

**Creating Experiences: International Tourism Students Conference  
2014 Porvoo**

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<p>The research was conducted as bachelor's thesis work in spring 2014. International Tourism Students Conference (ITSC) is an annual conference for tourism students to network and share ideas about a current topic related to the industry. There are delegations participating from various educational institutions around Europe. The aim of the research was to evaluate the positive experiences created by the organisers during ITSC Porvoo. In addition suggestions for future conferences were drawn from the results of the research.</p> <p>The theoretical framework of the thesis focuses on both conference and experience management. One of the trends within the conference sector is to create memorable experiences for the conference delegates. The theoretical framework was used when analysing the research results.</p> <p>The qualitative research method was chosen for the research project to detect the individual opinions of each delegate. Semi-structured interviews were conducted during the ITSC Porvoo on 22<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> of April. All and all nineteen interviews were gathered during the conference and twenty-three people were interviewed. In addition observation was used as a supportive research method. Post conference survey was conducted week after the conference to detect the long lasting memories.</p> <p>A great deal of positive experiences were created during ITSC Porvoo. The most memorable programme numbers were the Gala Dinner and the evening programme in Seikkailulaakso. Active participation of the delegates as well as stimulating the senses of the participant were the most effective ways in creating experiences. Moreover these aspects were highlighted when giving suggestions for the future organisers of ITSC and other events and conferences.</p>	
<p><b>Keywords</b> experience management, conference management, International Tourism Students Conference, experience realms, staging the experience</p>	

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# 1 Introduction

The following chapter explains the means and purpose of this specific research project. The task of the thesis is introduced along with the research questions. In addition the chapter will describe the structure of the research including a short description of the data collection process.

## 1.1 Aim and Delimitations of the Research

The aim of this thesis is to evaluate the delegates overall experience obtained from the International Tourism Students Conference 2014 (ITSC). The conference took place at HAAGA-HELIA Porvoo Campus from the 22<sup>nd</sup> till the 26<sup>th</sup> of April 2014. The conference was organised by both the international and the Finnish tourism degree programme students and the project was overseen by the international degree programme coordinator Kaija Lindroth, senior lecturer Eva Holmberg and senior lecturer Monica Birkle.

Numerous conferences and events have been organized on Porvoo Campus. The Campus has been an inspirational venue for these events and there are several events planned for the future. Porvoo campus has in the past hosted conferences such as Encounters 2011 and 2013 and International Competence Network of Tourism Research and Education 2013. Besides the academic content of the events, gala dinners and programme such as African dancing has been organized as social activities. The research conducted during ITSC Porvoo holds vital information for the future events and conferences hosted in Porvoo Campus.

The task during the conference was to observe and interview the guests about their experiences during the conference. The focus of the research was on the positive experiences created through the conference programme. The researchers attended the conference and programme as guests in order to observe the overall experience in its natural environment. By taking pictures and interviewing the delegates the unique experiences created during ITSC Porvoo were analyzed. As mentioned, one of the aims was to assemble valuable feedback and ideas to make the conference appealing

for the upcoming years. In addition the data can be used by HAAGA-HELIA Porvoo Campus when organizing other conferences and events in the future.

There were few delimitations for the experience research for ITSC. The researchers were not part of the planning process of the conference and the implementation of the event is not evaluated directly within the research. The focus was within the creation of positive experiences during the events and the planning process and its success was not relevant for this project. For this the organisers of the conference were not interviewed and the focus was on the experiences of the participants, in this case the ITSC delegates. Both negative and positive happenings within the planning process could have affected the answers of the organisers which the delegates were not aware of. For this these aspects were not reliable when measuring the success of the participant's point of view. On the other hand the organisers would have had first hand experience of the programme numbers and they could have elaborated the meanings and decision making process behind each event.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

The research questions were determined in order to reach the aims of the research described above. The aim of the research was to find out what kind of unique experiences were created during the International Tourism Students Conference 2014. The research focused on which aspects of the conference programme enhanced the development of the memorable experiences and how these experiences were created. Furthermore the research aimed to give answers for the future organisers of the conference: which elements should be implemented when organising a conference in order to create memorable experiences.

## **1.3 Methods**

Our study consisted of two parts; observing the experiences and interviewing the delegates. The qualitative research method was used for gathering the research data since the experiences of individual delegates were measured. By using the qualitative method the interviewees could express themselves more openly by using their own words

without reservations. This made the research less structured but through open-ended questions our results were more in-depth (Appendix 2). More extensive description of the qualitative research method can be found in the chapter four.

The interviews were based on one-on-one discussions and group interviews with the delegates. Questions about the general experiences of the conference were asked from the delegates. Furthermore questions were asked about specific programme numbers to measure the individual success of these events. When conducting the interviews face-to-face the researchers were able to make assumptions based on the tone of the interviewee's voice and of their body language as well. The answers received were recorded, transcribed and analysed after the conference and are introduced in this report in the chapter five.

To obtain further results pictures were taken during the entire conference and were used as a supporting element for the research findings. By taking pictures the delegate's emotions and body language can be analysed—a picture is worth a thousand words. Pictures were taken to capture moments and memories and through this numerous reactions were witnessed throughout the conference programme.

To receive more data, a post conference survey was conducted via Facebook (Appendix 3). The ideal timing for the survey would have been approximately one month after the event. Through this we hoped to obtain which aspects of the conference programme were most memorable for the conference delegates. Since experiences have the tendency of staying in the long-term memory of the participants it is important to compare the results of the interviews during the event to the results of the Facebook survey.

#### **1.4 Structure of the Research Report**

The research report consists of six chapters. The introduction chapter offers the reader with an insight of the means and purpose of the ITSC Porvoo experience research. To understand the structure and character of the International Tourism Students Conference, the second chapter informs the reader of the background, history and structure

of the conference. There are various programme numbers that need to be included in the official conference programme. Furthermore the IISC Porvoo 2014 is introduced including the theme, participating educational facilities and the conference programme.

The third chapter has the focus on the literature review conducted for the research. The information was examined by the researchers to develop a broader understanding of the main themes related to the project. The analysis of the research was conducted by comparing the theory of conference and experience management to the research results. Various steps of conference management are introduced as well as the different features of conference programme. As creating experiences can be seen as one of the future trends in conference management, few other developments within the conference industry are introduced as well. Experience management examines what experiences are and how they differentiate from services and other industries. To understand the concept of Experience Economy (Pine & Gilmore, 2011, 19-20), the development from the Agrarian Economy to nowadays experience developing industries is introduced. Moreover different characteristics and experience types are compared. Especially this part of the literature review was important when the analysing the data.

The fourth chapter of the report introduces the research method chosen for this specific research. The qualitative research method and its variables are explained and examined. Moreover interviewing and observation as data collection methods are introduced. By explaining the execution of the research the reader receives an understanding of how the methods chosen were implemented in the project. The reliability of the research is evaluated in the end of the chapter.

Chapter five gives the reader an insight of the analysing process of the research. The analysis was conducted by event and the results highlight four programme numbers as the most memorable experiences: The Amazing Race of Porvoo, the evening programme in Seikkailulaakso, the Gala Dinner and the Market Stalls. In addition results of the visit to Suomenlinna fortress and the overall experience are presented. As mentioned above, the theory part of the report was used to support the findings of the re-

search. Pictures are presented to demonstrate the emotions and moments from throughout the conference.

The final chapter includes conclusion and discussion of the ITSC experience research. The analysed data is examined to receive answers to the research questions stated in the introduction chapter. The requirements for the organisers when creating an experience are introduced with suggestions for the future International Tourism Students Conferences. There are various conferences and events organised in HAAGA-HELIA Porvoo Campus annually. For this, the discussion chapter involves improvement recommendations for the upcoming events held at the Campus.

## **2 International Tourism Students Conference**

The following chapter will offer information of the initial background and history of the ITSC Conference. The objective of the conference is introduced as well as the current scope of ITSC. Furthermore there is a review of the required structure of the ITSC Conference presented within the chapter. The information for the following chapter was gathered from the International Tourism Students Conference website.

### **2.1 Background and History**

The first International Tourism Students Conference (ITSC) took place in Chambéry, France in 1986. In the beginning there was two educational institutes part of the ITSC conference: the Université de Savoie located in France and the Fachhochschule Heilbronn located in Germany. Throughout the years the amount of participating institutes has grown and in 2014, there are 14 delegations taking part to the conference. ITSC is the first conference within the Tourism and Hospitality industry directed for the students. (International Tourism Students Conference, 2014a.)

As stated on the ITSC website (2014b.), the objective of the conference is

To encourage intercultural exchange between students from different countries specializing in tourism, hospitality and leisure management studies. (International Tourism Students Conference, 2014b.)

Initially the conference was to be hosted by a different institution every year. According to the International Tourism Students Conference website (2014c.), each destination has a new tourism related theme generally regarding trends in tourism today. The theme of the conference is chosen during the previous event.

### **2.2 Structure of the ITSC Conference**

While the organising institution changes annually, there are procedures that the hosting party needs to consider while planning and implementing the ITSC Conference. The

ITSC website (2014d.) states that there are several features that need to be included in the programme of the student conference. As educational aspects, there are six mandatory parts listed: research presentations, workshops, keynote speakers, country presentations in a form of market stalls, excursions, awards and certificates of attendance. Each of these programmes represents different ways of learning and engaging the delegates to the conference. For example the research and key note speaker presentations represent the formal and educational part of the conference and the excursions can be seen as more inspirational experiences introducing the host country's environment.

Apart from the educational aspects the host country is required to create hospitality and social programmes alongside with the formal conference programme. To create a welcoming atmosphere for the delegates, an opening and closing ceremonies are held in the beginning and in the end of the ITSC Conference. Additional hospitality and social programme should be implemented throughout the conference. The aim of these social activities is to ensure interaction between the delegations and creating student networks which will last past the ITSC conference as well. The content of these social and hospitality activities is determined by the host institution and the organisers. (International Tourism Students Conference 2014d.)

### **2.3 International Tourism Students Conference 2014 Porvoo**

The 29th ITSC will be held in Porvoo, Finland by HAAGA-HELIA University of Applied Sciences from the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April till 26<sup>th</sup> of April. According to the ITSC webpage (2014e.), this year's theme for the ITSC Conference will be Unique Tourism Experiences and Service Design. This specific theme suits well with the unique and innovative learning method of inquiry learning used in HAAGA-HELIA Porvoo Campus. There are eight educational institutions taking part to the ITSC 2014. Delegations participating come from NHTV Breda, University of Latvia, Hochschule Heilbronn, Chambéry IAE Savoie Mt Blanc, Högskolan Dalarna, Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, Manchester Metropolitan University and HAAGA-HELIA University of Applied Sciences.

