to write purely about tourist behaviour (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 140).

3.1 The history of tourist behaviour in Europe

In the beginning tourism was based on religion and health issues or trade rather than pleasure, and transport caused great amount of issues because of slow sea transport and the bad condition of roads. There were also conflicts among travellers, which did not encourage people to travel if there was not a good reason for it. (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 14.)

Ancient Greece with the Olympic Games and the Romans with their hedonistic holidays introduced the idea of tourism for pleasure. After the era of the Roman Empire, began the Dark Ages, which created the pilgrims to seek for more religious destinations. This was also the first form of mass tourism along with the Grand Tour. (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 14-15.)

In the nineteenth century the introduction of railways, the Industrial Revolution in Britain and some other European countries created forms of tourism. In 1841 Thomas Cook created the excursion business, which took responsibility for organizing trips for tourists, who did not have the language skills or the confidence to travel independently. This started to grow roots for the future package tourism. (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 16-17.)

The Global tourism began before the First World War, when Americans started visiting Europe. After the war in 1920s, cruises and sunbathing as leisure activities began, and from the 1930s and 1940s onwards, the development of transport systems such as motor cars, airplanes, education, growth of income, tour operators and

package holidays grew tourism further. From the 1950s until today, tourism destinations in Europe are easily attainable amongst Europeans, and mass tourism has become more of an everyday routine. (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 17-19.)

3.2 Characteristics affecting consumer behaviour

Cultural, social, personal and psychological characteristics strongly influence consumers' purchases. Cultural factors have the deepest influence on consumer behaviour, because it is the most basic cause of one's wants and behaviour. When growing up basic values, wants, perceptions and behaviours are learned from family and surroundings. Every society has a culture and the buying behaviour may vary greatly from country to country due to cultural influences. Each culture has smaller subcultures, which include nationalities, religions, geographic regions and racial groups, and each of them has shared value systems. Nationalities, religions, geographic regions and racial groups are included in subcultures. Subcultures are important market segments, and products and marketing programs are often tailored to their needs. (Kotler & Armstrong 2001, 172-173.)

Social factors also influence the consumer's behaviour, which are groups, family, and roles and status. One of the biggest influence factors is groups, which means that two or more people interact to accomplish individual or mutual goals. Groups also expose a person to new behaviours and lifestyles, which influence the person's attitudes and self-concept, whereas these may affect the person's product and brand choices. (Kotler & Armstrong 2001, 176.)

Personal characteristics are the buyer's age and lifestyle, occupation, economic situation, lifestyle, personality and self-concept. People in the same subculture or social class may have very different lifestyles. Lifestyle consists of many activities, interests and opinions, such as work, hobbies, sports, recreation, family and social issues. These factors profile a person's pattern of acting and interacting in life. Therefore, lifestyle is strongly connected to adventure tourism with its various characteristics. (Kotler & Armstrong 2001, 180-181.)

There are four psychological factors that affect a person's buying choices: motivation, perception, learning, beliefs and attitudes. Motivation is a need that is directing a person to seek satisfaction of the need. Psychologists have developed numerous theories of human motivation, and one of the most popular is the theory of Abraham Maslow called the hierarchy of needs (Figure 1.) It explains why people are driven by certain needs at certain times. These needs are the following: physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, esteem needs and self-actualization needs. A person tries to satisfy the most important needs (physiological) first, which are, for example hunger and thirst. Safety needs comes next, which is about having a safe and clean environment to live in, for example a home with healthy living. After this need is satisfied, social and esteem needs comes third and fourth. It determines how people are seen, treated and respected by others. Self-actualization is about developing oneself, realizing one's full potential, and pursuit of knowledge and creativity (Kotler & Armstrong 2001, 184-186).

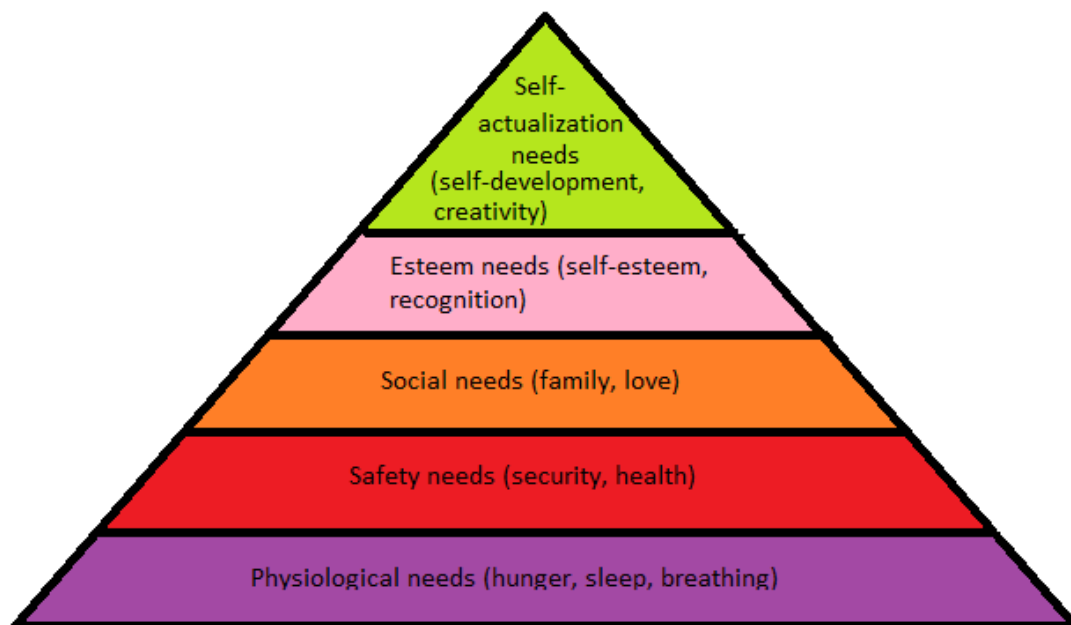


Figure 1. Maslow's hierarchy of needs. (Kotler & Armstrong 2001, 186-187)

3.3 Consumer decision-making

The model of consumer decision-making has three major components: input, process and output. The input component is about offering information about a certain product for consumers and influencing their values, attitudes and behaviour towards the product. Organizations use these marketing mix activities to reach, inform and persuade consumers to buy and use their products. The socio-cultural environment is also a major part of the input model. Socio-cultural inputs consist of non-commercial influences, for example feedback of a friend, editorial in the newspaper, and usage by a family member. These are important factors that affect how consumers evaluate the product, and ultimately accept or reject it. (Schiffman & Kanuk 2004, 553-555.)

The second component is the process, which explains the consumers' decision making. The psychological concepts (motivation, perception, learning, personality and attitudes) are the internal influences that affect consumer's decision-making processes. The consumer decision making consist of three stages: need recognition, pre-purchase search and evaluation of alternatives (Figure 2.) A need recognition occurs when a consumer recognizes a need and thinks of a product that might meet this need. Usually the recognition of need arises when a consumer is faced with a "problem", which is usually a lack in the product's feature, and the need to replace it. There are two different need recognition types: the actual state type, who recognizes his or her product starts to fail to perform, and the desired type, who simply desire for something new. (Schiffman & Kanuk 2004, 555.)

