

The Secrets of Finnish Nature - Developing a half-day tour to the Nuuksio National Park

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<p>The purpose of this thesis is to plan and develop a nature-based product, which is a half-day tour to the Nuuksio National Park, targeted to foreign visitors. The aim is to create such product that would both fit the commissioner's range of products and correspond customer demand. The tour is not implemented during this process, as the decision of it is left for the commissioner, Strömma Finland Oy Ab.</p> <p>This product-based thesis consists of two main parts: the theoretical framework, and the planning and development process of the tour. The theoretical framework focuses on explaining the concepts of nature-based tourism and product development, as well as the Nuuksio national park. Furthermore an outlook on the customer viewpoint of tourism is also presented. The information is collected from multiple sources including books, academic journals, articles and websites.</p> <p>The development process is executed based on the new product development model as well as fieldwork, which was completed by visiting the Nuuksio national park during the thesis writing process. The aim was to research the best options to carry out a nature-based tour on the surrounding areas of the Haltia nature centre, which is one of the main services of the Nuuksio national park.</p> <p>The result of this thesis is a nature-based tour package to the Nuuksio Natural Park for foreign visitors of Helsinki, Finland. The thesis provides the commissioner with ideas on how to possibly implement the tour in the future. Furthermore, the thesis gives the reader an insight on nature-based tourism and the procedures of new product development.</p>	
Keywords nature-based tourism, Nuuksio national park, new product development	

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1 Introduction

Nature-based tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors of tourism (OECD 2009, 17), and in the case of Finland, nature is one of the primary reasons, why it is chosen as a destination to travel (Hall & Saarinen 2010, 136). This is a product-based thesis with the main idea of developing a nature-based tourism product, a half-day tour to the Nuuksio national park. The thesis purpose is to provide the commissioner, Strömman Finland Oy Ab, with ideas on how to implement such product.

The commissioner of this thesis is introduced in section 1.1. After that, the thesis moves on to the theoretical framework in chapter two, which presents the concept of nature-based tourism. It defines the term as well as its main differences with other forms of tourism associated with the subject, such as ecotourism and sustainable tourism. Chapter three identifies the tourism product as well as the process of new product development. An outlook on the customer side is taken on chapter four, which explains the concepts of tourism demand and tourist motivation, as well as the purchase-decision process of a consumer. The final part of the theoretical framework is chapter five, which introduces the product environment, in this case the Nuuksio national park and the Haltia nature centre.

The empirical part of this thesis consists of the planning and development process of the half-day tour, which is done based on the new product development model. The process is described in detail, containing a total of six steps: idea generation and screening, concept developing and testing, determining the target market, pricing the product as well as identifying the competitors.

The development process is followed by a thorough description of the final product. The final part of the thesis is the conclusion, which summarizes the product development process and predicts the success of the developed tour. Furthermore, it reflects on the whole process and the skills that I improved and gained during the course of writing this thesis.

1.1 The commissioner – Strömma Finland Oy Ab

Strömma Finland Oy Ab is a company that creates different kinds of entertainment, experiences and activities for meetings, events and leisure purposes in Helsinki and the surrounding areas. The company's key products consist of bus and boat sightseeing tours, the Helsinki card as well as charter transports and guide services. At present, the Strömma Group operates in eleven different cities in Europe: Helsinki, Stockholm, Malmö, Gothenburg, Copenhagen, Oslo, Stavanger, Bergen, Geiranger, Ålesund and Amsterdam (Strömma Finland 2017.)

The history of Strömma Finland dates as far back as to the 1940s when the Helsinki Travel Association was established. In the 1960s, sightseeing cruises came into the picture when Sun Lines started taxi boating. The era of the Helsinki Travel Association ended in 2005, when Helsinki Expert Oy, a limited company was found. In 2010 Sun Lines sold its daughter company Charter Sun Lines to Strömma Turism & Sjöfart Ab, resulting in the new name Oy Strömma Helsinki Ab. The newest form of the company was developed in 2012, when Helsinki Expert Oy and Oy Strömma Helsinki Ab merged, forming Strömma Finland Oy Ab (Strömma Finland 2017.)

Strömma Finland's key mission is based on the will to make customers happy by creating "world-class experiences" and providing them with "life-long memories". The protection of the environment is also important to the company, as it tries to work in a way that minimizes the negative impacts on the environment. Strömma Finland also obeys the environmental management system EcoCompass and cooperates with WWF Finland in order to help the Baltic Sea (Strömma Finland 2017.)

Strömma Finland's main sales point is located at the Helsinki tourist information, right next to the Market Square in the city centre of Helsinki. Furthermore, the company's products can also be bought from their website, <https://www.stromma.fi/en/helsinki/> (Strömma Finland 2017.)

2 Nature-based tourism

Before jumping into the process of developing the tour, several key factors need to be explained in order to get a thorough understanding of the subject of this thesis. Section 2.1 focuses on introducing the concept of nature-based tourism, identifying the term as well as its main differences from ecotourism and sustainable tourism. Section 2.2 concentrates on nature-based tourism in Finland, discussing the importance of nature on the country's tourism industry.

2.1 Defining nature-based tourism

The World Tourism Organization states that "tourism mainly comprises the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for leisure, business and other purposes" (WTO 1995, 20). However, when it comes to the term "nature-based tourism", there are numerous different definitions, and in the wide sense of nature attracting tourists to various destinations, most tourism can be classified as nature-based (Valentine 1992, 105). The difficulty of identifying a universally applicable explanation lies on the fact that from a national point of view, it is challenging to detach tourists from those who spend time outdoors for recreational purposes. Furthermore, it is difficult to point out specific activities that are linked to more extensive services (Fredman & Tyrväinen 2011.)

