

Saimaa University of Applied Sciences
Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality, Imatra
Degree Programme in Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management

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Planning and Implementing Educational Trip for English-Learners. Case: Jules Verne Travel Ltd

Thesis 2016

Abstract

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Planning and Implementing Educational Trip for English-Learners. Case: Jules Verne Travel Ltd, 62 pages, 5 appendices

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The objective of the thesis project was to develop and test a new tourism product in a form of the short-term educational interactive trip for English-language learners from Saint Petersburg, Russia to Lappeenranta, Finland with a purpose of overcoming the language barrier. The thesis was created in cooperation with the tour operator Jules Verne Travel Ltd.

The thesis comprised the theoretical comprehension and the empirical project. The information for the theory framework was gathered from literature and the Internet. The empirical part implied the actual planning of the new tourism product and the implementation of the test-trip.

The final result of this thesis was based on the feedback collected from the tourists and other stakeholders who participated in the test-trip. The analysis indicated that although the test-trip was successful, the new product should not be fully launched and introduced to the market at the moment. The recommendations made as a result of this project have been implemented by the partner company in their operations.

Keywords: new product development, educational tourism, language learners

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1 Introduction

In the era of ubiquitous globalisation, foreign language proficiency is a key to opening all the secret doors to a better life. Foreign language skills are valuable for a better position, a higher salary, more diverse ways to explore the Earth, easier communications with the members representing other cultures, in addition to self-realization and self-discipline.

While all the languages are equally significant, English occupies a special place being the most spoken second language in the world. Learning foreign languages takes a lot of time, effort, and energy. However, actually speaking new language might be even more challenging as quite a lot of courage is needed to break the language barrier.

The idea of the thesis was generated with a purpose to make the English-language barrier easier to climb and overcome while enjoying an entertaining trip with new fellow like-minded people.

1.1 Objectives of the thesis

The main objective of the thesis work is to develop and test a new tourism product in a form of a short-term educational trip from Saint Petersburg, Russia to Lappeenranta, Finland targeted at English-language adult-learners in cooperation with the partner company being the tour operator Jules Verne Travel Ltd.

The subsequently arising aim is to assess the performance of the new product on the grounds of a conducted test-trip and make conclusions on the continuation of the product's launching process and the company's entering the educational tourism niche.

1.2 Scope and delimitations of the thesis

The thesis comprises the process of new product development and the implementation of a test-trip. The test-trip's duration is one weekend from Saturday morning till Sunday afternoon on the 5th-6th of March 2016 with the

departure point in Saint Petersburg, Russia and the destination in Lappeenranta, Finland.

The author is responsible for the content of the trip, the planning and implementing of the actual trip including finding accommodation and hiring supervisors, while the partner company's duties consist of covering all the occurring costs, determining the final price to the consumer based on the budget estimations of the author, marketing and actual sales of the trip to potential tourists, and signing the contracts with the vendors provided by the author.

The final outcomes to be delivered to the partner company contain the feedback collected from the tourists participating in the test-trip, the feedback of the students-supervisors, and furthermore the author's conclusions and recommendations on the ways to improve the new product and the opportunities of the company's future development in the educational tourism niche.

1.3 Structure of the thesis report

The thesis report consists of two main parts, each divided into chapters and sub-chapters. The first part represents the theoretical framework required for the successful completion of the second part which is the actual new product development process. Short description of the chapters of the thesis follows.

After introducing the main objectives and delimitations of the project, the thesis report begins with the chapter that focuses on project management. As this is a project-based thesis, the concise understanding of approaches and stages of managing a complicated project is required.

The main outcome of the whole thesis project is the creation and testing of a new tourism product which makes studying the major processes of product planning and development essential for the success of the work.

The new tourism product that is to be developed throughout the thesis project is an educational trip. In order to assure the product stands well among the

competitors by having all the significant characteristics, educational tourism specific features should be thoroughly analyzed.

The educational trip which is planned under the current thesis is targeted for language learners, so they need to be assessed in a form of a new tourism market to understand their attitudes better.

The final educational trip for language learners is being developed in the business case of the tour operator Jules Verne Travel Ltd. The partner company is introduced and characterized in the last chapter of the theoretical part of the thesis report.

The empirical part comprises all the detailed information on the thesis project being created, designed, developed, tested and evaluated. Each step of the product planning process is meticulously documented and explained.

The thesis concludes with a summary of the whole thesis process, the description of intended aims of the project and the actual achieved results and conclusions.

2 Project management

Project management is considered to be the application of knowledge, skills, tools and techniques to accomplish project activities in order to satisfy stakeholders and to meet project requirements. This process comprises identifying expectations, establishing achievable objectives, scheduling, controlling and adapting various project tasks to balance scope, time, cost and quality goals at the appropriate level according to the stakeholders' demand. (Lewis 1997, pp. 1-3; PMBOK Guide 2004, pp. 5-8; Camilleri 2011, pp. 4-11.)

However, this definition is rather generic; therefore a more comprehensive research of the project management follows. First of all, a project and its typical features will be distinguished. Then a life cycle of a project will be defined, furthermore focusing on the managerial matters of a project. As has been seen, project management is achieved through processes, using knowledge, competencies, methods and tools to receive inputs and generate outputs. A

process is a series of actions that are done in order to attain a particular result. The project processes normally belong to one of the two main categories. (PMBOK Guide 2004, pp. 37-42.)

The first category represents the common project management processes enforcing an integrated purpose such as initiating, planning, executing, monitoring, and closing the project (PMBOK Guide 2004, pp. 37-42). The sub-chapter 2.3 will put emphasis on the knowledge areas which the processes concern, while the sub-chapter 2.4 will summarize each process group and its assets.

The second category contains product-oriented processes creating the project's product (PMBOK Guide 2004, pp. 37-42). Although these product-oriented processes overlap and closely interact with the project management processes, they are highly significant for the project's outcomes; hence they will be specifically analyzed in the third chapter of the thesis report.

2.1 Project definition and characteristics

Work of any organization or establishment can be classified into two primary categories, operations and projects. They have some common attributes, such as being performed by people, confined by limited resources, planned, implemented and monitored. However, there are several important elements that differentiate projects from operations. As this thesis qualifies as a project-based work, the sufficient definition of a project should be carefully studied in order to assure that all further executed activities constitute project, rather than operations work. Maylor (2010, pp. 2-22) determines several common characteristics describing the term of a project which are presented below in Figure 1. There follow brief implications of each characteristic.

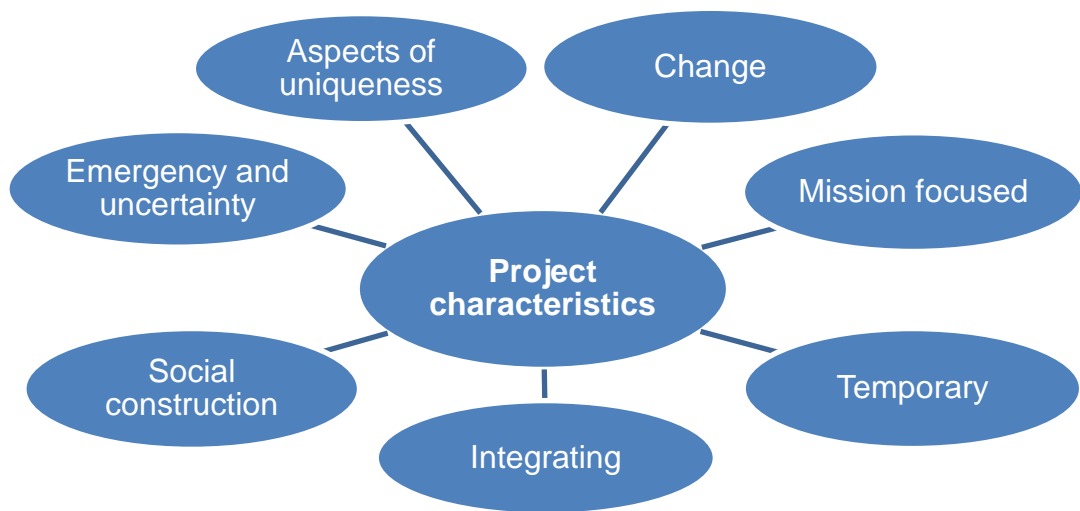


Figure 1. Project characteristics (Maylor 2010, p.7)

As a project has never been performed before, it contributes to the aspect of uniqueness. Although repetitive features might be present, the variables such as time, place, or team performing it create the fundamental uniqueness of the project work. (Epstein 2015.)

Projects typically involve some kind of change that will affect both team performing the project and people or establishments the project is delivered to (Maylor 2010, pp. 3-9).

Projects are expected to achieve a particular mission owing to solving a major problem and subsequently delivering benefits. Developing and using a mission statement also helps make decisions and take actions while keeping focused on the desired project outcomes. (Lewis 1997, pp. 27-31.)

Temporary means that the duration of a project is within a specific time frame. It has a finite beginning and a finite end. The start is the time when the concept is developed and the end is when the goal has been accomplished or not accomplished in case of failure. However, it does not imply that a project is short in duration. It may take months or even years to perform, while the created outcomes and impacts far outlast the project itself. Generally a team

carrying out the task is reassigned as soon as the project ends. (PMBOK Guide 2004, pp. 5-7.)

Integration of people, organizations and other participating stakeholders of the project is significant for the success. Moreover, it is highly important for the knowledge, resources and activities to be interlinked in the process all together. (Maylor 2010, pp. 3-9.)

A project is considered a social construction due to the fact that it always involves people and groups of people. The project is intangible which means that it is more challenging in terms of responding to changes as it requires dynamic interactions between these people. (Maylor 2010, pp. 3-9.)