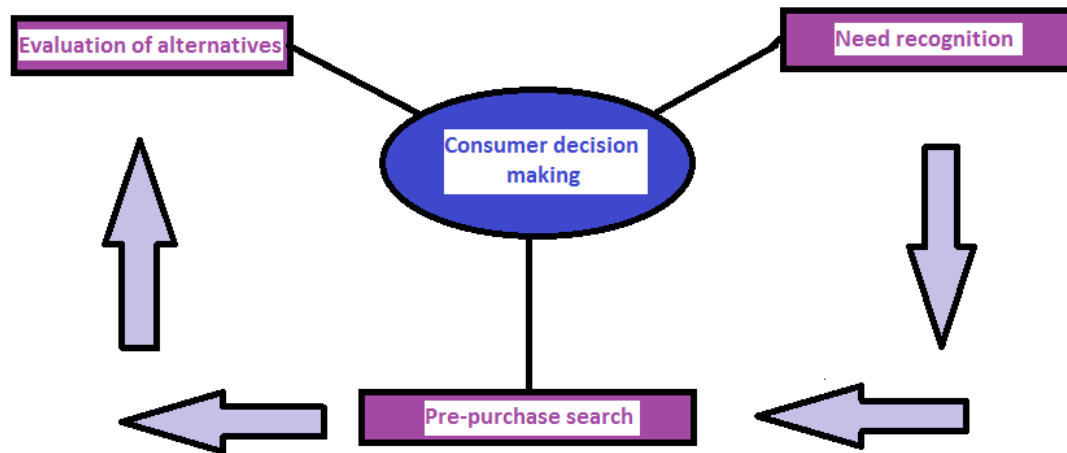


Figure 2. Consumer decision-making process. (Schiffman & Kanuk 2004, 555)

When a consumer recognizes a need that might be satisfied by the purchase and consumption of certain product, the pre-purchase search begins. To make a purchase choice he or she can rely on the past experiences, but if the consumer does not have prior experience he or she has to start a more extensive search for useful information about products. Usually the consumer searches his or her memory (internal source) before searching for external sources. For example shopping is an important and effective form of external source because the less a consumer knows about a product, the more time he or she uses for the pre-purchase search. Therefore the purchase is important and meaningful. On the other hand, research studies shows that consumers rely more on their own evaluations than external sources. (Schiffman & Kanuk 2004, 556-557.)

To simplify the decision-making process, consumers evaluate the potential alternatives. In the evaluation of alternatives -process consumers use two types of information: the evoked set and the criteria. When a consumer is considering in making a purchase within a certain product category, the evoked set refers to the specific brands in question. The evoked set or the consideration set consist of inept and inert set. The inept set consists of brands, which are felt to be unacceptable, and

are therefore excluded from the consumer's consideration. The brands in the inert set are seen as insignificant because the consumer feels they do not have any advantages. Therefore, it is essential for the product to be a part of the consumers evoked set if it is to be considered at all, and to get to this point, the marketers should create actions to make the product image more favourable. (Schiffman & Kanuk 2004, 559-560.)

Important product attributes are a part of the criteria used for evaluating brands. The picture quality, price and length of warranty in TVs, and the processing speed, price and amount of memory in computers are product attributes consumers consider before the purchase decision. When knowing that consumers will be evaluating alternatives, companies can advertise in a way that recommends the criteria that should be used in assessing products. Products are being compared and one of them stands out. This is designed to educate and assist consumers in their decision-making process. (Schiffman & Kanuk 2004, 555-561.)

The last component of the consumer decision-making is the output. It consists of two post-decision activities: purchase behaviour and post-purchase evaluation. Trial purchases, repeat purchases and long-term commitment purchases include in purchase behaviour activity. When a product is purchased for the first time, it is a trial purchase. Because of the fact that it is an unknown product consumers purchase it in smaller quantities. When a new product is found by trial to be satisfactory, the purchase is likely to be repeated. Therefore repeat purchase behaviour is closely related to brand loyalty, which most businesses are trying to achieve. A trial does not always need to develop into a long-term commitment. This is usually the case in durable goods, such as refrigerators and washing machines, because they are generally considered to be reliable and long-lasting. There are three possible outcomes of post-purchase evaluation: (1) performance matches expectations, which lead to neutral feeling, (2) expectations are exceeded, which leads to satisfaction, and (3) expectations are not reached, which leads to dissatisfaction. The consumers try to reduce any uncertainty or doubt they might have about their selection by reassuring themselves that the purchase was a wise one. (Schiffman & Kanuk 2004, 569-571.)

3.4 Consumer behaviour in tourism

In order to succeed in today's market place, marketers need to know how consumers behave, and what are their needs and wants. They also need to be aware of consumers' available resources, such as time, money and effort, which affect their decision-making process. There are two different kinds of consumer entities: the personal consumer and organisational consumer. The personal consumers are also referred to as end users or ultimate consumers, who buy goods and services for their own use, for the use of household or as a gift. The organisational consumers buy products, equipment and services in order to run their organisations, such as profit and non-profit businesses, and different kinds of institutions. Despite the classification of both categories, the personal or end-use consumption is the widest of all types of consumer behaviour, because it involves every individual of every age and background in the role of either buyer or user, or both. (Schiffman & Kanuk 2004, 8-9.)

Clawson and Knetsch (1966) identified five phases, which differentiate tourist behaviour from general consumer behaviour. The first phase is an anticipation or pre-purchase; many tourists usually plan their travels for months or even years ahead. When discussing about buying food or other general items, people do not usually plan those far ahead. The second phase is a travel to the site segment, which reflects with the fourth phase, a return travel component. These phases are necessary so a tourist can experience phase three, an on-site experience. Travelling to and away from a site can be experiences alone if a tourist is doing them for the first time or with different transport system than usually. A trip to a grocery store can be made by bike instead of walking to make an exception, but usually people do those trips the same way. An on-site experience is how a tourist views, hear, sense and feel the place visited and it is generally intangible. The difference from normal consumer behaviour is that tourist experiences are often deeply personal and they might leave some socio-environmental consequences to the place visited. The fifth phase is an extended recall and recollections stage. That stage is often long-lasting, because people think about

their tourist experiences sometimes even years after the travels and they might visit the same place again based on the memories. The difference in the fifth phase is that in normal consumer behaviour products are often expected to develop when a tourist is expecting to visit nearly similar place as previous time (Pearce 2005, 9-10).

3.5 The behaviour of adventure tourist

Soft adventurers are considered to take part in activities “with a perceived risk but low levels of real risk requiring minimal commitment and beginning skills” (Hill 1995, 63). These tourists enjoy safe activities with limited or no previous experiences, for example organised hiking trips. Self-discovery, experiencing new environments, the need to escape from the routine of everyday life and potential excitement are the main motivators for soft adventure tourists (Swarbrooke, Leckie & Pomfret 2003, 63-64).

Hard adventurers enjoy when exposed to activities “with high level of risk requiring intense commitment and advanced skills” (Hill 1995, 63). They engage in physically and mentally challenging outdoor activities that require previous experience and competence. Hard adventure tourists enjoy the adrenaline rush from the challenge, danger and risk. The types of activities that appeal to these tourists are for example mountaineering, sea kayaking and bridge jumping (Swarbrooke et al. 2003, 64).

The soft – hard adventure continuum has been useful in classifying adventure tourists. However, people’s perceptions of adventure vary. Whilst the experience of a hot air balloon ride may be classified as soft adventure due to the fact that it does not require skills or experience, a person doing it for the first time would probably feel nervous and panicky. Therefore, from this person’s point of view the experience may feel like a hard adventure. (Swarbrooke et al. 2003, 66.)

It is commonly believed that adventure tourism interests only the youth market, but there is another viewpoint arguing that a broad range of people can be seen as adventure tourists. Their holiday choices are made based on their lifestyles and

enthusiasm rather than age. Therefore, a physically active pensioner, for example, may well take part in challenging adventure activities. (Swarbrooke et al. 2003, 60.)

4 SEGMENTATION

It is important to market a business to the correct target group and in that process segmentation has an important role. In general, a segmentation criterion has various aspects which are also reflected to the segmentation criteria in tourism.

4.1 Basic definition of segmentation

The base of segmentation is that different consumer groups have diverse reasons for their buying decisions. It is more economic and profitable to differentiate and target marketing in different consumer groups than market in the same way for everyone (Bergström & Leppänen 2009, 150). In other words, segmentation is mainly about dividing the market, the potential customers, into different segments (customer groups) based on a specific reason, such as interests. (Lahtinen & Isoviita 2000, 120).

Aims of segmentation are approaching wished sales and profitability, separating from mass marketing, often growing sales in the beginning of a new company, as well as improving products or service sales (Lahtinen & Isoviita 2000, 120). It is also essential for all competitive edges and the product is not only marketed for segments; it is designed based on needs of the segment (Bergström & Leppänen 2009, 151).