While there is not one distinct definition, many authors use similar words, such as "natural environment" and "recreation" in the context of nature-based tourism. Lucas (1984) bases the description of nature tourism on enjoying and observing natural areas and nature, while Laarman and Durst (1987) use the term "nature travel" or "nature-oriented tourism" as a combination of education, recreation and in many cases also adventure (Lucas 1984; Laarman & Durst 1987.) More recent definitions link the subject to different tourist activities, and some also approach it from a sustainable viewpoint. Nature-based tourism, a generic term for recreational travel, is dependent on natural resources or landscape. Resources and landscape work either as a setting for tourist activities, such as hiking, fishing and downhill skiing, or as their main component (Zeitlin & Burr 2011, 1.) Nature-tourism is about experiencing natural places through such outdoor activities that are sustainable in regards of their effects on the environment (Tourism New South Wales 2012, 1).

Nature-based tourism is often used in the same context with sustainability and other forms of nature tourism such as ecotourism, which brings in a lot of obscurity in regards of the differences between them. While some authors use these terms as synonyms, significant distinctions have been discovered in recent literature (Nyaupane 2007, 161). The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) defines ecotourism as travel to natural places that is responsible, preserves the environment and enhances the well-being of locals. While nature-based tourism, such as adventure tourism and wildlife tourism, is merely defined by activities based on recreation, ecotourism is also characterized by a set of principles that have advantages to both the people and conservation in a certain country (Honey 2008, 6-7.) Ecotourism itself is already nature-based, but it is also environmentally developed and sustainably maintained. Thus, ecotourism can be seen as a subsection for nature-based tourism (Weaver 2001, 6.)

Whereas nature-based tourism is seen as a sector in the tourism industry, sustainable tourism is a principle that should apply to all forms of tourism: activities, operations, enterprises and projects, including traditional and alternate forms (Aghajani & Faraji rad 2010, 42). Sustainable tourism is defined by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) as “Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities” (UNEP & WTO 2005, 12). For nature-based tourism to be considered sustainable, it has to be suitable for the particular setting and should not generate any lasting deterioration on the nature (Valentine 1992, 108). Though sustainability is not particularly a characteristic of nature-based tourism, it is an important objective to aim for, both theoretically and practically (Fredman & Tyrväinen 2011).

The discussed matter of nature-based tourism is very complex and multi-dimensional, because it includes such a wide spectrum of activities. However, in the context of this thesis, nature-based tourism is simply seen as leisure travel, with the purpose of enjoying natural attractions. Sustainability is a principle that should be kept in mind when developing and planning the different components of the excursion, because protecting the environment is important for the commissioner.

2.2 Finland as a destination for nature-based tourism

Nature-based tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors of the world's tourism industry (OECD 2009, 107). For Finland, nature is quoted as the primary reason, why foreign visitors choose it as a destination to travel (Hall & Saarinen 2010, 136.) According to statistics, the role of nature on Finland's tourism industry is undoubtedly important. For instance, 25% out of the nearly 5 million foreign visitors that came to Finland in 2004, participated in outdoor activities (Hall & Saarinen 2010, 136} .In 2009 it was estimated that approximately one-third of tourists take part in nature-based activities (Finnish Tourist Board 2009, 50). Furthermore, the growth of nature-based tourism in Finland is predicted to be from eight to ten percent yearly (Hall & Saarinen 2004, 5).

It is clear from numbers that nature has a significant role for the tourism of Finland, a place that is often called "a land of thousand lakes". But what are some of the reasons behind this? Based on tourism topography (hydrography, vegetation and relief combined), geographic location, climate and the development of the economy, Finland is an excellent destination for such recreation and vacations, where nature activities and experiences are the key element (Vuoristo 2002, 251). The amount of forests and water is larger in Finland than anywhere else in Europe, and everyone has the right to explore and walk openly in nature (Visit Finland 2017). Furthermore, Finland was chosen as the third best destination in 2017 by Lonely Planet. Visit Finland's EVP Paavo Virkkunen commented in an interview that "nature is always near in Finland – stimulating natural attractions are available even to travelers who only stop in Helsinki" (Visit Finland 2016). These are not all, but just a few of the reasons why nature continues being one of Finland's main attractions.

Moreover, the growth of nature-based tourism has also increased the importance of National Parks in Finland (Puhakka 2008, 47), Nuuksio being on top of the list with growing numbers (YLE 2014). National parks work as an excellent setting for outdoor activities, all year round (Visit Finland 2016). Thus, on the basis of the facts presented in this chapter, developing a nature-based half-day in Finland tour would be a worthwhile idea to invest on.

3 Developing a tourism product

Creating a successful product requires thorough planning and analysis. Therefore, it is important to know the theoretical framework of product development. Section 3.1 of this chapter introduces the concept of the tourism product, and section 3.2 presents the process of new product development.

3.1 Defining the tourism product

The tourism industry consists and operates on numerous individual services, suppliers and products, thus it is rather challenging to define what a “tourism product” actually is (Ivanovic 2008, 212.) In order to fully understand the concept, it is essential to elaborate the term “product”, before connecting it to the field of tourism.

As defined by Armstrong and Kotler (2014) “a product is anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use or that might satisfy a want or need” (Armstrong & Kotler 2014, 230). Products are the main means in which businesses aim to satisfy customers’ needs, thus products are not bought just for what they are but rather for the benefits they give. It is important to note that products are not always material goods, but they can also be intangible items such as services, ideas and locations (Palmer 2012, 266.)