Last but not least, emergence and uncertainty are the fundamentals of a project. Emergence also referred as progressive elaboration, means that a project is developing by increments. At the beginning only primary expected benefits or outcomes are known, while the means to achieve them are determined only after some time and developing in steps. At the same time, uncertainty accompanies the concept of uniqueness and indicates all the indirect conditions the project has to be executed in. (PMBOK Guide 2004, pp. 5-7; Maylor 2010, pp. 3-9.)

2.2 Project life cycle

Project management divides projects into several phases in order to ensure better monitoring and controlling of the ongoing activities throughout the project's duration. Together these phases constitute the project life cycle. It generally describes which technical work should be completed in each phase, what outputs or deliverables to be created and how to validate them, who is involved in each stage, and how each phase is controlled and evaluated. (PMBOK Guide 2004, pp. 19-24.)

Transition from one phase to another typically requires provision of a certain deliverable. The deliverable refers to a measurable work product corresponding to the project management processes which will be thoroughly discussed in the next sub-chapter. The deliverable is assessed and accepted before the work

continues to the next phase. Some projects demand the beginning of work simultaneously with the deliverable's provision for the last phase if it is a case when involved risks are tolerably deemed. Figure 2 illustrates the possible required deliverables for the three major phases of the project life cycle. (PMBOK Guide 2004, pp. 19-24.)

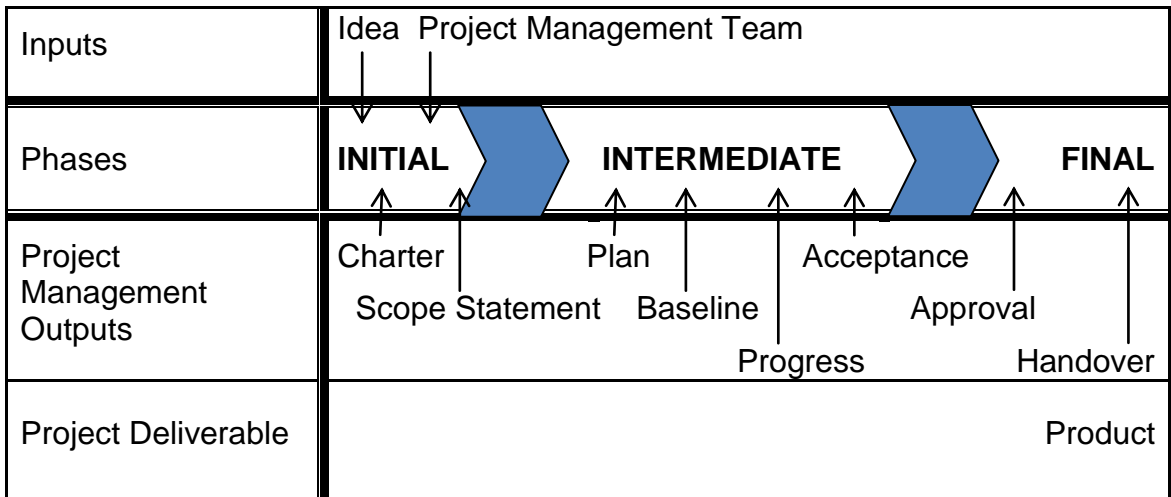


Figure 2. Typical sequence of phases in a project life cycle (PMBOK Guide 2004, p. 23)

2.3 Project management knowledge areas

There are nine main knowledge areas to be addressed during project management. They constitute manageable sets of primary factors which influence the overall project success or failure. Vital actions belonging to each knowledge area essential for the project success will be more precisely discussed below.

Project integration management concerns the various activities which are necessary for the coordination of different individual processes within project management for the achievement of success in meeting the requirements of stakeholders, as well as customers of the project. As project management typically includes a lot of processes happening at the same time, integration and monitoring of these processes is highly important. (PMBOK Guide 2004, pp. 77-102.)

Project scope management controls that all the work required for the project is included and only the work required is included. The main purpose is to

subdivide desirable project results into more feasible and controllable components which will be defined as activities to comprise the work effort. Scope management also ensures that the project does not exceed budget and available resources plan. (Camilleri 2011, pp. 63-73.)

Project time management includes the processes significant for the scheduling and timely project completion. After dividing the comprehensive work into smaller parts represented as separate activities, each activity should be analyzed and evaluated in terms of its duration and resources demanded for its completion. The next step studies the sequence which activities should commence in; moreover the possibility of multi-tasking is assessed with regard to the satisfactory quality of the outcomes. (Lewis 1997, pp. 49-59.)

Project cost management ensures that costs are estimated and controlled accurately for the project to stay within the approved budget. Almost all activities carry costs associated with them which should be indentified well in advance and properly evaluated in order to have a realistic cost plan to follow throughout the project. (Maylor 2010, pp. 174-198.)

Project quality management involves activities in pursuance of determining quality standards to be applied to the project evaluation, furthermore choosing the right approach for the assessment and control of how activities follow the aforementioned standards in order to satisfy the objectives (PMBOK Guide 2004, pp. 179-198).

Project human resource management includes the processes to build and coordinate the project team. First of all, project roles and responsibilities should be identified with clear understanding of hierarchy and relationships among the staff. Next, project team members should be hired, recruited or obtained otherwise. As project success directly depends on the well-synchronized team, the members' motivation, competencies, commitment and open communication are highlighted as keys for enhancing the project accomplishment. Therefore tracking team's performance and resolving any arising issues are essential activities of the project manager. (Elbeik & Thomas 2000, pp. 69-134; Camilleri 2011, pp. 89-112.)

Project communications management comprises the activities of collecting, storing and distributing accurate information among all the stakeholders involved in the project. Stakeholders are represented by all people, organizations and companies who are affected by the project success or failure outside of the project team. In some cases stakeholders are moreover included into the decision-making process throughout the project management. Stakeholders typically have requirements for the project completion; therefore communication on performance information is vital. (Maylor 2010, pp. 74-95.)

The project risk management activities are divided into three main categories, such as identification, quantification and response control. Identification deals with foreseeing symptoms from various sources of uncertainties. Quantification refers to assessing how likely the particular risk is to occur and jeopardize the project. While response control develops options and actions to reduce threats and enhance opportunities to resolve concerns prior to their occurrence. (Maylor 2010, pp. 217-237; Camilleri 2011, pp. 195-226.)

Project procurement management involves the processes to acquire products or services from any external organization conducive to the project success accomplishment. It includes careful planning and contracting of the purchases, as well as selecting the vendors, establishing and managing relationships with them. (PMBOK Guide 2004, pp. 269-297.)

2.4 Project management process groups

Project management is completed through the application of the five main process groups in the fields of project knowledge areas. These process groups are initiating, planning, executing, monitoring and controlling, and finally closing one. (PMBOK Guide 2004, pp. 37-42.) Table 1 below demonstrates the integration between project management process groups and knowledge areas, the detailed explanation of which follows.

Knowledge Area Processes	Project Management Process Groups				
	Initiating Process Group	Planning Process Group	Executing Process Group	Monitoring & Controlling Process Group	Closing Process Group
Project Integration Management	Develop project charter; Develop preliminary project scope statement	Develop project management plan	Direct and manage project execution	Monitor and control project work; Integrated change control	Close project
Project Scope Management		Scope planning; Scope definition; Create WBS		Scope verification; Scope control	
Project Time Management		Activity definition; Activity sequencing; Activity resource estimating; Activity duration estimating; Schedule development		Schedule control	
Project Cost Management		Cost estimating; Cost budgeting		Cost control	
Project Quality Management		Quality planning	Perform quality assurance	Perform quality control	
Project Human Resource Management		Human resource planning	Acquire project team; Develop project team	Manage project team	
Project Communications Management		Communications planning	Information distribution	Performance reporting; Manage stakeholders	
Project Risk Management		Risk management		Risk monitoring and	

		planning; Risk identification; Qualitative risk analysis; Quantative risk analysis; Risk response planning		control	
Project Procurement Management		Plan purchases and acquisitions; Plan contracting	Request seller responses; Select sellers	Contract administration	Contract closure

Table 1. Mapping of the project management processes to the project management process groups and the knowledge areas (PMBOK Guide 2004, p. 70)

2.4.1 Initiating process group

The initiating process group contains the processes that facilitate the start of a new project. The idea and concept of the project is developed, the objectives are defined, and moreover project duration and deliverables are described at a basic level. The feasibility study may be established in order to analyze practicability of the proposed project. Project charter authorizing the new product or other outcomes of the project is documented. In addition, preliminary scope statement addressing the requirements, resources and delimitations is produced. (PMBOK Guide 2004, pp. 43-45; Allen, O’Toole, Harris & McDonnell 2011, pp. 153-186.)

2.4.2 Planning process group

The planning process group is used to gather all necessary information from different sources in order to plan and manage a successful project. As can be seen in Table 1, each of the knowledge areas generates a separate plan. The primary task of a project manager or a project team is to integrate individual plans into the project management plan which can be later updated in case of arising changes. The project management plan plays an essential role of being a tool that allows the objectives of a project to be attained. The plan contains all

processes, including team structure and management, scope and duration definitions, schedule, resources allocated to tasks, budget and costs estimations, quality, and risk analysis. Another important process included in the planning group is creating a work breakdown structure which subdivides the whole project work into simpler manageable components. (Elbeik & Thomas 2000, pp. 49-67; PMBOK Guide 2004, pp. 46-55.)

2.4.3 Executing process group

The executing process group consists of the processes applied to complete the work defined in the project management plan. It is defined by making decisions and directing project realization, performing quality activities to ensure project's requirements will be met, obtaining the human resources and communicating their roles and responsibilities, distributing information to the involved stakeholders, clarifying timelines and resources. (PMBOK Guide 2004, pp. 55-58.)