The program designed for the ITSC 2014 (Appendix 1) follows the introductions given on the ITSC webpage (2014d.) including both the educational aspects and the hospitality and social activities required. The actual conference program takes place on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday while Tuesday is the arrival day of the delegates and on Saturday a volunteer excursion to Suomenlinna fortress in Helsinki is arranged.

### **2.3.1 Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> of April**

As Wednesday is the first day of the ITSC, the morning starts with registration and the opening ceremony of the conference. The morning continues with two workshops created by Sirpa Lassila, Marika Alhonen and Pia Kiviaho-Kallio. The first key note lecture presented by Henna Konu takes place in the afternoon. After lunch the Market stalls will open and time is arranged to visit the stalls of other delegations. As a social evening activity Amazing Race in Porvoo's old town is arranged followed by dinner at Porvoo Campus. (Appendix 1)

### **2.3.2 Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> of April**

The morning starts with the workshops from the previous day. There will be no key note lecture on Thursday but the afternoon will start with the research presentations of the delegations. Overall four 30 minute presentations will be heard during the day. The evening programme takes place in Seikkailulaakso adventure centre with versatile outdoor activities. (Appendix 1)

### **2.3.3 Friday 25<sup>th</sup> of April**

The final conference day starts with three research presentations prepared by the delegations. Before lunch the second key note lecture of the conference will be held by Mady Keup. The afternoon continues with the last workshop held by Mady Keup, Monika Birkle and Eva Holmberg. After the presentations of the third workshop the official conference programme will be closed. The evening continues with the Gala dinner where the best paper, the best presentation and the best market stall will be awarded. (Appendix 1)

## **2.4 Description of main Social Activities**

The four main programme numbers are the Amazing Race of Porvoo, the evening activities organised in Seikkailulaakso adventure centre, the Gala Dinner and visit to Suomenlinna fortress. For these programme numbers the full responsibility for creating a memorable atmosphere will be on the organising committee. In addition these social activities have the best potential in creating memorable experiences for the conference delegates.

### **2.4.1 Amazing Race of Porvoo**

Amazing Race of Porvoo is held in the old town of Porvoo on Wednesday the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April. A great deal of important happenings of Finland's history has taken place in the area and for the foreign conference delegates there is a lot to hear and learn. During the race, there are various activities organised related to Finland. The Amazing race is completed in teams and the winning team will receive a prize. After the race, a dinner is organised at Porvoo Campus.

As a venue the old town of Porvoo is beautiful and visiting the site can be seen as an educational and historical experience itself. Taking the amazing race to the old town gives the delegates a chance to explore the venue in an entertaining way. Since the activities are Finland related the participants will receive additional information of the host country as well. The race is completed in teams and to ensure the networking between the different student delegations the teams will hopefully consist of participants from different countries. This would be beneficial in creating a positive overall atmosphere during the entire conference. The Amazing race of Porvoo will be a memorable and educational start for the conference and in key role in creating student networks.

### **2.4.2 Evening Programme in Seikkailulaakso adventure centre**

The evening programme of Thursday the 24<sup>th</sup> will be organised in Seikkailulaakso adventure centre. The programme consists of various outdoor activities and there is an

opportunity to swim and sauna will be heated. In addition the conference delegates will enjoy an evening meal in Seikkailulaakso.

Since the Seikkailulaakso adventure centre is located in the archipelago of Porvoo-Emäsalo area (Seikkailulaakso, 2014) this is a great opportunity for the conference guests to explore the Finnish nature. While there are various outdoor activities involved, the evening programme in Seikkailulaakso both engages the delegates through taking part to the programme planned while exploring the environment. The possibility of trying Finnish-style sauna during the event gives the day a more traditional aspect. Furthermore the activities planned will support developing relationships and bonding between the delegation from different countries. For this, the evening spent in Seikkailulaakso has great potential in creating unique and memorable experiences for the guests. Nonetheless the possibility for bad weather might make the outdoor activities unpleasant and for this, the positive experience might suffer.

### **2.4.3 Gala Dinner**

The Gala Dinner is organised as part of the closing ceremony of the official conference programme on Friday the 25<sup>th</sup> of April. The event takes place in Vocational school Amisto at Aleksanterinkatu 20. During the Gala Dinner the best paper, the best presentation and the best market stall will be rewarded. The three course meal consists of traditional Finnish food while as a theme the organisers of the evening have chosen the Oscars.

The Gala Dinner is a traditional part of a conference and a festive way to celebrate a successful event. To create a memorable atmosphere for the event it is important to highlight the visual aspects such as lighting and decorations of the space. The Finnish menu suits well with the Finland related programme throughout the conference. The Oscars theme is festive and encourages the guests to dress accordingly. To be able to combine the Finnish traditional menu with the elegant theme of Oscars with additional programme can be seen as a challenge. Still, with all the components the Gala Dinner has great possibility to success in creating experiences.

#### **2.4.4 Visit to Suomenlinna fortress**

A visit to Suomenlinna fortress is organised as volunteer excursion on Saturday the 26<sup>th</sup> of April as the post conference tour. The fortress is situated in an island nearby Helsinki. The post conference trip costs 15 euro including the bus ride to Helsinki as well as the ferry ride to the fortress. A guided tour is organised in Suomenlinna area to make the visit more educational.

Since the Suomenlinna visit is the post conference excursion the atmosphere of the event will be more informal and casual. Like the Amazing race of Porvoo, the Suomenlinna fortress visit will give the guests information of Finland's history. In addition the scenery of the fortress and the surrounding area will provide the guests with a beautiful visual experience.

### **3 Conference and Experience Management**

This chapter contains the theoretical framework of the thesis. The theoretical framework will give the reader a wider understanding of the meanings and the results of the research. Furthermore the theory gathered will support the data analysing process in order to receive reliable results. The focus in this chapter is in both conference management and experience management. The data is gathered from reliable and up-to-date academic sources.

#### **3.1 Conference Management**

The next chapter is about the conference and conference management and these are explained in detail. The knowledge of conference management is an essential part for the organizer. Therefore it is important knowledge for organizing a successful conference. This chapter also includes tools and the future trends that lie in the conference industry.

##### **3.1.1 What is a conference**

Conferences date from the presidents hosting Last Middle East Summits to an annual meeting held by a company or organisation. Whether it was the same event or not the reason was to discuss business matters, share insights, to confer and even to negotiate. Conferences can be held in private or in public and mostly they are held to research or more profoundly learn about the subject that is of common interest. A conference is a common way of describing a series of multiple communications events. Conferences today are a modern form of communication whether it is for an internal or external use. (Rogers, 2008, 2; Rogers, 2003, 16.)

It has been established that conferences are held to share knowledgeable information as well discuss business issues. This is why we can determine that people mainly attend conferences because of a need to confer with others, professional status and also to learn. The conference attendees depend on the conference con-

tent to provide answers to their questions and this happens through people conferring. Conferring though the word might sound a tad old fashioned is something that happens aside the official programme, in between the lectures and seminars. (Segar, 2010, 11-13.)

Within business tourism there lays a sub-sector combined by business tourism and leisure tourism. Aside conferences, there are exhibitions, trade fairs; corporate events and incentive travel in this sub-sector. These four events are the major marketing areas for destinations and venues in the business tourism sector. Both business tourism and leisure tourism depend on one another. Both accommodations and transportation, in order to function economically, require for trade fairs, conferences and corporate events to be organized. Conferences and business tourism go hand in hand in taking over a large sector of the tourism industry. The conference industry along with conventions is alleged to be the world's biggest industry. The conference industry is without a doubt about people. This combination has no specific but continues throughout the year. The peak seasons for conferences are during the spring and autumn. (Rogers, 2013, 12, 26-28; Rogers, 2008; Rogers, 2003, 194; Segar, 2010; 25 – 27.)

The traditional conference holds more of a structured and old fashioned demeanour of teaching to it whereas the conventional conference model has taken a more interactive approach using social learning methods as well. This without a doubt makes the traditional conference model seem narrated. (Segar, 2010, 13.)

A conference attracts visitors also by the presenters and panellists invited. It is important to get the best professionals to your conference so that you also create opportunities for the attendees to confer with the professionals who already hold a professional status. Having someone with a professional status will also intrigue attendees to take part in the conference. Finding an adequate speaker with good presenting skills is not always easy. Generally if they are good presenters they might lack in their knowledge of the subject and vice versa. It is vital for the conference manager to have a conversation about the key note speakers' presen-

tations and to make sure they understand the theme of the conference. This way you avoid going off topic. (Rogers, 2013, 200; Segar, 2010, 16; Seekings & Farrer, 1999, 99.)

### **3.1.2 Conference Management**

Conference management foresees everything from planning the schedule to the delegate registration. Planning an event such as a conference, requires a planned vision of what the entity will look like. A conference is an event or several events presented and planned in a professional and formal way. Commencing to plan this kind of an event requires the characteristics of one who can stand the pressure the planning process brings. Thanks to television delegates often assume to receive the same high class service as shown on TV. A poorly planned conference is no longer tolerable at all. For this reason it is important to have professionals specialized in technology i.e. on your conference planning team. (Rogers, 2003, 142; Rogers, 2013, 206-207.)

Planning and designing a conference requires a lot of work, this is why having a planning group is vital to deal with the specific details of the conference. Therefore knowing how to manage time for the conference programme you secure that everything happens according to schedule. When planning a conference and how many speakers and guests there will be it is important to choose a venue that provides you with all the logistical components needed for your conference. Make sure you try and find as many components from the venue as possible especially meal time. It goes without saying that first impressions are everything. In addition to the logistical side of a conference you should pay attention to the attractiveness of the conference venue. The venue itself should be welcoming. (Segar, 2010, 142-143; Rogers, 2003, 146.)

Although the venue is of great importance organizing the meals from where they are served to the fact that they can be served on site is a key factor in creating a comfortable conference environment. It's important to serve fresh, tasty and innovative meals for the guests. A good meal can create a great atmosphere but a

bad one can be remembered for a lifetime. This is why it is vital to inform the guests which meals the conference package includes and which need to be paid by the guests themselves. (Finland Convention Bureau 2013, 13; Segar, 2010, 152.)

The Event Institute introduces the Return on Investment (ROI) Methodology as a solidly built and well thought out approach to the ROI measurement. The ROI Methodology has six levels measured by objectives starting from level 5 ending with level 0. By using the ROI Pyramid as an organizer you are able to determine the value of your conference or event not only for the conference management team but also for the stakeholders (Figure 1). The six levels will be described below.

Level 5 starts with determining the ROI wished from the event. In level 4 Rogers (Figure 1) detects the Impact Objectives were the conference management team determines the final value contribution of the event to their stakeholders. The third level of the ROI pyramid is the Behaviour Objectives. This explains the value of the event to the stakeholders brought by the delegates and the organisers prior and during the event. This might mean doing something differently or taking new actions.

