

Planning and Organizing an Event: Sushibar + Wine 6-year birthday party

Kaisa Laulajainen

Piia Pitkänen



<p>Author(s) Kaisa Laulajainen Pii Pitkänen</p>	<p>Group or year of entry 2011</p>
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<p>Supervisor(s) Vesa Heikkinen</p>	
<p>Abstract</p> <p>This thesis is a written report of an overview on how to plan, produce and manage a medium scale special event. The thesis was commissioned by Sushibar Restaurants Finland Oy. The commissioner and the contact person for this thesis is Matti Sarkkinen. The authors of this thesis are students of Hotelli- ja Ravintola-alan liikkeenjohto and Experience and Wellness management.</p> <p>The aim of this thesis was to plan, organize and manage a 6-year old birthday party for Sushibar + Wine restaurants. The planning and organizing process took place from October 2015 to November 2015. The actual event took place in the beginning of December 2015. The event was held at Korjaamo Culture Factory, in Töölö, Helsinki. The event was a medium scale event with approximately 200 participants.</p> <p>The goal of the event was to reward the regular customers and collaborators of Sushibar + Wine by offering them something out of the ordinary and special. Another goal of the event was to form a tighter bond between the participants and the company.</p> <p>Overall the event can be considered successful and the feedback from the event was mainly positive. According to the feedback, these kinds of special events are a welcomed addition to normal encounters between customers and a restaurant.</p>	
<p>Keywords Event management, Customer relationship management, Event planning, Creating value, Special Events</p>	

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1 Introduction

This thesis is a written report of an overview on how to plan, produce and manage a medium scale event. The thesis is commissioned by Sushibar Restaurants Finland Oy (later on referred to as Sushibar + Wine). Sushibar + Wine has three sushi restaurants in the heart of Helsinki. The company is privately owned by Matti Sarkkinen and Anders Westernholm. The commissioner and contact person for this thesis is Matti Sarkkinen.

Special events which differ from ordinary functions of a company are a way to boost the company's image. Already in the early 1990s Donald Getz and J.J Goldblatt identified an event as being something 'special', 'one-off', 'unique' and 'beyond everyday experience'. Throughout societies, even the smallest excuse could act as a reason for good celebrations. (Shone and Parry, 2013, 6) Special events give us a chance to break out from our everyday life.

Events are also a way to bring customers closer to the company since it is a chance for the customers to interact with the employees in a less formal setting. Events can be used as a way to reward the customers, especially the regular clients who come by every week, for sticking with the same company for a long time. When an event is a success it is not only beneficial for the company but also leaves a permanent positive memory for the customer. The restaurant industry in Helsinki keeps growing and evolving which places the restaurants in high pressure to come up with ideas how to differentiate themselves from other competing restaurants. This is an effect of the fact that our customers are getting more demanding and seeking for new experiences constantly. To offer the clients extraordinary and new experiences, different kinds of special events can be created. Special events are non-routine phenomena which have cultural, personal, organisational and leisure objectives that make them stand out from daily life. The purpose of these special events is to cater them for a group of people in order to enlighten, celebrate, entertain or challenge them. (Shone and Parry, 2013).

The aim of this thesis was to plan, organize and manage a 6-year birthday party for Sushibar + Wine restaurants. The planning and organizing process of the event was done in a little bit over a month from end of October 2015 to the beginning of December 2015. The event was held at Korjaamo Culture Factory, in Töölö, Helsinki, where one of Sushibar + Wines three restaurants is located. The event took place at 2nd of December 2015 and was with an invitation only. 200 invitations were designed by one of Sushibar + Wines' old employee. Invitations were given as plus one. The event invitations were mainly handed out face to face to regular customers in all the three restaurant locations. Some of the invitations were mailed to the recipient's, example for companies that Sushibar + Wine

collaborates with. By organizing this event the restaurant wanted to show their gratitude towards the loyal customers who came by the restaurant regularly. After the event, the authors conducted an internet survey to find out how successful the event was according to the participants at the event. The aim of the survey was to gather information on how to develop similar kind of events in the future.

The authors of this thesis, who were in responsible of organizing the event wanted to leave long lasting memories and create more personal experiences of Sushibar + Wine for the customers. The authors were responsible of most of the event planning, organizing and management.

To support the event and its purpose but also to add to the company's image a special set menu was launched. The menu was available for a month, starting from end of November until Christmas. The set menu included customer's favourite dishes from all six years of Sushibar + Wine. There was also a chance to buy the menu with the wooden board it was served on. The boards were designed and made by a Finnish industrial designer Teppo Lakaniemi with his own brand .Tebian.

The thesis is a product-oriented thesis and consists of two main parts: the theoretical framework of event management, the theoretical framework of customer relationship management and the actual planning, organizing, implementation of the event and the feedback on the event. The thesis starts with the aim and objectives, following author's motivation for the subject, company introduction and then going through the theoretical framework. After the theoretical framework we will explain how the birthday party event was planned, organized, executed and how the feedback was formed. In the last part of the thesis we will discuss the outcomes of the event and our own personal development regarding the event and this thesis.

1.1 The aim and objectives of the thesis

The aim of the thesis was to create a successful event for the customers, friends and collaborators of Sushibar + Wine. The purpose was to plan, organize and implement a 6-year birthday party for Sushibar + Wine restaurants. To the birthday party the restaurant wanted to invite regular customers, representatives from companies which Sushibar + Wine collaborates with, long time employees, friends and families to come and celebrate Sushibar + Wines' journey in the restaurant industry. The first objective of the event was to try to strengthen the bond between the participants, loyal customers who attended the event with Sushibar + Wine staff members and owners. Another objective of the event was to find out if there is a demand for these kinds of events in the restaurant and how Sushibar + Wine could develop small and medium scale events in the future. These objectives were

kept in mind during the whole planning and implementation process of the event. After the event was held, the authors conducted a survey for the attendees to gather feedback on how the event was organized, how we succeeded and what types of events Sushibar + Wine customers want to experience in the future. The feedback was collected from the participants with an internet questionnaire. Therefore, the end goal of the event was to find out how successful the event was and how the authors could improve the event offering of Sushibar + Wine in the future with also letting the regular customers have their say in what they wish from Sushibar + Wine in general in the future.

1.2 The author's motivation for the thesis topic

The authors of this thesis have worked in Sushibar + Wine restaurants since May 2012 and both started at the same time in one of the three restaurants. They have formed a firm professional understanding but also a friendship outside of work and know each other's way of living and working very well. One of the authors currently works as a restaurant manager in Sushibar + Wine Freda in Fredrikinkatu and the other one as a waitress with experience in managerial work in the restaurant in question. Both are planning to work in the field of restaurant and event business in the future, preferably combining these two together.

The interest in planning and organizing the event started with the owners mentioning that one of the three restaurants' birthday party was coming up: the restaurant was turning five years old so a celebration was in order to reward the regular customers and liable collaborators. Because of their own lack of time he suggested that anyone who is interested in planning and organizing the event, can contact him regarding the matter. After discussing the idea, the authors decided to volunteer to plan and organize the event and asked one of the owners if it was possible to write their thesis about the process of planning, organizing and implementing the event. Since both authors have worked for Sushibar + Wine for such a long time, they were keen on starting to develop the restaurants further together with the owners and this way making sure the reputation of the restaurant stays the same as it has been today.

Both authors also take an interest in the event scenery and management but also in customer relationship management, especially in the restaurant industry. The authors have realized that special events are a great opportunity to bring customers closer to the company and at the same time boost the staff members' motivation by offering them something out of the ordinary from their everyday job. By treating the customers not only as customers but also as friends, Sushibar + Wine wants to take care of the people who, in reality, keep the restaurants running and shows them that they are not just another face in the crowd but anticipated guests. Throughout their long working experience in the same

company, they have come to realize, that in order to keep the loyal customers coming back and to create new productive relationships with customers, focusing on customer relationship management especially in the field of creating customer value is crucial.

2 Company introduction: Sushibar Restaurants Finland Oy

Sushibar Restaurants Finland Oy is better known as Sushibar + Wine. Sushibar + Wine is a Japanese inspired restaurant with a Scandinavian twist. The restaurant concept mixes together Japanese food with Scandinavian design. At the moment the restaurant chain has three restaurants located in Helsinki; in Punavuori (Uudenmaankatu 15), in Kamppi (Fredrikinkatu 42) and in Taka-Töölö (Töölönkatu 51 a-b), to be more precise inside the Culture Factory Korjaamo. There used to be a fourth restaurant located inside the amusement park Linnanmäki, but the company sold it before the summer of 2014. The concept keeps on evolving all the time and every restaurant has its own atmosphere and character but still keeping the same business idea.

Sushibar + Wine has two owners: Matti Sarkkinen and Anders Westerholm. The first restaurant was opened in Uudenmaankatu in 2009. Matti Sarkkinen has a long background in the restaurant business and Anders Westerholm is more in charge of the atmosphere, art and design of the restaurants. Together with young Finnish designers such as interior designer Eliisa Korpijärvi from Korpijärvi design, Johannes Ekholm, TSTO; illustrator Pietari Posti and Agent Pekka they have created restaurants that all have the same Scandinavian atmosphere twisted with Japanese food. Since the restaurant wants to support Finnish design they work together with Marimekko, Artek and Iittala. Most of the furniture and crockery are from Artek and Marimekko. The restaurant works also closely with wine importer Viinitie, which provides all the wines to the restaurant. Matti Sarkkinen and Anders Westerholm are also part owners of Viinitie. They also have other restaurants and bars. Matti and Anders own a café-restaurant called Story in Old Market hall together with Teemu Aura and Markus Hurskainen. Sushibar + Wine owners also have a couple of bars; a wine bar called Vin-Vin in Kalevankatu and the latest is Bier-Bier, which is a beer bar in Erottaja. Soon they will be opening up a new type of restaurant in Punavuori together with Teemu Aura and Markus Hurskainen. (Sushibar + Wine, 2015)

The logo for Sushibar + Wine features the word "sushibar" in a bold, black, lowercase sans-serif font. To its right is a green plus sign inside a white circle, followed by the word "wine" in a green, lowercase sans-serif font.

Picture 1. Sushibar + Wine logo (Sushibar + wine)

2.1 The nature of the organization

The restaurant has three locations in Helsinki. All of the restaurants have their own restaurant manager, shift manager and a head chef. Every restaurant has their own waiters/waitresses and chefs. Altogether the company has approximately 40 permanent workers. No temporary workers are used, except during summers.

The main product of the restaurant is sushi. The menu has been created upon the wishes of the owners together with the kitchen staff. The menu changes approximately three times a year. Sushibar + Wine tries to keep the menu interesting and creative. The menu consists of side dishes, such as miso soup, wakame (seaweed) salad, kimchi and edamame beans. There's a variety of different sashimis, maki-rolls, nigiris and also rice paper sushi. Take-away orders are also taken.

What makes Sushibar + Wine stand out from other sushi restaurants is the idea behind the restaurant concept. The product served to the customers has to be first class quality and fresh but also interesting and appealing. The restaurant uses only high class ingredients and all dishes are made when the order arrives, not a second before. This way the food served to the table will be as fresh as possible. The restaurant does not have a sushi buffet since the freshness and quality of the sushi would suffer greatly. The wine list is built to fit the restaurants food products and it changes every other month. The wines come from small producers and most of them are organic or even biodynamic. (Sushibar + Wine, 2015)

All three restaurants have basically the same concept, but also have unique features to the restaurants compared to one another. The restaurant in Punavuori, Uudenmaankatu, is specialised in art and art exhibitions with young artists showcasing their work. The restaurant in Uudenmaankatu also organises special evenings with a Dj playing or nights with some other live music or performances. The restaurant located in Kamppi, Fredrinkatu, is all about wines and has the most versatile wine list of the three places. It is specialized in bringing forward small producers and special batches of quality wines. The restaurant in Töölö is culturally vibrant. With impressive art work on the walls, music gigs by popular artists and for example stand-up comedy clubs it is a lively addition to the culture scene in Helsinki. (Sushibar + Wine, 2015)

2.2 Company turnover and market share

Sushibar + Wine is considered a small company: there are less than 50 employees and the turnover is less than 10 million euros per year. (Yrityssuomi.fi, 2015.) The estimated

turnover for year 2015 is 2 300 000 € for all the three restaurants combined (estimated in 11/2015, Matti Sarkkinen).

2.3 Target audience

The target audience of the restaurants are people of all ages who find Scandinavian design and Japanese sushi kitchen appealing and interesting to their taste. The restaurant's target audience varies with the location of each restaurant. Sushibar + Wine in Uudenmaankatu is the favourite of Finnish-Swedish people who live close by or work close by. Most of the waitresses who work in Uudenmaankatu Sushibar + Wine are Finnish-Swedish speakers. Target audience also includes people who are interested in interior design and art. The lunch in Uudenmaankatu is by far the busiest of the three restaurants since there are a lot of different companies and shops close by. The restaurant in Fredrikinkatu in Kamppi targets mainly young-ish people and also tourists because of its location in the city centre. This restaurant gets a lot of Russian and Asian tourists as their customers. The weekend evenings are the busiest time in this restaurant, since people like to stay close to the city centre and enjoy some wine and sushi. The restaurant in Culture Factory Korjaamo in Töölö targets people living in the Töölö area. Their regular customers tend to be a bit older or parents with young children. The restaurant in Töölö is also the only one which takes table reservations, so bigger groups usually find their way there. (Sushibar + Wine 2015)

2.4 Competitors

In restaurant industry the competition is harsh. All restaurants serving food in Helsinki city centre oppose a threat to Sushibar + Wine, especially other restaurants serving sushi. It is important to acknowledge this fact or other restaurants might steal the customers. Analysing current competition and keeping in mind the strengths and weaknesses of other restaurants compared to Sushibar + Wine is essential. Every time a new restaurant opens nearby, Sushibar + Wine analyses the effects it might have towards the restaurant. Even though Sushibar + Wine has a large regular customer base, making sure the old and new customers are satisfied is the key to succeeding in the business and keeping the restaurants going for another six years. To attract more customers especially from other competing restaurants, the aim is to deliver fantastic food products, excellent service and special events which other restaurants can't match. The issues to pay attention to are the prices of nearby restaurants and those with similar food product. Also the value and promotions, service, location and the quality of the food are something to keep in mind. Once you lose customers to another place, it is hard to get them back without proving that the service and food the restaurant delivers is better.