Segmentation includes different benefits and dangers. The main benefit is that the consumer's needs and the company's marketing can easily be combined. In that way a company gets to know its customers so that it develops regular customer contacts. Customers will also benefit because they get products/services, which match their needs exactly. In a long term, segmentation improves a company's feasibility (and viability). Segmentation can also cause problems. It is possible that a company chooses an unprofitable or a too small segment. Segmentation can also be done based on the wrong reasons or focusing too much on only one segment. It can also be too expensive to approach the right segment. (Lahtinen & Isoviita 2000, 124.)

4.2 Classic segmentation criteria

When a company starts to segment its customers, there are four different segmentation styles. They are mass marketing, segment marketing, niche marketing and micro marketing. In mass marketing a company does not divide its customers to segments but markets the product/service in the same way for everyone. In segment marketing a company has divided potential customers to segments based on a certain criteria and chosen specific target groups from them, to whom it markets different versions of the product/service. This way a company can focus only on segments that are profitable and easiest for the company to provide products/services to. In niche marketing a company chooses only one segment that it focuses on. Usually the segment is the company's main target and it knows well its needs and wants. In micromarketing a company tailors its product/service and marketing to answer each individual customer's needs. (Kotler & Armstrong 2001, 245-248.)

Segmentation has many criteria for how a company can find correct target groups. The best way to find correct target groups is to try different segmentation variables separately and in combination. The four major variables are; geographic, demographic, psychographic and behavioural. Geographic segmentation is dividing market into different geographical units such as city, province and climate. Demographic segmentation is dividing market into groups based on demographic variables such as age, gender, income, occupation, education and nationality. Psychographic segmentation divides buyers into different groups based on personality characteristics, life style and social class. The fourth major criteria, behavioural segmentation, divide consumers into groups based on their response, attitude, use and knowledge of a product/service. (Kotler & Armstrong 2001, 249-256.)

4.3 Segmentation criteria in tourism

It is easier for a tourism company to understand customer expectations if it is familiar with consumer behaviour. Companies use this information to recognise customer groups, which have similar needs and wants, and then segment those target groups

based on that. There are a few reasons why segmenting is necessary in tourism; firstly, it is not cost-effective to try to target all consumers because some of them might not ever be interested in that specific hospitality product. Secondly, when characteristics of target groups are clear, designing and developing of a hospitality product and its marketing are more effective. Over all, by segmenting a company improves its profitability and generates repeat and recommended sales. (Bowie & Buttle 2012, 76-77.)

When implementing segmentation, there may occur some difficulties. The costs of marketing research may be higher than planned, but it needs to be done before a company is able to find the correct segments. Consumer behaviour and trends change from time to time and it might be hard for a company to keep up. That leads to the fact that many hospitality products are not easily changeable or flexible, for example if there is a business hotel, it is not easy to change it into a spa hotel quickly. Also the costs of developing and communicating certain offers for different segments can be more expensive than planned. The main aspect to understand is that segments are naturally unstable because their living environment changes their attitudes and behaviour. (Bowie & Buttle 2012, 76-77.)

Segmentation criteria in tourism consist of four main elements; discrete, measurable, profitable and accessible (Table 1.) A good segment is able to react to these four main elements positively. (Bowie & Buttle 2012, 77.)

Table 1. Four main elements of segmentation criteria. (Bowie & Buttle 2012, 77.)

<p style="text-align: center;">DISCRETE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">-having a unique set of shared requirements and expectations which need a specific marketing program</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">MEASURABLE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">-the market size is measurable in terms of value and/or volume, market share of current numbers and growth rates</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">PROFITABLE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">-have enough profit potential to compensate the investment</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ACCESSIBLE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">-reachable via marketing communication and distribution channels</p>

5 ADVENTURE TOURISM AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

Adventure tourism is one form of niche tourism because it is specialized in certain activities and attracts certain type of people. It can be challenging to define it because of its many forms and colourful history.

5.1 Niche tourism

Niche tourism has developed from the term ‘niche marketing’ and it aims to meet consumers’ special needs rather than general needs. Nowadays people are more independent and demand more personal interest holidays because, for example of developed transportation and higher income levels. The size of the niche tourism product has to be large enough to produce working business and it has to concentrate on a specific interest, for example literature. Niche tourism can be divided further into macro-niches and micro-niches. For example, sport tourism is a macro-niche and cycling tourism is a micro-niche. (Novelli 2005, 4-6.)

5.2 Definition of adventure tourism

Defining adventure tourism is difficult, because there are many levels in it; what seems an adventure for one, can be normal or even boring for someone else (Swarbrooke et al. 2003, 3-4). Buckley (2006) has described adventure tourism as “guided commercial tours where the principal attraction is an outdoor activity that relies on features of the natural terrain, generally requires specialized sporting or similar equipment, and is exciting for the tour clients”. However, he admits that description mentioned above cannot describe the whole area of adventure tourism because of its wide range of activities (Buckley 2006, 1-2). Adventure tourists can be seen as persons who want to take risks and challenge themselves physically and mentally, while they look for new and stimulating experiences. Sometimes they want to develop themselves or grow their self-esteem through adventure tourism (Swarbrooke et al. 2003, 57). Adventure tourism products are mostly intangible because they are experiences and a person usually tries to satisfy his or her wants rather than needs.

5.3 Different types of adventure tourism

Mintel (2001b) has listed different types of adventure travel, which are driven by tourists' interests and lifestyles. There is a destination driven adventure travel where a tourist choose a particular country or region to explore. An example of this type of destination is New Zealand, which is known as an exotic and adventurous destination. There are also vehicle and non-vehicle travel. Safaris by a land rover can be included into vehicle travel and travel, which is based on walking or running to non-vehicle travel. One type is activity-driven adventure travel, which includes activities such as cycling and snorkelling. There is also family adventure travel where the family goes together to an adventurous experience, for example when a Finnish family decides to travel to California to visit Disneyland it can be a whole family adventure. In multi-activity travel two or more activities are combined such as snowboarding and helicopter flight in the French Alps. Extreme activity travel, which is probably the most original adventure tourism form, is usually included in extreme sports such as heli-skiing. The two last forms of adventure travels are ethical and prestige adventure travel. Travelling to visit American Indians and experience their lifestyle during the holiday can be counted as ethical adventure travel, whereas in prestige adventure travel a person is building his status in places such as Buddhist temples in India (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 352-353).

5.4 Development of adventure tourism

There have always been adventurous travellers throughout the modern era of the world. Reasons for that are diverse; some wanted to explore new areas, such as South and North Pole, whereas others wanted to feel rush of adrenaline through white water rafting and other activities. There was also another era of expeditionary travel, which was focused on geographic and political factors; nations of Europe competed to investigate and discover new areas to take over. (Buckley 2010 217-218.)

Because of the world's diverse geographies adventure tourism has developed at different times in different places. For example, Arctic voyages have reportedly been available since 1871 (Marsh, 2000) and white water rafting industry developed after

the Second World War when army-surplus pontoons were used to make rafts. (Buckley 2010, 217-218.)

It is said that the modern era of adventure tourism is dated to the 1970s, when companies began to notice that there were also markets for other types of adventure tourism activities in the same region. Therefore they began to diversify their products. For example, guided mountain treks in the Himalayas provided by World Expeditions were diversified into new activities and new countries because of the growing popularity of white water rafting. (Knowles & Allardice 1992; Buckley 2010, 217-218.)

Today there are three major categories in adventure tourism trends; new adventure activities, external global trends and social trends. Development of new or improved equipment such as kite boards and diving gear create opportunities for new adventure activities. Then there are external global trends which one does not have much an impact on, such as global climate change. Many of the adventure tourism destinations require long-haul travel which has an impact on climate and there are changes of natural resources because of people, which then again grow travellers concern for the nature and in that way their travel decisions and behaviour. In socio-economic side can be mentioned the current global recession which is affecting travel patterns and preferences due the changes of currency exchange rates. The last external global trends affecting mostly adventure tourism are war, terrorism and political instabilities because adventure tourists are seeking an adrenaline rush and something different, but not many of them want to risk their lives after all in unstable areas even though those areas are often offering desirable surroundings for adventure tourism activities. (Buckley 2010, 219-221.)