The Level 2 explains the Learning objectives. The first level clarifies the Satisfaction and Learning Environment Objectives. Learning is influenced by the mindset of the learner along with the surroundings (i.e. noise, temperature, air) and the factors such as the speaker, the speakers voice etc. This level goes through the question how to create a learning environment for the most effective change in learning. The last level on ROI Pyramid is the Target Audience Objectives. By determining this level the organiser makes sure the right audience has been invited to the event. (Rogers, 2013, 211.)



Figure 1. ROI Pyramid (Rogers, 2013, 212)

### 3.1.3 Conference Programme

The conference programme holds all the importance to the attendees. If the programme fails to have all key components; contents, poise and timing it can be a very disappointing experience. The conference programme should also serve to as many guest types as possible. It is up to the organizers creativity on how well the social and the professional programmes are integrated. Social programmes during the official programme help the attendees to break the ice and bond in a natural and relaxed manner. The conference programme can involve an extended programme which can have a special nature. When planning the conference whether it is tradition or non-traditional the theme, specification of the conference is important to be established ahead of time. The planning committee has a responsibility to inform the lecturers of the theme or the details of the conference content. (International Association for Political Science Students. 2003; Rogers, 2003, 162.)

The organizer needs to be sure to add in some none traditional discussion activities. For example roundtables are a good way of getting interesting conversation within 60-150 minutes. The roundtable is usually something to sign-up before-

hand so that groups can be formed in advance. Lecture sessions in general should last approximately 30-60 minutes. Planning the schedule for the lectures, meals and free time activities require a lot of thought. Reflecting on previous years and its programmes should be of help. The cohesion in coordinating both the free time activity and the lectures is very important. Having completed the first draft, send it to the entire planning committee so that possible adjustments can be made. (Segar, 2010, 164, 175.)

Planning free time activity during the conference is vital. Often in conferences the lectures tend to have a serious tone to them. For this extra thought and effort should be part of the planning process when considering the free time programme. When searching for information of possible places to visit the planning committee should contact the nearest travel agencies, event companies etc. to receive information and insight on the destinations. When conference guests are visiting a foreign country it is a wise choice to include one trip or event to the conference price. (Finland Convention Bureau, 2013, 14.)

Conferences, whether they are purely academic or not, should focus on combining the academics with the social activities. This is where the conference management team gets to be innovative in creating an unforgettable experience. In this kind of programme it is best to mix up the delegates to let them experience new things about the destination and to network amongst each other informally. (Rogers, 2013, 201.)

The conference programme should include free time and structured free time activities such as gala dinners, company visits, guided tours etc. By organizing several free time programmes the organiser make sure the conference has also a more low-key and entertaining side. It is important to the guests to have a versatile conference programme. As Richard Reis mentions in his article in *The Chronicle*;

“While attending sessions is important, most experienced conference-goers know that much of the action lies not in the talks themselves but in the hallways, at dinners, and informal seminars.” (Reis, 2000.)

Once the programme has reached its final draft phase the organiser needs to make sure to inform the guests well in advance about the programme. It is important that the information reaches all the attendees participating in the conference without delay. During the conference you may use a form of social media as a marketing and information source. From the very beginning it is important that the website and other social media sites have a good outer appearance. Well written sentences avoiding mistakes gives a professional impression. This should be executed from the beginning until the end. On the website there should also be links to information about the destination city. (Finland Convention Bureau, 2013, 16.)

Before the conference begins it is important to make sure the planning committee focuses on getting all the information to the guest. Handling all the last minute details such as the promotional gifts given out when the attendees arrive to the registration. For example a promotional gift can be a keychain or a pen. (Segar, 2010, 210.)

In every event first impressions are everything. Clearing up the conference site and setting up all the necessary preparations play an important role in the attendee’s eyes. Having forms such as evaluation forms available can be very important to the attendee. It gives the attendee the impression that their opinion is valued and that the answers will be taken into consideration. Make sure to include a small introductory text expressing your gratefulness and wishes. (Segar, 2010, 218.)

The theme and quality of the conference needs to be consistent to ensure the best experience possible. During the conference there should be members of the planning committee on spot at all times: this way the communication flow and responsibility is taken care of. The members of the planning committee should

wear a name badge for them to be recognized. Lecture sessions have to start on time; it is of great disrespect to those who are on time. The conference organizer is advised to inform the attendees after each session with the details of the upcoming schedule. (Finland Convention Bureau, 2013, 15; Segar, 2010, 251-253, 283.)

After the conference, without too much delay thank you letters should be sent via email to the attendees and inquire them to answer a survey about the conference. In case the conference is being organized again you can utilize the feedback for future planning. Sharing these answers with everyone can be interesting information and therefore should be sent to everyone. This is a jester of good manners and should not take more than a few days to complete. (Finland Convention Bureau, 2013, 16; Segar, 2010, 309-310.)

### **3.2 The Future Trends in Conferences**

In the hospitality industry no branch has a 100 percent guarantee of offering jobs and services in the future. The issues that stress' this industry lie in the hands of the global economy along with the threats of the world's environment. Other issues such as terrorism and health epidemics such as swine flew can even bring extreme measures to the future of the industry. This brings conferences to the point where they need to offer even more experiences for the conferences because their might be economical cut backs and other restrictions. (Rogers, 2008, 306-308.)

Technology in the conference industry is a strong player. Along with social media and other applications the development of technology brings positive and negative aspects. Conferences in the near future are inevitably threatened by the fast speed of technology. For example teleconferencing and videoconferencing bring a new kind of competitor to the industry. Although it limits the face-to-face interaction it is still a major relief for people who are not able to travel long distances to attend for example a business meeting. By having the chance to com-

municate via the internet one can create an entirely different connection and experience. (Rogers, 2013, 356-362.)

Another trend that would not jeopardize the industry but could have a huge impact on the marketing of the conference lectures; podcasting. People could listen to the lectures that are recorded as a podcast and one could listen to the speeches without having to be on the spot. The podcasts can be spread online as downloadable material and can be easily accessed. Furthermore the use of mobile applications can be connected to the use of podcasts. (Rogers, 2013, 356-362.)

One other interesting form of conferencing is web conferencing. In web conferencing participants can take part in both video and audio interaction with just one IP address. This kind of web conference can be synchronized with a live event. In other words the participant can be involved virtually. Web conferences also have their own name which is “webinars”. These are usually streamed conferences and the duration is a bit shorter. (Rogers, 2013, 356-362.)

Experience creation and social interaction can be seen as a new trend within conference sector as well. Hurt (Midcourse Corrections, 2014) introduces a term of social conference. Since the material can be found online the visitors attend the event for the conference experience. To lure delegates on location, the conference organiser should create a programme including various types of social activities which involve more visitor participation. The trend is to create more memorable and interactive conferences. The next chapter introduces experience management and creation.

### **3.3 Experience Management**

This chapter was created to provide theoretical framework of what is an experience and how experiences are managed. The following will demonstrate how the society has reached experience based economy and how experiences should be implemented in the event industry. Various types of experiences are also introduced. The information was gathered from various reliable and current sources.

### 3.3.1 What is an Experience

As Pine and Gilmore (2011, 17) state, an experience is a personal, memorable occurrence which is commonly created from one person to another. The value of each experience is individual since the success of the experience depends on how an individual reacts to the experience created. As services, experiences are intangible but the distinctive nature of creating long lasting memories is what differentiates experiences from services.

Schulze (in Lütjhe & Tarssanen 2013, 64-65) also highlights the individuality of an experience. There are two main characteristics which help in creating an individual experience: differentiation and philosophy. Differentiation of the experiences can be measured via individual's assumptions and expectations of what is an experience and how their individual needs are satisfied. Philosophy of a consumer on the other hand explains the core values, the meaning of life and how the individual all in all sees the world. Since these values differentiate within individuals, each experience has a highly distinct character for the person involved.

The individual character of the experience industry creates the difficulty of measuring the success of the experience. As Berridge (2007, 122) states, the success of the event experience can be measured by the gap analysis between the image created with marketing (expectations of the experience) and the reality of the experience (success of the experience for the individual). To reduce the gap one needs to manage the experiences in a structured manner. Nevertheless efficient experience management does not solve the problem of how to receive reliable results when conducting customer research.

Komppula (Customer Value Based Experience Design in Tourism, 2005) examines experiences through the customer value. Customer value is the key to success and defines the core of the tourist product (experience) and leads to product development. The customer value consists of three steps: expected value, perceived value and experienced value. Expected value takes place prior the event, perceived value during the event and experienced value after the event. As Berridge (2007, 122), Komppula (Cus-

tomer Value Based Experience Design in Tourism, 2005) states that the expectations prior the event need to be integrated with the experienced value during and after the event. To be able to create successful experiences, the service provider has to understand the needs and the wants of the customer. Innovative and creative interaction between the service provider and the customer is important as well as having an understanding of the product itself. (Customer Value Based Experience Design in Tourism, 2005.)

In Finnish language the word experience can be translated in two alternative ways: *kokemus* and *elämys*. Where *kokemus* can be summarized as a happening in one's life, *elämys* has a more special meaning and could be seen as Pine and Gilmore state as a more memorable and personal occurrence. As Lühje and Tarssanen (2013, 61) mention, *elämys* is a subcategory for *kokemus*. For this, it is easier to compare and analyse the different stages of experiences with Finnish language.

### **3.3.2 The Development towards the Experience Economy**

The growing requirements of consumers during the past decades have created the Experience Economy to serve the needs of demanding customers. Even everyday commodities such as purchasing groceries and going to the fitness centre can be turned into an experience. According to Pine and Gilmore (2011, 19-20), creating experiences is even financially more beneficial for the business: the consumers are more likely to spend additional money when memorable experiences are created.

The economic development started from the essential commodities needed in human's everyday life. Pine and Gilmore (2011, 9-11) start this development from the Agrarian Economy which consisted of small communities harvesting and hunting the everyday necessities needed to survive. Nowadays Agrarian Economy provides the natural ingredients required by the Industrial Economy. Industrial Economy overtook the Agrarian Economy after the Industrial Revolution in the mid-1970s. The Industrial Economy produces tangible goods to be sold in the markets. Through standardization, factories were able to produce goods faster and in greater quantities. Standardization and new inventions within the production lines indicated to fewer workforces needed

in the factories. This change in the manufacturing industry as well as the growth in the standard of living revealed the need for creating businesses offering services. (Pine & Gilmore, 2011, 9-11.)

Pine and Gilmore (2011, 12-16) see the Service Economy as the first phase of the Experience Economy. As mentioned above, services are intangible but usually created by using tangible goods. For example cake prepared by a bakery may be seen as a good since it is made from commodity ingredients. Since the good, in this case the cake, is baked for the customer to avoid having to make it himself, it is classified as a service. In addition the cake type was chosen by the customer to satisfy his individual needs. As the manufacturing industry, commoditization has hit the service economy: internet stores have made it easy and quick to purchase goods without leaving ones home. Furthermore the automation has affected various segments of the Service Sector, such as the operations of travel agencies, banks and bookstores. (Pine & Gilmore, 2011, 12-16.)