By conducting a SWOT-analysis the restaurant can figure out its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. With Sushibar + Wine the strength is mainly the outstanding food and exceptional wines when comparing to most sushi restaurants. Not all sushi restaurants prepare the food to the order to ensure the freshness. The freshness of the food is an obvious strength compared to other sushi restaurants since with sushi it really is the most important thing. Helsinki has a lot of restaurants serving sushi, but the taste and freshness don't always add up to the price charged for the food product. The locations of all three restaurants are also a strength. All the restaurants are located close to public transportation and are easy to reach. One of the main weaknesses is the price. The price of the sushi in Sushibar + Wine is quite high compared to for example sushi buffets, so it does not suit everyone's wallet. The customers who consider the prices high are usually willing to sacrifice the quality over quantity and then seek for the cheaper option, usually indeed a sushi buffet. In Sushibar + Wine preparing the food starting from the order can be seen as a weakness but also as a strength. Since it takes a little more time to prepare the orders from scratch and not using partially readymade stuff, some customers do not want to wait the extra time and go to another restaurant that serve the food faster. Usually the quality is also compromised to ensure the food gets to the table fast. (Sushibar + Wine, 2015)

Take-away is a good chance for Sushibar + Wine to serve more customers. Take away orders are placed on the phone or through a mobile phone app Wolt or Foodora. Uudenmaankatu and Freda take take away orders only by phone and Korjaamo restaurant takes care of the Wolt and Foodora orders. Take away orders are scheduled according to the time that the kitchen provides. Lunch could also be served to more business customers to attract more traffic during the lunch, especially in Fredrikinkatu and Korjaamo. All of the new and old restaurants that are located nearby oppose a threat to Sushibar + Wine. Especially the main direct competitors for Sushibar + Wine are all of the other restaurants serving sushi, which are a direct threat. Other threat is the price of food, which keeps rising. Also the availability of getting fresh seafood and fish oppose a threat to the restaurant which wants to keep their ingredients always fresh. The biggest competitor is a sushi restaurant called Umeshu. Even fast food or Indian food restaurants nearby oppose an indirect threat to the restaurant. Even though their food and service is different they can still harm the business by having better price or promotions. The events happening in Uudenmaankatu Sushibar + Wine have been a great success and they would bring new customers to the other restaurants also. (Sushibar + Wine, 2015)

Since the events happening in Uudenmaankatu have been such a success, the authors wanted to reward the regular customers by offering them a medium scale event on the house. To stand out from the intensive competition, the restaurant wants to offer the cus-

tomers more of small and medium scale event in the future. (Matti Sarkkinen, several interviews, 11/2015.)

3 Event Management

This part of the thesis concentrates on the theoretical framework of event management. First it will cover the definitions of events, then we will go through what different types of event there are, ones' motivation of attending and participating in events and after this we will discuss how events should be planned and organized.

3.1 Definition of events

Getz (2012) explains that by definition, events only occur once. In order to socialize, celebrate or do business, people have a need to be together and because of this need, planned events are social in their nature. Events act as temporal phenomena, including start and end points, but also keeping in mind that the experience of an event might never end and it also might already begin before the event. (Getz, 2012, 38-39) An event gathers people together at a certain place at a certain time and for some particular reason. A common event is a phenomena occurring that has been planned, organized and detailed for people to gather together. (Kilkenny, 2006, 29). Shone and Parry (2013) explain that special events are out of ordinary non-routine occasions that have leisure, cultural, personal or organizational objectives that differ from the everyday activity. Purpose of these special events is to enlighten, celebrate or challenge the experience of certain people. (Shone and Parry, 2013, 6) Furthermore, Getz (2012, 40) argues that all of the event experiences are different and unique for everyone, and the experiences are a cause of interactions of the setting, program and participants.

Like Getz (2012) already discussed, Van de Wagen and White (2010, 3) agree that events usually happen only once, but in addition many events can be held every year. An event is characterised as something that most of the time acts as 'once in a lifetime' experience for the participant. They can be costly to build, which is why they require extensive and cautious planning. Most events have major risks concerning financial and safety risks. (Van der Wagen and White, 2010, 3) Van der Wagen and White (2010, 3) also state that with events, most of the time everyone involved has a lot at stake when organizing a specific event.

Different organisations, a group of people or different individuals might have various opinions on what they consider as special or unique event, which is one reason why events may have different accepted terms, concepts or definitions. (Berridge, 2007, 5) In addition, Berridge (2007, 11) also suggested that in order to separate actual events from non-events, they could be separated by considering what types of activities or occasions cannot be categorised as events. This would narrow down the list of differences and similarities between them.

3.2 Different types of events

Van der Wagen and White (2010, 7) explained that there are many different ways in which events can be classified, such as whether they are either public, by making them open for everyone or they are private with usually an invitation only. Events can be also categorised on the basis if they are profit oriented or non-profit. According to Van der Wagen and White (2010, 7) the events which are usually targeted for international markets, such as The Olympic games, are named as mega events, according to the size of the event. Mega events are in most cases referred to the size of the event but the term can also refer to other events that can have 'mega' tourism or economic effects on a place where they are held and give a small place a positive image. (Getz, Svensson, Peterssen & Gunnervall, 2012, 4)

In order to boost the attraction of certain tourism destinations or regions Hallmark events are designed. Hallmark events can be for example music festivals. In addition, Getz (2012, 44) continues, that in order to organize a Hallmark event, it has to appeal to tourists, create a positive image and has to be co-branded with the destination. Since Hallmark events are set up to create a positive image of the destination, the image of the event is tested and evaluated in smaller groups between stakeholders and the media support is vital. (Getz, Svensson et al. 2012, 10) Van der Wagen and White (2010, 7) continue grouping of events with major events. Major events have to appeal for a large number of participants, who are both local people and also tourists, which bring money to the country. Chinese New year celebrations are one example of a major event. In case an event is declared to be a major event, it will usually get support from many government agencies. Large number of events are categorised under minor events. Minor events can be meetings, parties, celebrations, award ceremonies, sporting finals, and other community and social events.

Events can vary a lot from each other with their aims, content and objectives. Shone and Parry (2013, 7) have divided events in four different groups according to the concept of the event. The groups are based on the objectives the event has, which can be leisure, cultural, personal or organizational. It is important to understand, that when comparing events in this categorization, there is always overlapping of these groups. Meaning, that one event can belong to multiple categories.

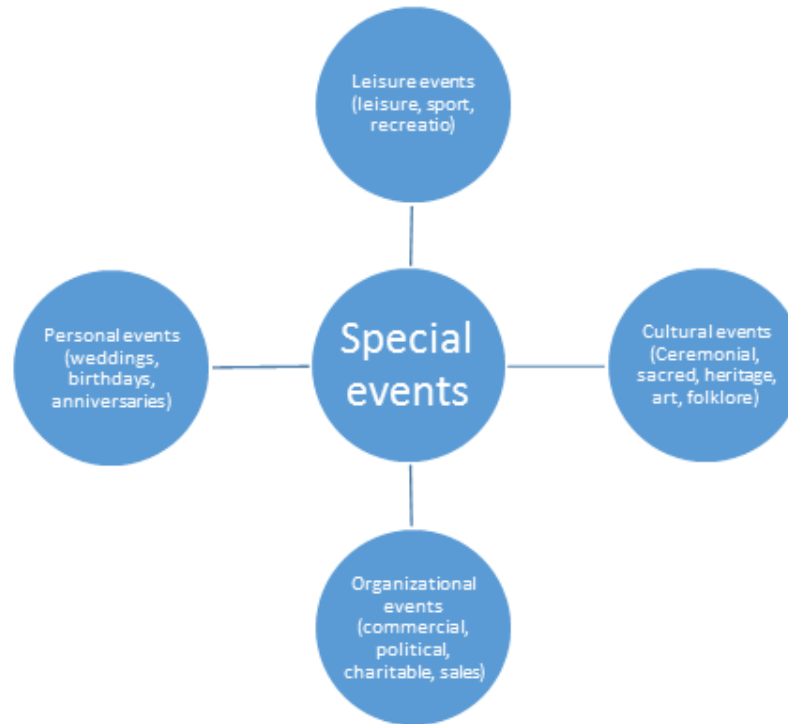


Figure 1. A suggested categorization of special events (Shone and Parry 2013, 7)

Furthermore, to be called as a special event, the event needs to be unique, meet the target objectives, embrace various elements of style such as theming and attract the eye of stakeholders and the audience (Getz, 2012, 46) Getz also had another way of categorising events: planned and unplanned events. Planned events do not just emerge out of nothing and are considered to be one of a kind. Planned events are designed by professional event designers and managers with an exact goal in their mind. They appear different than the other and are programmed otherwise. But it is important to also take in consideration, that all of the events can fulfil multiple functions, create similar experiences and associations. Getz (2012, 41) categorised planned events into six different typologies: business and trade, private functions, political and state, sports and recreation and cultural celebrations. On the contrary then, unplanned events are spontaneous and unpredictable. One characteristic in common for unplanned events, is that they have no managerial systems attached.

3.3 Purpose and objectives for organizing events

Whenever organizing an event, different aspects need to be well thought-out but especially the purpose of the event. The purpose should help in case of different opinions or conflicts that might emerge concerning the event but the purpose can also guide the planning process of the event. In addition, the event might have first and secondary purposes, depending on what kind of event it is. Different purposes of an event can be change of information, for example at a conference, or simply entertainment or with some events the

sole purpose is to make a profit. There are also events, such as carnivals, where community is the purpose behind the event. (Van der Wagen and White, 2010, 25)

In addition, creating measurable and clear objectives for the event is crucial. An objective of an event can be the number of people attending or the amount of food and beverage sold. Clear objectives keep the organizers focused on the main purpose of the event. (Van der Wagen and White 2010, 26)

Kilkenny (2006, 42-43) agrees that in order to create a successful event, it must have at least one purpose, some goals and objectives. She states that *“without goals and objectives, there is no defined vision”* for the event. Objectives are targets that can be measured and the goal provides the purpose for the event. This should be defined in the early planning process of the event. On the other hand, some events do not need nor have a deeper purpose for holding the event, such as dinner parties for friends or going to a restaurant to enjoy your time. (Shone and Parry, 2013, 98)

“The demand for events have been determined largely by social factors” (Shone and Parry, 2013, 36). Some of social factors of organizing events that they mention are social integration, interaction between individuals and communities and bonding. Some events might be held because of community rituals or ceremonies. In addition to these social factors, other motivational factors to organize an event might be economic, organizational, political, status, philanthropic and charitable needs.

3.4 Motivation for attending events

Kilkenny (2006, 31-32) explains that there are numerous of different reasons why people attend events. According to her, the event organizer should inspire and motivate people to participate. As some factors of motivation for people to attend an event she mentions for example celebrations, supporting a cause, public relations, exchanging ideas or networking.

Like Van der Wagen and White (2015) already discussed that the event organizer might have primary and secondary purposes for organizing the event, according to Shone and Parry (2013, 38-39) the participant might as well have primary and secondary motives for attending. Participating in an event might have a primary motive of coming to socialize but have a secondary motive of enjoying the entertainment. Shone and Parry have divided possible motives for attending events in four categories: Personal, organizational, physiological and social motives. For a personal motive of attending, one might have learning and education. As organizational motive for a person might be the need to make sales. To

dine or to be entertained might act as physiological motive for instance. What comes to social motives, one might have a need for social interaction with other people.

Getz (2012, 251-255) agrees that people are driven by the need of socializing, relaxation and out of ordinary functions that attending an event offers. He also underlines that the cultural background of a person might also have an effect on the need or interest concerning an event. The cultural background can determine their perceptions of an event and in the decision of whether they will go. Peer pressure can also act as influence to attend an event, because of the fear of being rejected or discriminated if not attending. For some people events can also be a good way to meet new people and can act as a motivator for them.

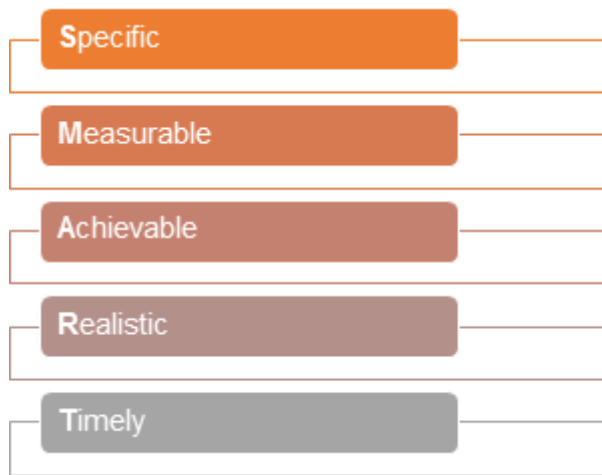
3.5 Event planning and organizing

In this part of the thesis we will discuss how events should be planned, organized and also managed. First we will discuss the planning of the event, then we will go through the organizational structure, how marketing and promotions should be done, the budgeting for an event, the sponsorships of an event, also how the risks involved should be managed, how events are staged and finally the close-down of an event with the evaluation attached.

3.5.1 The planning of the event

When starting to plan an event, one of the first issues is to sort out a meaningful idea for the event but also choose the best suitable people for the job. In addition, another thing to consider, is whether the idea for the event is feasible. The actual planning of the event begins once you have figured out a good and feasible idea to be put in action. In order for the event to be a success, the planning part is critical. Acknowledging the features that are best suitable for your event need to be first sorted out in the planning process. It also needs to be taken in consideration, that the planning process is very timely and it requires a lot of thinking and effort put into it. (Shone and Parry, 2013, 98-99)

Like we already discussed in the chapter 3.3 – Purpose and objectives of organizing events, when planning and organizing an event, goals and objectives need to be set right from the beginning. One way of measuring goals and objectives is a SMART formula (Figure 2.)



(Figure 2. SMART formula)

By making sure from the start of planning that the goals of the event are specific, it leaves no room for confusion how to develop the event further on. Clearly, the objectives have to be measurable, so it will help the organizer to know if the goals of the project are reached or not. Furthermore, the set objectives must be achievable in order for the event to be successful. As an event organizer you need think about realistic objectives that are reachable with the finance you have. Lastly, the objectives have to be timely, by setting timetables and deadlines for tasks. (Shone and Parry, 2013, 242)

In the planning process, before even creating a further budget for you project, the financial goals need to be well thought trough, since most of events are organized in the hope of making a profit. The financial goals will help creating the budget. (Kilkenny, 2006, 44) Van der Wagen and White (2010, 29) also highlight the importance of early financial estimations, since budget can easily go way over expected if not choosing concepts that are easy to execute and stay cost effective in the reach of your financial plan.

Kilkenny (2006, 45) points out that no matter what kind of event you are planning, the first steps are to identify who you are targeting and how you are going to reach them. She encourages to think whom you want to attend your event? If you are not sure who to target, then extensive research for potential participants is in place. As a few examples of potential participants she mentions like-minded people, fellow workers, family members or certain income bracket.

After deciding the target group for the event, another question to consider in the planning phase; when is the event held? It is important to choose the most suitable dates and times for your event in order to reach your target participant goals. You need to dedicate time for doing some research on what other events are happening the same time and which dates would suit best for your attendees. When planning a special event, the middle of the week

or the weekend is the best time, since then it will attract more potential participants. (Kilkenny, 2006, 100-101) Van der Wagen and White (2010, 27) agree, that timing of the event is crucial, therefore, it is important to check that the event will not overlap with another event. Depending on the nature of the event, the timing according to a suitable season or weather need to be taken in consideration.