In the tourism industry, products can describe a wide variety of attractions and activities, from natural features, such as waterfalls, to the built environment, such as theme parks and even people in a specific destination (COMCEC 2013, 5). A common trait for all products, especially tourism products, is that they have two forms: physical and symbolic (Seaton & Bennett 1996, 113). For instance, an amusement park is built of several physical traits such as rides and games, but on the other hand it signifies symbolic values to the consumer such as fun and adventure. This viewpoint also appears on Jefferson’s and Lickorish’s (1988) definition, who state that the tourism product is a “collection of physical and service features together with symbolic associations, which are expected to fulfil the wants and needs of the buyer”. They also further indicate that the tourism product is a gratifying activity that takes place at a desired destination (Jefferson & Lickorish 1988, 59, 211.)

Smith (1994) offers a model that suggests the tourism product is a combination of five elements. These elements are portrayed as a circle that consists of

the physical plant, service, hospitality, freedom of choice and involvement (see figure 1). Whether a product is successful in regards of meeting consumers' needs, is dependent on how well each of the elements is composed and connected with the others. Moreover, the tourism product is not just all the elements combined, but rather an outcome of a symbiotic communication between them (Smith 1994, 587-588.)

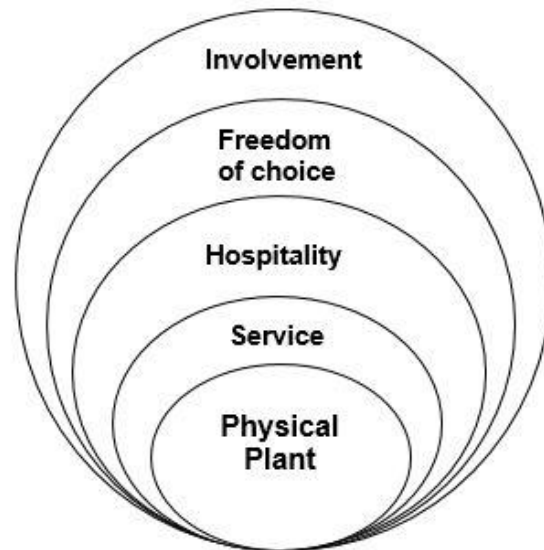


Figure 1. The tourism product model (after Smith 1994, 587)

The physical plant is the key part of every tourism product. It can be a location, a natural resource or facility. Moreover, it can either be a permanent premise, such as a hotel or a movable item, such as a cruiseship. On the other hand, the physical plant also alludes to conditions on the tourism industry's infrastructure, as well as environmental conditions, such as weather and the quality of water. According to Gunn (1972) and Mace (1980), evaluating the quality of the physical plant can be done by looking at the following components: optimization of the user's experience, preservation of the environment, and the product's accessibility to tourists with a vast sphere of capabilities or restrictions (Smith 1994, 588.)

The service part of the model is what makes the physical plant valuable for the consumers. In this case, service is a combination of those definitive tasks that are needed to meet the consumers' needs. Service is needed everywhere, for instance in hotels as a form of housekeeping and front desk operations and in airplanes as a form of cabin crew and airport services. All employees have

specific criteria that states the level and kind of knowledge needed to complete their job, thus the quality of service can be assessed by comparing the employee's execution to the requirements that have to be met (Smith 1994, 588.)

While great service is important, it is certainly not enough, which is why hospitality is a necessity. It refers to consumers wanting and expecting a unique service that has added value, "something more". Hospitality is not just a technical performance of a task, but rather the style or mindset in which the service is provided. In practice, it can be seen in such things as a smile and a genuine interest in the consumers' needs and wants. Compared to service, hospitality is more subjective, thus it is also more challenging to evaluate and manage. However, there are several methods that could be used to assess it, such as customer feedback and hiring experts to act the role of customers (Smith 1994, 588.)

Freedom of choice is a must-have for all tourism products and in order for consumers to have a satisfying experience, they need to have a reasonable selection of options. The level, in which freedom of choice applies, varies greatly, and is dependent on several factors such as the purpose of the travel, the consumer's budget, knowledge and prior experiences. Freedom does not necessarily always mean choice, but it can also refer to surprises and spontaneous actions, such as deciding last minute to go away for the weekend. (Smith 1994, 589-590.)

The last element and the shell of the model is involvement. It means not only physical participation of consumers, but also emotional and intellectual engagement that focuses on the activity. Successful participation of consumers in regards of creating tourism products, requires all of the previous elements – a reasonable physical plant, great service, hospitality and freedom of choice. Once these elements are established and combined with involvement, a satisfactory and good quality product is practically ensured (Smith 1994, 590-591.)

3.2 Product development process

There are two ways in which companies can create new products: one is by buying someone else's company or using their product through a license, and the other one is by using the company's own resources and attempts to create something new. Developing new products is not an easy task and multiple steps are required on the road to success. A company has to know its customers, competitors and the market as well as develop products that are of exceptional value. Furthermore, a strong, customer-oriented and efficient planning process is needed in executing new products. Kotler, Bowen, Makens & Baloglu (2017) introduce a new-product development process that includes eight key steps (see figure 2) (Kotler, Bowen, Makens & Baloglu 2017, 269.)