This change within the Service Economy has created the need for creating experiences to satisfy the customers. Since the everyday-services have turned into commodities where the low-cost provider has the advantage, creating experiences the customer is willing to pay extra for is the key to a successful business. This market segment is what Pine and Gilmore (2011, 17) see as a possibility for upcoming businesses. Moreover it is not only the service sector that has the ability to create experiences: the manufacturing businesses need to recognise the opportunities of experiences when creating new and modifying their existing products. According to L uthje and Tarssanen (2013, 61) the main focus while creating experiences is within three sectors: tourism, sports and culture. Conferences, in which the main focus of this particular research is, can create both business tourism and culture related experiences.

### **3.3.3 Types of Experiences**

To be able to create experiences it is important to understand the different varieties of experiences. As Pine and Gilmore (2011, 45) state the biggest indicator in shaping the experience is the level of guest participation. Furthermore the connection between the

participant and the event itself plays a key role in defining the nature of the experience. To demonstrate the division of experiences, Pine and Gilmore (2011, 46) have presented a figure of Experience realms. The horizontal axis demonstrates the guest participation while the vertical dimensions reflect the environmental relationship or connections with the experience itself. Moreover the environmental relationship falls in between absorption and immersion (Figure 2).

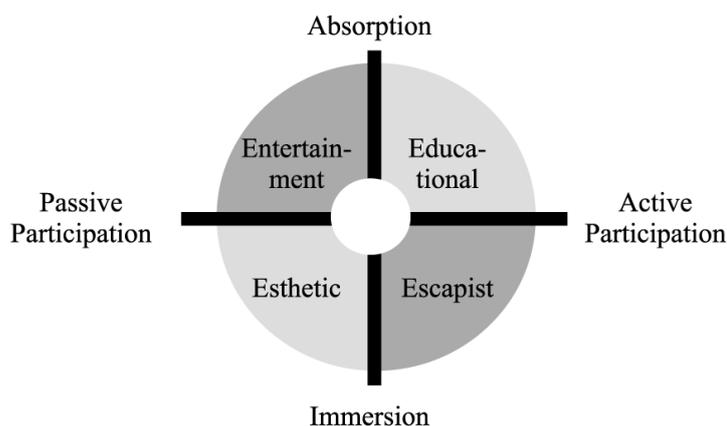


Figure 2: Experience realms. (Pine & Gilmore, 2011, 46)

In between the characteristics mentioned above, Pine and Gilmore (2011, 46) detect four realms of experiences. The most well-known style of experience falls in between absorption and passive participation: entertainment. Within entertainment the guest mainly observes the happenings of the event and visually absorbs information. As mentioned above, in nowadays society in creating unique, memorable experiences the engaging of the participant is important. When creating new experience-based products it is advisable to concentrate in the other realms of experiences.

While entertainment involves passive participation and absorbing information, the educational experiences engage the participant through various activities (Figure 2). As Pine and Gilmore (2011, 47-49) state, the learning experience can involve entertaining and fun characteristics while connecting either the mind or the body of the participant to the occasion. The escapist realm of experiences involves both the active participation and the immersion of the guest (Figure 2). Usually these experiences take place in

a specific environment designed for a particular activity. When taking part to an esthetical experience the participant merely desires to be. The guests do not take an active part during the experience but they are physically or virtually present during the event. (Pine & Gilmore, 2011, 49-52.)

The four realms of experiences mentioned above are commonly used individually by companies creating experiences. To create an experience with more depth and versatility, Pine and Gilmore (2011, 59) suggest combining various realms within one experience, which is especially important for the event industry. The ultimate goal would be creating a combination of all four realms. For a new business, the first aspect to consider should be the esthetical realm. When the audience is attracted to the venue, the focus point is enhancing the visitor through activities. The educational aspect should be related to these activities and the entire experience can be taken to a new level by additional entertainment.

O'Sullivan and Spangler (in Berridge, 2007, 124) have created an alternative approach for separating different kinds of experiences. They have created new 4 Ps for marketing experience-based products and services. As Pine and Gilmore's four realms, these four P's demonstrate different characteristics of experiences. The four Ps are as follows: Parameters, People, Peripherals and PerInfoCom.

Parameters of experiences are various characteristics which shape the experience to serve the specific target group. According to O'Sullivan and Spangler (in Berridge, 2007, 124-125) the parameter helps the event organiser in the development process of the experience. Parameters should be considered throughout the experience process: during the event, prior to the event and the reflection post the event. Elements within the experience include for example the authenticity, uniqueness and the role of the visitor. The parameters help the organiser to create effective marketing and promotion for the specific experience by defining the key characteristics of the experience.

O'Sullivan and Spangler (in Berridge, 2007, 125-126) see the people as the key characteristic of the experience-based product or service. Since the visitor or participant per-

ceives the experience individually it is important to target the experience to meet the target audience's needs. While defining the target group, there are four indicators O'Sullivan and Spangler see important to examine: the core unchangeable elements of individuals (age, gender etc.), the cultural elements (religion, geographic location, income etc.), elements within the choice of individual (values, preferences and lifestyle) and the changing elements in individual's life (health, seasonal influences etc.).

The third segment in O'Sullivan and Spangler's (in Berridge, 2007, 129-130) four P's is the peripherals. These variables consists of such elements as place, price, packaging of the product, in this case event, participants and the public image, which are part of creating the experience. Through the peripherals the experience can be differentiated from other similar experience-based products offered to the consumer. Moreover the peripherals offer the physical evidence important in the creation of the event experience.

The final P in O'Sullivan and Spangler's (in Berridge, 2007, 131) marketing tool is Per-InfoCom. The term consists of three words: Personalization, Informing and Communication. The term incorporates:

The need to communicate with people and to inform them about their needs as it relates to a particular experience while simultaneously doing so in such a personalized manner that will encourage them to take action. (O'Sullivan & Spangler, in Berridge, 2007, 130.)

The information gathered in the previous stages of the marketing mix is now turned into a promotional plan for the experience. The goal of the PerInfoCom is to position the experience in the market for the target audience. While O'Sullivan and Spangler's marketing mix of was created for marketing purposes, it helps to identify dissimilarities between different experiences. When compared to Pine and Gilmore's four realms of experiences the four P's does not categorise the experiences in specific sub-groups of experiences but in turn helps the experience manager to differentiate one's product from the competitors.

### 3.3.4 Staging the Experience

Pine and Gilmore (2011, 67) describe an experience as a theatre and for this highlight the importance of theme, memorabilia and engaging the five senses. Every experience has a theme. By creating a strong, well-known theme the visitor can create an image of the product well before the actual experience takes place. This can be compared to the cap analysis of Berridge (2007, 122). As Pine and Gilmore see it, without a well-managed theme it is difficult for the customer to create a full image of the experience and for this the memory will not last.

Memorabilia is something tangible the visitor is able to take with them after the intangible experience. These usually cheap products represent the actual experience and for this have an important meaning for the visitor. Pine and Gilmore (2011, 85) see memorabilia as a way to “socialize” the experience and give something tangible of which to tell friends and family about. For experience provider this means an easy and cheap method of marketing. Moreover through the memorabilia the visitor can relive the experience over and over again.

Pine and Gilmore (2011, 88) highlight the importance of engaging all five senses. The usage of several sense indicates to a more memorable experience. Including food and drink tasting into the experience is an easy way of involving senses, but via adding colours, textures, sounds and scents the experience strengthens. Like memorabilia, for example the aromas and music can bring the visitor back to the experience and the memory of the sensory phenomena lasts for a long time.

## 4 Research Methods and Data Collection

This chapter informs the reader of the research methods used and the data collection process of the project. To receive multi-dimensional results the qualitative research method was chosen and is explained below. The data was collected with semi-structured interviews and a post conference survey was conducted via Facebook. Furthermore observation was used as a method to assess and evaluate the experiences created during ITSC Porvoo. The importance of reliability of the research is noted in the chapter and ways to ensure valid results is introduced.

### 4.1 Qualitative Research

As mentioned in the introduction chapter, the research method chosen for this specific study was qualitative research. Research Methods for Business Students states qualitative research as following

Qualitative data refers to all non-numeric data or data that have not been quantified and can be a product of all research strategies. (Saunders Lewis & Thornhill, 2007, 470.)

When numeric, quantitative data is more suitable for statistical analysis the qualitative research method gives more thematic data and a wider understanding of the respondent's opinions. The Cultural Tourism Research Methods states qualitative research as following:

Qualitative research can be defined as research that aims to obtain in-depth insight into the social reality in basis of a relatively small number of respondents or observations. (Melkert & Vos, 2010, 34.)

As Jennings (2005, 100) states, qualitative research can be divided into two sub-categories of semi-structured and unstructured interviews. For measuring the success of creating experiences the semi-structured interview method was chosen. In semi-structured interview there are list of themes and possible questions to guideline the conversation of the interview. The themes of the questions asked are fixed while the

order of the questions might vary or additional questions may occur. (Jennings, 2005, 104.)

To support the data collected via interviews the researchers took part to the different programme numbers of the ITSC as conference guests. Through this, the researchers had an opportunity to observe the behaviour and reactions of the conference guests during the event. As Ghauri and Grønhaug (2002, 90) state, observation combines listening and inspecting the behaviour of others in the natural setting of the occurrence. The main problem with observation as research method is how to transfer the data into scientifically relevant information. Aarnos and Grönfors (2001, in Tuomi & Sarajarvi, 2002) see observation as a good technique to support another research method, in the case of ITSC, semi-structured interview. For this particular research the field observation method was chosen. In this participant observation the participants are aware of the observation taking place and who is observing them. (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2002, 90.)

Ghauri and Grønhaug (2002, 87) detect three main characteristics in qualitative research: data, interpretive or analytical procedure and report. There are two methods to collect the data: interviews and observation. As mentioned above, both of the methods will be used during the research for ITSC. The qualitative data was collected by interviewing the delegates and lecturers attending the ITSC 2014. Since experiences are created in an individual level it is important to receive information of why the interviewee felt like the event was successful. The qualitative, open-ended questions will give the research results more depth.

The second characteristic Ghauri and Grønhaug (2002, 87) highlight is the interpretive or analytical procedure. Compared to the quantitative data the analysing of the results is more complex when using the qualitative research method. The results received are more individual and it is important to analyse the data carefully with a suitable technique for the data in question. The final and third component of qualitative research is reporting the findings. In this specific research project the report is in written form.

## 4.2 Interview as Data Collection Method

When compared to for example quantitative survey, interview gives the researcher a more extensive insight of the interviewee's views, beliefs and attitudes. In qualitative interview the interviewer asks questions from the respondent which are relevant to the topic of the research and the research question (Botterhill & Paltenkamp, 2012, 119). Key Concepts in Tourism Research define interview as following:

A specific form of conversation that seeks to gather information by administering a set of questions. (Botterill & Paltenkamp, 2012.)