Next step is finding a convenient location for the event which suits the purpose, objectives and goals of the event. Before starting the actual project, the theme can be decided and the venue for the event can be chosen to match the possible theme. The venue should complement the purpose of the event. Some of the aspects that Van der Wagen and White (2010, 27-29) suggest to keep in mind when choosing the venue, include the ambience of the venue, location, safety and accessibility. Kilkenny (2006, 53) agrees, that the venue should be decided in the planning phase, since some venues might need to be booked many months, or even years in advance. We will discuss more about choosing the venue and theme later on in subchapter 3.5.7 – Event venue and staging.

3.5.2 Organizational structure

Most likely all events have somewhat different kind of organizational structure and staffing, with some similarities occurring. The main services are the same, so Shone and Parry (2013, 274) suggest that event organizational structures usually include five main functions which are presented in Figure 3.

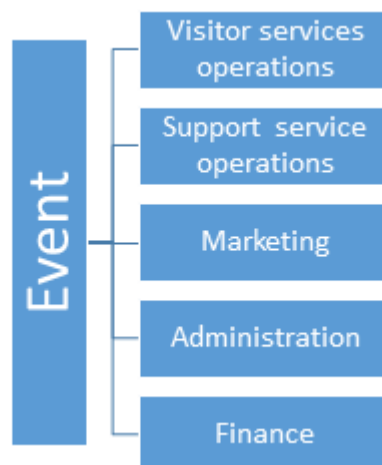


Figure 3. Organizational structure (Shone and Parry, 2013)

Organizations can further divide these structures into sub-structures according to the size and nature of the event. It is very common that only ones with a higher pay check are the most important members of the staff or key managers. A lot of events use voluntary workers, who they do not have to pay. Furthermore, in some organizations the managers and coordinators are responsible for the activities while the same time supervising the volun-

tary workers and the paid staff underneath them. In order to know what everyone is responsible for and who is in charge of what, the organizational structure may seem to be very orthodox. (Shone and Parry, 2013, 275-276)

Van der Wagen and White (2010, 160-161), discuss that when evaluating the most suitable staff for the event, you need to figure out how many full-time, well trained and professional employees you can financially afford. These workers are going to be the ones, who are in responsibility of the most relevant factors in setting up the event. No matter how small the event is, there should be at least one key person who is responsible of most event related questions.

Sharon Kilkenny (2006, 53-55) points out that the roles and responsibilities should be sorted out immediately at the beginning of the project. Defining the roles and responsibilities depends on the nature of the event. Some of the tasks can be divided straight away but some of them as the process moves onwards. Try to combine tasks according to the skills of your staff members. But it is vital to keep in mind, that everyone has to be aware of their job description.

One of the most challenging jobs has the event manager. The responsibilities of event manager vary from day to day, and it is not an ordinary job where you might perform the same tasks each day of the year. Each event and each process will most likely be different. The tasks vary on the size, scope and difficult level of the event. As an event manager you might have to multitask, by for example arranging everything from food catering to entertainment and the same time making a budget for the event. Event manager needs to combine many of her/his skills together in order to make a successful event. Setting up an event requires a lot of communication between various different people. One person can't handle everything, so in order to reduces stress, two or three other skilled people should be hired to designated responsibilities and tasks. (Kilkenny, 2006, 36)

3.5.3 Event marketing and promotion

According to Getz (2012, 290) *"marketing is best described as the management of the interface between an organization and its stakeholders, in pursuit of achieving the organizations goals."* Getz highlights, that communication and understanding the potential needs of customers and stakeholders is vital in the marketing process.

One of the most valuable aspects of marketing is to know who you are marketing to. It is important to learn as much as possible about the target market, in order to get their attention. The target market in this case, are the potential participants attending the event. In some cases, the event might have couple of different types of target markets instead of

just one particular. Research on the potential target market and assessment of the potential competitors is usually in place when starting the marketing process for an event. (Shone and Parry, 2013, 196-197)

Kilkenny (2006, 153-159) points out that, no matter if the guests are invited to the event, required to attend, or are paying to attend, it is important to let them know, what kind of event is being held. With outstanding marketing and effective promotion materials the event organiser can ensure getting the right message out. The first way to reach your target market, is by impressive invitations. The invitation is a useful way to create buzz before the actual event. Kilkenny suggests that when creating the marketing material for your invitation, keep in mind that, it gets the reader's attention simply by for example using colours or photos. Offer them a solution or a reward, why they should come and highlight the benefits of attending. It is vital to give clear directions, such as "remember this date" and provide them all the needed information, in order for them to take action and attend.

Huge part of the marketing process is offering different promotions to support the event. Event promotion should be included in the marketing strategy, since it is a chance to communicate the wanted image and content of event for the target market. Promotion activities are not just advertising. Promotion can also happen in the form of direct marketing, sales promotion and personal selling. Advertising is usually paid communication, for example in the radio, that is used to catch potential buyers attention. On the contrary, personal selling happens face to face between seller and buyer and with this kind of promotion, it is important to know exactly what you are selling and who you are trying to sell it to. Another way is to use sales promotions, which might be discounted tickets for the event, competitions or giveaways. (Van der Wagen and White, 2010, 90-97)

Today, the social media marketing plays a big role when setting up events. "*Social media marketing is a term that describes the use of social networks, online communities, blogs, wikis or other online collaborative media for marketing, sales, public relations and customer service.*" (Barker, Barker, Bormann, Neher, 2013, 3). Barker et al. (2013, 3) explain that social media marketing (SMM) is important since it will create a buzz of the event that the organizer is hoping to get attention drawn into. But SMM acts also as an easy way to promote the actual event. This type of marketing is solely based on trying to influence people in a positive way and create conversation around the event.

Additionally, social media can be an effective and cost efficient marketing channel for events. It should be used as a marketing channel before the actual event, at the event and after the event to ensure the best result. One way of marketing through social media is to create an actual event to Facebook or the organization's Facebook page can be used to promote the event. With the use of social media as a marketing place, it is easy for the

organizer to keep the participants updated on the upcoming event. (Vallo and Häyrynen, 2014, 86-88)

3.5.4 Budgeting

“A budget is a forecast of a plan, which helps to regulate the operation of an event over a given period of time” (Shone and Parry, 2013, 147). Budgeting for an event can be quite challenging since it is based mostly on estimations and on relative small amount of information. (Goldblatt, 2008, 144) Since events are limited for a specific time, the budget is given in the timeframe of the event and it includes at least a list of revenues and costs but it can be far more complicated. Budget acts as a guide which helps to plan and control the expenses, costs and revenues of the event. Creating a budget might be done by many people together in case nobody has wide experience of creating one. But in order to maintain good and steady financial management over the event, someone should be appointed as responsible for it and control who is able to spend what, when and how. (Shone and Parry, 2013, 139-151)

Goldblatt suggests (2008, 144), that events can be put financially into three categories: Profit-oriented events, break-even events, and loss leaders or hosted events. In the profit-oriented events, revenue goes beyond the expenses and usually the purpose of the event is creating new sales. In the break-even events the revenue is equal to expense and for example the admission fees should cover the costs. Host events are designed not to make any profit and are usually created to promote a cause or agenda.

3.5.5 Sponsorships

“Sponsorship is a commercial transaction in which two parties agree by way of an offer and acceptance” (Goldblatt, 2008, 277). Without sponsorships most events would not be feasible or reach their targeted goals or objectives. There is a need for companies to attain new marketing ways and channels to promote, inform and sell their products which has lead into growth in the amount of sponsorships. (Goldblatt, 2008, 276)

When trying to get sponsorships, first the organizer needs to figure out the amount of how much financial or other support is needed from the sponsors. After that it is important to consider whether the event and the activities, projects or items included will attract sponsors. When these questions have been sorted out, the organizer can start looking for potential sponsors for activities that fit the sponsors profile. (Van der Wagen and White, 2010, 109)

Sponsorships can truly be a source for income or revenue for an event, but finding suitable sponsorships can be challenging and time-consuming. The event organizer has to

keep in mind, that in order to attract sponsors, the potential sponsors must gain something from sponsoring the event. It is crucial that the event organizer and the potential sponsor have the same target market on their mind. Most of the sponsors will not sponsor the event, unless they will get some benefits, such as media coverage or free VIP-tickets. (Shone and Parry, 2013, 154-156)

Furthermore, Van der Wagen and White (2010, 107-110) agree that, usually the sponsorship is a mutual marketing effort between the sponsor and the event organizer. When trying to attract potential sponsors, it is important to highlight the motivational factors that will appeal to them. Potential sponsors for an event might be for example individuals, government agencies, private corporations or community organisations. Sponsorships can cover multiple things such as, staging or performance costs, food and beverage, entertainment, physical items or naming rights for events.

3.5.6 Risk Management

Sometimes things might not go as expected, so in order to minimize and diminish the possible threats and risks, the organizer should acknowledge the risks in all the actions they take, when setting up the event. Even though evaluating the possible risks, there still can be things that might go wrong, but the risk management helps to forecast them. Risks of the event can be categorized into four different groups. When losing financial investments or sponsorships, it is considered as economic risk. Performance risks happens when the event is cancelled or otherwise ruined because a booked performer or other form of entertainment does not show up. If the venue or the actual event has bad reputation it is considered as a psychological risk and physical risks concern the issues of health and safety problems. (Shone and Parry, 2013, 222)

The organizer needs to ponder what is considered as a risk for them? It might be any of the above mentioned or change in the weather and also inviting wrong kind of people to the event can also cause problems. The risks might already arise from hiring untrained or unskilled people, or not having a good and professional managers working at the event. To ensure these kinds of risks not to happen, there are numerous of different guides and manuals to help the organizer to learn how to handle risk management. (Getz, 2012, 302-303) One good way to is to come up with contingency plans and emergency procedures. (Shone and Parry, 2013, 223)

Shone and Parry (2013, 228-230) suggest that the risk management is a three phased procedure. Firstly, the risks are assessed, then they are evaluated and after evaluating the risks, the risk measurements are controlled and preparations are made. Lastly, last editing can be done, especially if the organizer has identified new risks. The event man-

agers and coordinators should always perform these procedures, so they can offer the attendees a safe environment and prepare for potential accidents or other problems.

Furthermore, the event must have all the required licences and hire licensed people to be responsible of the security issues, such as removing badly behaved people from the premises or acting as bouncers. If the staff is trained with a proper health and safety training, they will be more aware of the potential risks that might occur and can take actions regarding them. (Van der Wagen and White, 2010, 253-265)

Nevertheless, when setting up an event, the organizer needs to take in consideration what permits are required for the specific event. The most common permits, that are required are dispensing license for alcohol, lottery permission, a permission to close roads or a permission to light fire outside or have fireworks. Especially the licence to serve alcohol is very important or there can be consequences later on, for example big fines and losing liquor license for a long time. Most of the permissions can be applied from the police or from the city bureau with just one electronic notification. If the organizer is using background music, there is a fee that has to be paid to Teosto. (Vallo and Häyrinen, 2014, 153-154) In case of a public event, the organizer will need a permit to organize the event from the police. In bigger events bouncers are needed to keep the event flowing safely. (Järjestäjänopas, 2004, 8)

3.5.7 Event venue and staging

After the planning process, the preparation and development process occurs and it is time to choose the right location or the venue for the event. When choosing the venue, the organizer should think about the accessibility of the venue, to make sure that the attendees can easily find their way to the location. Looking for a suitable venue can be really time consuming so a venue-finding agency can help with the problem by giving couple of suitable places to use. (Shone and Parry, 2013, 166-167) There are numerous of features that the organizer needs to take in consideration when choosing the right venue. Like we already mentioned, one of the most important is the accessibility: will the potential attendees travel to the location and how will they get there? Some other factors to mention are ambience, parking, safety, food and beverage possibilities and logistics of setting up. All of these features should be kept in mind in order to offer the best atmosphere for your attendees at the lowest cost possible. The venue should also be big enough for all the invited participants. One of the biggest priority is to fit the venue for the attendees needs. (Van der Wagen and White, 2010, 28 & 44-47)

The purpose of the event can be used as driver when choosing the proper theme. The theme can show up in colours, which are used in all the items connected to the event,

such as tickets or décor. (Van der Wagen and White, 2010, 28) Getz (2012, 237) discussed that the theme can give a proper meaning to the event. The theme of the event should stimulate senses of the participants and be memorable.

According to Van der Wagen and White (2010, 57-59) the venue should be adaptable to the chosen theme. This will also decrease the costs since it is easier to transform. The performers, the attendees and the event organiser all need to be taken in account and pleasing them with the location. The venue needs to be safe for all of them, in order to minimise the risks of something going wrong.

When staging the actual event, the entertainment should be chosen based on the theme and the décor is fairly easy to set up according to the theme. Key to success is providing a good layout for the specific event. The audience should not be placed so that they will not see to the stage and the set up should provide enough space for waiters and the attendees to move. The music plays a big part in creating the atmosphere, so the level of the volume and the use of right equipment are important. (Van der Wagen and White, 2010, 60-63)

3.5.8 Event close-down and evaluation

Shone and Parry (2013, 306-308) state that the close-down and clear-up has to be handled professionally and with caution. Various elements need to be considered when closing down the event. Obviously, the venue needs to be cleared and cleaned up, but there are also a lot of administrative tasks to do. These administrative tasks are paying the bills to contractors, paying checks to the workers, doing some marketing activities such as press releases and also evaluating the event. Already at the planning phase the organizer should count how much staff the close-down will require. The staff working at the event should be properly informed and trained how to handle the close-down of the event, so it will run smoothly. The phases of close-down are demonstrated in the figure below.

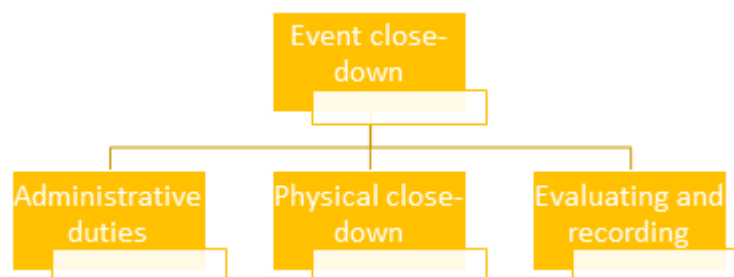


Figure 4. Final phases of event activities (Shone and Parry, 2013, 307)

“Evaluation is the process of measuring the outcomes against the objectives using a variety of methods, such as customer surveys, focus groups etc.” (Van der Wagen and

White, 509) Customer surveys can be used in the post-evaluation report. When creating an evaluation, it needs to ask the right questions, in order to get the required information. The questions can be following: where did you hear about the event? Why did you attend and would you attend again? Or what were the best features of the event? Post-event evaluation also includes the financial records. Staff and other stakeholders can also provide valuable information when evaluating the event, so a staff meeting should be held after the event. (Van der Wagen and White, 2010, 358-361) Kilkenny (2006, 234-235) agrees that the people who have been involved in the decision and planning process of the event, should attend a post meeting. They can answer questions regarding what went well and what did not go as expected or how were the set goals and objectives met. After the event has been held, the organizer should send "thank you" to everyone involved, especially the volunteers. "Thank you" can be just a phone call or a letter, to show the appreciation of the work they have done.