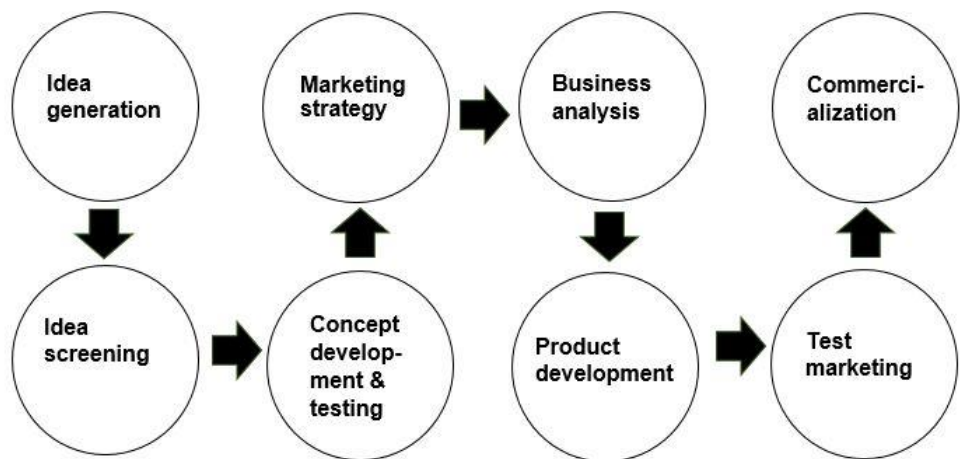


Figure 2. The new product development process (after Kotler et.al 2017, 269)

The process starts with generating an idea, or rather many ideas from which only a few are good ones. Sources of new product ideas can be divided into two categories: internal and external. The traditional method of using internal sources is through research and development, but nowadays many companies encourage their employees to create and develop new product ideas. External idea sources are numerous, including customers and competitors as well as distributors and suppliers. For instance, customers can leave complaints and questions which help a company develop products that better fit their needs. Suppliers can inform about new techniques and trends, and by following competitors a company can get an insight on their products. A rather new method is crowdsourcing, also known as co-creation, where customers are engaged in the process of developing a new product. Many companies do not use just one source, but rather a combination of internal and external sources (Kotler et. al 2017, 270-271.)

The second step is idea screening, which means identifying good ideas and dropping bad ones. Good ideas are considered as ones that will turn into profitable products, and profitability is essential because developing new products is often costly. Perhaps the most important part of screening is compatibility. In order for a product to succeed, it is important to see whether the product is compatible with the company's product line, objectives and strategies. Making an incompatible product is a frequent mistake for many companies, so taking enough time for this step is crucial (Kotler et. al 2017, 272.)

Generating a potential idea is followed by the concept development and testing stage. It is essential to tell the difference between an idea, a concept and an image of a product. A product idea is a potential product that might be put out to the market by managers. A product concept on the other hand is a more detailed form of the idea that is expressed in terms that are significant for the consumers. Lastly, the product image is the way in which the customers see the potential or a real product. Ideas need to be developed into alternate product concepts, from which the best is chosen. Product testing can be done with a group of target customers, but some companies, especially smaller ones often overlook this stage and move straight from an idea to implementation (Kotler et. al 2017, 273.)

The next step is developing a marketing strategy, a plan how the product is going to be introduced to the market. There are three parts in the marketing strategy. The first one is identifying the target customers, positioning the product and determining goals in terms of profits, sales and market share for the start, usually for the first few years. The second part delineates the price of the product as well as budgets for distribution and marketing. The third part is for the long-run, pointing out the goals for sales and profits as well as the strategy for the marketing mix (Kotler et. al 2017, 274.)

The fifth step is called business analysis. In this step, the company further analyses if the product idea is appealing enough in terms of business. Business analysis is done by revising the projections regarding the sales, costs and profits of the product. If these fulfil the company's objectives, the product is ready to move to development (Kotler et. al 2017, 274.)

In the product development stage, the company puts the plan into practice by creating one or more versions of the product. The prototype should be safe, stay on the budget and have the main features described in the product concept report. It is important to note that the prototype does not fully portray the potential of the core product as it lacks many of the intangible aspects, such as the employees input (Kotler et. al 2017, 274-275.)

After development becomes the market testing, where the product and the marketing plan is put out to test in real market situations. In this stage the company can get valuable information of potential issues and information that is needed before fully executing the product. There is great variation in the amount of testing needed and each product is different. For instance, if the development costs are low, little to no testing might be done. Even though market testing can be costly, it is often worth the investment, as it prevents a company from making mistakes later down the road (Kotler et. al 2017, 274-275.)

Finally, the company has to decide whether or not they want to commercialize the product. There are several questions in this step that need to be looked over, before jumping on to the product launch. Firstly, a company has to decide on the right time to put out the product. Secondly, it has to choose, whether the product will be introduced in a single location or in a larger scale, such as the national or even international market. The target markets should be revised and made more detailed, by looking at who will be the ones to grab the products attention. Lastly, a plan for introducing the product should be created and the marketing budget should be spent according to the plan (Kotler et. al 2017, 274-275.)

4 Understanding tourism from the customer's viewpoint

As a part of successful product development, it is fundamental to understand the customer, in this case the tourist. Section 4.1 of this chapter focuses on identifying the concept of tourism demand, and section 4.2 goes further into detail by explaining the tourists' motivation and needs. Lastly, section 4.3 presents the general purchase-decision process of a tourist.

4.1 Tourism demand

Travel and tourism is all about the people who are engaged in it – the tourists. Without people seeking for new experiences, there would be no tourists, thus travel and tourism would not be as large phenomenon, as it is today. This is all related to travel demand, a rather complex and broad, yet fundamental part of tourism. Travel demand is about identifying the reasons why and how people choose to take part in tourism, but also about such things as examining why people choose certain types of tourism and how they behave as tourists (Sharpley 2006, 29.)