Nowadays social trends and consumer behaviour are also affecting adventure tourism. Tourism destinations are marketing themselves as adventure destinations by offering a selection of commercial adventure tourism products along with organising events such as multi-sport adventure races, which therefore attract various types of tourists

to the destination. In heavily visited adventure destinations companies are nowadays using combo packages as a key strategy in competition, in other words they are offering packages which have options for all kinds of people. There are also more expensive and luxurious options available in more long-distance destinations and only cash-rich people usually have an opportunity to do activities such as heli-skiing. (Buckley 2010, 221-225.)

6 SWOT-ANALYSIS

SWOT-analysis is one of the most well-known systems to find out the external and internal factors which affect the operation of a company. When setting up a new business it is important to evaluate the market situation. This can be done through SWOT-analysis which is an acronym for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. It is a way to observe external and internal factors affecting a company. It can be also used in yearly basis to help improve and develop a company's business idea. (Palmer 2004, 67-68; Viitala & Jylhä 2013, 49-50.)

When observing an external environment, a company focuses on opportunities and threats. It is important to consider marketing opportunities in the area to find potential customers and recognise their needs. That way a company can function in a profitable way. When it comes to observing threats a company is looking for unfavourable trends and developments which may affect sales, profitability and company's market position. These threats can be divided into minor threats which can possibly be ignored, and the ones that need to be monitored in case they grow to be bigger threats. (Kotler 2003, 102-104.)

In internal environment analysis a company focuses on strengths and weaknesses which appear inside the company and its personnel. A company will mirror how current strengths and weaknesses affect an external environment and what actions should be taken when aiming to find a balance between all four SWOT-analysis sections. (Kotler 2003, 104.)

7 SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPACTS OF TOURISM AND THE FACTORS INFLUENCING ITS CHANGE

There are a lot of factors in tourism that affect a community and its residents. The researchers studied this subject because they wanted to know how these factors and the new possible adventure tourism company in Vaasa would affect the community.

7.1 Classification of social impacts

Tourism is a social environment, which is created by travellers, hosts or employees, who want to gain experience about domestic and international societies. In any development the social impact bring up changes in the quality of life of inhabitants, tourists, organisations and companies. On one hand, the development of tourism creates changes in host areas, especially in the quality of life of its residents. On the other hand, the experiences undergone in tourism and in the process of travelling may change the quality of life of tourists. The change is different and less significant in the case of tourists than in the case of residents. One of the definitions of socio-cultural impacts of tourism is that the development of tourism and the presence of tourists in the destination generate changes in the quality of life of residents. (Rátz & Puczko 2002, 116.)

The social impacts of tourism can be classified as follows: population impacts, transformation of labour market, changes in community characteristics and structure, and impacts on natural and cultural resources. Population impacts are, for example changes in age, gender, ethnic or racial composition, and increase/decrease of temporary workers. Generation of new jobs, change in the number of seasonal jobs, and economic diversification are examples of transformation of labour markets. Changes in community characteristics and structure are explained by conflicts between residents and outsiders, change in infrastructure, and appearance of new social classes. And finally, pollution, congestion, commercialisation, destruction of

resources, and change in traditions and habits are factors that impact on natural and cultural resources. (Burdge 1994; Rátz & Puczko 2002, 117.)

7.2 The characteristics of tourists

The characteristics of tourists, host community and tourism development influence the socio-cultural impacts of tourism. The characteristics of tourists that have an impact on tourism are their number, type, length of stay, activities, motivations, expenditure, behaviour and socio-economic characteristics, for example age gender, education, profession, marital status and average income. (Rátz & Puczko 2002, 121.)

The changes in the host community are related to the number of tourists present, the larger the number, the bigger the changes. The same number of tourists will most probably result in large changes in communities of different size. For example, 100 tourists present in a village of 500 inhabitants has more different and bigger effect than the same number of tourists in a city of two million. In small cities or villages the tourists can be easily distinguished from the residents. In the latter case they mingle and blend in with the crowd in a way that they do not stand out with their different behaviour and habits. Therefore the local residents are not that effectively influenced by tourists. (Rátz & Puczko 2002, 121.)

The number of tourists and the type of tourists are usually related to each other. Different types of tourists want to adapt themselves to the local circumstances, lifestyle, traditions and customs. As a result, they cause changes in the hosts' lifestyle and culture. A small number of tourists who are willing to get to know the local customs and use the local residents' services, usually make a smaller impact on the society than the mass tourists arriving in large numbers, and want familiar services and expect the locals to adapt to their ways. (Rátz & Puczko 2002, 121-122.)

The average length of stay of tourists has an impact on the relationship between local residents and tourists, and the type of activities tourists participate in. Visitors whose stay in the destination is less than 24 hours and tourists with a longer stay have different impacts due to their money and time usage. Returning guests usually

develop a relationship between local residents, where they understand each other's values and culture. Therefore, it is more likely to result in positive cultural impacts. (Rátz & Puczko 2002, 122.)

Tourists' motivations and their socio-economic characteristics are in interaction with each other and together they influence tourists' demand for activities. The general motivation, a need for variety, can be seen in tourists' visiting habits, for example sightseeing in natural attractions or participating in sport activities. Age, gender, education, profession and marital status influence tourists' motivations. Also their average income may restrict the selection of tourist products, especially the ones that satisfy their needs. The demand of tourists' affects the supply of the tourist industry and therefore results in changes in locals' quality of life. (Rátz & Puczko 2002, 122.)

Local residents' attitudes changes towards tourists based on tourists' behaviour, even though they are indirectly in contact. Tourists express their behaviour through their cultural background, and may show that they do not have to follow the rules of the community. They may also believe they can live by their behavioural norms and standards, and, therefore, show less respect towards the local people. (Rátz & Puczko 2002, 123.)

7.3 The characteristics of host residents

It is obvious that the socio-cultural impacts of tourism in the host community are seen clearly, but the characteristics of the local residents play a crucial role in determining which impacts are the most dominant in destinations. The demographic and socio-economic characteristics (age, gender profession, marital status, average income) of the host residents show how open-minded they are in getting involved in the development of tourism, and what kind of cultural differences there are between hosts and tourists. The lifestyle, traditions and value systems of residents are often linked to the tourist attractions in the destination. Tourism development may change residents' rhythm of life and their traditional habits. Tourists' presence can also cause changes in the values of more exposed and responsive social groups, for example young

people. These changes can lead to family or community conflicts. Hosts' openness towards other cultures influences their attitudes toward tourism and tourists. Multicultural communities are obviously more open towards diversity, but tourism may be a whole different issue due to the fact that each cultural group takes in impacts of tourism in different ways. (Rátz & Puczko 2002, 123-124.)

7.4 Characteristics of the development of tourism

The socio-cultural impacts in the destination are determined by the type of development of tourism. There are different kinds of forms of development and the major resources of a destination have an impact on the characteristics and type of tourism and its development. Sun, beaches, big cities and theme parks are usually the factors that attract the development of mass tourism, whereas other resources such as gastronomy, rare flora and fauna, and rural lifestyle are important factors in alternative forms of tourism and its development. (Rátz & Puczko 2002, 128-129.)

In general there are three types of tourism development; quick pace of development, slow pace of development and casual development. If the development's pace is quick the local community needs to adapt to the changes fast. Too fast and large-scale development is unpredictable and less manageable than usual, therefore, the impacts are mostly negative. Slow development is more favourable in the eyes of the local community, because in the beginning they provide the basic services tourists require and as the development grows slowly the locals can step up the supply at the same speed without any pressure of not being able to satisfy the demands fast enough. Casual development is the most common development, especially in national tourism. The growth of tourism comes from weekend and event tourism and most likely it is seasonal with unimportant general change in the local economy. (Rátz & Puczko 2002, 129-130.)

8 THE CURRENT STATE OF ADVENTURE TOURISM IN VAASA

Today there are five companies in Vaasa offering different kind of adventure tourism experiences and they mostly concentrate on group and business customers. The companies' services include activities such as hiking, zip wires, husky safaris and kayaking.