According to Shone and Parry (2013, 312-314) two main elements should be evaluated in the final evaluation: How were the objectives met? What could be done better next time? If the objectives were reached, it should be stated clearly to the stakeholders to ensure them about the successfulness of the event. To ensure the event to be even better in the future, the identification of problems and then solving them needs to take place after the event close-down and in the final evaluation.

4 Customer relationship management and customer value

This part of the thesis concentrates on the aspects of customer relationship management. First we will discuss the meaning and also the purpose of customer relationship management (later on referred to just as CRM) and then finally concentrate on creating customer value.

4.1 Customer relationship management

Payne (2008, 1-6) argues that in the business world customer relationship management has become an increasingly important topic. The principles behind the term “customer relationship management” have been around for a long time and companies have always relied on some form of CRM, even though the term CRM wasn’t developed until the later parts of 1990’s. What is different about the practices used decades ago compared to the ones used today and being labelled as CRM, is that organizations can now manage relations between other organizations and customers on a profoundly larger scale. With new technological innovations and more organized practices, companies can rely on CRM as a business strategy rather than as separate functions to help with the business and relationships with customers, suppliers and stakeholders.

CRM is a broad term and can mean different things to different companies. Simply said, CRM is a business approach seeking to form, develop and enhance relationships with customers. The focus of CRM is to figure out which customers are profitable to the company and then target these people in order to improve customer value and increase profitability. These actions again increase the stakeholder value. (Payne, 2008, 4-5.) Dyché (2002, 4) points out that getting a new customer to buy a product costs a company six times more than selling more products to already existing customers. Therefore, it is wise to enhance and maximize the existing relationships with customers. According to Baran, Galka and Strunk (2008, 8) CRM is a way to keep relationships going between a company and its stakeholders such as customers, employees and suppliers.

CRM made its way to the business world with the competition getting tougher and customers having more choices. A few decades ago the choices customers could make were limited, but as the corporate world developed the competition grew and people had more choices with normal household chores and actions such as banking and groceries. As the competition got tougher with deregulation the prices of services and products got lower. Companies were forced to come up with ways to ensure that customers would try their product or service and then stick with it. This is how ATM’s (automated teller machines) and IVR (the recorded system on the phone instructing customer on how to proceed) were developed. The new systems did not have the desired result and it was soon realized that

cutting costs to maximize profitability was not the way to go. (Dyché, 2002, 3-4.) Concentrating only on products proved to be tricky: duplication and rip-offs easily take away the advantage of being the market leader (Payne, 2008, 5). Nowadays internet also brings its own challenges into the game since almost an endless variety of choices is only a click away (Dyché, 2002, 4).

Payne (2008, 11) describes that the biggest incentives on making CRM a permanent focus in business strategies lies in several aspects and trends. The business is not only about transactions anymore: concentrating solely on products is not only short-sighted but also non-profitable. Customers should not be treated only as an audience for marketing but rather as a business asset which can give the company crucial information on how to develop their actions and organization. This motivates companies to concentrate on the quality in service and customizing actions according to regular customer's wishes. Also the costs, risks and input on concentrating on existing relationships is lower than with marketing based on transactions since with the transaction based approach the customer needs to be won over with every transaction.

The key to success seems to be in service quality that exceeds customer's expectations consistently and distinctively. Duplicating service quality is much more difficult than just a product since service quality is always linked to the customers themselves. Gathering information on customers, their behaviour and preferences and adjusting actions to it and afterwards gathering information again forms an ongoing conversation between customers and the company and can create a competitive advantage that exceeds competition's actions. (Payne, 2008, 5.) Baran, Galka and Strunk (2008, 57) point out that CRM systems are a means to an end when it comes to forming a loyalty based relationship with customers. They also mention that a loyal customer takes less time to decide on purchasing the company's products and this way the risk of losing the customer to another company is cut down.

4.2 CRM terminology

Since there are no clear definitions or terminology when talking about CRM yet, it is important to make sure it is clear within the organization what CRM and the terminology stands for to the organization in question. However, many analyst firms classify CRM accordingly: Operational CRM, Analytical CRM and collaborative CRM. (Payne, 2008, 22-23.) Next we will discuss the definitions of these classifications.

4.2.1 Operational CRM

The focus in operational CRM is in sales force automation, marketing automation and customer service automation. Sales force automation concentrates on automating business processes. Creating and using tools to assist sales people to manage their accounts, keep track of sales, keep contact information in order and monitor and control inventory helps the sale process become more customer friendly. In reality these tools are not very complex. Usually simple technological solutions such as calendars, alarms on events and tasks, dividing customers between sales people, contact information and notes on clients, information on company policies and handbooks and call centres make the process easier for the sales personnel and also help maintain and enhance the relationship with the customer. (Dyché, 2002, 81-87.)

4.2.2 Analytical CRM

Analytical CRM focuses on collecting, storing, analysing and using information on customers to help adjust processes according to the data (Payne, 2008, 23). Analytical CRM nowadays usually lies heavily on technology, computer programs and applications. Customers expect the sales personnel to know who they are and what they want and sales personnel rely on the information given to them about the customer. Integrating systems and information can help generate a sales process that understands the customer's needs. Information collected and analysed can consist of for example purchase history, last topic the customer contacted the company about and other information such as family members, ages of family members, place of residence and spending habits. (Dyché, 2002, 119-122.)

Companies can use special data warehouses and create several separate databases to store the information needed, even though using data warehouses in itself is not considered CRM. Databases can be created to accommodate the needs of company management, resource planning within the company and human resources, marketing department, call centres or financial solutions. (Dyché, 2002,124-125.)

4.2.3 Other terminology

There is also other terminology used to describe and define CRM. For example, strategic CRM combines CRM with a company's business strategy to develop long-term value for shareholders. e-CRM is about web-based customer relationship management and concentrates on actions taken with electronic tools or programs to enhance the relationship. (Payne, 2008, 24.) PRM is considered a part of CRM and concentrates on partner relationships: taking care of resellers and alliance partners. There are various definitions and

names for areas of CRM besides the one's mentioned since it is a field of interest in corporate world. (Dyché, 2002, 12.)

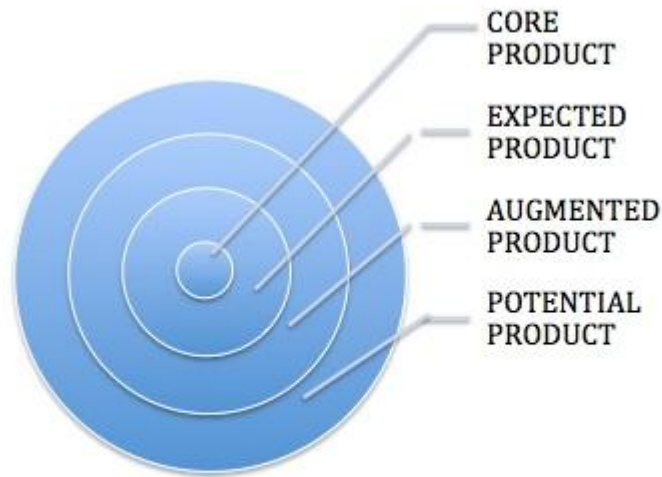
4.3 Creating customer value

Payne (2008, 102-103) argues that generating customer value can be seen as an important aspect of CRM and can set a company positively aside from the others when it comes to competitive advantage. However, "customer value" is a difficult pair of words since quite often it is not defined what counts as customer value and what is the value the company seeks. Grönroos (2007, 155) points out that since value itself cannot be manufactured, it is always linked to the product or service the customer purchases. This means the value appears to the customer in their everyday lives, not at the moment of transaction. It is up to the company behind the product or the service to set invisible and unspoken guidelines on the creation process of value. Value is created by the customers themselves but also by the customer and the company in collaboration. Field (2012, 29) reminds though that when integrating the customer into the service process the customer needs to be made to feel that they get more out of it than the effort they put in.

4.3.1 Value creation process: the product

There are three steps in value creation process: specifying the value the customer gains, figuring out the value the company gets and successfully managing the dialogue between these two. Unfortunately, some companies only concentrate on the value the company itself gets with the focus being on extracting as much money as possible from customers and selling as many products as possible. However, it is crucial to companies to keep in mind the value the customer receives since the customer experience cannot be consistently positive if only concentrating on the benefits the company gets. (Payne, 2008, 103.)

The value customer gets can be described as a packaged deal of the core product accompanied by expected, augmented and potential product.



PRODUCT LEVEL	CUSTOMER'S VIEW	MARKETER'S VIEW	EXAMPLE: personal computer
CORE	Customer's generic need that must be met	Basic benefits which make the product of interest	Data storage, processing, speed of processing, retrieval
Expected product	Customer's minimal set of expectations	Marketer's product decisions on tangible and intangible components	Brand name, warranty, service support, the computer itself
Augmented product	Seller's offering over and above what customer expects or is accustomed to	Marketer's product decisions on tangible and intangible components	Diagnostic software, trade-in allowance, base price plus options, dealer network, user clubs, personal selling
Potential product	Everything that potentially can be done with the product that is of utility to the customer	Marketer's actions to attract and hold customers regarding changed conditions or new applications	Use as system controller, music compose and other areas of application

Figure 5. Total value offer (Payne 2008, 106.)

As Payne's figure above shows, a product is a sum of all four layers. These four layers make up for the total value offer. The core product is a basic need that has to be fulfilled. The need is fulfilled with the expected product. The expected product gets more value with the augmented product complementing the expected product and finally the potential product gives the expected and augmented product the final touch, gives it something "extra" the customer necessarily did not know they want or need. (Payne, 2008, 105-106.)

Value can also be examined through the value proposition. Once the product with its extensions are defined a company can use value proposition to help define to value the customer receives. Value proposition analyses the relationship between what the customer buys and how the supplier fulfils customer's needs across the board: it studies the perfor-

mance of the product, whether and how well the customer's needs are fulfilled and what the total cost to the customer is. With value proposition it is important to keep in mind though that each customer is different and so might their needs be as well. (Payne, 2008,124.)

Payne (2008, 125-128) reminds that creating the value proposition requires the company to define several things. The company needs to figure out their target customers: who do they want to do business with? The benefits the customer gets need to be defined as well: what does the company want to offer the customer? The price is important of course: what is a good price for the product in correlation to competitors? Finally, a formal description of the value proposition has to be drafted. All these things can be taken care of with a couple of steps. First step is to analyse the market according to the value the customers seek. This means analysing what the customers are willing to pay to get the experience they consider superior. After segmenting the customers, the chances to convey remarkable value to them have to be determined. With this step it is wise to analyse and define which are the segments to focus on. Last step is to design the value proposition for the chosen segments that needs to be put to use in order to make the most out of the opportunities within each segment. With this step it is important to assess the value propositions very carefully before taking them to the customers.

4.3.2 Value creation process: relationships adding value

Creating an irresistible offer is not necessarily enough when building a relationship with a customer nor is relying on the brand itself. Additional measures have to be taken to ensure a lasting relationship with the customer: customers tend to rely on a supplier they feel provides them value. (Payne, 2008, 111.) Like we already discussed earlier on, acquiring new customers is also six times more expensive than keeping old customers (Smith & Wheeler, 2002, 28). This means that taking care of the existing relationships and enhancing them should be a major concern for a company. However, companies tend to focus their marketing mainly on acquiring new customers rather than building an even stronger bond with the old ones. The result is "you win some, you lose some". (Payne, 2008, 111.) When concentrating on enhancing the relationship with the customer, the customer is more likely to feel that they are getting good value for and are prone to circle back to the same company over and over again. This results in customer loyalty and with that, lowered costs on relationship upkeep and therefore, hopefully, better deals for the customer. (Grönroos, 2007, 161.) Hiking up the customer loyalty by only five percent has a profound effect on the lifetime profitability of a customer: the profitable growth can be as much as 95 percent (Smith & Wheeler, 2002, 28).

Customer loyalty is what companies should strive for: customer referrals, word-of-mouth and recommendations are an effective way to get new customers in many product and service environments. The key to securing loyal customers is in the customer feeling totally satisfied. The difference is remarkable when compared to customers who are simply satisfied: totally satisfied customers are more likely to return to products or services. (Payne, 2008, 114.) Satisfaction in itself though does not mean loyalty nor does loyalty mean new purchases by the same customer. Loyalty, in some cases, might even be forced: either there are no other options, it is inconvenient to get to other options or the quality overall is poor so there is no point in switching from a company to another. (Smith & Wheeler, 2002, 28-29.)

Payne (2008, 112) introduces “the loyalty ladder” as one look on the customer’s journey in building a relationship with the company. This figure describes the stages the customer goes through. However, all customers do not go through all stages and all customers are not ever worth the push. The one’s that make it to the higher levels though are the ones to take care of. It is also important to keep in mind that some steps require more effort and are more expensive for the company. Therefore, it is crucial once again to identify the customers who have the potential to rise to the higher levels.

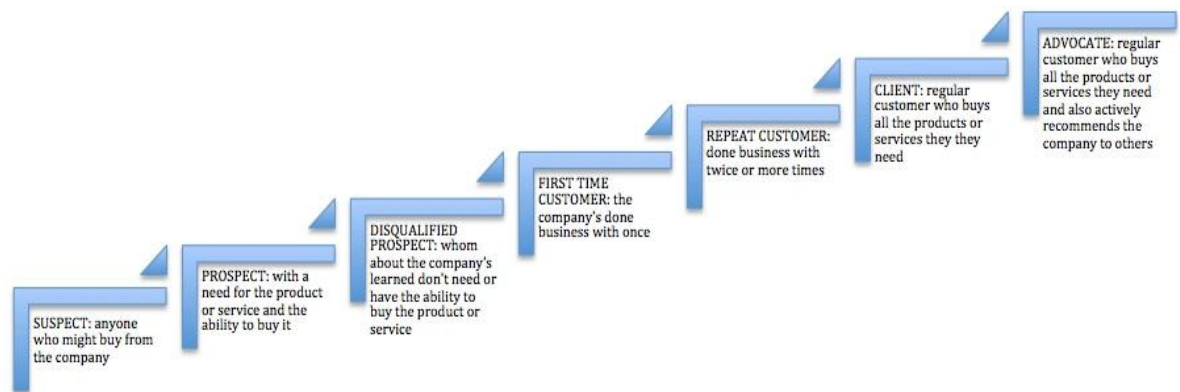


Figure 6. The Loyalty Ladder (Smith & Wheeler, 2002, 42.)