2.4.4 Monitoring and controlling process group

The monitoring and controlling process group includes the processes focusing on the project objectives to observe project progression with respect to the project management plan and take remedial action in a timely manner if required. Performance information concerning scope, schedule, cost, quality, and resources is being collected and reviewed in a form of performance reports. All the areas that might benefit from changes are verified and approved. Communications among the project team members, as well as to stakeholders are tracked and managed in order to resolve any occurring issues prior to the crisis. Furthermore, this process group also comprises identifying and assessing risks, planning risk responses and forecasting their effectiveness. (Elbeik & Thomas 2000, pp. 135-163; Camilleri 2011, pp. 149-155.)

2.4.5 Closing process group

The closing process group is used to formally terminate all activities of a project. Nevertheless, after the project tasks are completed, there are still several fundamental processes to be carried out, such as ensuring all required

documentation and outcomes are provided, constructing the immediate review, moreover reward and recognition of the team, assessment of the performance and effectiveness of the project, and finally gathering recommendations for further improvements. (Elbeik & Thomas 2000, pp. 165-191; Maylor 2010, pp. 360-383.)

3 Product planning and development in tourism

The main objective of the current thesis work is to introduce and test a new tourism product for the partner company. Therefore the process of planning and developing a product is closely studied in this chapter.

As product development is not possible without a clear understanding of what a new product is, the chapter begins with defining the term of tourism product. Due to the consumer-oriented marketing program, the new product should be highly compatible in the market and attractive for the potential customers. For this purpose the possible ways to increase the value of the product are determined.

The chapter continues with a thorough description of each phase of the new product development process. And it concludes analyzing the common risks linked to the product creation and the total quality approach in order to avoid these risks.

3.1 Tourism product definition

In tourism generic product is the facilitation of travel and activities outside consumer's own place of residence. From the point of view of a potential customer, the product represents a package of tangible and intangible elements based on destination's activities. Tangible components comprise for example accommodation units, restaurants, transports, sports and activity facilities; whereas components like the beauty of the nature or services offered to the consumer are considered intangible. The combination of both elements builds the total experience which leads to a full satisfaction of tourists' needs and

expectations. Customers perceive the product as a total experience for a specific price. (Cooper 2012, pp. 3-27.)

Nevertheless, a product is not as simple as just one piece; it contains three layers or three levels underneath. These levels are shown in Figure 3 below.

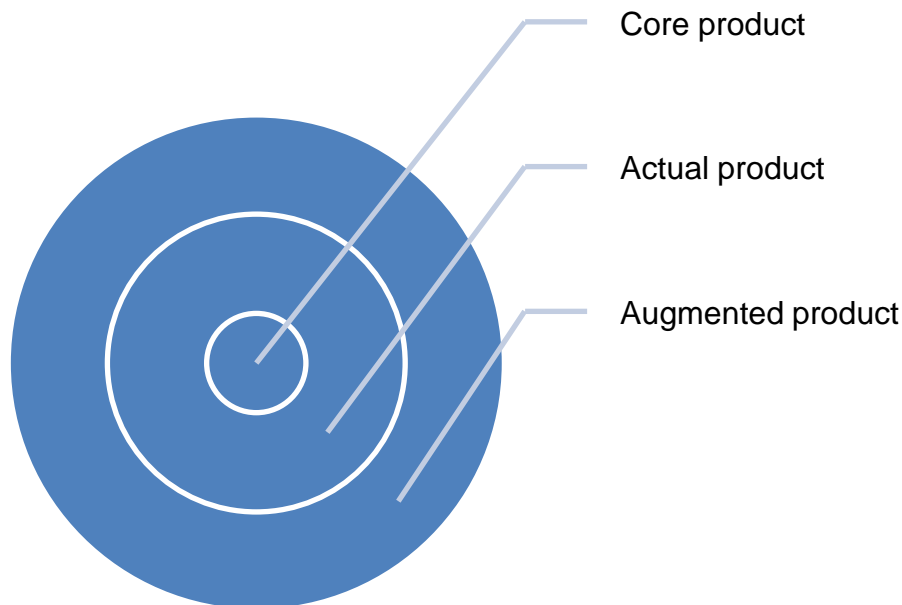


Figure 3. The three levels of a product (Marketing teacher 2016)

The first level is a core product, it can be described as a core customer value of the product or an intangible benefit provided for a customer. Every product serves by satisfying a certain need, for example, the core customer value of a mobile phone is communication. Although marketers try their best to address all kinds of psychological benefits a particular product may bring, each consumer chooses only the part of the bundle that is necessary for him or her at that moment of time. (Marketing teacher 2016.)

The second level of a product is an actual product. After determining a core benefit, it should be converted into an actual product. This involves packaging, product features, brand, design, and quality level. If a product is not tangible, then the service concept should be taken into consideration. It requires attention to ways of distribution, market segmentation, organization network, and service image or service brand. (Chand 2015; Marketing teacher 2016.)

Finally, the levels of a product are completed with an augmented product. It is built around the core value and the actual product offering additional benefits when buying the product. These extra services may encompass warranty, delivery, after-sale service, instructions, and payment terms or in the case of a service product it might contain cohesiveness and coherence of the set of offered services, excellent customer service, reliability and responsiveness. (Chand 2015; Marketing teacher 2016.)

3.2 Value opportunities

Since the product provides an experience for the customer, the better the experience, the greater the value of the product for the consumer. There are seven major sets of opportunities to add value to a product, named value opportunities.

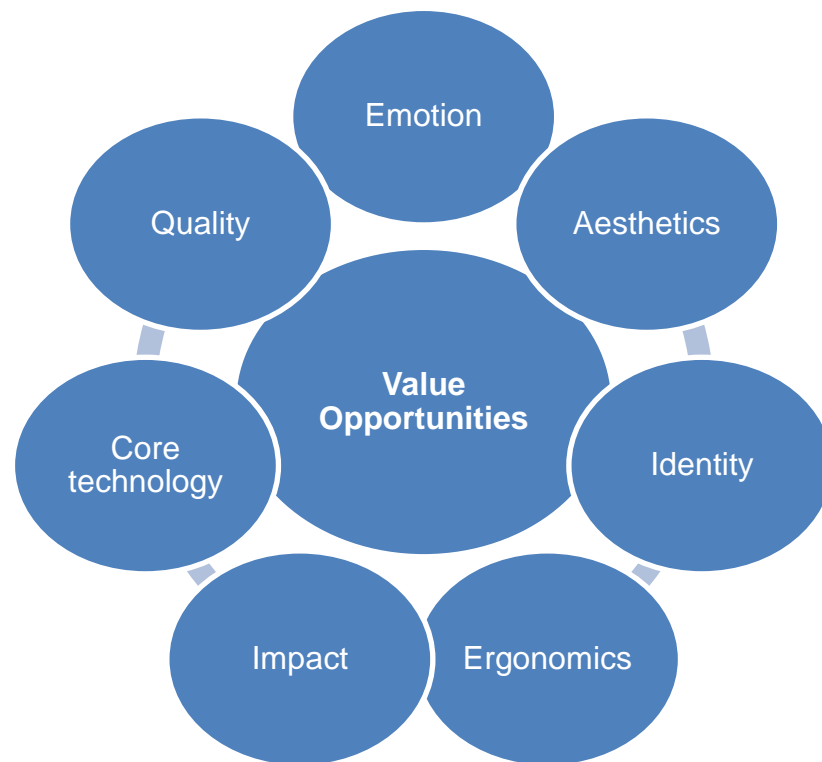


Figure 4. Value opportunities (Cagan & Vogel 2002, p. 54-83)

The first value opportunity is emotion. It defines the fantasy aspect of the product, for instance the product might give its user a sense of confidence, or security, or sensuality, or even feel of independence and happiness. Basically

emotion refers to the perceptual experience of the consumer while using the product. (Cagan & Vogel 2002, pp. 54-83.)

The second value opportunity is aesthetics. It connects the product with sensory perception, involving visual, tactile, auditory, olfactory, and gustatory senses. Some of the aesthetics attributes work closely with emotion value opportunity building positive associations. (Cagan & Vogel 2002, pp. 54-83.)

Product identity, or the third value opportunity, refers to the product being introduced in the right point of time with appropriateness to the sense of place and differentiation among competitors, own uniqueness (Cagan & Vogel 2002, pp. 54-83).

Another exciting opportunity to add value to the product is demonstrating the positive impact, either on society or on environment, which will be created through the new product introduction (Cagan & Vogel 2002, pp. 54-83).

Ergonomics focuses on the dynamic interaction between the consumer and the product. The product must be safe and easy to use, logically organized, and moreover it should feel comfortable from different perspectives to use this product. (Cagan & Vogel 2002, pp. 54-83.)

The next value opportunity is called core technology, and it requires the product to function properly, consistently, reliably without causing any difficulties to the consumer (Cagan & Vogel 2002, pp. 54-83).

The final opportunity to get more value is quality. It is characterized by the product performing according to the customer's expectations throughout the whole expected life of the product. (Cagan & Vogel 2002, pp. 54-83.)

3.3 New product development process

New product development is a challenging and uncertain process which however, can be highly rewarding. In order to minimize the risk of not achieving success, effective managerial strategy ought to be chosen. The primary decision is to determine whether to be reactive or proactive. Reactive product strategies proceed with the actions only after the occurrence of some

pressures. Already existing product might be copied or slightly improved after monitoring of competitor's success. In the interim, proactive product strategies imply that change is initiated by the company in order to achieve its own success. (Urban, Hauser & Dholakia 1987, pp. 13-45.)