First and foremost, it is important to take a look what the term “demand” actually means. In tourism, there are three types of demand. The first one is actual/depressed demand, which is the number of people that participate in tourism, based on statistic. The second one is suppressed demand, which is formed of the people who have the potential to travel and become tourists, but are not able to do so due to personal circumstances. The third type of demand is called latent demand. It consist of people that are potential tourists, but their needs cannot be satisfied by a certain product or a destination. From these three, depressed demand is the one that is most used when studying tourism demand. It is fundamental to note that tourism demand should be seen as a continuous process; previous holiday experiences often fuel the expectations and experiences of the future ones. Furthermore, tourism demand should be seen as a part of a larger image – it is just one aspect of consumer behaviour (Sharpley 2006, 29.)

The tourism demand process, which usually resembles the purchase-decision process, is a rather effective and useful model for understanding the demand of travel and tourism. The purchase-decision process generally consist of five stages, which are all subject to a range of factors (see figure 3) (Sharpley

2006, 29.) Cooper, Fletcher, Fyall, Gilbert and Wanhill suggest that these factors can be placed under four categories (adopted from Cooper et.al 2005, in Sharpley 2006, 29).

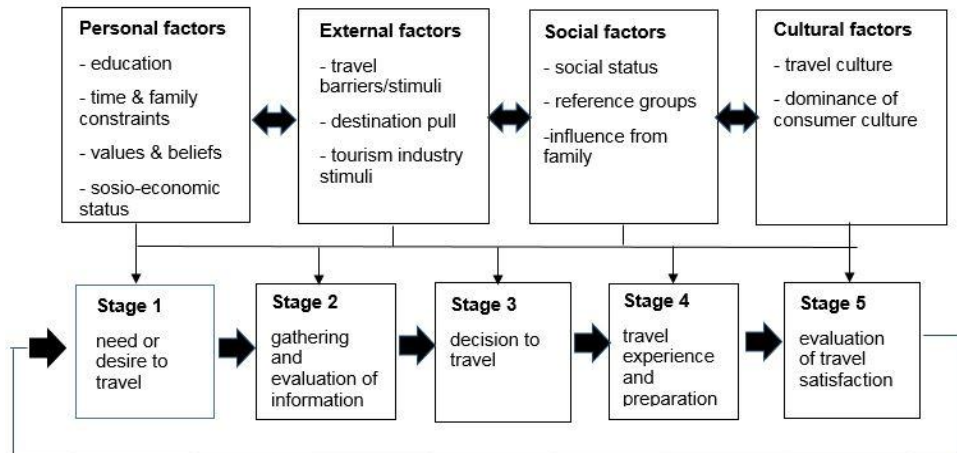


Figure 3. Tourism demand process (adopted from Cooper et.al 2005, in Sharpley 2006, 30.)

1. The first category consist of the energisers of demand. These are the start of the process (stage 1), as they are the push factors that form the motivation for people to go on a vacation (adopted from Cooper et.al 2005, in Sharpley 2006, 31.)
2. The second is formed by the effectors of demand, which are the pull factors. Often the tourists' previous impressions and knowledge on a certain destination, place or experience, influence the information gathering and evaluation process (stages 2 and 3), thus the effectors lead to certain travel decisions (adopted from Cooper et.al 2005, in Sharpley 2006, 31.)
3. The third category includes the filterers/determinants of demand, which can be various psychological and social, tangible or definitive demand factors such as mobility, education levels, employment and income (adopted from Cooper et.al 2005, in Sharpley 2006, 31.)
4. The fourth as last category consists of roles, which are also influencers in tourists' travel and vacation choices. They can be roles in the purchasing part, which are adopted from family members in making holiday choices. Alternatively, roles can be characteristics that describe the tourists' role in the tourism industry (adopted from Cooper et.al 2005, in Sharpley 2006, 31.)

As tourism grows, the demand for tourism changes. There are two themes that often emerge and should be noted when planning for tourism activities and products. One is the relationship between the production and consumption, also known as “Fordist production”, meaning that nowadays consumers have to accept mass-produced products. The other concerns the nature of tourists: tourists are becoming more adventurous and flexible, yet they are also becoming more aware. Therefore tourists seek products that are of greater quality and bring value for their money (adopted from Cooper et.al 2005, in Sharpley 2006, 32.)

4.2 Tourists’ motivation and needs

The tourist motivation is one of the most important aspects of the tourism demand. First and foremost, it should be made clear that motivation is not the same as demand. Motivation is the part that connects the need with the action that is needed to fulfil it, thus motivation is the outcome of demand. Furthermore, motivation turns needs into goal-oriented consumer behaviour. There are various different approaches to tourist motivation, however two main perspectives can be identified. These are the intrinsic, which sees motivation as a psychological phenomenon, and extrinsic, which sees it as a sociological phenomenon (Sharpley 2006, 35-36.)

The intrinsic approach to tourist motivation regards with creating a link with an individual’s psychological needs and goal-oriented behaviour. It is rather challenging to identify psychological motives, as often tourists themselves have a hard time understanding what exactly motivates them. However, most researchers agree that one of the main intrinsic needs that travel and tourism can fulfil is ego-enhancement (Sharpley 2006, 36.) Dann (1977) states that people have the need to have their ego boosted at times, but it is difficult, because they have already been assigned a social-status at their home environment. However, by travel, one can go to a place where his social-status is unknown, and thus feel superior and boost his ego (Dann 1977, 187.) Other intrinsic motivators, some often known as “hidden agenda”, include such things as relaxation, escape, freedom, self-realisation and enhancement of relationships (Sharpley 2006, 36).