Smith & Wheeler (2002, 42.) explain the loyalty ladder as follows:

1. Suspect is anyone who might end up buying the company’s product or service but there is not enough information to define whether they will or they will not do so.
2. Prospect is someone who has the need to buy the company’s product or service and has the ability to do so.

3. Disqualified prospect is someone the company's learned does not after all need the product or service and / or does not have the ability to purchase it.
4. First time customer is someone who has bought from the company once. They are not yet loyal to the company and can turn to others.
5. Repeat customer has bought from the company twice or more times.
6. Client is a regular customer who comes back to the company and buys whatever the company sells them. They tend to stick with the company and do not opt for other options.
7. Advocate is a regular customer who, just as a client, buys whatever they are sold but in addition actively recommends the company to others and this way does the company's marketing and acquires new customers too.

Turning regular customers into advocates is what companies should concentrate on. By producing exceptional experiences and totally satisfied customers within the chosen target group the company has a chance to keep these customers loyal and finally turn them into advocates. Advocates appreciate quality over price and are immune to the offers of competitors. (Smith & Wheeler, 2002, 43-44.) Advocates also do marketing for the company: by telling about their exceptionally positive experiences about a product or service they inspire others to try them too. Referrals coming from other customers tend to be taken more seriously and believed to be true. Commercial information may spike the customer's interest but the referrals coming from other customers might be the breaking point to drive the prospects to try the company's product or service. (Payne, 2008, 114.)

4.3.3 Value creation process: delivering value

Smith & Wheeler (2002) rely on systematically working towards building customer loyalty. They state that customer loyalty has to be designed. Designing The Branded Customer Experience is about building a brand and turning loyal customers into advocates for that brand. They have determined a four step plan to land brand advocates.



Figure 7. Defining customer values (Smith & Wheeler, 2002, 43.)

First step is to define what the customer's values are. In order to do so the company must determine indisputably who the customers are they want to target. This requires segmenting the customers according to who are the most profitable one's for the company. After that the company has to find out what this chosen customer segment considers as value and how to deliver this value to the customers in a way that sets the company ahead of competitors in the customer's minds. Demographics do not seem to be the most successful way to segment the customers but relying on customer behaviour. Finding out what drives the customer to the company and where the revenue comes from is the key.

Studying the target group is the company setting themselves in the shoes of the customer: what are their expectations, what is the experience they get when buying the company's product or service, how is the company succeeding in delivering what the customer seeks? The information collected is crucial since it tells the company what is going right and what is going wrong and gives the company a chance to act on the information. After understanding the customer's point of view, the company can start drafting a brand promise, which tells the customer what they can expect to get if they choose the company's product or service. It tells the customer what the company's managers have decided the company will deliver to the customer and the company must then work relentlessly to do so. The brand promise must appear valuable to the target customer. It must also address one of the levels of needs by Maslow and fulfil the customer's expectations. (Smith & Wheeler, 2002. 44-50.) Robinson & Etherington (2006, 8-9.) point out that according to Maslow's theory a person can only progress to higher levels of hierarchy if their basic needs are met. Struggling to fulfill the basic physiological needs is rare though in the modern societies and therefore it is fulfilling the emotional needs that makes a company appealing to the customer. For example, a service process gone wrong might not only affect the person's physiological needs but also their need for recognition.

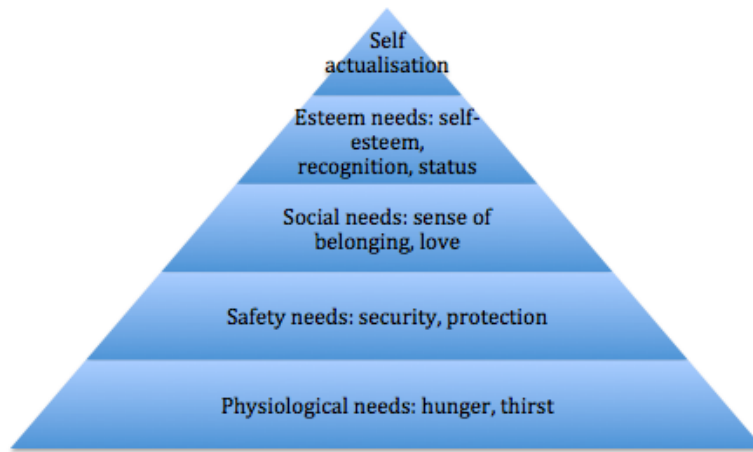


Figure 8. Maslow's hierarchy of needs. (Robinson & Etherington, 2006. 8.)

Smith & Wheeler (2002, 44-50) define that the road to customer loyalty is paved with succeeding in delivering the brand promise or even exceeding expectations on a daily basis. Robinson & Etherington (2002, 11) point out that it all comes down to how the customer is made to feel. Smith & Wheeler (2002. 49-51) continue to explain that a designed brand promise could help in the process. The brand promise can be seen as a guideline for the employees of the company: this is what we promise and this is what has to be delivered. The brand promise must also be taken seriously in the sense that it has to be delivered every day.

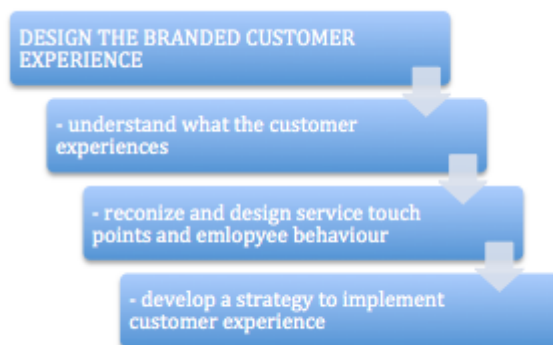


Figure 9. Designing the experience (Smith & Wheeler, 2002, 43.)

After the first step is completed it is time to start designing the branded customer experience. This phase requires analysing, creativity, precision, owning up to the process and idea and overall stepping in the customer's shoes, keeping in mind that the most important thing is what the customer feels happened. Going through all the touchpoints where the company and the customer interact and engineering the customer's way

through the process will show as better service and help the customer to feel they have gotten an extraordinary experience. (Smith & Wheeler, 2002, 51.)

Payne (2008, 128) also calls for companies to set themselves apart from the ordinary image of developing and manufacturing the product, selling it and providing service if needed. Companies should instead see the process as a means to deliver value in a whole rather than just selling a product and providing the obligatory service concerning the product.

There are some pointers to keep in mind managing the experience: A thing to remember is to finish strong. Customers tend to remember the things that happened last so making sure they leave with a smile on their face is important. Secondly, if there is a part of the experience that is unpleasant for the customer it should be taken care of in the beginning. This way the customer does not leave with a bad memory as their last. Thirdly gathering the boring or unpleasant things in one and spreading the nicer things along the way makes it seem the experience last longer and makes the unpleasant things feel a bit less unpleasant. For example, queuing for a long time to get service does not seem so awful if there is something along the way to keep the customer occupied. It is also worth a while to give the customer the feeling that they have a chance to control the process somehow even though the company is the one pulling the strings after all. Finally sticking to routines helps: people find comfort in routines and doing things the way they already know (Smith & Wheeler, 2002, 51-54.) Storbacka and Lehtinen (2001, 59-60.) point out that it is also important to pay attention to details. Since encounters with customers consist of relationship activities it is necessary to make sure the activities are fine tuned to fit the purpose. According to Storbacka and Lehtinen (2001, 59-60) the factors affecting the customer's experience are their own knowledge and occurring emotions, employee's actions and the actual setting of the activities. Paying close attentions to the details within these sections makes it more likely to give the customers an extraordinary experience even when they are not the first time around.

Implementing the customer experience is a process that requires precision. How is the experience communicated to the customer? Which equipment, technology or training is needed to make sure the customer gets what the company wants them to get? Planning the implementation process is important too before actually acting on it. (Smith & Wheeler, 2002, 51-54.)



Figure 10. Equipping employees and delivering value (Smith & Wheeler, 2002, 43.)

Smith & Wheeler (2002, 60-63.) explain that the next step is to concentrate on delivering the value consistently and making sure the staff is capable to do so. Providing employees with the means to deliver the customer experience is crucial and not only in the employee level but also from the top. The company executives must understand and experience the customer experience themselves to be able to guide employees to deliver. They also must take care that the employees have extensive knowledge and skills, organizational support, equipment and passion to work in a way that makes the customers experience the intended. Therefore, it is important to adjust employee training to cover the company in question and not just to rely on general training: what do WE want and how are WE going to deliver this to OUR customers rather than how things are usually done in a company service wise. The hiring process counts in this as well. Hiring the right kind of people for the right kind of job might be just the thing to pick up the game. No employee can deliver value in the way the company wishes unless they are passionate about their work and want to do so. Employees must also be able to show empathy, to set themselves in the role of the customer to personally know what the customer wants. Employees must also have the skills to give the customer what they seek and also a permission to perform actions required.

Storbacka and Lehtinen (2001. 127.) point out the importance of transparency in management. Making sure that the information needed to deliver the wanted result is available to those who need it and they know and want to use it is necessary, keeping in mind that what the customer sees is the organization as a whole and not it's pieces individually.

Performance and quality must be assessed by the whole organization. Since there are a lot of people contributing to the value delivering process it is important to make sure everyone does their part. This happens best if everyone participates in taking care of quality. (Grönroos, 2007, 122-123.)



Figure 11. Sustaining and enhancing performance (Smith & Wheeler, 2002, 43.)

Smith & Wheeler (2002, 65) remind that in order to keep the loyal customers coming back the customer experience must be delivered successfully over and over again. This requires continuous assessment of the experience and processes. Since the needs of the customer might change over time so must the experience as well.

Ideally no mistakes should happen if the process is well planned and executed. However, since it is people as employees and customers and with technology involved something unexpected might happen. Important is to recover from the setback and turn it from relationship threatening situation into a relationship fortifying one. Problems should be preferably taken care of before the customer leaves: customers rarely take the effort to formally complain, they just switch to another supplier. Nevertheless, an effective service recovery process can help keep the customer even if the quality has suffered. A working service recovery process relies on assessing service processes to spot weaknesses, taking care of problems swiftly and learning from them to make sure the same thing does not happen again. (Grönroos, 2007, 129-131.)

4.3.4 Challenges of creating value and customer loyalty

Smith & Wheeler (2002, 31-32) point out that nowadays satisfaction is anticipated and taken as a norm. That makes it difficult to turn customers loyal: why would a customer choose this company when they might be just as satisfied with another?

Many loyalty cards can be seen as just a way to get special promotions or price reductions. This means that one customer might have several loyalty cards of companies that consider each other competitors. These loyalty programs concentrating on benefits concerning price are widely accessible to customers and are quite often free or charge or the cost is very low. The benefits of loyalty programs are also poorly known by the customers.

This means that customers, even though satisfied, might turn to a competitor despite the loyalty card if it is convenient for them. If the loyalty programs do not deliver the desired outcome for the company, they just end up swallowing money from the company without turning customers loyal. (Smith & Wheeler, 2002, 28-30.)

Payne (2002, 115) mentions “terrorists” as a problematic aspect of creating value and trying to turn customers loyal. Terrorists oppose a threat to a company’s loyalty strategy. These people are customers who have had a bad experience with the company that was not handled well and left the customers feeling negative to the extent that they actively spread their story of an unsuccessful event forward. Internet also gives its own spin on the matter: it is easy to speak up on the internet to a large crowd at once. Payne reminds that companies should, besides concentrating on creating loyal customers, keep in mind that people who complain point out the weak spots in their service systems and this way help in the process of creating better experiences.

5 Presentation of the project

In this empirical part of the thesis we will explain how the birthday party event was planned, organized and executed. This empirical part is based on our own observations and notes collected and used during all of the phases of the project.

5.1 The planning of the actual event

In this chapter we will discuss the planning process of the Sushibar + Wine 6-year birthday party. The discussion will be based on our own findings and the theoretical framework of this thesis. When starting to put together the plan for the event we decided to proceed with CRM processes. The CRM processes helped us to figure out who, what and where but also to analyse our goals and objectives for the event. As a guide we used the help of theoretical part of the event planning in order to succeed in the event organizing.

5.1.1 Planning process of the event

The whole process of planning and organizing the event took us approximately just over two months. The idea emerged in October in a restaurant staff meeting when one of the restaurant owners told us that Sushibar + Wine Freda restaurant's five-year birthday was coming up. Since he was tied up in other projects and did not have the time to plan and organize the party, volunteers were gladly accepted. After the meeting we discussed the idea just the two of us and decided that we can organize the party together. We let the owners of the restaurant know that we can take care of the birthday party and also asked if we could make our thesis about the planning, organizing and executing the event. The owners of the restaurant gave us a permission to organize the party and also to write our thesis about it.

In October we mainly focused on planning the event. We set up a meeting with Matti Sarkkinen (the other owner of the restaurant) to discuss the birthday party. The meeting took place on October 9th and was held at another restaurant of his. We went through some questions that we had concerning the planning of the party. After a long discussion, the venue changed from Sushibar + Wine Freda restaurant to Sushibar + Wine Korjaamo. Also, the number of invited guests hiked up by over a hundred and the party was changed from Sushibar + Wine Freda's 5-year party to the whole Sushibar Restaurants Finland Oy -company's 6 -year birthday party.

5.1.2 Defining goals

With every event there has to be clear goals, aims and objectives and we acknowledged this right from the start. In the planning part we started to set goals for our project. The

first goal was to organize a memorable birthday party for the loyal customers of Sushibar + Wine. With organizing a successful birthday party, we wanted to reward the clients and co-operators of Sushibar + Wine for staying as loyal customers for so long. We came to the conclusion, that by satisfying and showing appreciation towards the loyal customers, they will most likely keep coming to Sushibar + Wine for another six years also. Another object for the party that we set, was to find out if there is a demand for small and medium scale events in restaurants and how we could develop these events further. We both agreed that by organizing something special, out of the ordinary, we could differentiate Sushibar + Wine from its competitors, in case the event is successful. In addition, one obvious goal was to plan, organize and execute the event as well as possible in the given timeframe. For every week we created smaller objectives, tasks and timetables that we had to reach. We understood that in order to create a positive and memorable event, we had to plan the event according to the set goals. With the goals and objectives, we set for the event, we tried to keep in mind that they have to have the attributes of being SMART goals. The goals for the event are presented in the Figure 12 below and explained how SMART they are. SMART goal attributes are explained in the middle of the figure.