Each strategy is favourable depending on the certain conditions. In consideration of the particular thesis work, proactive strategy is to be applied. Willingness of the partner company to enter new market niche, as well as lack of serious competition justify the choice.

Figure 5 displays the sequential five-step decision process of the creation of proactive new product development strategy. Each stage will be more closely discussed in the following chapters.



Figure 5. New product and service development process (Urban, Hauser & Dholakia 1987, p. 26)

3.3.1 Opportunity identification

Opportunity identification phase is focused on the creation and careful choice of the main product idea to be developed later on. First of all, the markets offering the best compatible characteristics are identified; they are screened and assessed in terms of analysis of the level of potential, specific target audience, its size and possible channels of distribution. Next, a list of creative product

ideas which will tap the potential of the selected market is generated. Some of these ideas might be the key ones for the future product, and some of them might not be sufficient enough. Therefore a relative simple managerial idea screening process is needed to choose a few good ideas for the following development. (Urban & Hauser 1980, pp. 77-151.)

3.3.2 Design

After identifying a primary market and generating a set of appropriate ideas, the next step is to design the product. This process comprises concept testing, business analysis, and product development. Concept testing involves determining the key benefits of the product in a statement called core benefit proposition. Business analysis regards positioning of these benefits in the current competition. And product development deals with the provision of demanded physical features. Moreover, the design stage is characterized by the initial price, distribution, target market, and promotion to be decided. (Cooper 1988, pp. 127-162.)

3.3.3 Testing

After developing the initial idea into the actual product and marketing strategy, testing should be implemented in order to minimize risks and increase expected benefits. Test marketing is quite an investment of both time and money for the company and cannot be used on every product; however, it is still a helpful tool in case of high-risk products or services. It provides valuable data on ways of profit improvement, advertising creativity and sufficiency, as well as on if the product fulfils consumer needs and expectations. Based on these findings, the important decision on whether it is worthwhile to continue with the product launch is made. (Urban et al. 1987, pp. 193-251.)

3.3.4 Commercialization

Once the product has been successfully tested and the risks have been reduced, a full-scale introduction should be implemented. It requires careful planning and commitment, as the price for any mistake is much higher than during the testing stage. Effective coordination between production and

marketing departments, as well as considerations on time and management of the product's introduction are significant. Furthermore, the need to monitor the launch and to track progress is critical. (Urban & Hauser 1980, pp. 461-494.)

3.3.5 Life cycle management

As soon as the product is launched, its life cycle begins. Every product has four major stages, such as introduction, growth stage, maturity stage, and decline stage. If the product is not managed carefully throughout these stages, the full profits and sales potential may not be reached. Therefore collecting miscellaneous data for the future marketing purposes, analyzing the market response, introducing innovations, making decisions on repositioning and product line's compositions are all parts of the new product development process. (Urban et al. 1987, pp. 264-291.)

3.4 New product risks

There is always a certain risk in development activities. The risks generally can be divided into two main categories: internal and external risks.

Internal risks mean the probability that the organization fails to achieve predetermined objectives. These risks concern the personnel and their skills, abilities and appropriate motivation to perform the task of developing a new product. Moreover, there is a common uncertainty about setting and following schedules, availability of all required resources, interactions and relationships inside the development team, as well as clear and consistent management. The primary goal of management is to find balance between effort and level of ambition. (Andreasen & Hein 1987, pp. 155-168.)

External risks refer to the probability of failure in regards to expected sales figures. There are quite many reasons why the target might not be reached even in case of good internal management. The external risks may be connected to the competitive situation, wrong choice of business concept, dissatisfactory marketing campaign, tough running conditions, changes in materials or quality, unreliable suppliers and subcontractors, unmaintained production price and other reasons. In order to handle the risks efficiently,

strategic planning and monitoring should be carefully implemented throughout the whole process of developing a new product. (Andreasen & Hein 1987, pp. 155-168.)

3.5 Total quality management

Quality is a dynamic state associated with products, services, processes, people and environments that meets or exceeds expectations. Quality is determined by product design and achieved by effective control techniques. The adoption of total quality management standards is a strategic decision that helps improving overall performance. The international system for providing quality certification emphasizes seven primary principles to be taken into consideration while meeting the requirements. (The CQI 2016.)

The first principle is customer focus. Any organization or company depends on their customers, so they need to study current and future needs of the customers, link these expectations to their goals and later on monitor customer satisfaction. (ISO 2015.)

The second principle is leadership. Leaders should be able to show the correct direction in which the company needs to move to enhance customers' expectations and also ensure that all members and stakeholders are equally involved in the process. (ISO 2015.)

Engagement of people refers to all levels throughout the organization to understand the main objectives and actions to reach these aims. People fully apply their skills and abilities for the success of the company and communicate freely in case of any misunderstandings or difficulties. (ISO 2015.)

Process approach assures that all the processes or happenings inside the company or a project are interrelated. Responsibilities are clearly established and divided between members of the organization. Information is available for all interested parties for management purposes. (ISO 2015.)

Another quality principle is improvement meaning that the focus of the organization lays on continuous innovation, advancement and education development (ISO 2015).

Evidence-based decision making implies that decisions made on the analysis of data and information basis are expected to bring more profound results in comparison with uncertainty decisions. Cause-and-effect relationships should be studied carefully prior to challenging decisions. (ISO 2015.)

The last quality principle is relationship management suggesting leading consistent and successful relationship among all stakeholders, both internal and external, and sharing timely information on the performance measurements with them (ISO 2015).

4 Educational tourism

The desired new product to be developed belongs to educational tourism services. In order to have a better understanding of the whole new tourism market, educational tourism specifics are meticulously researched.

The chapter begins with a short introduction of special interest tourism term to which educational tourism belongs. Thereafter educational tourism is defined and characterized in comparison with commodity travel. Finally, another new term of edutainment is being analyzed.

4.1 Special interest tourism

Special interest tourism is a new broad term which can be defined as customized leisure and recreational experiences driven by the specific expressed interests of individuals and groups. Although the term is relatively new, the concept has been known for quite a long time already under various other names, for example alternative, low impact, responsible, respectful, and ethical. The main idea is to package non-standardized leisure activities for very carefully segmented markets in order to deliver distinct authentic experience. (Kruja & Gjyzezi 2011.)

Special interest tourism integrates many different special interest niche markets which are gaining popularity on their own and becoming more sustainable. Some of the main categories are presented in Figure 6 below.



Figure 6. Categories of special interest tourism (Richards 2014)

Nowadays there is a global trend towards experience oriented holidays where tourists go somewhere because of a particular mission that can be pursued at a particular destination or a particular region. The primary motives for such travels are described as novelty and education. Current tourists are more concerned with participating and learning something new rather than just visiting a place and being on holidays. (Richards 2014.)

4.2 Definition and origins

Educational travel includes those special interest tourism experiences motivated primarily by interest in learning. Travel as means of education has been recognized since the beginning of recorded history. Historically, travelling for pure pleasure was not considered a valid reason; it should have been justified by the number of legitimate purposes such as education, culture, or health. As learning and travel are mutually compatible, the tradition of educational value facilitated the development of new fashionable kind of tourism. (Weiler & Hall 1992, pp. 15-26.)

The trend of educational tourism started already in the seventeenth century, first among the ruling class of Great Britain. Back then it was known as the Grand Tour which comprised gentlemen traveling around Europe as a part of their education program. Later on studies abroad gained their popularity in the United States of America. One of the main factors that assisted the progress was the influence of the adult education movement of the late twentieth century. This movement brought rapid advancement of travel for educational purposes. (Weiler & Hall 1992, pp. 15-26.)

Currently education tourism is one of the most prosperous and fastest growing areas of special interest tourism. There are numerous variations of educational travel. It can last a few days or several months. It can be formal or quite unstructured. It can involve visiting one destination or touring, destinations can be domestic or international. Providers can include non-profit and religious organizations, private and public-sector educational institutions and private industries. The commonality is that educational travel is not limited by curiosity or fascination for a particular topic; it implicates a travel experience organized with simultaneous learning of any form. Nowadays educational tourism exists under other names, for instance career enhancement, self-actualization experiences, seminar or convention vacations, exchange studies abroad, educational cruises and many more. (Tourism and more 2010.)

4.3 Characteristics versus commodity travel

Commodity travel, otherwise known as mass-market tourism, combine knowledge, travel experiences and destinations into a packaged product which is being sold to consumers. A product should be finite for consumers to be enticed to buy it; an emphasis is put upon services and product rather than content and impression. Therefore marketing of such product represents standardized or even stereotypic perceptions of a destination to make the choice simple. (Douglas, Douglas & Derrett 2001, pp. 188-211.)

On the other hand, educational tourism is mostly interested in the subject matter and content of travel. It is less fixed, more changeable and customized. Minor alterations in a viewpoint produce an infinite variety of representation which

means that each experience is getting more and more personalized. The offered product is very sharply targeted due to serious market segmentation. Creative approach is to be applied as customers emphasize their desire for authenticity and real experiences rather than typical mass tours. (Douglas et al. 2001, pp. 188-211.)

Another big difference between commodity travel and educational tourism comes from relationships between tourists and their tour guide. The modern tour guide has developed from two types of antecedents: the pathfinder with outer-directed function and the mentor with inner-directed function. Based on this, mainstream tour guide is the pathfinder, while educational travel guide is seen more like a teacher, a tutor or a resource person for travelers. The information he or she provides is more objective or neutral compared to the normal guide being instructed of the topics to avoid for maintaining a proper image of a destination. This leads to more flexible and personalized relationships between educational travel guide and their tourists developing mutual trust and respect. Moreover the guide is acting as a catalyst stimulating social interactions within the group which is essential for tourism experience. It stands to reason that the role and the quality of the guide in educational travel is of much more importance to the overall satisfaction with the total experience. (Weiler & Hall 1992, pp. 15-26.)