There are three types of interviews used in research: structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. In structured interview the respondent answers fixed questions in order chosen by the researcher. These survey researches can be systematically sampled by using quantitative method (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2002, 100). Semi-structured interview is the most common research method within qualitative research. In semi-structured interview an interview guide is created and used as a base during the interviews. The interview guide contains a list of potential questions and the topics the researcher wants to address during the interview (Botterhill & Paltenkamp, 2012, 122). In unstructured interview only the topic of the research is defined and the interviewee has the freedom to express one's thoughts and knowledge of the matter freely. The interviewer makes sure the respondent stays in topic during the interview. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002, 78.)

Personal interview can be seen as a flexible data collection method. When the interviewee interacts with the interviewer in person, one can correct possible misunderstandings which might occur within the interview questions. Furthermore if the interview questions involve expressions with which the interviewee is not familiar with, the interviewer has a chance to elaborate the meanings of these terms. As mentioned above the structure chosen for the interviews conducted during ITSC Porvoo was semi-structured. In semi-structured interview the order of the questions can vary according to the answers of the interviewee which highlights the flexibility of the method. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002, 75.)

After deciding to use interview as the data collection method an interview guide was conducted after careful consideration. Ghauri and Grønhaug (2002, 102) highlight the importance of targeting the questions to answer the research question set in the beginning of the research process. In addition it is important to keep the commissioner in mind and the value of the answers and the results received for the research project. The interviewer should have a clear vision of what they want to ask from the interviewee while keeping in mind that the interviewee should be answering these questions willingly and honestly. (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2002, 102.)

Ghauri and Grønhaug (2002, 12) encourage to set a maximum time limit for the duration of the interview. Since the conversation during the interviews for ITSC wanted to be as flowing and relaxed as possible, there was no time limit set for this specific research project. Time limit was seen as unnecessary since the length of each interview was less than ten minutes. The questions were tested beforehand by the researchers and through this experiment setting a time limit seemed redundant.

### **4.3 Execution of the Research**

The interviews took place during the ITSC Porvoo on 24th – 26th of April. On Wednesday the 23rd the conference was only observed by the researchers since on the first day it was difficult for the respondents to give answers concerning the programme. Most of the interviews were individual interviews with one delegate at the time but there were four group interviews conducted as well. All and all nineteen interviews were gathered during the conference and twenty-three people were interviewed. Twenty of the interviewees were student delegates of ITSC and three interviews were conducted from the lecturers participating the conference. The interviews were recorded with tape recorders borrowed from HAAGA-HELIA Porvoo Campus Library. In addition the final workshop with feedback and learning outcomes was recorded to receive more results.

The questionnaire designed before the research was used as a base for the semi-structured interviews. The order and the amount of questions asked varied due to the

answers of the interviewees. In addition the themes varied to receive answers concerning specific programme numbers. For example during Wednesday the objective was to collect data of the *Amazing Race* whereas on Saturday the questions were related on Gala Dinner, visit to Suomenlinna and the overall experience. The questions had an emphasis on the following aspects: the overall success of the conference and the programme numbers with social character. A short introduction of the themes of the questions was given for the respondents prior the interview. The interview questions are presented in the Appendix 1. In addition the presentations during the Workshop 3 were recorded to receive more feedback of the conference (Figure 3, Interview 20-24). These presentations were used to support the results gathered through the actual interviews.

Figure 3 demonstrates the amount of interviews conducted during ITSC Porvoo. The presentations recorded during the Workshop 3 are also included to the table. The interviews are numbered according to the timely order of the interviews. The table demonstrates from which University the respondent comes from and whether the interviewee is a student or a lecturer. In addition the origin country of the respondent is presented to give an insight of the cultural background of the interviewee. The final column displays the date the interview took place.

Observing the ITSC delegates took place during the conference as well. By taking part of the activities the researchers received a wider understanding of the programme itself. In addition the researchers got to know the delegates which created more relaxed and friendly atmosphere when conducting the interviews. Pictures were taken during the conference to support the findings and capture the feelings of the delegates.

The post conference survey in Facebook was conducted approximately one week after the conference. The ideal time for the post survey would have been one month after ITSC but due to the short time to analyse the results the survey was decided to release earlier. In the survey the researchers asked which of the conference programmes had been the most memorable. Within a week 17 answers were received. Two of the programme numbers were noted as the most memorable: the Gala Dinner and the even-

ing programme in Seikkailulaakso. Four of the respondents liked Gala Dinner the most and three nominated Seikkailulaakso as the most memorable. Ten respondents had the difficulty of deciding between the two programme numbers. A picture of the survey with the question and results can be found in the Appendix 3.

Number of Interview	From Where	Date of the Interview
1	Hochschule Heilbronn, Germany, Student	24.4.
2	IAE Savoie-Mont Blanc, France, Student	24.4.
3	Manchester Metropolitan University, United Kingdom, Student; NHTV Breda, the Netherlands, Student	24.4.
4	NHTV Breda, the Netherlands, Lecturer	24.4.
5	Hochschule Heilbronn, Germany, 3 students	24.4.
6	Manchester Metropolitan University, United Kingdom, Lecturer	24.4.
7	Manchester Metropolitan University, Germany, Student	25.4.
8	University of Latvia, Latvia, Student	25.4.
9	NHTV Breda, the Netherlands, Student	25.4.
10	Dalarna University, Sweden, Lecturer	25.4.
11	Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, Spain, Student	25.4.
12	HAAGA-HELIA UAS, Finland, Student	25.4.
13	Manchester Metropolitan University, Cyprus, Student	25.4.
14	IAE Savoie-Mont Blanc, France, Student	25.4.
15	Hochschule Heilbronn, Germany, Student	25.4.
16	Högskolan Dalarna, Sweden, 3 students	25.4.
17	Hochschule Heilbronn, Germany, Student	26.4.
18	NHTV Breda, the Netherlands, Student	26.4.
19	NHTV Breda, the Netherlands, Student; Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, Spain, Student	26.4.
20	Workshop 3, Group 1	25.4.
21	Workshop 3, Group 2	25.4.
22	Workshop 3, Group 3	25.4.
23	Workshop 3, Group 4	25.4.
24	Workshop 4, Group 5	25.4.

Figure 3: Table of the Interviews

#### 4.4 Reliability of the research

The main issue with qualitative research is to ensure the reliability of the study. There are various biases which Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009, 326) emphasize to consider while collecting the data. The interviewer can affect the answers of the interviewee through one's body language, own attitudes or the tone used while conducting the survey. During the data collection for ITSC this had to be considered since the researchers are participating the program as guests. It was important not to let one's own opinions of the different programmes of ITSC effect the interview situation. The interviewers tried to act as objective as possible and the questions were asked in a neutral way. Since there were few group interviews there is a possibility that the answers of other interviewees affected the answers following by others. This problem was considered when analysing the results.

The second bias Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009, 326) highlight is the sensitivity of the questions or themes involved for the interviewee. This may prevent them from giving truthful answers which are meaningful for the research in question. For the ITSC research this was not a major problem since the topic was neutral and mainly focused on the positive happenings and atmosphere of the conference. In addition time management is important while conducting a qualitative research since the interviewee may shorten their answers if the interview takes too long (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009, 326). The interviews during the conference were be efficient and short and the timing for the interviews was be chosen the way that the interviewee had time to answer the questions, for example in between programme numbers.

The validity of qualitative research depends on how well the researcher is able to analyse the answers received from the interviewee. It is important that the interviewee has enough knowledge and experience of the specific field examined. Otherwise this might lead to misinterpretation of the data (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009, 327). The interviewees familiarized themselves with both the conference and experience management theory as well as the ITSC programme before the actual event.

The final quality issue is with generalizability. Since the results gathered with qualitative research consists of individual opinions of the interviewees, the results cannot be used to make statistical generalisations about the entire population (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009, 327). The research will provide data which reflects the opinions of the conference delegates of IISC Porvoo. Major generalisations were not drawn when analysing the results. In addition the data gathered during the Workshop 3 was only used as information to back up the findings of the actual interviews. The data is not as reliable since the opinions reflect the emotions and feelings of larger groups of delegates and individual results cannot be drawn from the presentations. In addition the researchers could not identify each presenter by voice when listening the recordings. This lowers the reliability of the data as well. Still, the feedback presentations were recorded as additional material from the beginning.

## 5 Analysis of Research Results

Analysing the results took place right after ITSC Porvoo, on week 18 and 19. The results were transcribed by the interviewers prior assembling the results. In this chapter, the research results are presented by event. Through the interview results the following four separate programme numbers were found the most successful in creating experiences: the Amazing Race of Porvoo, Evening programme in Seikkailulaakso, Gala Dinner and the Market Stalls. These four programme numbers will be analysed separately in this chapter. In addition an analysis of the overall experience will be presented.

### 5.1 The Amazing Race

Overall the Amazing Race received positive feedback and was appreciated among the delegates. The interviews showed that the delegates enjoyed the checkpoint activities and they felt that they learned about Finland and its culture during the race. As Pine and Gilmore (2011, 46) state in their Experience realms that one element in creating experiences is the educational aspect. Through the checkpoint activities, the participants had the opportunity to learn more about Finland and its culture.

The most memorable checkpoints included a game of Nokia mobile phone throwing, Angry Birds game and picture quiz about Finland. “Especially I liked the mobile phone throwing, it is something you won’t forget because usually you don’t throw them on purpose. (Figure 3, Interview 7)” The Nokia mobile phone throwing is demonstrated in Figure 4. The delegates as a team collected points by throwing a mobile phone to a target. By landing the phone to a certain area of the target the team received a specific amount of points.



Figure 4: The Amazing Race, Nokia Throwing checkpoint. (Anni Aro, 2014)

By mixing up the groups the participants felt that they also learned about each other's cultures and not only about Finland. By observation, this could be seen from singing songs and by performing dance acts from different participating countries. In addition socializing with other delegations helped the participants to form bonds with people from other nationalities. "(Did you meet new people during the race?) Yes, because we had to do different activities such as dancing to get extra points as well as working together with people from different nationalities...(Figure 3, Interview 2)" This is part of the ITSC objectives of creating student networks among different countries.

Furthermore Pine and Gilmore (2011, 88) highlight the use of all five senses in creating experiences. The delegates liked the tasting of Finnish traditional foods even though it did not suit everyone's liking. Figure 5 demonstrates the food tasting checkpoint. The

delegates had the opportunity to try foods such as mämmi, salty liquorice and leip-äjuusto. From the picture one can see the reactions of two delegates eating the traditional Finnish Easter dessert mämmi which was not enjoyed by most of the participants. However, the food tasting was not seen as an unpleasant experience: “I thought the food tasting was also nice, very unique and funny. (Figure 3, Interview 7)” The coffee tasting in Porvoon Paahtimo café involved both tasting and smelling of the coffees. “The different steps were very interesting; I especially enjoyed the coffee tasting. (Figure 3, Interview 14)” The use of variety of senses will help to make the experience more memorable.