Figure 12. Our own main goals for the event

Getz (2012, 46) explained that to be called as a special event, the event needs to be unique, meet the target objectives, embrace various elements of style such as theming and attract the eye of stakeholders and the audience. We tried to keep this advice in our mind when starting to plan the event. Special events also can be put into four categories

based on the concept of the event, like we already discussed in the chapter 3.2 - Different types of events. The categories are personal, leisure, cultural and organizational events. There can be overlapping in these categories (Shone and Parry, 2013, 7) From the organizers point of view, the birthday party event definitely belongs in two of these categories: personal event and organizational event. It is a personal event, since the event was organized to celebrate a birthday party of the restaurant. Additionally, it can be seen also as an organizational event because of its nature of an organization to organize the event in order to retain good relations with the attendees and ensure its market place by boosting image. There are also features of a leisure event, since from the participant's point of view it was an event where the participants could go to have fun.

5.1.3 Defining the target group

With a fundamental question of who our customers are and who we want to invite to the party, we decided use different target group than with previous events that had been held for our customers. Usually the previous events have targeted people who have registered to Sushibar + Wine's regular customer mailing list that has over a thousand recipients. Invitations sent through the mailing list have resulted in approximately 100-150 RSVP: s and about 50-100 people have showed up to the events. Since there are so many registrations on the mailing list, the turn up sounded a bit alarming. Is there any point in having a birthday party if only a handful of people show up?

Since we have worked for the company for several years we have noticed that all of our three restaurants have regular customers who we see at least once a week, usually even more often. We decided that these are the people that are exactly the people we want to invite: the people who genuinely visit us very often and keep coming back over and over again. Since the staff is in quite friendly terms with most of the regular customers it seemed like a brilliant idea to invite them so both staff and the regulars can interact in a more non-formal environment without the exact roles of a staff member and customer.

Another group we wanted to invite to keep relations warm with was the suppliers and collaborating companies such as accounting company, since we thought it would be nice for the contact people in these companies to meet face to face with the staff they deal with on a weekly basis.

5.1.4 Marketing actions

To make sure the birthday of the company would not go unnoticed even from customer who were not invited to the party we came up with a theme assortment. The idea of the assortment was to remind our customers of the old favourites we used to have on the

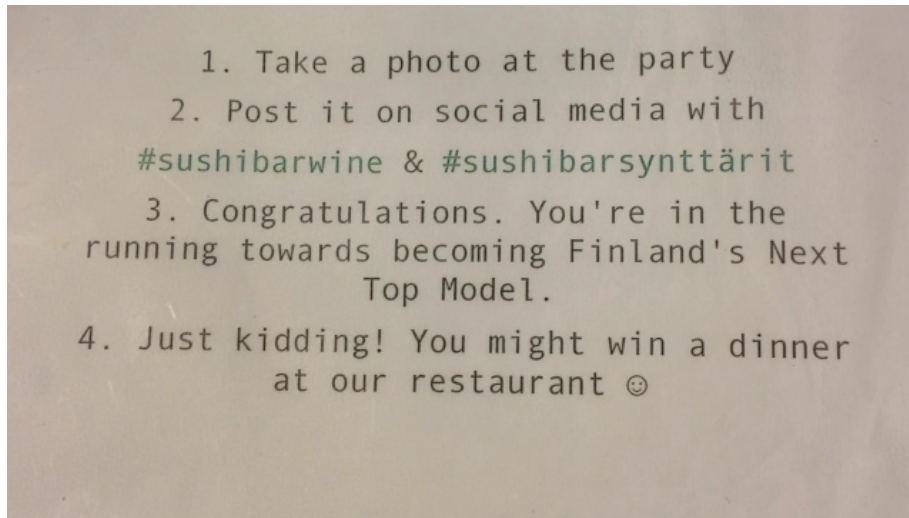
menu and this way make them feel they have been a part of the company's journey in the previous years. The menu had a connection to our now-gone restaurant in Linnanmäki and also our restaurant in Korjaamo via some chosen items on the assortment and this way add to the story that the staff could tell customers about why and how the assortment was formed. The assortment was named "Memory Lane" to accentuate that it was formed of favourites from the old menus. With the presentation of the assortment we collaborated with a Finnish designer Teppo Lakaniemi and his brand .Tebian. We already had some wooden boards in use for the presentation of dishes but since this was a special assortment we asked .Tebian for some specially made boards with a burn mark of his brand on the top. The birthday assortment was served only on these specific boards.



Picture 2. The birthday assortment "Memory Lane" and .Tebian board.

Before the event the company's Instagram page was given some extra attention as social media marketing action. At the beginning of November, the Instagram account was changed from just Sushibar + Wine Korjaamo to cover all three restaurants. Since social media is nowadays a popular marketing channel we decided to start using Instagram more often to share pictures and videos from the restaurants to give the customers a better view on how we do things. We started gathering followers well before the event since the plan was to promote the birthday assortment with only posting photos from the making and taking pictures of the assortment building up to the launch. The Instagram account was used to promote other things as well during the campaign time. The company's Facebook page was used to promote the birthday assortment in several posts during the campaign time.

We also decided to utilize social media at the birthday party. We made some posters for the party and attached them on selected spots the tables and walls telling attendees to post a picture from the party with the hashtags #sushibarwine and #sushibarsynttärät. By posting a picture with these hashtags the attendees were able to participate in a draft to win a gift card for dinner for two. The competition resulted in 31 photos all together.



Picture 3. The social media raffle.

After the event the Instagram page was, in addition to “normal” posts, used to share pictures from the party and to announce the winner of the gift card. The company Instagram page will continue to be a marketing channel in the future.

5.1.5 Budgeting for the event

According to the event planning theories, every event needs a budget. However, we were not given a specific budget. Therefore, we created our own budget to ensure that the event would cost as little as possible. We used our common sense when purchasing decorations, booking performers or making orders for the event. We recorded our spending's into an Excel sheet in order to keep track of the money that we had used and on what. For bigger investments we asked the permission from the restaurant owner. Since Sushibar + Wine collaborates with the wine supplier Viinitie, we managed to negotiate a price reduction of 30% for all the wines ordered for the birthday party. We also negotiated a special price on fish and other seafood with Kalatukku Eriksson. These price reductions made a difference in the total budget. The biggest investment for the event besides the food and the drinks was the live artist. We managed to keep the budget affordable, considering the size of the birthday party and some of the things, for example glasses bought for the party have gone into use in all the three restaurants afterwards. The event was a host event,

meaning that the event was free of charge for the attendees and therefore no straight profit was not meant to be collected from the event.

The total costs of the event consisted of food, drinks, decoration, equipment and supplies and also staff costs. The cost of the event when calculated afterwards settled at 4800€.

The costs are divided as following in the Figure 13 below:



Figure 13. Estimation of the costs of the birthday party

5.2 Organizing the event

In this part of the thesis we will concentrate on the actual organizing of the event and explain what steps we took and how we proceeded with the event organizing.

5.2.1 The setting of the event

Right from the beginning we knew we wanted to keep the birthday party non-formal, a nice cocktail party type of thing. The party was supposed to take place at Sushibar + Wine Freda, in Kamppi but after we gave it some thought and had a meeting with Matti Sarkinen, we decided that Freda was quite too small for a birthday party of this size. After that the location was set to Sushibar + Wine Korjaamo. This gave us a lot more options regarding the event: the space is bigger, more versatile and we would have the opportunity to use Culture Factory Korjaamo's spaces and equipment too. Not to mention the kitchen at Sushibar + Wine Korjaamo is the biggest of the three restaurants so it has the capability to cater to a bigger audience. The location also gave us a chance to serve warm food,

since the Korjaamo restaurant kitchen is the only one of three restaurants which has an oven and a grill. At Sushibar + Wine Korjaamo it was also possible to keep the restaurant closed the whole day to get more time for preparations since the lunch is more quiet than at Fredrikinkatu restaurant.

The theme was chosen accordingly to celebrate Sushibar + Wine turning six years, so the colours for the party were chosen to be green, white and black. All the decorations were decided based on the theme colours. The invitations were designed with Sushibar + Wine logo and colours. We also wanted to bring in elements of the history of Sushibar + Wine by creating a memory lane of pictures gathered from the previous six years. The memory lane was also a surprise and also a thank you for the owners and old employees who have been a part of Sushibar + Wine over the years.

Most of the decorations were made with “do it yourself”-principle since we wanted to keep the costs as low as possible. The balloons used for decoration had to be bought ready with the suitable equipment to fill them up and gather in balloon clouds around the venue.

5.2.2 Event organizing timeframe and phases

In this subchapter of the thesis, we will go through the most important phases that we took from the beginning to the end. The most important phases are described in the figure 14 below and explained in depth after the figure.

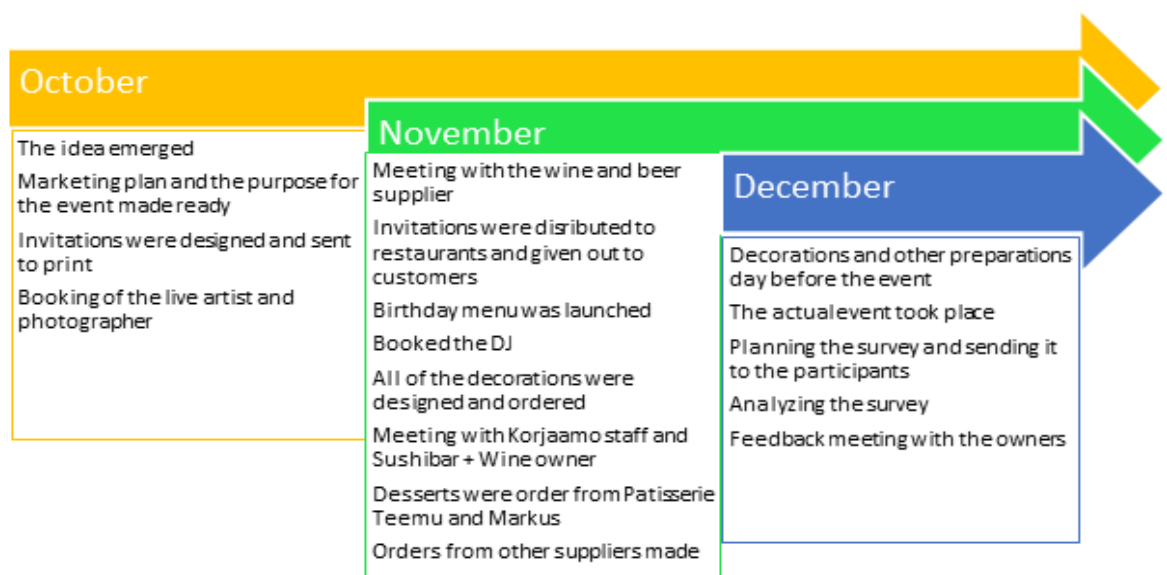


Figure 14. The most important phases of the event

When we started organizing the event, it was clear for us that we would use the help of our contacts and friends to set up the event in the most cost-efficient way. In October we had a meeting with a former Sushibar + Wine employee, who is skilled in graphic design. We provided her with ideas on how we would like the invitations to look like. She designed the invitations for the birthday party with a short notice and shortly after that, they were sent to print. The printing company that we used was also a workplace for a former employee, so we managed to get a good deal for the printing. All together 250 invitations were sent to print but we decided to only give out 200 to avoid overbooking. The invitation is in the attachments. (Attachment 1) We sorted out that since the event was not a public event and the size of attendees was quite small but also, the location and the company had all the needed permits, we did not have any need for applying special permits to the event.

After the invitations were taken care of and the location was sorted out, we started looking for a performer for the event. We went through our contacts and pondered our options regarding on what type of an artist we wanted to have. We contacted a couple of artists asking their preferable fee for performing a couple of sets at the party. Eventually, we booked a live artist, who was a friend of the other owner of the restaurant and was recommended by him. Since one of our own waitresses is a talented photographer, it was clear that we asked her to handle the photo shooting at the party. In October we started to develop ideas about the time schedule and program of the event. At first we were planning to organize a charity auction as a program. In the auction we were planning to sell all the unnecessary, but still usable goods (such as plates) from the restaurant which were not in active use anymore. The profit would have gone to preserving the Baltic sea or salmon. In early stages of the organizing process, we had to reject this idea because after conducting an inventory on the goods, there were not enough items we could have used and not enough time to gather auction items as donations from collaborating companies.

In early November the invitations were distributed to all three restaurants with instructions to whom they should be handed to. We also came up with a mailing list of company collaborators, friends and old employees and promptly started mailing the invitations to them by mail. To other restaurants and to some competitors we delivered the invitations personally ourselves. Since most of Sushibar + Wine's alcohol, especially the wines, come from a wine supplier called Viinitie, we set up a meeting with one of their contact persons. At the meeting we sorted out what deals we could make on wine and beer. After a brief negotiation, we managed to make a deal to get around 100 beers as a free promotion. Both white and red wine we also negotiated to a good price.

Booking of the DJ went really smoothly, since we contacted a DJ who was a friend of ours and he happily came to play to the event. Since we are not professionals with other beverages besides wine, we contacted our friend from a cocktail company Son of a Punch to come up with a punch, that was designed accordingly to the wishes of the owner. These investments did not put a big hole in our budget which was the one of the reasons for using our contacts. Additionally, we wanted to use our contacts and friends, so they could also have visibility at the event.

In November we had one meeting with the managerial staff from Korjaamo to sort out all the necessary issues concerning the party. We managed to make a deal to borrow their coat checks, some tables, table clothes and some crockery for the evening. Besides the meeting with the managerial staff, we kept contact via email regarding any issues related to the event. We had a clear picture in our mind concerning the decorations for the event. All the equipment for the decorations were purchased throughout November but were put together by ourselves just a day before the event. We definitely wanted to have some kind of photo frame at the party, where people could go and take their photo and post it on social media. Photo booths turned out to be too expensive in our opinion, so we decided to make a photo frame of our own. The blank frame was ordered and picked up from Puite Oy in Kalasatama. We ordered the balloons from Ilmapalokeskus and picked them up from Espoo a day before the event. Some other decoration was bought from Sinooperi and Tiger. For goods, supplies and food orders we used Sushibar + Wine collaborators: Dieta, Heinon tukku, Koff and Kalatukku Eriksson. All of the orders were done couple of days before the event, after we knew the RSVP's for the party, so it was easier to calculate the amount of goods, supplies and foods needed. Additionally, some flowers were used as a decoration. The actual day of the event will be discussed better in the next chapter 5.3 - Executing the event. The survey was conducted after the event and will be also discussed later on.

5.3 Executing the event

Preparing for the party took a lot of time the previous day and also on the day of the party. We spent the previous day at the Korjaamo restaurant prepping decorations, writing and printing menus and gathering things we needed for example tables, chairs, equipment for the buffet and dessert tables. We planned on getting as much done the previous day as possible since we were thinking the next day is going to be busy anyway. We got most of the decorations in their places the previous day: for example, filling up the balloons took a lot of time.