4.4 Edutainment

Tourism is a fast developing industry and there is a brand new term called edutainment. Edutainment is a compound of two words: education and entertainment. Historically, this practice appeared in the media industry, especially in documentaries and cartoons for children where the task was to provide new knowledge to the audience while keeping the content attention-catching, easy to understand, enjoyable and fun. Later on edutainment spread over other industries, including tourism. (Doll 2013.)

Edutainment tour packages are a growing trend as people take interest in travelling with a mission and pleasure at the same time. The learning process during educational travels should be more enjoyable and engaging. However,

entertaining should still contain some educational value. The most powerful and effective approach for this purpose is humor. Humor helps successfully focus and memorize more information, simultaneously lightening the mood. That is why the role of a guiding person for edutainment tours is extremely important. They should have skills and techniques for finding an appropriate balance between humor and the content in order to keep the audience engaged during the tour. (Doll 2013.)

5 Language learners as a tourism market

The target market that the new product will attempt to reach is language learners. Consequently analysis and evaluation of language learners as a tourism market is required.

First of all, it is essential to understand characteristics of consumer profile in order to have better targeted marketing. Secondly, probable motivations and drivers for demand of language learning travel will be devised and studied. And the final sub-chapter will focus on examination of current situation of English learners in Saint Petersburg.

5.1 Consumer profile

Studying foreign languages is a key skill for the success in numerous areas of human life. Second language knowledge can help in achieving business and work needs, furthermore it provides immeasurable possibilities for travelling and meeting people from all over the world and gives a solid basis for self-realization and self-development. That is why so many people struggle to study new language in many different ways, including educational language tourism. To secure better understanding of this category of people, closer research follows.

Marketing efforts need to be focused on the target. In order to understand this target, potential customers should be segmented into groups with fairly similar needs and wants. According to Douglas et al. (2001), all special interest tourists can be divided into ten major value segments suggesting observations on the

psychographic factors of social class, personal values and consumer attitudes. Table 2 below will briefly describe all the value segments summarized by the author with a reference to the sources. (Cook, Yale & Marqua 1999, pp. 26-47; Douglas et al. 2001, pp. 2-28.)

VALUE SEGMENTS	FEATURES
1. Basic Needs (4 % of the population)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional views; • Passive activities; • Fairly satisfied with their life; • Retired, pensioners and people with low income.
2. A Fairer Deal (5 %)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissatisfied with their life; • Pessimistic, cynical and insecure; • “Everyone else has all the fun, but them”; • Feel anger and disillusionment.
3. Conventional Family (12 %)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home and children; • Value on family and friends; • Strive for financial security.
4. Traditional Family Life (19 %)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 50 “empty-nesters”; • Family roles and values commitment; • Home, garden and traditional activities; • Cautious about new ideas.
5. Look at Me (13 %)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young, active, unsophisticated; • Self-centred, peer-driven; • Fun and freedom; • Unmarried with no children; • Fashion and trend conscious, socially active; • Leisure and sport.
6. Something Better (8 %)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-educated, with responsible jobs; • Confident, ambitious, progressive; • Overextending financially for the quality.
7. Real Conservatives (7 %)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservative social, religious, moral and ethical views; • Asset rich, income poor; • Security, tradition and stability.
8. Young Optimists (8 %)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optimistic about the future; • Middle to upper middle class;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students, computer technologists and professionals; • Career building and travelling.
9. Visible Achievers (16%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 30 years old with above average income; • Collecting visible signs of achievement; • Interest in public affairs and politics; • Focus on themselves, in addition to their family's needs and desires.
10. Socially Aware (10 %)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socially responsible; • Involved in community activities and environmental groups; • Progressive and open-minded; • Early adopters of products and ideas.

Table 2. Value segments (Douglas, Douglas & Derrett 2001, pp. 9-10)

Following the analysis of each major value segment of special interest tourism, the emphasis is put on potential educational tourists. The suggestion is that segments number 5, 8, 9, and especially 6 should be reached. The commonality implies them to be quite young and well-educated, working with average or above average income. Their most significant common feature is the existence of a serious interest in spending their valuable time developing themselves, improving their abilities and skills, particularly language skills.

5.2 Demand and drivers for demand

After examining the commonalities of language learners as a tourism market, it is essential to study why they choose to go for educational travels. This information can help appreciate true market's needs and wants in order to enhance their expectations via preparing a better product for them.

The prevailing trend throughout the world suggests that people prefer traveling with a certain mission nowadays. Times of general sun and sand destinations are slowly falling to oblivion. There is also a demonstrable shift away from mass tourism to niche marketing, which is a response to the increasing sophistication of the travelling public. These trends presuppose rapidly increasing popularity of

educational tourism, a great part of which is related to travels with a purpose of learning or practising foreign language. (TTG Mena 2012.)

People preferring educational language travel concentrate their time, energy, effort and other resources on satisfying a specific aim that allows them to engage with like-minded individuals in the process. This leads to a conclusion that although the core motivation is improving language skills, additional motivations include having pleasant interactive experience with harmonious people. (Tonkosti 2016.)

Besides, there is a greater demand for shorter courses. As the world is getting faster and people want to get results straightaway, they can no longer spend 12 weeks out of the normal life to learn or better say practise English. Those who wanted a 12-week course previously, now change it to 6 weeks, while 6 weeks come to 2 weeks, and then it all goes down to a weekend. The motivation is to get results faster with a more intense program. (Tonkosti 2016.)

5.3 English learners in Saint Petersburg, Russia

As it was already mentioned, language courses are in extremely high demand at the moment. According to the statistics, there are around 45 big evening schools providing English language courses for adults in Saint Petersburg. Each of these schools has up to 11 locations throughout the city. The medium price of a 45-minute group lesson is 300 Rubles which equals to 4 Euros. Individual lesson costs around 800 Rubles or respectively 10 Euros while individual lesson with a native English speaker will be close to 15 Euros. The prices are quite high implying that people need quite a number of lessons to be able to actually speak English.

In order to achieve the desirable results faster, there are also various language courses abroad, for instance in Great Britain, Malta or the United States of America. The prices are much more expensive compared to the language courses that take place domestically. These international courses typically last 2-4 weeks with intensified language usage. The target audience is preferably children due to their free time capacity and commonly shared love for camps. The demand among full-time working adults is low, as a strong need for short-

term language courses with a respect to the workload and schedule is perceptible. (Schoolrate 2016.)

6 Introduction of the partner company

The new tourism product is being developed for the further development and excellence of the partner company which collaborates with the author to the mutual benefit. The description of the partner company's major characteristics and typical product follows.

6.1 Tour operator definition

The partner company for this thesis project is a small-scale tour operator Jules Verne Travel Ltd. Ensuring full understanding of the company's activities requires studying the term of tour operator more closely.

Tour operator, or otherwise known as packager or tour wholesaler, is a business organization engaged in planning, preparing, marketing and sometimes operating vacation tours. The role of tour operators is to act as a wholesaler assembling elements of supply to the consumer as a tour package for a single price. At least two of the following elements typically compose a tour package: accommodation, transportation, entertainment, meals and sightseeing activities. In order to get profit, tour operators make contracts in bulk with various organizations that provide these elements of supply, for instance hotels, ground transport companies, restaurants. They negotiate rates, price the final inclusive tour competitively and bring it to a customer by utilizing either travel agents or their own online sales or both as their distribution strategy. (Cook et al. 1999, pp. 48-67; Cooper 2012, pp. 194-217.)

There are a number of possible ways to classify tour operators. They can be distinguished by the types of tours they provide. For example, an escorted tour implies tourists being accompanied by a tour guide, a hosted tour relates to local company welcoming guests at their final destination, and an independent tour suggests only delivering guests to the place of their stay and leaving them on their own. Other classifications are based on the segment of market they

target (for instance, students or the elderly), the type of transportation they employ (ferry cruise ships as an example), the level of accommodation they offer (such as chalets, lodges or villas), or very significantly on the type of tourism niche they put to use, for example health tourism. (Cook et al 1999, pp. 48-67; Cooper 2012, pp. 194-217.)

6.2 Company's profile and activity

It was already mentioned that Jules Verne Travel Ltd is a small-scale tour operator based in Saint Petersburg, Russia. The chief executive officer is Alexander Gorodinskiy. Around 25 employees are engaged working for the company, altogether comprising creative, marketing, sales and accounting departments. As a typical tour operator, their actions are directed towards developing various package tours and selling them to the final customers. The primary means of distribution are online through their own website, but additionally travel agencies and online travel agents are utilized.

Their main operations take place in the north-western region of Russian Federation; nevertheless, they are offering tours to numerous faraway remote destinations, both domestic and international. For instance, they actualize tours to Chukotka (Russian Far East), the great Caucasus Mountains, the Canary Islands, Iran, Nepal, Morocco and many more destinations. (Jules Verne 2016.)

The major niche Jules Verne Travel Ltd possesses is the outdoor adventure tourism. They offer hiking, trekking, yachting, off-road driving, mountain and road cycling tours with different levels of difficulty for both novice and advanced adventure travellers. They target these trips for quite a wide range of segment markets, including and not restricted by extreme experiences lovers, yoga practicing enthusiasts, families with children, bored professionals, and both the elderly and younger generations. Although it is a relatively narrow niche, their sales prove to be successful with a reference to surprisingly diverse consumers. (Jules Verne 2016.)

Currently the company is expanding their operations and looking for another tourism market to conquer. Their possibilities to enter educational tourism niche

and to develop new products and services in the future are to be tested as a result of the present thesis project.