Figure 5: The Amazing Race, Food Tasting checkpoint. (Sylvia Saraste, 2014)

One of the delegates felt that the order of the checkpoints could have been better and clearer due to the fact that the group had to walk back and forth around Porvoo. In addition, a delegate would have liked to have a guided tour around the Old Town of Porvoo to learn more about the city and its history. This could have been easily arranged since each group had a personal guide from the organizing team who could have briefly introduced sites around Porvoo in between the checkpoints.

The Amazing Race of Porvoo was able to create experiences by using senses and giving the participants an active role during the event. With the Finnish trivia the event included an educational aspect as well: the delegates felt like they learned new facts of the hosting country of the ITSC. This makes the Amazing Race an educational and memorable experience. Mixing up the groups was a positive surprise and was highly appreciated among the participants. The delegates met new people during the Amazing Race and started the networking process. By completing the race in teams the groups got to explore the city of Porvoo in an entertaining way. On the other hand the old town of Porvoo has a great deal of history and to tell the participants about the happenings in Porvoo was something lacking from the content. As mentioned earlier this is an aspect that some of the delegates would have liked to include into the program as well.

## **5.2 Seikkailulaakso adventure centre**

With the Gala Dinner the evening programme in Seikkailulaakso received most positive feedback. This can be seen in the post conference survey: the two events were the only programme numbers mentioned when asked for the most memorable part of the conference. In addition the programme number received a lot of positive feedback during the interviews.

The delegates felt that the activities organised engaged them with Finnish culture and like during the Amazing Race, they learned more about Finland which can be seen as an educational realm of the experience (Pine & Gilmore, 2011, 47-49). Still, some of the delegates felt that the time for the activities such as Nordic walking and playing mölkky was too short. Nordic walking is demonstrated in Figure 6. In Nordic walking sticks are used to gain more effective results from the exercise. During the activity in Seikkailulaakso Nordic walking was instructed by members from the organising team. In the picture the delegates are smiling and enjoying the sunshine. Playing mölkky is demonstrated in Figure 7. One of the delegates is throwing a wooden block towards the other blocks. The player receives points from the block fallen to the ground. The player looks happy in the picture and enthusiastic about the game. All and all the activities and the enthusiasm and involvement of the organizers were highly appreciated “After the sauna we had the Nordic walking and the leader of the activity taught us

some Finnish words and we had to do some funny pictures so it was a nice activity (Figure 3, Interview 15)”.



Figure 6: Seikkailulaakso, Nordic Walking. (Sylvia Saraste, 2014)

One respondent highlighted the environment of Seikkailulaakso: “Every aspect of the programme was incredible including the scenery. For us it was very different.” In an esthetical experience (Pine and Gilmore, 2011, 49-52) the participant enjoys the experience without involvement in activities and other programme. Though there were activities organised for the guests, there was time to enjoy the Finnish nature and landscape which for some created an esthetical realm of the experience. Still, one respondent hoped to have more time to enjoy the nature and have a walk in the woods. The delegates had the chance to choose into which parts of the programme to participate. The ones who wanted to go to sauna as well as to participate into the other activities did not have as much free time in Seikkailulaakso.



Figure 7: Seikkailulaakso, MÖlkky. (Anni Aro, 2014)

A great deal of respondents saw the evening in Seikkailulaakso as a Finnish experience. “I love it (Seikkailulaakso). It is a good way to show Finland. We could stay in the city but that is not Finland – this is Finland. (Figure 3, Interview 4)” Bathing in a Finnish sauna and swimming in the sea were highlighted the most. “For me the best experience was the sauna and then jumping in the sea. (Figure 3, Interview 11)” the Jacuzzi was also well liked among the delegates. Bathing in Jacuzzi is demonstrated in Figure 8. Participants from several delegations are enjoying themselves in the Jacuzzi after sauna. Delegates are smiling and having a conversation. The atmosphere of the picture is relaxed and joyful. The Finnish barbeque dinner was appreciated among the respondents as well. This highlights the use of different senses while creating experiences (Pine and Gilmore, 2011, 88). Furthermore one responded felt that her expectations of Finland were met in Seikkailulaakso: “For me it corresponded with the image I had of Finland. (Figure 3, Interview 14)” In this case, the gap analysis introduced by Berridge (2007, 122) can be applied: the experience is more successful when the expectations before the event and the reality of the experience meet.



Figure 8: Seikkailulaakso, Jacuzzi. (Anni Aro, 2014)

The main problem seemed to be with time management and the respondents hoped to have more time for the different activities such as the games and bathing in sauna and Jacuzzi. In addition free time to explore the nature was missing. Even though most of the delegates enjoyed the food there were minor problems with the delivery. For example they ran out of potato salad and it took some time to prepare more (Figure 3, Interview 15). By observing the event, several participants seemed to be cold during the dinner and used the extra blankets provided by Seikkailulaakso. Still, the cold evening did not affect the overall experience since none of the respondents mentioned being cold as a negative part of the evening.

The evening programme in Seikkailulaakso met the expectations of both the delegates and researchers as well. The delegates had a chance to explore Finnish nature during the outdoor activities. In addition the interactive activities, such as Finnish games and sports, gave the delegates a chance to develop their relationships with one another. The sauna was seen as a traditional Finnish experience and as a bonus the possibility to swim in the sea created a unique experience. The swimming in the sea is demonstrated in Figure 9. One of the delegates is jumping in the sea from the dock. The delegate is

enjoying himself and the Finnish experience of jumping in the sea after the sauna. As mentioned above the cold weather was not seen as a negative factor by the delegates.



Figure 9: Seikkailulaakso, Swimming. (Sylvia Saraste, 2014)

### 5.3 Gala Dinner

As mentioned above, the Gala Dinner on Friday night was seen as one of the highlights of the conference. Due to the fact that the Gala Dinner was the final event of the official conference programme the amount of interviews concerning the final night was insufficient. Still, as already mentioned the post conference survey showed that the Gala Dinner was seen as a memorable experience. By observing the atmosphere at location the researchers felt the festive and positive feeling of the entire evening.

Some delegations found the award ceremony as the most memorable part of the night since they won awards. “Our group won (the best paper award) so that was probably the highlight of my evening. (Figure 3, Interview 18)” In addition the Gala Dinner was seen as a great ending for a successful conference.”...everyone was happy I guess because we had experienced such a great things. (Figure 3, Interview 17)”

On the arrival there was photographers taking pictures of the delegates. This has a nice addition to the evening and the photos can be stored as a long lasting memory. The pictures were accessible for the participants on Flickr after the conference and for this the pictures taken can be seen as a form of memorabilia (Pine & Gilmore, 2011, 85). A demonstrative picture of the picture corner can be found in Figure 10. The Dutch delegation with one member of the delegation from United Kingdom are posing for the camera. The people in the picture are smiling or doing silly poses. From the picture one can feel the positive energy and happiness of the delegates. Since there are people from different delegations one can conclude that networking and bonding between the student delegations has taken place during ITSC. All and all the Gala Dinner received positive feedback and the delegates felt the event was well organized.



Figure 10: The Gala Dinner, Photo shoot. (Valentin Abramnikov, 2014)

During the Gala Dinner traditional Finnish food was served and the participants appreciated the fact that they had the chance to try new dishes such as reindeer. “...different kinds of foods since they all tasted good and I never had reindeer before so it was nice to try new things. (Figure 3, Interview 17)” A picture of the starters can

be seen in Figure 11. The menu consisted of three small dishes of mushroom pie, smoked reindeer toast and salmon mousse served on bread. These traditional Finnish flavours were appreciated by the conference guests.



Figure 11: The Gala Dinner, Starters. (Anni Aro, 2014)

In the end of the evening a local band performed live music for the conference guests. Through the food and the music various senses were used by delegates in creating a memorable experience (Pine and Gilmore, 2011, 88). Moreover the band performance can be seen as an entertainment realm of the experience (Pine and Gilmore, 2011, 46). The fact that the audience was dancing and having fun during the show indicates more into active participation than passive participation which is related to entertainment by Pine and Gilmore (2011, 46). In Figure 12 the delegates from different countries are listening to the band as a cohesive group. One can see from the picture that the delegates have formed tight bonds amongst each other. The group is enjoying the music and the festive atmosphere of the last night of the conference together.



Figure 12: The Gala Dinner, Listening to the band. (Anni Aro, 2014)

One delegate felt that the lack of wine served during the dinner was insufficient. Due to the Finnish alcohol legislation the guests were not allowed to bring their own alcohol since there was a bar opened selling drinks throughout the evening. For people from other cultures this may seem strict but all and all the respondent was satisfied with the event. There were tables of various sizes and one of the respondents would have preferred to be seated in a table with more people. Still, these are minor issues and the overall experience was not effected by this.

The Gala Dinner was a festive way to celebrate a successful event. The decorations and the lighting made the venue look elegant and suitable for a sophisticated evening. The Finnish style menu was positively welcomed by the delegates and especially the possibility to try reindeer meat was appreciated by the participants. As seen in the post conference survey the organisers were able to create all and all a memorable experience. Contradicting to the original programme (Appendix 1), the Oscar theme which was mentioned in the third newsletter was not executed. The theme was changed to Spring Gala which suited the season and highlighted the good weather during the conference. The change of the theme did not affect the atmosphere of the evening.

## 5.4 Market Stalls

On the contrary to the expectations of the researchers prior the research, the building up and browsing the market stalls created a memorable experience for the conference guests. Even though the success of the market stalls were not asked separately during the interviews the programme number was mentioned as a positive event from several delegates. Each delegation had their own stall where they had the chance to introduce their home country and culture via food, beverages and props such as flags, posters and brochures. The event lasted for a few hours during which the participants had the chance to visit each stall. The market stall of the Dutch delegation can be seen in Figure 13. A lot of elements were part of the stall: food, beverages, brochures and balloons for example. The stall was decorated with orange, which is a distinctive colour for the Netherlands. The delegates have a coherent style of clothing as well, with orange shirts and leis. The people in the picture are smiling and the overall atmosphere is happy.



Figure 13: Market Stalls, the Dutch delegation. (Tiia Nordström, 2014)

Due to Finnish alcohol legislation the alcoholic beverages served had to be placed in one separate room. By observation the first reaction to the different way of handling

the liqueur service was negative. The delegates felt that the lack of alcohol on their main market stalls would make them less visually appealing. Even though the separate alcohol stalls caused some additional work for the participants it was not mentioned as a negative aspect during the interviews. "...we thought it was going to be complicated because the alcohol was in the other room but it actually worked out quite well, it became sort of like a bar. (Figure 3, Interview 10)"

"Then the Market Stalls, it was a really nice moment. It was the first real moment to network and to get to know all the people. We felt comfortable, funny and happy... (Figure 3, Interview 24)" During the Market Stalls the delegates had time to get to know one another and each other's cultures. Since the market stalls were created by the delegations themselves the atmosphere was created via their own active participation during the event. The active participation and enthusiasm to learn about different cultures lead again to the educational realm introduced by Pine and Gilmore (2011, 47-49). Browsing the market stalls was seen as a fun and interactive way to learn and to create networks.