On the day of the party we arrived at the Korjaamo restaurant at 10.00 to pick up where we left off the previous day. One of the owners lent us his car for the day and he brought it

to Korjaamo around noon. We left for Heinon Tukku wholesale right away to gather the things we were missing. We visited our restaurants at Uudenmaankatu and Freda as well to get some wine and water glasses and other necessities. We also picked up some flowers from a florist for decoration. We ran a bit late when arriving back from gathering the things we needed and started setting up right away since there was a lot left to do and we were starting to feel the pressure of running out of time. Luckily the restaurant manager of the Korjaamo restaurant had arrived while we were taking our round gathering things and had already started setting up. The waitresses for the party arrived at 16.00 and we issued everyone their areas they would be responsible for. With everyone pulling their weight we miraculously got everything done right on time before people started arriving.

The birthday party started at 17.30 and a lot of people started coming even ten minutes before the actual starting time. Both owners of the restaurant, Matti Sarkkinen and Anders Westernholm and also the restaurant manager of Uudenmaankatu Sushibar + Wine, Anna Talgren and the restaurant manager of Sushibar + Wine Korjaamo, Emilia Kennäsmäki, were greeting and welcoming the guests that arrived to the birthday party from 17.30-18.00. The guests were given a glass of sparkling wine or non-alcoholic wine at the arrival. After handshakes and welcomes, the participants of the party were informed that they have a chance to go and take a photo at a photo frame with a photographer.



Picture 4. Decoration

At the beginning we had a photo frame set up for customers to get their picture taken inside a “Polaroid frame”. The location of the photo frame was set in front of the green wall in Korjaamo, since the green colour suited the Sushibar + Wine colour scheme perfectly and it was located right next to the coat checks at the entrance. The photographer took photo frame pictures for approximately 45 minutes from the moment people started arriving. The “Polaroid frame” we made ourselves to cut the costs on the photo frame. We searched the options of renting a ready-made, operational photo frame before the event but discarded the idea because of the expensive price. The photo frame pictures were posted later on the Sushibar + Wine Facebook page and people were given a chance to tag one another in the pictures.



Picture 5. Photo frame and background

The buffet table was set right from the beginning of the event at 17.30. People slowly started moving towards the table after a little while a queue was formed by the table. The buffet ran out of food to serve around 19.00. More about the problems concerning the buffet table will be discussed later on in the chapter 5.3.1 - Challenges of the event. With the placing of the buffet we decided to go with a corridor right next to the kitchen. This way we could make a two sided buffet table with easy access both to customers and for us to refill the food when needed.

On entrance the guests were served a glass of sparkling wine to start the evening off and to mark the celebration. Other drinks such as wine, beer and soft drinks were available at the drinks stand throughout the evening. The wines and beers were served by the waitresses either going around at the party and filling the guests' glasses and also from a

drink stand that we set up for the event. At the drink stand the guests had a chance to refill the punch themselves or have some soft drinks. We also made a ginger-lemon-apple punch for the party, since one of the owners said every good birthday party has to have punch as a drink. The punch recipe was made in collaboration with cocktail bar 100 Dogs and Jere Vihervaara.



Picture 6. The buffet table

The dessert, coffee and tea was served straight after the buffet table food ran out around 19.00. The desserts were ordered from Patisserie Markus and Teemu. There were three small different flavoured pastries that the guest could choose from. The desserts were sacher, lemon-merengue cake and carrot care.



Picture 7. The dessert table.

With the scheduled programme we decided to go with only one artist with her pianist and outside of the artist performances, a DJ playing music in the background. We did not want the party to be too structured but to have a relaxed, non-formal atmosphere. The artist was scheduled to perform two half hour sets at 19.00 and at 20.30. The DJ played music before, in between starting from 17.30 and after the artist's performances until the party ended a bit over 22.00. We also asked one of the two owners of the Sushibar + Wine restaurants to give a little speech at the party to reflect on the 6 years of Sushibar + Wine. The owner's speech took place at 18.30.



Picture 8. The artist (Wanda) performing at the birthday party.

To incorporate customers into the programme we also set up a stand where they could make Japanese hand rolls called temaki with the instructions of one of our head chefs. At first people seemed a bit shy to participate but after a while got some courage and started making their own temakis. We had the temaki stand up for approximately an hour starting at 18.40.



Picture 9. The temaki stand.

With the scheduled programme ending at 21.00 we slowly started cleaning up and doing the dishes in the back. Guests started to leave after 21.00 and the venue was almost empty by 22.30. The last customers left around 23.00 and the cleaning was done by mid-night. After the event some of our staff stayed behind to celebrate Sushibar + Wine and the successful event themselves.

A summary of the event timetable is described in the figure 15 below:

Time	Program
17.30	The birthday party starts, DJ starts playing
17.30-18.00	Welcoming of the guests
17.30-19.00	The buffet table is served
17.30-18.15	Chance to take a picture at the photo frame with a photographer
18.30	Anders Westernholm gives out a speech
18.40-19.40	The temaki stand is operating
19.00-19.30	Wanda (the live artist) performs
19.00	The dessert, coffee and tea is served
19.30	DJ starts playing again
20.30-21.00	Live artist performing
21.00	Cleaning up starts
23.00	The last guests leave

Figure 15. Summary of the event timetable

5.3.1 Challenges of the event

The event gave us a couple of challenges along the way. First problem occurred before the event had started: not all of the glasses ordered for the event had arrived meaning we were missing approximately a hundred sparkling wine glasses. The problem was quickly solved though with the help of Korjaamo Bar & Grill restaurant's glasses they lent us for the evening.

As the event started we noticed right away that people arrived all straight at the beginning and not through the evening as we expected. The party started at 17.30 and we had a full house by 18.15. This proved problematic for the sparkling wine station at the entrance since there were not enough sparkling wine glasses to serve the wine to everyone at the same time. We ended up picking used glasses very frequently off the tables ran them through the dishwasher as fast as possible. Luckily this problem did not show to the customers.

Everyone arriving at the same time caused some problems with the buffet and wine stations as well. The buffet table was ready and stacked up when the party started but so many people at the same time caused quite a queue which resulted in people having to wait for a while to get their food. The buffet table was also emptied in record breaking time and the kitchen had to fill it up again fast. After two rounds of additions from the kitchen the food started running out with a lot of people still hungry. The kitchen started making more food on the go. They decided to opt for salads since they were a lot faster to make than rolling nigiri or maki. We noticed that the reason behind the food running out was people taking more than they were supposed to. We did not put any signs on the table saying how many pieces were reserved per person since we felt it would resemble a school cafeteria rather than a party and this was our mistake. Apparently people appreciate Sushibar + Wine food so much that they had reserved their hunger to be tamed at our buffet table. We relied on people realizing that since the food is free and it is a cocktail party that they are not supposed to take several plates and still go get more after that but the buffet was rather about tasting new things and taking one piece of each. The food made on the go lasted surprisingly long but still some people were left out. This caused annoyance in some people who arrived briefly after the food was gone.

The rush at the beginning also caused some hassle at the drinks station: everyone wanting something to drink at the same time ended up in queuing. This luckily balanced out quite fast with people getting one drink and then taking a place a bit further to enjoy their food and wine.

The rush at the beginning also proved that we did not have enough staff at the party. We ourselves were supposed to act as hosts and mingle with guests and small talk our way into making them feel more as friends than customers. Unfortunately, because of the unexpected rush we both got stuck with actually working as waitresses taking care of drinks, buffet table, desserts, coffee and washing dishes. We got to leave the chores only when some of the guests started leaving and the situation calmed down a bit. Luckily when asking from friends and family members who were at the party they said they did not notice any shortage in staff during the evening.

5.3.2 Learning outcomes of the event

What we figured out due to the unexpected problems at the event was that one can never be too prepared. Determining how many staff members are needed to work the party was hard in the first place and proved to be even more of a challenge after noticing that we thought we had enough but actually did not. Luckily experience helps with this aspect so the next time we will be wiser on the matter and know to get more people for an event of this scale.

The situation with the food running out too fast because people were eating more than they should have needs to be resolved somehow when organizing future events. We talked about this with the kitchen and tossed around ideas of maybe the chefs standing behind the table giving out the food so they can apportion it on the plates. Another option could be to hand out plates with food already apportioned on them. Us and the kitchen did not like the idea of putting a sign on the table saying how many pieces everyone can have before the party and did not like it after the party either despite the problems with the buffet. Backup solutions for problem situations such as the food running out and the glasses running out could be given a thought in advance: What do we do if these things do not go as planned?

We also figured out that with an event of this scale it is wise to make the orders from suppliers for the event at the earliest possible time and it would be best to unload the orders ourselves. This way the situation with the sparkling wine glasses that never arrived could be avoided and everything could be double checked before the event.

What we learned about planning and organizing an event is that time is of the essence and there will probably never be enough of it. The day before the party and also the day of the party were hectic and we barely had time to even make ourselves look presentable so preparing everything possible for the event well in advance is essential. Also giving a deeper thought to problem situations well before the event is in order: how to handle problems when they occur and who takes care of what in these situations?

Also communication throughout the group organizing the event is crucial. There were some minor issues along the way that were due to poor communication or someone just assuming something rather than asking about the matter. The more people taking part in the process the more it takes effort to get messages through to everyone about everything necessary. For example, a WhatsApp group could have been formed of all the people taking part in organizing the event (us, owners, kitchen staff) to make sure everyone is on the same page.

6 Feedback on the event

One of the main objectives and goals for organizing the event was to create a successful, fun and pleasant event for the regular customers and companies that Sushibar + Wine collaborates with but also to get insight on how Sushibar + Wine could develop small and medium scale events in the future. Therefore, we wanted to evaluate the experience of the attendees right after the event took place. In order to evaluate and to find out how satisfied our customers and collaborators were with the actual event and give them an opportunity to provide us and Sushibar + Wine ideas on what kind of events to create in the future, an online feedback survey was set up.

6.1 Online survey

Online survey is fairly easy to set up and does not cost much. It is a quick way to gather information from a target group of people. The survey we set up and created on Webropol, an internet survey creator. The survey can be found from the attachments (Attachment 2). The online survey was addressed to the attendee's emails who emailed their RSVP for attending the event to the company's email address. The link for the survey was send via email and addressed straight to the recipient with a message where the attendees were asked to answer the survey in order for Sushibar + Wine to develop their restaurant services further on and enhance the customer service. The message can be found from the attachments (Attachment 3.)

According to Heikkilä (2008) the response rate for a surveys is much higher when the actual questionnaire of the survey is well planned and thoroughly thought through and also it has to be very understandable for the participants. Heikkilä (2008) suggests that the following points support reliability of the survey:

- Clearly and accurately defined problem
- Clearly defined universe
- Well planned questionnaire
- High response rate

(Heikkilä, T. 2008)

The online survey consisted out of four questions in total, which two of them were Likert Scale questions and two were open answer questions. In the survey, the questions number 1-2 were mandatory for the recipients. The survey responses were given out anonymously to make sure the respondents would reveal their honest opinions and develop-

ment ideas. No geographical questions were asked, such as age or gender, since we did not consider them to provide any necessary information when analysing the feedback.

Altogether 125 requests to answer the survey were sent. The survey was available for a week on Webropol before we started to analyse the answers from the responses. The responses were analysed with the help of Webropol's own analysing system and the use of our own mathematic skills. The response rate was 39,2%, since 49 out of 125 participants answered. In our opinion the response rate was quite decent. In addition, we think that the survey results can be seen quite reliable and the feedback was relevant. The number of responses was a pleasant surprise, since we did not expect to get this many answers. All of the 49 respondents gave an answer to the questions number 1-2, since they were mandatory. However, the question number three got only 29 responses and the question number four got 34 comments altogether. Below the results of the survey will be discussed. You can view the whole survey in the attachments (Attachment 2). We will not reveal the open question answers, since they are only for our information to develop Su-shibar + Wine further on.

6.2 Online survey results

The first question of the survey was following: how would you assess these features at the event? With the chart below we wanted to find out the attendees own personal experiences and feelings of four different features of the event. The features that were analysed concerning the event, were atmosphere, program, food and wine. The respondents were given a chance to choose a number from a Likert Scale assessing the feature. Numbers in the rating were from 0-5, so they were given six options to choose from. On this scale the rating goes accordingly so that, 0. I can't say, 1. Bad, 2. Mediocre 3. Okay, ,4. Good and 5. Excellent. The results of the question are discussed below.

1. Miten arvioisit tapahtumassa seuraavat asiat?

Number of respondents: 49

	0En osaa sa- noa	1huon o	2välttäv ä	3kohtalaine n	4hyv ä	5erinomaine n	Total ans- wers	Avera- ge
Ilmapiiri	0	0	1	1	19	28	49	5.51
Ohjel- ma	1	0	1	7	25	15	49	5.04
Ruoka	3	0	3	3	9	31	49	5.2
Juoma	1	0	0	2	13	33	49	5.55
Total	5	0	5	13	66	107	196	5.33

Figure 16. Question number 1 for the internet survey

The value 0 represents "I can't say", but it still has to be taken into consideration when calculating the averages in the question number one. Since 0 can't be calculated we transferred the value 0 to represent the value 1. When calculating the averages, we used the following values: 1. No opinion, 2. Bad, 3. Mediocre 4. Okay 5. Good and 6. Excellent. Because of this the averages are more than 5.

As the figure demonstrates, the atmosphere was assessed to be 5,51 on average, with 28 (57%) of the respondents choosing excellent. The worst points were given to the program, which got 5,04. The food got an 5,02 average and drinks 5,55. This makes the total average of 5,33.

The goal for the second question was to find out what was the overall grade of the event. The question was following: What overall grade would you give for the birthday party? In this question the Likert Scale was used again from 1-5, this time starting from number 1. Excellent, 2. Good, 3. Okay, 4. Mediocre and 5. Bad.

2. Minkä kokonaisarvosanan antaisit syntymäpäiväjuhille?

Number of respondents: 49

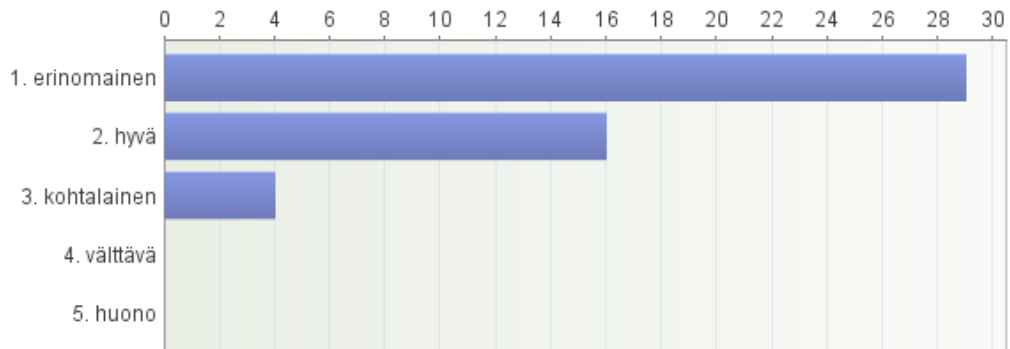


Figure 17. Question number two for the survey

29 (59%) out of the 49 respondents gave the overall experience grade 1, which was excellent. 16 out of 49 (33%) respondents gave the grade 2 and four respondents (8%) answered 3. We realized later on that the scale should have been the other way around, with 5 being best and 1 worst, so the average would be easier to demonstrate. The average on this scale is 1,49, which might be easier to understand as 3,85 if the scale was the other way around.