Extrinsic or external motivators derive from a person’s social and cultural surroundings, such as family and friends, work-life or society. It is essential to

note that these factors are intrinsic in the sense that they become a personal need, but they emerge in a person's social environment. The extrinsic motivators can be looked from the individual's viewpoint, also referred as social action perspective, or from the society's viewpoint, also known as a structural or functionalist perspective (Sharpley 2006, 36-37.)

There are numerous elements that should be considered when studying extrinsic motivation. First is the relationship of tourism and work. Work is a major extrinsic factor in motivation, because since the industrialisation, work has become contrary to leisure, and especially travel and tourism. Thus, work experiences often influence the wanted tourism experiences. There are three forms that the work-tourism relationship can have: work and tourism as opposites, tourism as continuation to work and lastly work and tourism as neutral between each other (Sharpley 2006, 37.)

The second element are the social influences, which are a person's social groups, both immediate and wider, that affect the tourist motivation. The social pressure can come from four sources which are culture, social position, family and reference groups. The relationship that these influences have on tourist motivation, is however, not commonly exclusionary, as there might be different influences that dominate at different times (Sharpley 2006, 37-38.)

The last element is the concept of modern society, which has given the opportunity for travel and tourism, as well as created the need for it. One of the main factors in regards of modern society is the need to escape from it every once in a while. From a functionalist viewpoint, travel and tourism have an important role in maintaining a good balance in the modern society. Alienation and anomie are some of the main concepts of the motivational push of modern society (Sharpley 2006, 38.) According to Dann (1977), anomie relates to a society where the norms that have ruled communication are no longer forceful, and where disorder and insignificance have taken over (Dann 1977, 186). Alienation on the other hand, refers to feeling of uninvolvedness in a society, group, culture or a situation. Tourism provides an opportunity to escape from this feeling, thus alienation works as a motivation for tourists (Jafari 2002, 19).

In addition to the desire to escape the hectic modern life, tourists are believed to be looking authentic experiences and meaning through travel. In a way, travel and tourism represents a modern version of a spiritual experience, or a

holy, religious journey that back in the day brought meaning and sense to people's lives (Sharpley 2006, 38.)

4.3 Tourist purchase-decision process

Economically, the tourist is involved in a purchasing decision, gaining satisfaction for the spent money. The traditional consumer product purchase is usually a spontaneous decision, where the customer expects tangible returns and invests only a small part of his assets (Wahab, Crampon & Rothfield 1976, 74.) The buying-decision of a tourist is, however, different and unique in many ways.

Firstly, the investment that a tourist makes has no tangible return. Rather than a material good, the tourist product is an experience, which changes its form during each step of the purchase-decision process. Purchasing a tourist package has a much larger financial investment, yet the tourist cannot check and examine the product prior the purchase. Because of the investment, tourism product purchases, apart from smaller ones such as gifts and souvenirs, are typically not spontaneous, but rather thoroughly planned (Wall & Mathieson 2006, 42.)

In the case of tourism, consumers go directly to the production place of the product, rather than the product being transported to them. Unlike in traditional consumer purchases, in tourism there is often an interest for new and alluring places, thus distance is not seen as a disadvantage (Wall 1978). Tourists do not consume products in the typical sense, where the product is demolished at the time of the use, though in the long run the nature of the tourism products may change. Moreover, this relates to the fact that tourism products are not storable, but perishable as they can not be saved for later use (Wall & Mathieson 2006, 42-43.)

When a tourist makes a decision on a certain vacation or a tourism product, various smaller subsequent decisions are made, in regards of the diverse nature of the tourism industry and the motivations of the people travelling. Furthermore, decision-making always includes a variety of identified risks. In most cases, satisfaction of tourists is regulated by the quality of the tourism products that the supplier or destination provides, but the tourist itself has little to

no way of influencing that. Thus, the degree in which the risk applies correlates on how much control and engagement the tourist has on the travel decisions (Wall & Mathieson 2006, 43.)

Bennett and Strydom (2001) offer a model of the purchase-decision process that includes six steps (see figure 4).



Figure 4. The purchase-decision process of a consumer (Bennett & Strydom 2001, 35-37)

1. The process starts with the consumer recognizing a need or a problem that can be satisfied or solved by buying a certain product, a tourism product in this case. For this realization to begin, there needs to be a difference in the current and desired state of a consumer. This step is equally important for marketers, because if they want to increase sales, they need to respond to their target customers' needs (Bennett & Strydom 2001, 35.)

2. The next stage is the gathering of the information. Potential consumers try to collect as much information as possible, so that they can decide whether or not to purchase the product. There are various different media outlets in which marketers can promote their tourism products, but the focus should be on the benefits that the product has for the consumer (Bennett & Strydom 2001, 35-36.)

3. In the evaluation stage, the consumer appraises the different alternatives in term of their benefits and attributes. The evaluation criteria can vary depending on the situation, but it can be product-based such as the cost and quality of the product, or psychological such as personal satisfaction and social needs (Bennett & Strydom 2001, 36.)

4. After evaluation comes the decision. This is rather difficult to measure, as the decision process is a personal and mental process for the consumer. However, there are two categories that marketers should note: the essence of the decision (what the consumer decides) and the fact that decision-making is a complex process. Typically decisions that are of high risk, require more involvement and more effort. Low involvement on the other hand means little effort on the decision-making (Bennett & Strydom 2001, 36-37.)