The delegates enjoyed the opportunity to taste different foods and beverages from other countries. In addition the event had a great deal of visual aspects in it: using flags, posters, brochures and traditional costumes helped to create an international atmosphere. During the event there was music playing in the lobby. The Dutch delegation filmed dancing scenes for their project of "Happy" video which was mentioned as a memorable part of the Market Stalls. During the event there were several senses included. As mentioned by Pine and Gilmore (2011, 88), usage of senses helps to create memorable experiences and help the participant to reminisce the experience afterwards. Figure 14 demonstrates the recording of "Happy" video. The delegations have gathered in the middle of the Porvoo Campus lobby to dance together for the video. The atmosphere is energetic and joy of the participants can be seen from waving of ones hands and clapping. A great deal of people have gathered together and the sign of bonding can be seen from the picture.



Figure 14: Market Stalls, Dancing for “Happy”. (Tiia Nordström, 2014)

Each of the delegations had small giveaways to hand out during the event: pens, pins, key chains and brochures. Furthermore some delegations had organized a small quiz with prizes to engage the participants. Small giveaways and souvenirs received during the experience are seen as memorabilia. These tangible products are memories of the intangible event and through the souvenirs the participant is able to remember the experience. Furthermore Pine and Gilmore (2011, 85) state that with the memorabilia the delegates can share their experience with their friends and family.

According to the conference programme the Market Stalls was held on both Wednesday and Thursday. Some of the delegations were unaware of this information and did not assemble their market stalls again on Thursday afternoon. There were delegations who were not prepared with enough food, beverages and giveaways for both days. For some, this was seen as a negative aspect.

## 5.5 Suomenlinna

Prior the data collection and the actual conference the visit to Suomenlinna fortress was predicted as one of the memorable happenings of the conference programme. Unfortunately not all delegations were able to participate due to travelling schedules. There was no guided tour organized and the delegates had time to walk around the island and explore the site by themselves. Nonetheless, the delegates enjoyed the day outdoors and the scenery even though there was no information provided of the history of the fortress. Figure 15 demonstrates the day in Suomenlinna. Five delegates are enjoying the day by the sea in sunshine. People look relaxed and the picture captures the beautiful weather of the day which had a vital effect on the overall experience of the visit.



Figure 15: Visit to Suomenlinna fortress. (Anni Aro, 2014)

Since there was no activities planned for the Suomenlinna visit it can be seen as an esthetical realm. According to Pine and Gilmore (2011, 49-52), an esthetical realm does not include active participation by the visitor but engages the participant with the environment. “Yes, it is a beautiful place, I like it. This is something you would probably not visit if you would go to Helsinki by yourself, so the visit was a really good idea.

(Figure 3, Interview 18)” Due to the observation of the researcher some of the delegates would have appreciated a guided tour to learn more about the historical site. Still, the relaxed visit to Suomenlinna was seen a positive event. “It has been a great day today: sun, fresh air and the sea. (Figure 3, Interview 19)”

## 5.6 Overall experience

All the evening programmes had a Finnish theme or included Finnish elements: the Amazing Race, evening in Seikkailulaakso and the Gala Dinner. By creating a strong and coherent theme the event organiser has a better chance to create experiences (Pine & Gilmore, 2011, 67). Throughout the different program numbers the delegates felt that they learned new things about Finnish culture and traditions. “I learned some Finnish words and some Finnish games and I went to the sauna for the first time in years so I think I have a good overview of Finnish culture.(Figure 3, Interview 17)” Again, the educational realm of the experience (Pine & Gilmore, 2011, 47-49) can be seen throughout the conference programme. For one delegate the before conference expectation of Finns was not too positive: “I did not even know openness exists among Finns and of course, I am from Finland (the interviewee has lived in Sweden for his whole life) myself so I was surprised of the openness of the students. It was a really big surprise for me. (Figure 3, Interview 16)” In this case the expectations were exceeded by the reality in the gap analysis (Berridge, 2007, 122). The organisers received a lot of positive feedback from other delegates as well: “Everything was spot on, they made us feel like a family. (Figure 3, Interview 13)” The organisers succeeded in creating a friendly environment for the participants to mingle and network with one another.

From the official conference programme the workshops of Pia Kiviaho-Kallio and Sirpa Lassila and Marika Alhonen received a great deal of positive feedback. “I really liked the creative aspect of it (Service Design in Practice workshop) like playing with Lego and Play Doh and I think that you actually learn more when doing things... (Figure 3, Interview 3)” Since the teaching methods in HAAGA-HELIA Porvoo Campus revolve around inquiry learning it was a new approach for the conference delegates.

For this, the workshops can be seen as an educational realm of the conference experi-

ence (Pine and Gilmore, 2011, 47-49). The delegates were actively participating during the workshops via various activities. “I have never experienced anything like that (Species of Spaces workshop) and I was thinking if this is how you teach in Finland it is very innovative and it is a whole new technique and I really enjoyed that. (Figure 3, Interview 16)” The Species of Spaces workshop can be seen in Figure 16. The delegates are using movement as a learning method and the exercise took place in Porvoo Campus lobby. The delegates look happy and they seem to enjoy the new learning technique.



Figure 16: Workshop Species of Spaces, Dancing. (Sylvia Saraste, 2014)

There were some cultural differences detected among the responses when analyzing the data. When asked, which was the best part of the conference the answers varied. For example delegates from Manchester Metropolitan University highlighted the educational aspect of the conference. They liked the creativity and the interaction between the lecturers and the participants. Still, the other respondent is originally from Germany, which needs to be taken into consideration when analysing cultural differences. Figure 17 demonstrates how the student delegates are using Lego and Play Doh as an innovative and creative way of learning. The delegates look motivated and intrigued on

the subject. The Swedish delegation highlighted the workshops as well. All and all the most impressive element for the Swedes was the openness of the Finnish students organizing the conference. “The students have been really interactive and proactive and they have interacted well with delegates from different schools. (Figure 3, Interview 16)” When asked from a Spanish delegate, the highlight of the conference was presenting their research and receiving feedback from their hard work. On the contrary the answers received from the post conference survey in Facebook the most memorable programmes were the evening in Seikkailulaakso and the Gala Dinner. As Pine and Gilmore (2011, 17) state, experiences stay in the long term memory of the participant. For this reason, these specific programme number can be seen as the most memorable experiences created during the ITSC.



Figure 17: Workshop Service Design in Practice. (Sylvia Saraste, 2014)

Not too many negative comments were given about the conference programme. Still, one issue was brought up several times during the interviews which was the lack of free time. Delegates would have wished to have time to explore the city of Porvoo, take pictures, buy souvenirs and relax. “I think when you are organising a conference you have to give the delegates a chance to rest... it was very well organised but intense.

(Figure 3, Interview 6)” In addition few delegates would have been interested to learn more about the history of Porvoo and hoped for a walking tour around the city with a skilled guide.

## 6 Conclusion and Discussion

The Conclusion and Discussion chapter includes answers to the research questions created in the beginning of the research project. The success of the most memorable events are examined and elaborated. The chapter examines the main characteristics of experience creation used during ITSC Porvoo. One of the aims of the research was to obtain suggestions for the future conferences. In addition a plan for further research is introduced.

### 6.1 Experiences during ITSC Porvoo 2014

The programme numbers which created the most memorable experiences were the Gala Dinner and the evening programme in Seikkailulaakso. Even though the amount of responses concerning the Gala Dinner was low compared to the other programme numbers the post conference survey indicated the success of the event. The active programme in Seikkailulaakso was well executed and appreciated by the delegates and seen as a Finnish experience. The traditional Finnish food received positive feedback and the overall positive atmosphere of the Gala Dinner helped to create a memorable experience for the participants.

The majority of the ITSC programme was themed to be about Finland and Finnish culture. The organisers succeeded in creating a Finnish experience through the coherent theme. The theme was consistent throughout the entire conference and was seen in the food, programme and in the setting of various programme numbers. Furthermore, the delegates felt that they learned new facts about Finland through the events such as the Amazing Race and the evening programme in Seikkailulaakso. A great deal of the programme numbers had an educational aspect and an educational experience was created (Pine & Gilmore, 2011, 47-49).

Various senses were stimulated throughout the conference programme. A great deal of the programme numbers involved tasting of traditional Finnish foods or beverages. In addition during the Market Stalls the delegates had an opportunity to taste foods from each other's home countries and learn about different cultures. Visual senses were used

especially during the market stalls where the delegates had a chance to browse through the colourful stands. Music had a significant part of the Gala Dinner. The local band helped to create a festive atmosphere and brought everyone together to the dance floor. Through the usage of senses long lasting memories were created during ITSC Porvoo (Pine & Gilmore, 2011, 88).

On the contrary to the researchers' assumptions the Market Stalls was one of the most memorable experiences for the conference guests. The delegates had the first chance to bond and network with one another while browsing the stands. The atmosphere was relaxed and joyful among the delegates. Since the responsibility of creating the market stalls was not on the organising committee the delegates were able to create a memorable experience by themselves. The active participation lead to the market stalls becoming one of the highlights of the conference.

## **6.2 Suggestions for Future Conferences**

The following chapter includes suggestions for the organisers of future conferences. There are suggestions for ITSC as well as for the upcoming events organised at HAA-GA-HELIA Porvoo Campus. The suggestions are based on the research results conducted during ITSC Porvoo.

### **6.2.1 ITSC**

The delegates of ITSC Porvoo appreciated the cultural learnings they received of the host country. Therefore cultural programme should be emphasised and local traditions and characteristics including food, music, history, nature and activities should be part of the conference programme. The theme of the conference can be related to the hosting country or merely include a few activities including the culture and traditions. For example traditional food can be an exotic and new experience for the participants. As previously mentioned the delegates of ITSC Porvoo enjoyed tasting reindeer meat during the Gala Dinner. For many this was a new experience which they will remember for a long time. Introducing local traditions will make the delegates feel welcomed and more engaged with the hosting country.

One aspect was seen as missing by the interviewees from the conference programme of ITSC Porvoo. A guided tour in the historical Old Town of Porvoo would have been appreciated by the delegates. When travelling to a destination the visitor has the desire to explore the area and familiarize oneself with the main sites of the region. During the Amazing Race this could have been easily arranged but unfortunately the historical sites of the old town were not explained for the conference guests. As one of the programme numbers a guided tour of the city is suggested to acquaint the delegates with the host city. As Amazing Race the guided tour could be arranged in an innovative and more entertaining way.