6.3 Company's typical product

As the main operations of the partner company spread over outdoor adventure tourism, their typical product is a tour package exploring some remote treasure of Russia.

Taking the latest New Year's tour to Murmansk region as an example will help understand the track of the partner company. It is a 6-day tour from Saint Petersburg to the far north-western part of Russia with an active program planned for each day. Transportation from Saint Petersburg to Murmansk and back is offered, but not included in the basic option of the trip. (Jules Verne 2016.)

However, it includes accommodation at the four-star hotel for four nights and accommodation at the private wooden cottages on the Arctic Ocean's shore for another night. It includes all major meals and transfers around the destination, a visit to a reindeer farm, a husky safari, a snowmobile safari, a northern lights hunting tour, and several excursions (around the city, to the Arctic Ocean, and to the old icebreaker ship etc.), and moreover an insurance for extreme winter sports. (Jules Verne 2016.)

The final price of the trip to the customer is 38 700 Rubles which equals to a little bit more than 500 Euros. They also have a promotion for families with children giving slightly fairer price and free train tickets between Saint Petersburg and Murmansk. (Jules Verne 2016.)

7 Empirical part of the product development

As it was mentioned in the introduction, there are two major objectives of the thesis work: to develop and test a new tourism product in a form of a short-term educational trip for English-language learners, and assess the performance. The first part of the thesis report comprises all the theoretical information obtained in order to apply it during the empirical part of the thesis.

The main outcome of the particular thesis work is a new tourism product prepared and tested for the partner company's future consideration. The practical results of the project are the conclusions on success or failure of the product in the testing stage and predictions for the future of the particular product. Therefore the empirical part of the thesis report will focus on the description of all processes included into the new product development until commercialization stage in strict accordance with the theoretical part.

7.1 Opportunity identification

The main stages of the new product development process were thoroughly illustrated and described in the sub-chapter 3.3. The first stage of the new product development is opportunity identification which comprises the generation and screening of the main idea, as well as preliminary market definition which can occur in a form of feasibility study.

7.1.1 Main idea and concept creation

The general idea of short-term educational trips for English-learners is created and discussed by the author and the CEO of the partner company Alexander Gorodinskiy in November 2015. The cooperation is considered to be very fortunate due to a number of advantages that each side of the partnership might bring.

First of all, the partner company has a well-established reputation of a small, but quite successful tour operator. They have useful business connections (for instance, with English-language schools and transportation companies based in Saint Petersburg, Russia). Moreover, they already have a comprehensive database of potential customers who might be interested in this idea. The company is looking for new opportunities and is ready to expand which ensures them to be opened for any innovations and totally new markets.

On the other side, the author has broad experience of participating in various educational tourism programs, such as exchange period abroad in the United States of America and long-term English-language courses in Malta, as well as many workshops and similar university trips. Furthermore, the author's

knowledge of Finland as a travelling destination, theoretical background in tourism and project management, in addition to extensive network of university connections with other students who might take part as supervisors is beneficial. And last but not least, the author's interest and high motivation in leading such a project assures abilities to work hard in order to achieve the partner company's goals.

As the partnership seems to be favourable for both parties, the idea is being further generated. The main goal is to help English-language learners break the language barrier during the trip while having a nice time in a new place. The destination is chosen to be Finland due to its proximity to Saint Petersburg, Russia. However, the exact town has not yet been discussed. Few ideas on the activities during the trip are created; nevertheless the actual program of the trip is not clear.

7.1.2 Feasibility study

In order to measure the interest this idea might arouse, two pre-request surveys are conducted as a form of feasibility study. The responsibilities are equally divided between the author and the partner company.

As it was already mentioned, the partner company has business connections with English-language schools in Saint Petersburg, Russia. Therefore they are in charge of the informal survey among fellow adults studying English to get to know if there are people who would be interested in such opportunity to practise and improve their language skills. The exact questionnaire is presented in the Appendix 1, while the summarized results are discussed later on. According to the information the partner company provides, the survey sample consists of 36 adults. The interest in such trips is taken by 21 adults which gives around 58% potentially curious. Although the sample is rather small, the results are considered very promising. Another question concerns the duration of a possible trip. The majority of respondents chooses weekend as a suitable length of a trip. Finland is approved as an appropriate destination for such short-term educational trip by most of the survey participants. However, the question concerning the costs of the trip that people are willing to pay appears

to be a bit confusing for several respondents. It originates due to the different perspectives on the decision-making process of a purchase. For some people the content of the trip is completely enough to base their opinion on and make a buying decision, while the others need some kind of comparison on the market to collate the probable price with. Combining both of the cases, the sufficient result that this question gives is that people are not ready to spend more than 10 000 Rubles (approximately 120 Euro) on such trips.

The second feasibility study is conducted by the author among fellow students of the Saimaa University of Applied Sciences in both campuses of Imatra and Lappeenranta. The survey sample consists of 22 students with different international backgrounds. The survey is informal and is conducted in a form of short one-on-one interviews. The main idea and goals of the project are described, as well as primary responsibilities of student-supervisors followed by the question regarding their interest in participating and form of remuneration they are expecting for such activities. The results are impressive, as 20 students out of 22 express their interest in the project and ask to keep them updated on the news of the project's development. Most of the respondents are willing to take part in it completely voluntarily, so the proposed remuneration of 20 Euro for the weekend work is completely approved by the students.

Due to the positive results received in feasibility studies among both potential customers and potential supervisors, the decision on continuation of the project is made.

7.2 Design of the product

To combine the theory on project management with product development, all the knowledge areas together with product development processes will be discussed in this chapter being the most significant in the actual product appearance.

7.2.1 Core benefit proposition

According to the three levels of a product that were already mentioned in the theoretical product planning and development chapter, core benefit proposition

should determine each of these levels in a particular product of the educational tour.

The core benefit of the product is varied among customers, however the task is to find the one that will combine and unite all the major psychological benefits. The core value of the particular product is a fast break through the English-language barrier in a fun environment of like-minded individuals.

The actual product is composed out of several knowledge areas which will be addressed in details later in the sub-chapters. The scope of the product is limited by the time frame of one weekend from Saturday morning till Sunday afternoon, by the departure point of Saint Petersburg, Russia and the destination of Lappeenranta, Finland. Lappeenranta was chosen as the destination due to its proximity to Saint Petersburg and a wide range of places and services which might be applicable for the implementation of the test-trip. The transportation is provided by bus from one meeting point throughout the whole program till the return to the same meeting point next day. The content of the trip includes interactive trainings directed to ease and facilitate English-language use in conversations with people from different cultural backgrounds. The image of the product builds on a positive image of the tour operator Jules Verne Travel Ltd.

The augmented level of the product incorporates friendly atmosphere of the group, quality of the guide and proficiency of the language speaking supervisors, fun time spending during the weekend and responsiveness to any questions or request of the customers.

7.2.2 Target market

Market segmentation is to be achieved through grouping customers in reference to the following variables: geographic characteristics, demographic characteristics, psychographic and product-related characteristics.

Geographic segmentation implies grouping potential customers according to their location. In the particular case, the location of the target market is Saint

Petersburg, Russia. The more concise geography suggests evening language schools with English courses for adults.

Demographic segmentation is the most commonly used basis that includes easily measurable variables. So the target market of the particular education trips is considered to be young adults with an average age between 25 and 35 years old. The gender is not indicated as a factor. Quite young age implies single adults or members of young families. The potential consumer is generally well-educated with slightly above average income, typically that presumes responsible full-time job positions.

Psychographic segmentation relates to the priorities and lifestyles of target audience. An easy assumption is that potential tourists share an interest in studying English as their second language and they probably are enrolled on the evening English-language courses in one of the schools. Their level of the language proficiency is intermediate or upper-intermediate. They are active and ambitious, especially about achieving their goal of learning new language.

The last variable for market segmentation is product-related which means the benefits that potential consumer is looking for in a product. For the particular case, the tourists are seeking quality of easy and at the same time useful short-term language course with friendly and socially interacting atmosphere and new exciting experiences.

7.2.3 Competition

First of all, the competition is assessed directly around the destination. For this reason, the current situation of educational tourism in the Saimaa region of Finland is analyzed. The particular region is of interest due to the new product being developed to take place in Lappeenranta. According to the author's general knowledge, at the moment the only progressing activity of educational tourism happening in the area is exchange students coming to the educational institutions, such as Saimaa University of Applied Sciences, Lappeenranta University of Technology, Saimaa Vocational College and others. Saimaa region is also famous for hosting some educational events (seminars, conferences and meetings) on both national and international level. These

events are mainly connected to the developing industries like tourism and wood processing.

The second part of the competition analysis contains evaluating the saturation and probable challenges of the particular market niche. As the product is relatively new, the competition is not too strong. There is a lot of various language courses offered to the consumer, however most of them require much more time and money. Typically the courses last from 2 weeks to several months. While courses' fees are quite expensive in addition to flight tickets, accommodation costs and possible visas, and certainly they need more documentation, such as health certificates and criminal record statements. Therefore participation in these language courses is much more complicated, takes more effort making them less-appealing destinations for full-time working adults who want to practice and improve their English language skills.

Nevertheless, the fundamental competitor of such short-term trips is a not-going-anywhere position of potential customers. Laziness, lack of money and in some cases shyness might prevent someone from joining the trip. Therefore the marketing which will be discussed later in the next sub-chapter should emphasize not only usefulness, but also friendly welcoming atmosphere and interactive nature of the trips.