8.1 Vaasa Tourist Office

Vaasa Tourist Office provides information about Vaasa and its region's sights, accommodation and program organizers, events, outdoor activities, shopping, art, restaurants and cafés, sightseeing tours, and renting of cars. The office also has many of various brochures to search for more activities (Kaivonen 2013). 1.1.2014 Vaasa Tourist Office joined the new company Vaasa Region Tourism Ltd which consists of the cities Vaasa and Närpes and the nearby municipalities Vörå, Laihia, Korsholm, Korsnäs, Malax and Isokyrö (Vaasan kaupunki 2013).

The researchers visited the tourist office September 23rd 2013 and met with Samuli Kaivonen, the executive director of the World Heritage Site Kvarken Archipelago. He told the researchers a little about the current state of tourism in Vaasa and the companies offering leisure time activities. He mostly focused the Kvarken Archipelago, where he also arranges activities. (Kaivonen 2013.)

The World Heritage Site offers cruises, boat tours, hiking, fishing, ice fishing, snowmobile and husky safaris, kick sledding, skating (mostly for foreigners), paddling, transportation to events and museums, and premises for conferencing and dining. The visitor number in 2012 was 2,600 and it consisted mostly of company clients. The Kvarken Archipelago advertises itself through brochures, magazines, newspapers, radio and the Internet. They constantly search for ways to develop and

expand, and they want the locals to take part in the planning in order to create the most exciting and interesting services. (Kaivonen 2013.)

8.2 Oy AWAY-Tourism Ab

Oy AWAY-Tourism Ab is a Vaasa based company that, since 1997 offers experience, adventure and program services. They arrange the services mostly for companies and their clients, but individual customers are also welcome. (Oy AWAY-Tourism Ab 2013.)

AWAY offers various individual and group competitions, paintball, zip wires, sailing, ATV safari, absailing, “treasure hunting”, and On the Rox –program. In treasure hunting one tries to find clues with the help of GPS to reach to the finish line and the prize. On the Rox –program gives the possibility to put on a wetsuit and see what it is like to sink through the ice and feel the zero-degree water. All of this is done under supervision of an instructor. (Oy AWAY-Tourism Ab 2013.)

8.3 Botnia Events

Botnia Events is an adventure and program service –company that started up in 1992 with 4,000-6,000 visitors a year, and it mainly operates in the Vaasa region throughout the year. The clientele consists of small, big, local and international companies. (Botnia Events; Marko 2013.)

They offer ATV, husky and snowmobile safaris, race car driving, fishing, hiking, cruises, nature photo shooting, eco gun shooting, laughter Yoga, GPS orienteering, cooking course in gourmet and wilderness food. (Botnia Events.)

8.4 Gaia Events

Gaia Events is a one-man company and it has operated round the year since 1998 in whole Scandinavia, but mostly in the Kvarken Archipelago. It arranges guided hiking and trekking in every nature form, such as in fell grounds, woods, swamp grounds, shores, archipelagos, inner water systems and open sea. (Kari 2003.)

During summer, autumn and spring Gaia Events offers kayak paddling at the sea and archipelagos, and Canadian canoe paddling mostly on sheltered waters, such as rivers and lakes. On solid grounds it offers various nature trekking by walking, biking, mountain biking, mushroom picking, nature shooting, archery, angling and different kind of fishing. During winter Gaia events arranges cliff and ice climbing for beginners, tour skating, kick sled and skiing trekking, and ice fishing, and other winter fishing. (Kari 2003.)

All of the mentioned services are tailored for each customer taking into consideration their individual needs and goals. Therefore, the company can offer correctly designed experience, adventure, refreshing, education and pedagogical services. (Kari 2003.)

8.5 Outback Ab

Outback Ab is a company based in Vaasa since 2008 that offers various leisure time activities throughout the year mostly in Vaasa area, but especially in the natural heritage site, which has achieved the World Natural Heritage status. (Outback Ab 2008.)

Outback offers kayaking, hiking, mountain biking in the nature, ice tours and night expeditions. In addition, it offers boat tours, range shooting, skiing locally or in Lapland, mountain hiking in Lapland, hiking in Sweden and possibly anywhere in Scandinavia, as well as local guiding with wine tasting of Australian quality wines.

All of the services and programs are adjusted according to customers and their budget, preferences and qualifications. (Outback Ab 2008.)

9 RESEARCH

Elias (1986) indicates that a research is a tool of science whose purpose is to bring something previously unknown to human knowledge (Veal 2011, 5). The most common types of research methods are quantitative and qualitative.

Quantitative research is about collecting, analysing and presenting of statistical information. In order to draw conclusions the research relies on numerical evidence. Usually it is necessary to study large numbers of people to be sure of the reliability, and then to analyse the data on computers. The data for the research can be gathered, for example from questionnaire surveys, existing data or observation. (Veal 2011, 34.)

The qualitative research does not usually concern numbers but form of words, orally or in writing. Images and sounds may also be used in addition to the latter. Through qualitative research it is relatively easy to gather large amount of information needed about the research subjects, for example individuals, organisations or places. When gathering qualitative information the methods used are observation, interviewing, analysis of texts and participant observation. (Veal 2011, 35.)

9.1 Research method chosen

The researchers wanted to get an overview of students' opinions, experiences and knowledge about adventure tourism activities and companies in Vaasa. The quantitative research method was a natural decision for this study due to the fact that the sample group was diverse and the students reply easier to questionnaires sent via e-mail than face-to-face interviews. The questionnaire was also the fastest way to reach the sample group and receive enough replies.

9.2 Design of the questionnaire

Researchers use questionnaire surveys when they want a specified range of information from individuals or organisations. Questionnaires' purpose is to collect responses to questions whose possible answers are limited, for example gender or education. Some questions can also be open-ended which have no specified range of answers, for example respondents' opinions. Respondents are usually a proportion or a sample of a defined population which the researcher is studying (Veal 2011, 256-257). In this research the sample of respondents are students because the researchers are interested in students' opinions, experiences and knowledge.

There are many forms of how the quantitative research is possible to implement. It can be implemented as a letter questionnaire, phone interview, face-to-face interview, informative survey (researcher deliver and collect a questionnaire and can possibly specify questions more) or an Internet based questionnaire. These are the most used forms but there is a possibility to implement a questionnaire also as a survey which is used when the sample group is large, or as well as an observation survey where the needed information is collected by observing the sample group. (Heikkilä 2008, 18-19.)

This research was implemented as an Internet based questionnaire. Internet based questionnaires must be aimed only for a sample group which have a possibility to use Internet and it is important to figure out what is the best way to reach a correct sample group. Disadvantage with Internet based questionnaire is that a researcher cannot control if someone replies twice or multiple times to the questionnaire. (Heikkilä 2008, 18-19.)

The structure of the questionnaire in the thesis was divided into three question groups; background information, tourist behaviour and adventure tourism companies in Vaasa. The questions in the questionnaire were based on the theory of the thesis and the current availability of adventure tourism companies in Vaasa and their activities. Most of the questions were pre-coded/closed list of options due to the fact

that the researchers wanted to receive as reliable replies as possible and to make the layout of the questionnaire clear and simple.

9.3 Implementation of the research

The questionnaire was done on E-lomake, an Internet based questionnaire program. The empirical part was carried out by sending the questionnaire through an e-mail to all of the students at Vaasa University of Applied Sciences. The questionnaire was sent in January 2014 and it was available for 12 days for the students to reply and 134 replies were received. The analysis was carried out with SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) which is generally used in analysing quantitative research results. It was relevant to write the questionnaire in English due to the fact that there are a lot of international students at Vaasa University of Applied Sciences and the researchers wanted to reach as many students with different nationalities as possible. Also the fact, that the researchers study the degree in English affected the questionnaire's language.

9.4 Reliability and validity

Reliability means the accuracy of results. The research should be possible to repeat and results of the research should be approximately the same each time. However, the results may vary because of the differences in societies (Heikkilä 2008, 30). Because of this the researcher has to be very cautious when making general statements on the basis of empirical research (Veal 2011, 47).

Validity means that the research reflects the phenomena which the researcher is studying. This means, that questionnaire and theory should support each other so that the research is valid. Questions of the questionnaire need to be carefully planned because it is difficult to examine the validity later on. (Heikkilä 2008, 29-30; Veal 2011, 46.)