Active participation was required in many of the programme numbers during ITSC Porvoo. This increased the educational realm (Pine & Gilmore, 2011, 47-49) and made the event more memorable. The organisers play an important role in engaging the delegates to actively participate in the programme. Enthusiasm of the organisers will reflect on to the participants in a positive way. By offering the delegates a chance to be part of the programme throughout the conference the possibility of creating a strong and positive experience is more likely. Teaching the delegates how to make a traditional dish of the hosting country can be a good example of an interactive and unique experience.

The Market Stalls is a good concept and should be continued in future ITSC's as well. However there was confusion regarding the fact that the market stalls were part of the programme on both Wednesday and Thursday. Some of the delegations were not aware of this and did not divide their food and beverages for both days. Having said this the Market Stalls should be planned only for one of the conference days to avoid the confusion. Moreover it is difficult for the delegations to bring the components needed for the market stalls when travelling long distances. Making the Market Stalls a one day programme number would ease this export problem as well.

## 6.2.2 HAAGA-HELIA Porvoo Campus

The results gained from the research obtain valuable information for other conferences and events organised at Porvoo Campus in the future as well. There are few aspects related to the suggestions given for the future organisers of ITSC. When hosting international guests it is a good idea to involve Finnish activities and traditions to the conference or event programme. Since Finland is not as familiar destination as some other countries in Europe it is interesting and informative to introduce Finnish culture to the visitors. The participants will learn new insights and hopefully share their experience of Finland to their friends and family as well. Furthermore the programme should involve active participation of the delegates which helps in creating long lasting memories. For example traditional Finnish songs could be taught to the participants. This would include both Finnish tradition and engaging the participant to the programme. Guided tour in the Old Town of Porvoo should be arranged to inform the visitors of the historical value of the city. The Old Town also holds an esthetical value through the historical buildings and beautiful scenery of the river side.

As mentioned above the active participation of the organisers was appreciated by the delegates of ITSC Porvoo. The atmosphere was welcoming and warm which created a feeling of unity among the conference guests. Good hosting skills are key to a successful event and this has always been present during the events in Porvoo Campus. The level of customer service did not vary even though there were several groups of students from different degree programmes responsible of the different programme numbers. The good level of customer service should be maintained and monitored in future events.

The Gala Dinner was a very successful programme number. However the theme was changed from the original theme of the Oscars to the Spring Gala and the change was not informed beforehand. In general the changing of the theme did not affect the overall atmosphere of the evening. Nonetheless the new theme of Spring Gala was not too visible for the guests either. In future events the theme should be carefully considered and decided well beforehand. When organising an event such as gala dinner the organiser should consider whether or not a theme is needed. In this case of ITSC

Porvoo Gala Dinner the theme was somewhat irrelevant due to the structured programme of a traditional conference gala dinner.

The diverse facilities of HAAGA-HELIA Porvoo Campus should be made use of when organising an event or a conference. Still the other facilities offered in the nearby area should be considered. The usage of Pomo-talo and Seikkailulaakso adventure centre was successful during ITSC Porvoo and the possibility of using especially Seikkailulaakso in the future should be considered. The delegates felt like the evening programme in Seikkailulaakso created a Finnish experience and they had a chance to explore the Finnish nature. The post conference tour was organised in Suomenlinna and the visit was successful. When visiting a new country one desires to visit and explore the capital city. Helsinki is nearby and easy to access from Porvoo which makes it simple to include activities in the capital to the event or conference programme.

In the overall experience of ITSC Porvoo the interactive workshops were mentioned as innovative and fascinating. The new teaching method of HAAGA-HELIA Porvoo Campus has unique characteristics and the interest towards new methods of learning is high. The research results show that engaging conference guests with the inquiry learning method is beneficial and inspiring. Attending a lesson or a workshop like this can create an experience for many visitors. The interactive learning method of Porvoo Campus should be introduced to the conference delegates in the future as well.

### **6.3 Further Research for ITSC**

The research results are reliable and a good amount of responses was received. As mentioned earlier the data collected during the Workshop 3 is not as reliable as the actual interviews. They were only used to back up the answers retrieved from the primary data. Altogether the interviewers stayed objective during the interviews and tried not to influence the interviewees with their own opinions. This was challenging since the researchers attended the conference as guests and through this had formed their own image of the programme. Overall the results are valid and further research could be conducted for example during next year's ITSC. This would give an insight of the consistency of the quality of the conference. However ITSC is organised annually by a

different educational facility which makes the comparing of the results difficult. The venue, theme and the organisers change each year and for this, the results should be carefully examined.

#### **6.4 Reflection of Thesis Writing Process**

The thesis writing process was quite fast and all the planning, execution and analysis took approximately three and a half months of time. The biggest difficulty was to find reliable sources for the literature review of the experience management. Pine and Gilmore's book *The Experience Economy* was quoted by a great deal of authors and to find a good variety of sources took time and effort. Additionally it took time to ensure the reliability of the interviews. The biggest bias would have been if the interviewers had influenced the interviewees during the face-to-face interviews. For this the questions were formed carefully and during the interviews the researchers acted as neutral as possible. All the results were reliable and a good variety of results were gathered during the conference.

The data collection process was somewhat easy and clear since the interviews were conducted within four days. Receiving answers was not difficult and the delegates were eager to take part of the research. After the data collection process the analysing of the results was done in a short period of time working intensively due to the end of the semester approaching. The researchers learned a great deal about research methods and procedures as well as the experience based services and products and how they are created. The topic of the thesis was interesting and for this working intensively within three and a half months was not seen as too stressful and overwhelming.

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**Programme: ITSC 2014 Porvoo, 22nd-26th April, Based on the third newsletter**

***Tuesday 22nd of April***

Arrival to Porvoo, Finland

Dinner at own expense with local hosts

***Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> of April***

8:30-09:30 Registration and Opening ceremony at Porvoo Campus

09:30-11:30 **Workshop 1&2**

Sirpa Lassila & Marika Alhonen: *'Service Design in Practice'*

Pia Kiviaho-Kallio: *'Pieces of Spaces'*

11:30-12:00 Coffee break

12:00-13:30 **Key note lecture:** Henna Konu

*'Developing experiential tourist products cases from Finland'*

13:30-14:30 Lunch at Porvoo Campus

14:30-16:30 Market stalls (Set up market stalls and visit them)

18:30 Amazing Race in Porvoo old town

20:00 Dinner at Campus

***Thursday, 24th April***

09:00-11:00 **Workshop 1&2**

Sirpa Lassila & Marika Alhonen: *'Service Design in Practice'*

Pia Kiviaho-Kallio: *'Pieces of Spaces'*

12:00-13:00 **Research Presentations**

13:00-14:00 Lunch at Campus

14:00-15:00 **Research Presentations**

15:00-17:00 Removing the market stalls and free time

16:30-23:00 Evening Programme in Seikkailulaakso adventure centre

***Friday, 25th April***

09:00-11:00 **Research Presentations**

11:00-11:30 Coffee break

11:30-13:00 **Key note lecture:** Mady Keup

13:00-14:00 Lunch at Campus

14:00-15:00 **Workshop 3**

Mady Keup, Monika Birkle, Eva Holmberg: 'The conference as a customer journey'

15:00-15:30 Presentation of workshop 3

15:30-16:30 Closing the official program

19:00 Gala dinner (theme: Oscars)

***Saturday, 26th April***

09:00 Departure from Porvoo to Helsinki

10:00 Visiting Suomenlinna fortress

12:00 Helsinki city tour/free time

## ITSC 2014

During the event delegate survey

The Amazing Race of Porvoo:

*How did you like the event?*

*Did you meet new people during the event?*

*Did you learn something new during the event?*

*Was the entire programme content coherent?*

Evening Programme in Seikkailulaakso adventure centre:

*Did you enjoy the evening programme?*

*What was the best part of Seikkailulaakso?*

*Do you feel like this was an authentic Finnish experience?*

*Did the bad weather influence the overall experience of the event?*

Gala Dinner

*Did you find the atmosphere of the Gala Dinner festive?*

*Was the theme of the dinner coherent with the additional programme and menu?*

*Did you find the location suitable for the Gala Dinner?*

*Which part of the dinner did you enjoy the most (food, programme, other?)*

Visit to Suomenlinna fortress?

*Do you feel the visit was worth the money?*

*Did you find the visit educational?*

*How was the guided tour arranged?*

The overall experience:

*What has been the best part of the conference so far?*

*Did you have any negative encounters?*

*Do you feel like the programme has created a Finnish experience?*

# ITSC 2014

## Post event Facebook survey

 **Anni Aro**  
5 May at 09:43

Hi everyone, it's Anni and Sylvia bothering you once more. It's been approximately a week now since ITSC Porvoo. If you could take the time to think and tell us, which one was the most memorable programme number during the conference. Just write it down as a comment. Once more, thank you for the interviews, hope to see you soon!

Like · Comment · Share

✓ Seen by 45

 **Kariina Gatere** Gala dinner! 😊  
5 May at 09:50 · Like · 1

 **Ilse DKn** Can't decide between the gala dinner and the evening out in the Valley of Adventure 😊  
5 May at 10:40 · Like · 3

 **Nora Tuominen** Same here: gala dinner and Selkkallulaakso  
5 May at 10:41 · Like

 **Arturo Rodriguez** The same Gala Dinner and the Valley of Adventure (sauna and the lake!!) 😊  
5 May at 11:18 · Like

 **Dominik Pie** Same same  
5 May at 11:35 · Like

 **Javito GP** GP Gala dinner and Selkkallulaakso...  
5 May at 11:37 · Like

 **Anika Himn** also the Gala dinner and Selkkallulaakso 😊 and of course meeting all these amazing people 😊  
5 May at 12:06 · Like

 **Clémentine Boo-gt** - The same ... Ahah 😊  
5 May at 12:17 · Like

 **Helén Holmquist** Selkkallulaakso  
5 May at 14:08 · Like

 **Fabian Kolb** Selkkallulaakso 😊  
5 May at 18:57 · Like

 **Sarah Lena** gala dinner 😊  
5 May at 19:27 · Like

 **Javier De Estaban Curiel** Pre-gala dinner, gala dinner, post-gala dinner  
5 May at 23:52 · Like · 1

 **Riki Knoll** Selkkallulaakso  
6 May at 15:03 · Like

 **Milmo Asthausen** gala dinner 😊  
6 May at 15:26 · Like

 **Julia Riegler** Gala dinner and Selkkallulaakso  
8 May at 22:41 · Like

 **Marin Denis** same than Julia Riegler , the gala and the finnish way of life in Selkkallulaakso 😊  
8 May at 22:44 · Like

 **Majella Fe** Also both 😊  
10 May at 17:31 · Like