The third question was an open answer question. The aim of the question was to find out what kind of events our customers want to experience in the future. 29 respondents out of 49 gave an answer to this question, which makes 59%. The question was not mandatory, since we did not want the respondents to feel any pressure to answer in case they had no improvement ideas. The question was following: What kinds of events would you hope for Sushibar + Wine to organize in the future?

3. Millaisia tilaisuuksia toivoisit Sushibar + Winen järjestävän tulevaisuudessa?

Number of respondents: 29

Figure 18. Question number three for the survey

According to the answers to question number three, most of the respondents hoped for same kind of events in the future. Some were hoping for wine tasting and sushi making events, with some music performances added to them. Couple of the respondents mentioned that they would like to have events where everyone can participate in some action, not just sit in their own social groups.

In the last question of the survey, question number four, we asked for other comments and thoughts. In this question, the intention was to gather some positive and/or negative feedback about the event from the respondents. Number of 34 out of 49 respondents answered to this question, so 69% of the respondents.

4. Muita kommentteja?

Number of respondents: 34

Figure 19. Question number four for the survey

Many of the respondents wanted to thank us for organizing the event and thought that it was well planned and executed. Most of critique that the event got was about the food running out and people having to queue.

6.3 Reflections of the survey

After analysing the survey, we came to the conclusion that most of the feedback given through the survey was positive. None of the respondents gave the event a grade less than three (on a scale of one being excellent and five being the worst), which was brilliant in our opinion as event managers. The Webropol survey had all the relevant questions that we felt necessary to ask in order to analyse the birthday party and to get more insight on how to plan future events. Especially the responses to question number three can be used in the future to develop the restaurants event services. Even though not all the respondents answered the open answer questions, there were a lot of valuable comments that we highly appreciate. From the survey answers we got new development ideas that can be put in practise in the future. In question number four some of the respondents pointed out the mistakes that we had made, which we mostly already knew when conducting the survey.

The survey gave us and the restaurant valuable information how to plan next events. It also was nice to hear from the respondents that they mostly enjoyed the event and felt that it was well organized.

7 Conclusion and discussion

In this part of the thesis we will go through the overall results of organizing the birthday party, followed with a discussion of our own thoughts regarding our findings.

Overall the whole project can be considered successful. At the event, when asked, people seemed to be very happy about the party, the food and drinks and the program. People also seemed pleased that they were handpicked to attend the party. Through the survey our own beliefs were legitimized: these kinds of events are a welcomed addition to Sushi-bar + Wine's schedule and the regular customers hope to see more of special event in the future, whether it will be a birthday party, a gig, wine tasting, sushi courses or something else. Overall the demand for something out of the ordinary compared to a "normal" restaurant experience was clear.

After the event many regular customers who come by the Sushibar + Wine restaurants several times a week have said thank you to us and other staff members face to face for throwing such a nice party and many of them were eager to see the photos taken at the event. A few weeks after the event the owners decided that Sushibar + Wine is going to have a birthday party every year from now on and it will be the authors of this thesis who are going to be responsible for organizing such a party, in case they still are working for the company. The results in the long run remain to be seen: the owners (and staff) anxiously wait for other opportunities to come to reward the customers who come back over and over again and this way build an even stronger relationship with the familiar faces.

The birthday assortment was also successful: the birthday set almost matched the sales of the most popular assortment on the menu over the campaign period. The kitchen is now considering making these kinds of special campaigns a regular thing to give the customers something new every now and then in addition to normal menu changes three times a year. The sale of the board the birthday set was served on proved to be less successful. However, the unsold boards will come to use at the restaurants and this way promote the designer who they were ordered from. Future collaborations with the designer are likely but the product range is going to be thought through more closely. The designer has a pop up shop at one of the restaurants at the time this thesis is being written.

After the event, just to evaluate our own performance we decided to go through the 5 CRM processes Payne (2008, 32-33.) introduces and evaluate how we performed according to them.



Figure 20. Five CRM processes. (Payne, 2008. 33-34.)

When looking back we came to the conclusion that we got us (as organizers) and the target group figured out quite well: the attendees were in reality just who we wanted them to be and they represented Sushibar + Wine’s target group very well. A minor setback was some of the well-known faces of Finnish rap scene invited being unable to attend due to their own pre-Christmas party. These celebrities are friends of the owners and also regular customers at Sushibar + Wine restaurants and could have had an impact when thinking about the aspect of creating value. This was something we could not do anything about though.

We think our goals for the event were also quite realistic. We got information on if the events are more than welcomed addition and what kind of events the customers hope for. The pointers we figured out before the event about creating value also seemed quite accurate since we guessed that giving customers something out of the ordinary and special with only a limited number of invitations would make them feel appreciated and special. The imminent feedback showed that we succeeded in this at least in some way. Creating value is an ongoing process though and takes time, so making sure to keep on the path that we have created will probably have the desired outcome to some extent. It will remain to be seen if we were successful in creating value that shows in long-term.

Thinking about the communication between customers and us we thought that printed invitations were the best choice. After we started to get emails from people participating, we actually figured that it would have been wise to maybe ask the customers for their email and then email the invitation to them. That way we could have acquired new email addresses for our customer mailing, with the customer’s permission of course. Since our mailing list at the moment consists of over a thousand email addresses and has been

mostly compiled in the first three years of Sushibar + Wine, some of the addresses are surely dated and some of the people might not even visit our restaurants anymore. Collecting email addresses from people who actually visit the restaurant regularly would have been a smart move when planning future events and inviting people. We also discussed what the text in the invitation should be. We think some customers misunderstood the phrase food, drinks, programme and decided to “save their hunger” for the party. This ended up in some sort of a disaster with the food as we described before. We think that phrasing the text on the invitation more carefully could have had a different effect. Maybe just mentioning snacks or little taster bites would be a more suitable solution and would prepare people not to come to the party with a completely empty stomach.

The information collected after the event was gathered and analysed and sent to one of the owners. The information has already gone to use: the restaurant managers went through the feedback with the owner in one of their weekly meetings and started brainstorming about new events and also ways to create value in the future. The feedback will be taken into consideration when planning future events and making decisions about them.

Since customers who turn into advocates increase profitability (Payne, 2008. 136-137.), we find creating value through special events an important business move in the future. Creating value for customers and this way making them even more dedicated towards our restaurants make for long-lasting relationships and growing sales per customer. This way also the profitability and value for shareholders increases: the owners of Sushibar + Wine restaurants will be happy and the business will keep booming which in return makes supplies. At the moment the three restaurants are doing well as it is and customers seem to find their way to the restaurant without any bigger investments in creating value. This might not be the case forever so thinking ahead and making sure to stay on the successful path is something to put some effort into.

The creating value part of the project is a thing to observe in the future since it does not show right away but with continuous actions to create value. We do agree with the theories studied for this thesis that is wise to work with determination to turn regular customers into advocates. Targeting the customers, the restaurants already have is a logical solution since the capacity of the three restaurants is limited and therefore it is impossible to increase the number of customers indefinitely. Besides making sure the service process is top notch, the brand promise and product have to be impeccable and the company has to incorporate these aspects into its business plan.

Furthermore, it has to be said that not all of our event planning, organizing and executing went according to the principles of event management theory and guidelines. We created

a successful event without having a clear or specific budget, or too much evaluating the risks of organizing such an event. Thus, setting goals and objectives with the event was very beneficial tool when proceeding with the event. We would have not thought about setting goals and objectives along the way, without getting the information from the event management books. The theoretical part of event planning gave us some kind of “red line” which to follow with the planning and organizing the event, but the actual work was done using our own skills and knowledge before looking too much on the event planning framework on how the event should be set up. But we both feel that the theory of event management will help us in the long term if we decide to work with medium or big scale events in the future.

In addition to this, we do not agree on all of the CRM pointers. We don't think it requires special data warehouses or expensive and extensive systems to create a successful CRM programme for a company. Especially with a small company the extensive software, equipment, data collecting and storage seems expensive and over the top. We think that when it comes to CRM the most important parts to study and to invest in are the staff, the structures of the company and the processes without the large scale technological solutions. To study and alter the business plan according to the principles of creating value is what could make Sushibar + Wine even more successful than what is today.

8 Personal development

In this final part of the thesis we will discuss how the process of organizing the birthday party event felt, writing the thesis went, the challenges we faced along with it and our own personal learning outcomes.

We decided to write the thesis together, since we both had our studies almost at same point and were given a chance to do a commissioned thesis for Sushibar + Wine. We both knew each other's working styles and were confident that both could deliver the wanted result, without major issues. We acknowledged the fact from the beginning, that working on bigger project like this together, we both have to understand each other's working styles and combine our own accordingly to one another. We managed to have good communication between us and clearly assigned tasks though the whole process. In addition to that, we did not have any major disagreements concerning either the event or the writing part. Having almost same kind of working styles and good communication between us was one of the reasons why we were confident that the event was going to be a success. Knowing each other personally and how we both work, gave us confident that we could finish the project and the actual thesis in the timeframe that we had set for it in the beginning.

Small issue that we faced in the beginning was, that Piia Pitkänen had conducted her studies in English and Kaisa Laulajainen in Finnish. Because of this we made a decision to write the thesis in English but conduct the project in Finnish. Kaisa Laulajainen has had previous studies in English so writing the thesis in English was not a problem, but more of a challenge, since Laulajainen usually writes all of her academic assignments in Finnish.

We did not have a wide experience on organizing events, but still wanted to accept the challenge and were interested in both of the topics, Event Management and CRM, and especially how to develop these in Sushibar + Wine. Piia Pitkänen had studied some event management courses, due to her study program of Experience and Wellness Management. She had taken part in some small events that have been organized through her studies. Kaisa Laulajainen did not have much experience in event organizing. Even so, we were confident that we have enough resources, skills and experience to set up a medium scale event. Both of us had gained experience on CRM through our studies and work life, but wanted to take our knowledge and skills to the next level.

Getting started with the organizing was one of the most challenging part with also trying to find the time to set up the event. Once the event schedule was done, the date for event decided and the location was chosen, it was easier to get started with the actual planning and organizing.

One major challenge that we faced was definitely time management. Setting up an event this size required more time and effort put into it than we first thought. Since we both studied and worked the same time, especially Kaisa as a restaurant manager of Sushibar + Wine, it created a lot of pressure and made us wonder if we could plan and organize everything on time. The tight schedule was also due to the fact that we only had a little bit over a month to plan, organize and execute the event. Since there was not that much time, we had to dedicate most of our free time to the project, to ensure that we would deliver the best possible result with the given timeframe. From the beginning, it was crucial that we set clear objectives and goals for every week and scheduled appointments with different people. We had to set up many excel sheets and word documents, in order for both to know what had been done and when something needs to be done. We both learned through the process of setting up an event, how important good time management is and how well organized you have to be in order to succeed in it. With this timeframe, we also learned the importance of delegating. It was not always impossible to handle everything by ourselves.

The time management was an issue throughout the whole thesis writing process. At first we had a tight schedule with setting up the event and shortly after that we had tight schedule with writing the thesis and finishing the theoretical framework. The theoretical framework took us longer than we expected and our own schedules did not always stick. Narrowing down the theoretical framework was a challenge, since there was so much important information on both subjects: Event Management and CRM. We came to decision that we had to divide the theoretical framework, so that the other one will write about Event Management and the other one will concentrate on CRM and Customer Value. When working together on a project like this, we realized that it is important to trust each other and be patient, since everything cannot be done at the same time.

We gained a lot more information on how to plan and organize events, than a course could teach, by doing everything ourselves but following some basic guidelines. Since we were given free hands to do almost whatever we wanted with the birthday party, it gave us more confidence in ourselves and we wanted to show the owners of Sushibar + Wine that we are worth the trust. We dedicated a lot of thought and time to the event planning and organizing process, with the specific goals in our mind. We both feel that setting up an event this size was a great learning experience which we can use as a benefit in our future, especially in the working life. Writing the thesis and going through literature related to our thesis was a great learning process and gave us valuable information that we can both use later on when developing events at Sushibar + Wine or handling customer relationships.

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Getz D., Svensson B., Peterssen R., & Gunnervall A.: Hallmark events: Definition, Goals and Planning process, International Journal of Event management Research URL: <http://www.ijemr.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Getzetal.pdf> Assessed: 5.1.2016

Other

Matti Sarkkinen, partner. Sushibar Restaurants Finland Oy. Several interviews. November 2015.

Attachments

Attachment 1. The invitation: front side and back side.



sushibar ⊕ wine

Sushibar + Wine 6-vuotissyntymäpäivät

1. Miten arvioisit tapahtumassa seuraavat asiat? *

	0 En osaa sanoa	1 huono	2 välttävä	3 kohtalainen	4 hyvä	5 erinomainen
Ilmapiiri	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ohjelma	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ruoka	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Juoma	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. Minkä kokonaisarvosanan antaisit syntymäpäiväjuhille? *

- 5. erinomainen
- 4. hyvä
- 3. kohtalainen
- 2. välttävä
- 1. huono

3. Millaisia tilaisuuksia toivoisit Sushibar + Winen järjestävän tulevaisuudessa?

4. Muita kommentteja?

Attachment 3. The letter requesting customers to take part in the survey.

Moikka (nimi tähän)!

Ilmoittauduit jokin aika sitten Sushibar+Wine –ravintolamme 6-vuotissyntymäpäiville. Toivottavasti olit paikalla sinulla oli hauskaa! Toivoisimme sinun vastaavan alla olevaan kyselyyn. Kyselyssä on 4 kysymystä ja vastaaminen vie vain minuutin tai pari. Vastaukset ovat anonyymejä. Kyselyn vastausten perusteella kehitämme ravintolamme tulevia tapahtumia ja asiakastyytyväisyyteen vaikuttavia asioita. Kiitos vastauksistasi!

Kyselyyn tästä linkistä: (linkki tähän)

Terkut,
Sushibar+Wine / Kaisa ja Piia

Ps. Julkaisemme tapahtuman valokuvat Facebook –sivuillmme pian. Stay tuned! 😊

Hi (name here)!

You signed up for Sushibar+Wine's 6-year birthday party a while ago. We hope you made it to the party and had fun! We're hoping you could spare a minute or two and take part in our survey of 4 questions. The answers are anonymous. We'll use the survey to develop our future events and customer satisfaction. Thank you for your effort!

You'll find the survey here:

Best regards,
Sushibar+Wine / Kaisa and Piia

Ps. We'll post the photos from the party on our Facebook page soon. Stay tuned! 😊