7.2.4 Promotion and distribution

As the target market includes people who are enrolled on English-language courses, the easiest way to reach the target audience is by coming to the evening language schools in Saint Petersburg. The method of distribution involves both brochures and personal selling. As the product is brand new and only being tested, the marketing is not even being included in the costs of the final product. The personal selling happens in a way of the representative of the partner company giving a short presentation on the educational tour offer at different language schools in Saint Petersburg. For the test-trip the number of tourists is very limited, therefore only three groups of one language school were given a presentation, resulting in the total of 46 potential customers. The

brochure is being developed by the creative department of the partner company and left for the further insight at the same language school.

7.2.5 Procurement management

Several contracts are to be concluded for the product to be prepared.

First of all, the contract is signed between the partner company and the transportation company under conditions of a bus rental in alliance with the driver hiring for two days starting from the 5th of March 2016 till the 6th of March 2016 with a full payment administered at least 10 days in advance.

Secondly, the booking is made for a one-night stay in 5 twin rooms from the 5th of March 2016 till the 6th of March 2016th. The booking is secured with a 50% deposit on the day of the booking with an arrangement that the rest of the payment will be conducted by the partner company at least a week prior to the arrival date. The bonus for a multiple booking is early check-in on the day of arrival and the late check-out until 3 in the afternoon on the day of departure. The contract is not signed between the two organizations due to the reason that this is only a test-trip, not a recurring event.

Another important agreement is made that the whole content of the trip is planned and organized by the author. The partner company only performs controlling function. The results of the trip design are to be presented to the partner company for their approval at least one week prior to the actual test-trip. The means of communication among the stakeholders (namely the author and the partner company) are emails and Skype calls.

7.2.6 Risk management

There are several risks connected to the particular new product development.

The first risk of not getting enough customers for the test-trip is prevented by the marketing being performed well in advance, taking into account time for extra promotion if necessary.

The risk of vendors failing to provide required services is protected with the signed contracts mentioned above. Moreover, additional options of the transportation companies and accommodation are considered beforehand. In order to avoid the risk of the author not being able to plan and prepare the content of the trip, the approval review is scheduled one week prior to the test-trip.

Furthermore, the risk of losing money is addressed via the cancellation policy of the trip. The customer needs to give a deposit of 30% upon booking and complete the full payment not later than one week before the actual trip.

7.2.7 Budget estimations

As it is agreed with the partner company, the author is not responsible for covering any costs regarding the test-trip. The test-trip is expected to bring small profits to the company which will be taken into consideration during the price establishing process.

First of all, it is necessary to divide costs of the test-trip on variable and fixed ones. Variable costs change in relation to changes in the volume of activity, while fixed costs are business expenses that are not dependent on the level of production (Inc 2016).

Variable costs		Fixed costs	
Accommodation per 1 tourist in twin rooms	€ 43	Bus transportation for the weekend	€ 360
Reward for supervisors per 1 tourist	€ 10	Administrative expenses	€ 160
In total per tourist	€ 53	In total	€ 520

Table 3. Budget estimations

As the main purpose is to test the new product, not to gain profits, the price per unit might be omitted in the following equation. Therefore dividing fixed costs by

variable costs per person will give the breakeven point in persons. In this case dividing €520 by €53 will result in rounding of 10 persons which is the minimum amount of tourists to participate in the test-trip.

The company agrees on having the number of 10 tourists during the test-trip which is only equal to the breakeven point. The estimation of the price is done through dividing the sum of variable costs and total fixed costs by the number of tourists. Variable costs need to be previously multiplied by the corresponding number of tourists. In this case €53 multiplied by 10 persons plus €520, all divided by 10 persons will give the answer of €105. The exchange rate is varying a lot every day, but on an average it is 75 Rubles per Euro, which results in 7875 Rubles per trip. This price does not include any profit to the partner company. After some considerations the company agrees on the final price to the consumer to be 8990 Rubles (or 120 Euros respectively).

7.2.8 Supervisors' training process

The author is responsible for finding good supervisors for the test-trip. They are chosen out of the students of the Saimaa University of Applied Sciences in both campuses of Imatra and Lappeenranta. As the test-trip is intended for a small group of tourists, the author looks for the suitable candidates among the fellow students. The basis for selection is their English-language proficiency and accent, their social skills and level of responsibility.

Each of the pre-chosen ones receives a personal email with the information on the project and request for their interest in taking part as a supervisor. If the person confirms his or her interest, the next step of the hiring process is a one-on-one meeting, a kind of informal interview where both parties ask questions and give answers. This interview is aimed at getting to know the responsibilities, testing language skills once again and assessing the suitability. If the results of the interview are satisfactory for both sides, then the supervisor is pre-confirmed.

The next stage is the actual choice of the supervisors out of the group. Certainly the holders of international certificates of language proficiency are a priority, but this feature is not mandatory as long as the person studies at the university in

English. After the choice is made, all the future supervisors are confirmed as hired for the test-trip and invited to the meeting.

This meeting is the final training for all supervisors together with a purpose of explaining the work process, playing some of the situations that may occur to ensure the abilities to handle some kind of public speaking and possible stress. All the questions are being addressed so that each supervisor knows when, where and what his or her duties are. Later on the hired supervisors keep in touch via Facebook until the day of the test-trip.

7.3 Testing of the product

The actual date for the test-trip is the first weekend of March, or the 5th of March 2016 till the 6th of March 2016. On Saturday morning the tourists are picked up from their meeting point in the centre of Saint Petersburg, the Vosstaniya Square. The transportation is provided by the Russian bus company, the name of the company was asked not to be mentioned in the thesis report. The tourists are welcomed by the CEO of the Jules Verne Ltd, Alexander Gorodinskiy (later on referred as Alexander), who starts conversations in English straight away. In order to break the ice, some interactive games are played during the reasonably short journey from Saint Petersburg, Russia to Lappeenranta, Finland. So by the time the group arrives in Finland, they are already familiar with each other.

The group consists of 10 persons. As it is only a test-trip, the group is small and slightly familiar to Alexander which makes the tour less stressful to organize. The age of participants varies from 22 till 32 years. As for the gender groups: 6 of them are men, and 4 are women. All of them are very active, easy-going and open-minded with intermediate level of English language on an average.

The bus arrives in Lappeenranta at around 11 am. The first task is to check in the hostel. Firstly the bus intentionally comes to the wrong hostel where the tourists are trying to check in and failing as there is no reservation on hand. The role of the hostel manager is played by the author and after several stressful minutes when all the tourists have already started using English without clearly realizing it, their guide is introducing the author as the host guide. The tourists understand that they have been played and need to be more careful in the

future. The bus takes everybody to the correct hostel where the real receptionist is asked in advance to be more talkative, give more information to the incoming guests, so that they start using their language skills with someone from another culture.

After checking in, the tourists are taken to the café where they can have lunch. Even though the café is based on self-service, all the possible interactions between a waiter and a client are being played with the help of supervisors. Supervisors are introduced to the tourists during lunch as well. There are a total of five supervisors, one for each two tourists.

After enjoying a meal, the tourists are taken to the town center. The main training takes place around the harbor and central area of Lappeenranta. All ten tourists are divided into pairs and given a map that they need to fill in. The concept is similar to a scavenger hunt game. There are five stations, each with a different assignment to complete provided by a supervisor. Each station represents a certain establishment: a shop, a bank, a tourist info station, a gas station and auto repair, and an airport. The assignments are strongly linked to the topic of a particular establishment. Upon completion of the assignment, the tourists get a stamp on their map and directions on how to find the next station. When they finally finish their hunt and meet up, they are given a concluding task in order to moderate the contrast between the ones who have won and the ones who have lost.

The evening is spent in a small bar where all the conversations are obviously in English. The tourists are given lots of interactive fun games to play with a goal to get to know each other better and to understand how to meet new people while traveling abroad. For instance, one of the games is to introduce themselves in less than two minutes to each new person and find out one thing that is common for the two of them and one thing that is completely different.

Sunday morning is full of interactions with supervisors where the tourists have to get particular information concerning manners and customs typical for Finland and to share this information with the others. This particular exercise focuses on abilities to listen and reproduce received information, as well as

practising some form of public speaking. Another morning activity is ordering pizza over the phone where the number they are given belongs to the author whose goal is to ask as many additional questions as possible while continuing to confuse the tourists and encouraging them to use all of their language skills. After that, the food is being delivered to their hostel together with the feedback forms regarding the test-trip and shortly thereafter the tourists leave for Saint Petersburg. The last step is supervisors being asked to fill in their feedback form and subsequently thanked and rewarded by the author for their contribution to the project.

7.4 Results and conclusions

In order to evaluate the results of the project accurately, the feedback is collected through three different questionnaire forms. The first one is distributed to the tourists at the end of the test-trip to find out their opinions on how satisfied they are with the product. The second form is given to the students-supervisors participating in the test-trip to get their view on how the project has been organized. And finally the third form is sent to the partner company to understand their level of satisfaction with the author's work throughout the project. All the questions of these forms are adduced in the appendices of the thesis report.

Three sub-chapters focus on the summary of each feedback form received, while the last sub-chapter analyzes the final conclusions deduced from the results above.

7.4.1 Feedback of the tourists

The questionnaire form has eight main questions for the tourists taking part in the test-trip. The following summary addresses each of these questions.

Fortunately, all of the tourists mark the enjoyment of the trip. The majority mentions good communications with the guides and the supervisors as the most pleasant feature. Other answers include friendly environment, fun and entertaining assignments during the duration of the trip.

The usefulness of the trip is considered to be on the level from middle to high. Many notice the easiness of starting a conversation and lack of fear due to the nice atmosphere in the group and among the guides.

In regard to the organizational part of the tour, some tourists write their dissatisfaction with the long queues on the customs, however it is not up to the company to control. It makes a choice of the destination a bit questionable. Someone even offers the supervisors to come to Saint Petersburg and organize a weekend training somewhere there, instead of travelling to Finland.