The reliability in the research could have been better if there had been more than 200 replies to the questionnaire because the conclusions of the results would have been more reliable. However, the results were diverse and it was possible to draw interesting conclusions based on them.

The validity of the questionnaire suffered because all the questions were not accurate enough and there could have been more different type of questions. Therefore the researchers' did not receive all the information they could have used as a support when analysing the results.

10 THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

The results of the research were collected from the students at Vaasa University of Applied Sciences in 12 days. Based on the results, conclusions about the demand of adventure tourism activities and the current state of adventure tourism in Vaasa were made.

10.1 Background information

Questions one and two consisted of respondents' gender and age group. 92 of the respondents were female and 42 men. The most extensive age group was 21-30 years old with the amount of 99 which is natural because the questionnaire was sent to students. The second largest group was 20 years old and younger with 19 responses. Age group of 31-40 years old consisted of 11 respondents and the last age group of 41-55 years olds included five respondents.

10.2 Tourist behaviour and experience in adventure activities

The second part of the questionnaire consisted of five questions about the respondents' tourist behaviour and experiences in adventure activities. Question three was about factors affecting the respondents' choice of travel destination and their importance level when making the choice. There were nine different factors introduced based on the theory and an open-ended option in the end in case the respondents did not find a suitable option from the pre-coded factors. The importance levels were described as "very much", "much", "a little" and "not at all".

The first factor was opinion of family (Table 2.) which affected mostly "a little" the respondents' choice with 42 % (57) of replies. This factor also received the highest number of "not at all" replies with 19 % (25) from all the factors. The fact that Vaasa has a lot of students comparing to the whole number of inhabitants and usually students live alone, with a friend or a partner can influence on this result. 29 % (39) of the respondents stated that opinion of family had "much" influence on their decision and 10 % (13) answered that it affected "very much".

Table 2. Opinion of family

Opinion of family		
	Replies	Percent
Very much	13	10
Much	39	29
A little	57	42
Not at all	25	19
Total	134	100

The second factor was opinion of friends (Table 3.) which affected mostly “a little” as in the case of family with 53 % (71) of the replies. This amount was also the highest number of “a little” replies from all the factors along with marketing of the destination. 33 % (44) of the respondents answered that opinion of friends affected “much” their choice. Both “very much” and “not at all” received 7 % of replies.

Table 3. Opinion of friends

Opinion of friends		
	Replies	Percent
Very much	10	7
Much	44	33
A little	71	53
Not at all	9	7
Total	134	100

The third factor was the respondents’ own lifestyle (Table 4.) which affected mostly “very much” with 58 % (78) of replies and this was also the highest number of “very much” replies from all the factors. 37 % (50) of the respondents stated that their own lifestyle affected “much” their choice of travel destination and 5 % (6) answered “a little”. This factor did not receive any “not at all” replies, which show that one’s own lifestyle has also meaning in travel habits.

Table 4. Own lifestyle

Own lifestyle		
	Replies	Percent
Very much	78	58
Much	50	37
A little	6	5
Total	134	100

The fourth factor was price of the travel (Table 5.) with 49 % (66) of “very much” replies and “much” received 42 % (57). Generally, the price of travel affects the choice of the destination no matter what life situation a person is in. “A little” received 7 % (9) and “not at all” 2 % (2) replies.

Table 5. Price of the travel

Price of the travel		
	Replies	Percent
Very much	66	49
Much	57	42
A little	9	7
Not at all	2	2
Total	134	100

Possibility to learn something new during travels (Table 6.) was the fifth factor with 49 % (66) of “much” replies. This result shows that the respondents have also other interests during their holidays besides relaxing. The second most affecting opinion was “a little” with 33 % (44) replies. “Very much” received 13 % (17) and “not at all” 5 % (7) of replies.

Table 6. Possibility to learn something new during travels

Possibility to learn something new during travels		
	Replies	Percent
Very much	17	13
Much	66	49
A little	44	33
Not at all	7	5
Total	134	100

The sixth factor was safety of the destination (Table 7.) with 44 % (59) of “much” and 34 % (45) of “very much” replies whereas “a little” received 18 % (24) and “not at all” 4 % (6). These results show that safety is an important factor in the respondents’ life and that they have self survival instinct also when travelling.

Table 7. Safety of the destination

Safety of the destination		
	Replies	Percent
Very much	45	34
Much	59	44
A little	24	18
Not at all	6	4
Total	134	100

The seventh factor was marketing of the destination (Table 8.) with 53 % (71) of “a little” replies which is the same amount of “a little” replies as in opinion of friends. “Much” received 30 % (40) of replies whereas “not at all” received 12 % (16) and “very much” 5 % (7). Travel marketing in general divides people’s opinions which can also be seen from the results of this factor. However, if the average age of the sample group in this research had been higher, the results would have shown the importance of marketing more.

Table 8. Marketing of the destination

Marketing of the destination

	Replies	Percent
Very much	7	5
Much	40	30
A little	71	53
Not at all	16	12
Total	134	100

Activities in the destination (Table 9.) was the eighth factor with 60 % (80) of the replies which is the highest amount of “much” replies from all of the factors. 13 % (17) answered that activities in a destination affect “very much” and 24 % (32) answered “a little”. “Not at all” had only 3 % (5) of replies. The results are divided between the four options because on one hand young adults seem to want something to do during their holidays but on the other hand they also have the urge to relax.

Table 9. Activities in the destination

Activities in the destination

	Replies	Percent
Very much	17	13
Much	80	60
A little	32	24
Not at all	5	3
Total	134	100

The last pre-coded factor was previous experience (Table 10.) with 48 % (64) of “much” replies. “A little” received 25 % (34) and “very much” 19 % (26) of replies. 8 % (10) of the respondents answered “not at all”. Even though young adults want to explore and experience new things and destinations, still based on this result they seem to rely on their previous experiences.

Table 10. Previous experience

Previous experience		
	Replies	Percent
Very much	26	19
Much	64	48
A little	34	25
Not at all	10	8
Total	134	100

In addition to the results presented above there were six replies to the open-ended option. The respondents mentioned the following factors; opinion of the person/people one is travelling with, no Muslims in the destination, cultural and historical value, having local friends in the destination, no mass tourism and easy access.

In question four the researchers asked the respondents about the activities they did during their last travel. There were listed 13 different adventure activities which are currently offered by the local adventure tourism companies in Vaasa (Table 11.) This was not mentioned in the questionnaire because the researchers wanted to know how popular the activities are in general. The options were “Yes” and “No”.

Most of the respondents have not done any of the listed activities during their last travel. However, 46 of the 134 respondents did hiking which is a quite common activity during holidays. Along with hiking, sailing, mountain biking, kayaking, ATV safari and white water rafting received over ten “Yes” replies. Only one of the respondents did hot air balloon ride.

Table 11. Activities done during last travel

	Did you do any of the following activities during your last travel?			
	Yes		No	
Hiking	46	34 %	88	66 %
Sailing	19	14 %	115	86 %
Mountain biking	15	11 %	119	89 %
Kayaking	13	10 %	121	90 %
ATV Safari & White water rafting	11	8 %	125	93 %
Husky & snow-mobile safari	6	5 %	128	96 %
Skydiving	4	3 %	130	97 %
Zipwires & Cliff climbing	3	2 %	131	98 %
Absailing	2	2 %	132	99 %
Hot air balloon ride	1	1 %	133	99 %

Question five was a follow-up question to number four asking about the factors that drive the respondents to do the activities mentioned above. The respondents could choose several options from the list and also had the possibility to add other driving factors to the open-ended option (Table 12.) The most affecting factor was clearly “new experiences” with 116 replies and the least affecting factor was “danger” with nine replies. There were nine open-ended replies which five of them mentioned “to have fun” as a driving factor. Other mentioned factors were curiosity, enjoying oneself, doing something out of the ordinary, sightseeing and one mentioned that the activity was part of the package holiday program. Over all, the results show that the respondents want to gain new experiences without taking unnecessary risks or putting themselves in danger.