5. Once the decision is final, the process continues with the action of purchase (Bennett & Strydom 2001, 37).

6. The last stage in the process is the post-purchase evaluation. In this stage the customer compares the purchase decision with the experience of the product, thus this evaluation is a strong influencer of future decisions. If there is a negative difference between the desired state and the accomplished state, cognitive dissonance, or more familiarly feeling of dissatisfaction might occur. Therefore, it is essential for companies to follow and monitor the post-purchase stage, because negative experiences spread quickly through word-of mouth. (Bennett & Strydom 2001, 37.)

5 Product environment - Nuuksio National Park

In the core of this half-day tour is nature, more specifically the nature of Finland. The next chapter will concentrate on the main destination of the tour: Nuuksio national park. Section 5.1 gives a general introduction to the area, while section 5.2 presents the Haltia nature centre. Haltia is one of the main attractions of the half-day tour in addition to nature.

5.1 A brief introduction to Nuuksio

Since Finland is known for its pure and peaceful nature, there are plethora of nature-based attractions – one of these being the Nuuksio national park. Nuuksio is an area located in the Uusimaa region of Finland, extending to the city of Espoo and to the municipalities of Vihti and Kirkkonummi. The total size of the area is about 55 square kilometres (Metsähallitus 2017). Based on visitor numbers, Nuuksio was the second most popular national park in Finland in 2015 (Metsähallitus 2015).

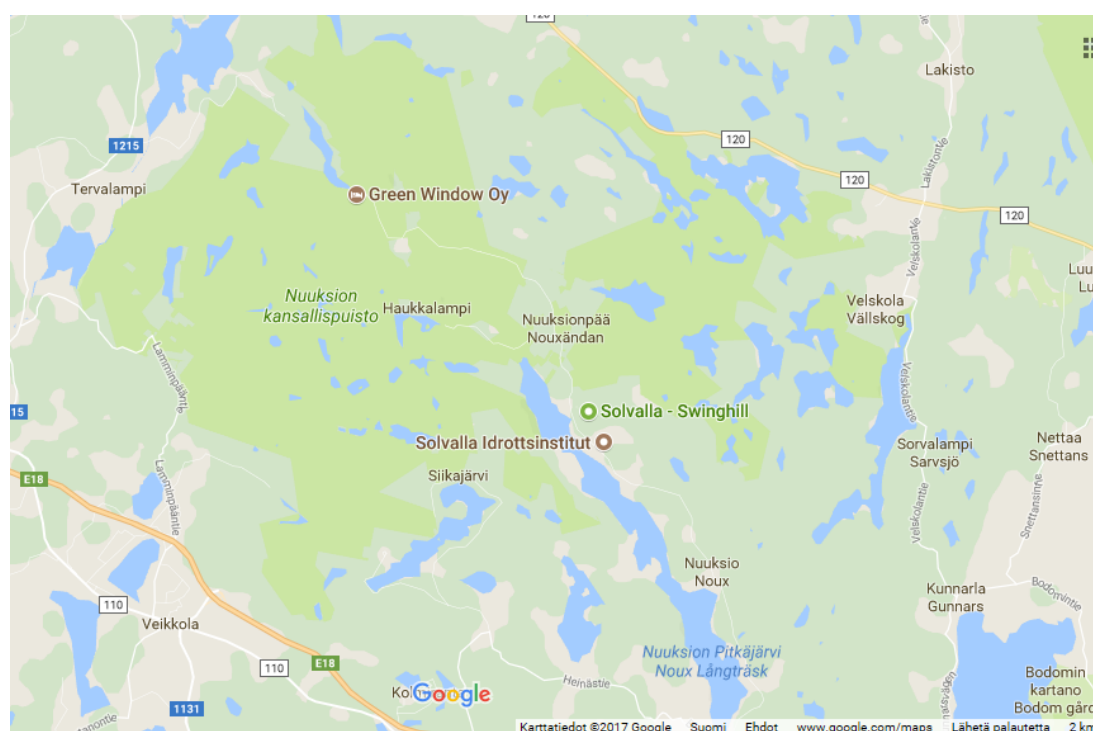


Figure 5. Google Maps view of Nuuksio National Park (Google Maps 2017)

The Nuuksio National park was established in 1994, but the history of the area dates back to much earlier days. The first parts of the region emerged from the sea over 9000 years ago, due to the upthrust that followed the Ice Age. Findings from the Stone Age have proven that there was movement already back then, but it was the Iron Age and agriculture that brought inhabitants to

the surrounding areas of Nuuksio. The national park itself remained as a hunting and wilderness area. Tenant farming, a system established in the 18th century, reached Nuuksio at the end of 19th century. Still to this day, there are many signs of the past that one can find when roaming around the area (Metsähallitus 2017.)

Nowadays Nuuksio is a popular destination for both summer- and winter outdoor recreation and activities. The diverse nature of the area consists of boreal forest, Siberian taiga and also some southern species, due to the closeness of the shore of the Gulf of Finland. The landscapes of Nuuksio vary between numerous lakes, ponds, bogs, rocks, forests and much more (Espoon kaupunki 2017). There is also a wide spectrum of animals, of which the flying squirrel is the official symbol of the national park (Metsähallitus 2017).

Nuuksio is easy to reach by car or with the public transport, thus it is great not only for one day trips, but also camping excursions lasting for several days (Espoon kaupunki 2017). The distance from the city centre of Helsinki to Nuuksio is approximately 35 kilometres, and the journey takes between 40 minutes to an hour, depending on the traffic and mode of transport (Google Maps 2017).