As it was already mentioned, the guides and the supervisors receive a lot of grateful and kind compliments concerning the work done during the project. The content of the trip is assessed as “fun and educating at the same time”, “very diverse” and “useful for the future travels”, “the tasks are not too difficult but not too easy, just fine”.

For the suggestions, the destination is again discussed as being not that important in the whole trip which makes it worthy to be changed to Saint Petersburg. There is another proposal to increase the number of tourists in a group. The schedule might also be changed, for instance “during some holidays the trip might last longer than a weekend”. Moreover, one tourist offers an idea of a tour specially “for those who want to do business in English” which will have more profound vocabulary and address skills to negotiate or sign partnership agreements in English.

All in all, the trip and the company are to be recommended to the friends and families of the tourists participating in the test-trip.

7.4.2 Feedback of the supervisors

The questionnaire for the students-supervisors is short and simple consisting of just five questions. The summary of the results follows.

All five students have a pleasant experience working for the project. They enjoy “fun time”, “nice conversations with other people”, “practice of the English-language teaching experience”, “new way to spend free time on a weekend”.

Due to the good comments of the tourists, the students are quite confident about their own performance as a supervisor and the success of the project. Some of them only mention the outdoor activities to be highly dependent on the weather conditions, so the training should have taken place “somewhere inside”.

The remuneration is satisfactory, as many of the supervisors point out that the smiles and comments of the tourists mean much more for them than the money they earn for the project. “The inside feeling of success is unforgettable”. Therefore all of them express their interest in joining the project again if necessary.

7.4.3 Feedback of the partner company

After the test-trip has been finished, the author sends the evaluation form containing five questions to the CEO of the partner company, Alexander Gorodinskiy. His opinions on the overall satisfaction of the project and the author’s work are presented below.

The partner company received a copy of the filled in feedback forms of the tourists and students-supervisors for the further assessment. Therefore the results of the project are marked as quite satisfactory in their regard. All of the desired outcomes of the project are delivered to them, including the author’s suggestions for the further development and improvement.

The author’s work during the project is “generously appreciated and valued”, even though “it was a difficult task to handle almost everything on her own, but she succeeded”. The only suggestion for the author’s skills improvement concerns the ability “to work in a stressful environment without overdoing it”, because “even if you have huge workload, resting from time to time is still important”.

With respect to the future launch of the new product, the company “needs to consider entering the niche domestically” before going on an international level in order to reduce risks, save money and practice the trainings not far from the company’s basic location.

7.4.4 Final conclusions

To sum up all of the feedback forms, the results of the project are quite successful. The tourists not only see the usefulness of such trips, but also the fun and easy-going atmosphere which helps them break the language barrier even faster. The students who performed as supervisors did a great job of welcoming and entertaining the tourists with the well-prepared assignments and are satisfied with the received positive feedback. The partner company is impressed with the excellent results of the whole tourists' experience and the author's work throughout the project.

Nevertheless, the satisfactory results of the current tour do not directly indicate the coherence and the immeasurable success of the new product being introduced to the market. The actual launch of the new product would be much more expensive and unworthy in a profitable way; as such weekend trainings would be easier to be developed domestically in Russia. Therefore the author's suggestions are to set aside the launch of the actual product in this particular way, but to try it in another environment or at another destination. The particular project was successful, but the future development is not worthy.

7.5 Complications

There were several problems faced during the whole process of the creating, planning and implementing this project. The first major issue was communication with the partner company. Even though the relationships between the company and the author were fine, sometimes the difficulty appeared when the company suddenly stopped replying any emails regarding the project for quite a long time. As the company already has some specific order in which they are planning their new products, it was difficult for the author to correspond with it. For example, the company could not decide on the profits they would like to get until the last minute, therefore marketing among potential customers was conducted without any price determinations.

Another problem was the lack of destination knowledge and expertise from the partner company. For some reason, the CEO of the company imagined Lappeenranta to be a highly-populated city with a lot of attractions and places to

visit by tourists, although most of the sights here are nature-based, so they are not available in March. Similar issue was connected to the fact that the company didn't know the way some things go in Finland, transferring their impression from Russia. For example, it was not clear to them that most of gas stations in Finland are automatic, banks require preliminary appointment, a lot of shops and restaurants work on the self-help system. The author was always correcting the company's expectations of the destination.

The company's lack of knowledge regarding the destination grew into another problem during the promotion stage of the process. The author was responsible for the whole creation of the trip; however, the marketing was a part of the partner company's duties. The main concern of the author was that the company would not be able to give the correct impression or otherwise would give some false information about the future test-trip which could completely jeopardize the implementing process. The company was carefully advised in advance about all the plans in order to avoid this peril.

Furthermore, there was a major risk of not getting enough tourists to participate in the test-trip, as the marketing was not even included into budget considerations. Nevertheless, the promotion organized via personal visits to the language schools worked fine and the test-trip got enough tourists to be considered profitable enough to organize.

The tourists were expected to bring the biggest amount of challenges, however on the contrary the implementation part of the work appeared to be much less difficult than the planning part.

8 Summary and discussion

The present thesis dealt with developing a new tourism product for the partner company. The implicated work was reasonably complicated and challenging. The primary objective of the thesis was to develop and test an educational trip for English-language learners. In order to be successful with the new product, the theoretical comprehension was necessary.

The theoretical framework was relatively extensive. First of all, it comprised the approaches to manage a project that would be profitable and satisfactory for all of the involved stakeholders, including the analysis of the simultaneous connection between the phases of the project development and the knowledge areas to be addressed. Secondly, the characteristics of each major stage of the new product's development were determined in order to provide the valuable and qualitative product for the target market. Thirdly, the specifics of the educational tourism as a part of the special interest tourism were studied for further reference; in addition to the examination of a new tourism market that is to say the language learners. The partner company's primary activities and typical products were introduced as well. The empirical part of the thesis project was completed through applying all the collected theoretical background to the actual planning and implementation of the test-trip of a new tourism product.

Consequently, the second main objective of the thesis was to analyze the results of the new product's testing and introduce the possible suggestions for the further improvement. The conclusion of the thesis work implies the delivery of the outcomes and the findings to the partner company. The results were collected using questionnaire forms for the tourists, the students-supervisors, and the partner company as well. After the thorough investigation of the received feedback, the author made her own conclusions and presented them for the partner company's future review.

Although the test-trip received good comments and was extremely satisfactory, the continuation of the product's launch was not induced due to the high costs which would even increase in case of the new product's introduction to the market, the small profit ratio to be returned from the product, the superfluous complexity of the project and the big differences in doing business between the two countries.

There are several major conclusions on the success factors of the new product development process that can be made upon the completion of the project. First of all, entering new niche does not imply creating a totally new product. Most of the markets are nowadays over-saturated with various products and services. However, combining several existing products, improving their quality and

adding extra value is a key success factor for finding a perfect balance between the old and new. Secondly, new product development requires careful market segmentation. Potential customers should be willing to spend money on the product, as it solves some particular problem for them. In the case of the present thesis, the suitable approach might be to focus even more narrowly on exclusive language schools where the target market might be above-average businessmen leading international negotiations, for example. Another important conclusion concerns the significance of successful communication between the production and the marketing departments within the company. The marketing employees should be aware of the actual content and all the possible alliterations of a product in order to be accurate in their promises for the potential consumer.

All in all, the results of the whole thesis project may be considered successful due to the fact that the tourists are fully satisfied with the planned and conducted test-trip and the almost effortless breakage of the English-language barrier in a fun and friendly environment, the supervisors express interest in participation in the future similar projects. The partner company has received all requested outcomes and has made clear conclusions with a reference to the author's recommendations. And the author has obtained incredibly valuable experience of managing an independent project while collecting and applying the theoretical knowledge on practice in cooperation with the actual tour operator.

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Appendix 1

Feasibility study 1 – questionnaire among English-language learners

1. Would you be interested in participating in the trips that were described in the introduction speech?
2. How long should this trip last, in your opinion?
 - a. One day
 - b. A weekend
 - c. Three to five days
 - d. A week
 - e. More than one week
3. Is Finland a good destination for such trips, in your opinion?
4. How much would you pay to participate in such trip?
 - a. Less than 5 000 Rubles
 - b. 5 000 – 10 000 Rubles
 - c. 10 000 – 20 000 Rubles
 - d. More than 20 000 Rubles

Appendix 2

Feasibility study 2 – questionnaire among international Saimia students

1. Would you be interested in participating in such trips as a supervisor?
2. What kind of remuneration will be sufficient for your work as a supervisor during a weekend?

Appendix 3

Feedback form 1 – questionnaire among the tourists of the test-trip

1. Did you enjoy your trip? What did you like the most?
2. Do you think the trip was useful for you and your language skills?
3. How satisfied are you with the way the trip was organized?
4. In your opinion, is the destination suitable for such trips?
5. How do you assess the work of guides and supervisors during the trip?
6. How satisfied are you with the content of the trip?
7. What suggestions for further improvement do you have regarding this trip?
8. Would you recommend this trip to your friend? Or would you join a similar trip another time yourself?

Appendix 4

Feedback form 2 – questionnaire among the students – supervisors

1. Did you enjoy working for this project? What did you like in particular?
2. Do you think you succeeded with your responsibilities during the project?
3. What could have been done differently about the project or your work?
4. Was the remuneration satisfactory for you?
5. Would you be interested in participating in a similar project again?

Appendix 5

Feedback form 3 – questionnaire for the partner company

1. How satisfied are you with the results of the project?
2. Did you get all required outcomes of the project?
3. How satisfied are you with Elana's work during the project?
4. What suggestions for further improvement do you have for Elana?
5. Would you continue the development and launch of the new product?