Table 12. Affecting factors

Affecting factors			
New experiences	116	87 %	
The need to escape from routines	52	39 %	
Self-discovery	50	37 %	
Adrenaline rush	49	37 %	
Mental challenge	35	26 %	
Physical challenge	33	25 %	
Risks	12	9 %	
Danger	9	7 %	

The aim of question number six was to find out the respondents' experiences (Table 13.) in the same 13 adventure activities mentioned in question four. Most of the respondents (98) have done hiking once or more. The other most done activities were kayaking (57) and snowmobile safari (46). Hot air balloon ride and skydiving were the least done activities. 129 respondents have never tried hot air balloon ride and 124 skydiving. Only 17 respondents have tried absailing once or more which make it third on the “never done” –list.

Table 13. Experience in adventure activities

	Have you ever done any of the following adventure activities?			
	Never done		Tried once or more	
Zip wires	94	70 %	40	30 %
Sailing	92	69 %	42	31 %
ATV safari	110	82 %	24	18 %
Husky safari	110	82 %	24	18 %
Snowmobile safari	88	66 %	46	34 %
Kayaking	77	58 %	57	43 %
White water rafting	109	81 %	25	19 %
Absailing	117	87 %	17	13 %
Mountain biking	98	73 %	36	27 %
Cliff climbing	105	78 %	29	22 %
Hiking	36	27 %	98	73 %
Skydiving	124	9 %	10	8 %
Hot air balloon ride	129	96 %	5	4 %

In question number seven the researchers' aim was to find out if the respondents would be interested to do the mentioned activities in Vaasa. Cross tabulation (Table 14 and 15) was done based on the information received from questions six and seven to figure out how many respondents would do the certain activities again in case they have already tried them, and how many respondents who have never done them would like to try one or more of them.

More than half of the respondents who have done sailing, absailing and skydiving would do them again. The variance between eight of the activities is not significant because all of them are more than 40 %, only the respondents who have done ATV safari and hot air balloon ride were not as interested to do them again with percentages under 40.

Table 14. Interest of doing the activities again

Have done the activities and would like to do them again			Total replies
Zip wires	18	45 %	40
Sailing	28	67 %	42
ATV safari	8	33 %	24
Husky safari	10	42 %	24
Snowmobile safari	22	48 %	46
Kayaking	31	54 %	57
White water rafting	11	44 %	25
Absailing	11	65 %	17
Mountain biking	15	42 %	36
Cliff climbing	17	59 %	29
Hiking	46	47 %	98
Skydiving	6	60 %	10
Hot air balloon ride	1	20 %	5

More than half (57 %) of the respondents who have not done hot air balloon ride would like to try it. The next two activities which the respondents would like to try the most are snowmobile safari and zip wires with percentages 40 % and 38 %.

Otherwise, the interest towards the rest of the activities was relatively equally divided with the exception of mountain biking which received only 19 % interest level.

Table 15. Interest of trying the activities

	Never done the activities but would like to try them		Total replies
Zip wires	36	38 %	94
Sailing	26	28 %	92
ATV safari	32	29 %	110
Husky safari	34	31 %	110
Snowmobile safari	35	40 %	88
Kayaking	26	34 %	77
White water rafting	40	37 %	109
Absailing	33	28 %	117
Mountain biking	19	19 %	98
Cliff climbing	33	31 %	105
Hiking	12	33 %	36
Skydiving	47	38 %	124
Hot air balloon ride	73	57 %	129

10.3 Respondents' knowledge about adventure tourism companies in Vaasa

The last part of the questionnaire figured out whether or not the respondents had heard about the current adventure tourism companies in Vaasa and if so, in what content. The options were “have used their services”, “school”, “friends”, “work”, “media”, “advertisement/brochure” and “not familiar” (Table 16.).

Two (2 %) respondents have used Away's services. Botnia Events' and Outback's services have both been used by one (1 %) respondent. None of the respondents have used Gaia Events' services.

36 (27 %) respondents were familiar with the company Away through school, nine (7 %) were familiar with Botnia Events, and Gaia Events and Outback were both known by one (1 %) respondent. Botnia Events was familiar with seven (5 %) respondents through friends. Away and Gaia Events were both known by one (1 %) respondent and none of the respondents knew Outback through their friends. Botnia Events was

known by four (3 %) respondents and one (1 %) knew Gaia Events through work. None of the respondents were familiar with Away and Outback through work.

30 (22 %) answered that they know Botnia Events through media which includes the Internet, newspapers and other communication tools. Gaia Events is known by six (5 %) respondents and three (2 %) knew Outback. None of the respondents were familiar with Away through media. Nine (7 %) respondents have seen an advertisement or a brochure about Botnia Events, three (2 %) about Outback and two (2 %) about Away. None of the respondents have seen an advertisement or a brochure about Gaia Events.

It became evident that most of the respondents were not familiar with any of the companies. The least well-known company was Outback with 126 (94 %) replies. However, Gaia Events had only one respondent less with 125 (93 %) replies. 93 (69 %) respondents were not familiar with Away and 74 (55 %) with Botnia Events.

Table 16. Knowledge of the adventure tourism companies in Vaasa

	Knowledge of the adventure tourism companies in Vaasa							
	Away		Botnia Events		Gaia Events		Outback	
Have used their services	2	2 %	1	1 %	NA		1	1 %
School	36	27 %	9	7 %	1	1 %	1	1 %
Friends	1	1 %	7	5 %	1	1 %	NA	
Work	NA		4	3 %	1	1 %	NA	
Media (newspapers,Internet etc.)	NA		30	22 %	6	5 %	3	2 %
Advertisement/Brochure	2	2 %	9	7 %	NA		3	2 %
Not familiar	93	69 %	74	55 %	125	93 %	126	94 %

11 CONCLUSIONS

The thesis researched whether it is viable to start up a new business in Vaasa which is concentrated in adventure tourism. Another aim was to find out if young people of age group 18-30 could be a good target group (segment) for the new business in addition to companies. Therefore the questionnaire aimed to find out if there is enough demand for a new adventure tourism business among young people in Vaasa region.

The research was carried out by an Internet questionnaire to the students of Vaasa University of Applied Sciences. The questionnaire included questions related to background information, tourist behaviour and adventure tourism companies in Vaasa.

The results were firstly used to evaluate the factors that motivate the sample group to choose their travel destinations and the activities done during their holidays. Secondly, the results were used to figure out how many respondents have done the activities currently offered in Vaasa region and all the respondents' interest toward them. The third purpose of the results was to investigate how familiar the respondents are with the current companies offering adventure activities in Vaasa region.

The fact that the questionnaire was sent to the students at Vaasa University of Applied Sciences helped to achieve the target group, young people of age 18-30 which was the majority of the respondents.

The results of the question about factors affecting respondents' choice of travel destination showed that opinions of family and friends were the least influencing factors. This was a surprising outcome because the theory stated that social factors such as family and groups strongly influence consumer's behaviour. However, the result could be explained by the fact that most of the respondents were under 30 years old and supposedly independent. Own lifestyle received highest amount of "very much"-affecting replies which also shows that the respondents are independent and do not care that much about families and friends' opinion.

Price of travel received high numbers of “very much” and “much” replies. The fact that the respondents were students clearly affected the results due to the fact that students’ income is usually quite low and they cannot afford to go on expensive holidays and do costly activities.

Almost half of the respondents stated that the possibility to learn something new during their travels affected “much” their choice of travel destination. The outcome was positive when considering adventure tourism activities. Most adventure tourism activities are not offered everywhere and can be expensive. They also often are “once in a life time”- experiences and people usually learn new things when taking part in them.

Almost all of the respondents answered that safety of the destination is an important factor in the choice of travel destination, which is a natural outcome when taking into consideration that safety in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is the second most important of human needs. Also people are more aware of today’s terrorism and wars because unfortunately they are common and reported worldwide.

More than half of the respondents claimed that marketing of the destination affected their choice of travel destination only “a little. This result is surprising due to the fact that most of the travel destinations market themselves quite heavily in today’s tense and competitive market situation. On the other hand, tourist behaviour has changed during the past decade. Today people do not pay attention to marketing as much because they prefer exploring the destinations themselves.

It is not surprising that activities in the destination matter “much” to more than half of the respondents in the choice of travel destination because it is only natural for tourists to want something to do and experience during their holidays.

Almost half of the respondents stated that previous experience has an effect on the choice of travel destination. Based on this result it can be assumed that the respondents often choose similar kind of destinations because it is a sure and safe choice.

When asked about the activities done during the last travel it was shown that the respondents did not participate significantly in any of the activities listed in the questionnaire. However, 46 of the 134 respondents did hiking which is a quite common activity during holidays. Sailing, mountain biking, kayaking, ATV safari and white water rafting were the next most done activities. In exception to hiking, the listed activities are not generally so common and available in every travel destination.

The next question was a follow-up question to the previous one aiming to find out which factors drove the respondents to do the activities they did during their last travel. Almost all (116) of the respondents were driven by the willingness to gain new experiences. The next most affecting factors, the need to escape from routines and self-discovery, are the main motivators for soft adventure tourists according to the theory. Also adrenaline rush drove the respondents to do the activities. As stated in the theory, adrenaline rush is one of the motivators for hard adventure tourists because they engage in physically and mentally challenging activities.

The aim of question number six was to find out the respondents' experiences in the same 13 adventure activities mentioned in question four. Most of the respondents have done hiking once or more which can be explained by the fact that hiking is generally a soft adventure activity and suitable for everyone. Another point to be taken into consideration is that it can be done independently, free of charge and almost everywhere due to the fact that Finland has exquisite settings for outdoor activities in general. Hot air balloon ride and skydiving were rarely done activities which can be explained by the fact that the sample group consisted of students who usually cannot afford to do this form of hard adventure activities.

If a new adventure tourism company started in Vaasa it would be recommended that it offers at least sailing, absailing, skydiving, zip wires, snowmobile safari and hot air balloon ride. According to cross tabulation between questions six and seven, those six were the most interesting activities among all the respondents and if they were offered with reasonable price it could attract customers instantly. However, if a company wants to offer all those activities it has to have enough capital and cooperation partners in order to cover the costs of expensive equipment and organising the activities. It can be concluded that not so many new companies have enough capital. Therefore they might have to attract their customer base with other means such as marketing, personnel and so on.

The last question's purpose was to find out whether or not the respondents were familiar with the current adventure tourism companies in Vaasa and if so, in what content. Only four of the respondents have used the companies' services, however all the companies were known in some of the contents. The most known company was Away which can be explained by the fact that some of the respondents know Kim Kurenmaa, an employee at Away, as one of the former teachers at Vaasa University of Applied Sciences. In contrary to Away, Botnia Events is known through media due to its broad clientele and heavy marketing.

In the possible case of starting up a new adventure tourism company in Vaasa, a SWOT-analysis has to be done first. According to the results of the research, most of the people who have done adventure activities which are currently offered in Vaasa would do them again. Also persons who have not tried them would be interested in trying them. Therefore, it can be assumed that there would be a demand for a new adventure tourism company in Vaasa which is a considerable strength. Other strengths are that it could offer more activities for young people in Vaasa with correct activity choices and create work places.

The largest weaknesses are related to money. Organising adventure activities is expensive and might force companies to set prices quite high, especially if the company is new. If the target group is young people and students they might not afford to take part in all the offered activities, which then again may force the company to strictly limit their offered activities. Another possible weakness is funding possibilities, but because funding of adventure tourism companies has not been discussed in detailed in the thesis, this is only a conjecture, and therefore further research should be done about the subject.

A considerable opportunity for the new possible adventure tourism company is cooperation with Vaasa Tourist Office. It is a powerful company due to their broad advertisements methods which all of the tourism companies in Vaasa use. The merger with the nearby municipalities can also attract people from those communities to come and use the new company's services. The combination of diverse marketing tools and the interest along with curiosity in the new company could differentiate it from other existing adventure tourism companies.

The largest threats are the other two existing companies Away and Botnia Events. According to the results of the research, Away is the most well-known company among the respondents which makes it the biggest competitor for the new possible adventure tourism company. Away does not only offer their services to companies but also to individuals, which shows that their clientele is broad and diverse. Botnia Events is also a big threat even though they offer their services solely to companies. Botnia Events has operated since 1992 and has gained the trust and loyalty of its customers due to their long history and experience as an adventure tourism company. Other considerable threat could be the fast changing seasons due to Vaasa's location by the sea, for example lack of snow can cause difficulties for the company to arrange each winter activity.

Based on the information received along with this thesis, it can be concluded that the new adventure tourism company would have socio-cultural impacts on the area, but most of them will most likely be positive, such as the quality of life of the residents would improve through new free-time activities. It would also attract more weekend tourists and day visitors. However, there can also be negative changes to the society because of the possible conflicts between residents and tourists who are using for example their land for the activities. Residents can also be worried about possible pollution, congestion and commercialisation in the area.

According to the results of the research there would be high demand for a new company. However, the question is, if there is an entrepreneur who has the capital and courage to have reasonable prices in the tough industry.

If something could have been done differently in the questionnaire, the options in question five should have been closed and only one option available per respondent. This would have made it easier to compare the driving factors to the done activities asked in the previous question. Also in the last question there should have been the possibility to choose several options instead of one, because it is likely that the respondents have heard about the companies in more than one content. As an improvement to the questionnaire there could have been more questions in order to receive more accurate information about the respondents and their interests towards new and different adventure activities besides the currently offered ones. Due to this the validity of the questionnaire suffered. In addition, the reliability of this thesis suffered because no information was received from all of the companies despite several contact attempts.

Suggestion for further research is to make a feasibility study about the subject including funding aspects. The aim of the research could be to do a practical business plan for a real entrepreneur. Another suggestion is to make similar type of questionnaire in a larger scale also including other young people in Vaasa region besides students.

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APPENDIX 1. THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Demand for a new possible adventure tourism company in Vaasa

We are studying tourism in Vaasa University of Applied Sciences and doing our final thesis about adventure tourism in Vaasa. This questionnaire aims to find out if there is enough demand amongst students for a new possible adventure tourism company in Vaasa.

Background information

Male Female

1. Gender

2. Age

Tourist behavior

3. How much do the following factors affect on your choice of travel destination?

	Very much	Much	A little	Not at all
Opinion of your family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opinion of your friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your own lifestyle	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Price of the travel	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Possibility to learn something new during your travels	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Safety of the destination	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Marketing of the destination	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Activities in the destination	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your previous experience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other?

4. Did you do any of the following activities during your last travel?

	Yes	No
Zip wires (köysirata)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sailing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ATV safari (mönkijäsafari)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Husky safari	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Snowmobile safari	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kayaking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
White water rafting (koskenlasku)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Absailing (köysilaskeutuminen)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mountain biking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cliff climbing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hiking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Skydiving	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hot air balloon ride	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. Which factors drive you to do activities mentioned above? [?](#)

- Self-discovery
- New experiences
- The need to escape from routines
- Physical challenge
- Mental challenge
- Adrenaline rush
- Risks
- Danger

Other?

6. Have you ever done any of the following adventure activities?

	Once	Twice	More than twice	Never
Zip wires (köysirata)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sailing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ATV safari (mönkijäsafari)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Husky safari	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Snowmobile safari	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kayaking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
White water rafting (koskenlasku)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Absailing (köysilaskeutuminen)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mountain biking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cliff climbing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hiking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Skydiving	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hot air balloon ride	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. If there was a chance to do any of the following activities in Vaasa, which of them would you like to do?

	Yes	Maybe	No
Zip wires (köysirata)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sailing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ATV safari (mönkijäsafari)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Husky safari	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Snowmobile safari	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kayaking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
White water rafting (koskenlasku)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Absailing (köysilaskeutuminen)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mountain biking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cliff climbing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hiking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Skydiving	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Hot air balloon ride



Adventure tourism companies in Vaasa

9. Are you familiar with any of the following companies? If yes, in what content?

	Have used their services	Schools	Friends	Work	Media (newspaper, Internet etc.)	Advertisement/Brochure	Not familiar
Away	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Botnia Events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gaia Events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Outback	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

In some other content?

Tietojen lähetys

Thank you for your answers! :)