5.2 Haltia nature centre

The Haltia nature centre, located right alongside the national park in Solvalla, was opened in 2013, thus it is a rather new addition to Nuuksio's services (Metsähallitus 2017). Haltia is an exhibition and events centre that introduces all of Finland's national parks and hiking destinations. Moreover, the centre is also available for private occasions and meetings (Visit Espoo 2017.)



Figure 6. The Haltia nature centre (Photo: Suomen Luontokeskus Haltia / Anna Haukka)

Haltia's surroundings offer great grounds for nature-based recreations, such as hiking and bird watching (Visit Espoo 2017). The main attractions of the centre are the exhibitions, which there are four in total: three of them indoors, and one outdoors. The main exhibition introduces all of Finland's 40 national parks, the green belt exhibition is focused on the capital area's nature destinations and the other two have changing collections. Furthermore, the centre's services include a restaurant that offers buffet lunch and has savoury and sweet delicacies, and a shop where one can buy maps, books and souvenirs. The shop's selection of items is focused on Finnish design and production. There is also a library corner, where one can relax or search information. The restaurant, the shop, as well as the library corner are free to enter, but the exhibitions, apart from the green belt, have an entrance fee (Suomen luontokeskus Haltia 2017.)

In the summer season, from the first of May until the end of September, Haltia is open every day from ten to six. In the winter season, it is closed on Mondays, but open other days from ten to five. The services of Haltia as well as the whole Nuuksio national park are operated by the Finnish Administration of Forests. (Metsähallitus 2017.)

6 Planning a half-day tour to Nuuksio

This is the empirical part of this thesis, which is all about the planning and development process of the tour. The planning process is based on the new product development process model by Kotler et.al, which was presented earlier in chapter four. However, it is modified to fit the context of this thesis. This chapter has a total of eight sections. Section 6.1 introduces the idea generation and screening process, and section 6.2 the concept development and testing. Section 6.3 focuses on marketing, and section 6.1.4 determines the duration and season of the tour. Section 6.5 presents the costs and pricing, and section 6.1.6 the suggested name of the tour. The competitors are identified in section 6.7, and lastly, the product is compared to Smith's model of the tourism product in section 6.8. The description of the final product is presented after the development process and it is found on section 6.9.

(adopted from Cooper et.al 2005, in Sharpley 2006, 31.)

6.1 Idea generation & screening

The process started with the idea generation, which meant thinking about different ideas for a new product that would both fit the commissioner's product line and be relatively easy to productize. In this process, both external and internal sources were used. Internal sources included discussions with the commissioner on what they might be interested in. External sources were mainly focused on the demand side. While working for the commissioner during the summer of 2017, I noticed that many foreign visitors were interested in nature-based activities and more specifically the nature of Finland. Furthermore, research made on nature-based tourism in Finland showed that nature is one of Finland main attractions, thus as stated earlier, it would be a worthwhile idea to develop a nature-based product. Since the commissioner's product range is mainly focused on sightseeing, it made sense that the product would be a nature-based sightseeing tour.

Next step was to think about the physical plant, in this case the destination for the tour. Several criteria had to be considered in this step. Since the commissioner's operations are mainly focused in Helsinki and the surrounding areas, the location had to be within reasonable distance from the capital area of Finland. Furthermore, this was essential so that the travel time would be minimized and as many people as possible would have the chance to participate. Secondly, the destination had to represent the main theme of the tour: the

Finnish nature. Moreover, it was important that the place had some additional services that would make the place appealing to potential customers.

After researching and screening several options, Nuuksio seemed to be the best choice for further development. It is located not more than 40 minutes to an hour from Helsinki, offers great grounds for exploring nature and has the unique Haltia nature centre with its additional services. Based on the facilities that the destination offered, the tour decided to be built around two main components: a walking tour in the nature and a visit to Haltia.

6.2 Concept development and testing

Once the basic idea was developed, it was time to go further into detail with the concept development and testing. In the new product development process, concept development usually means testing the product concept with a target group. However, at the time of the development process, the high-season of tourism in Helsinki (roughly from May to September), which was also the planned season for the product, had already ended. Instead, the concept development was conducted in the form of fieldwork, which practically meant going to Nuuksio and examining several options how the tour could be executed. This decision was also based on the fact that the aim of this thesis was to develop and plan the concept of the tour, but leave the decision to implement it for the commissioner. Furthermore, the costs of the product were not expected to be high, thus there wouldn't be great losses, if the demand was low.

In Nuuksio, the first step was to research how nature could be incorporated in the tour. The process started in Haltia, as nowadays it is the centre point of Nuuksio and surrounded by numerous marked routes with variation in both length and scenery. The main goal was to find out such route that would be the most convenient in terms of organizing a nature-themed walking tour. The route was supposed to be easily accessible, and of reasonable length, so that it would cater to a wide audience and that there would be enough time for a visit to Haltia. Based on these criteria, two routes were tested to see their potential: Maahisenkierros and Päivättärenpolku (see figure 7).



Figure.7 Päivättärenpolku and Maahisenkierros on the lower right corner of the map (Photo: Suomen luontokeskus Haltia)

Maahisenkierros and Päivättärenpolku did not differ drastically in terms of length, the first being 2 kilometers and the latter 1.4 kilometers. However, the main difference was in the accessibility; Maahisenkierros was easy to walk as it was also suitable for people in wheelchairs and baby strollers. Päivättärenpolku on the other hand was more challenging due to its steep hills. Maahisenkierros also included a beautiful lookout spot that had a view to the Pitkäjärvi lake (see figure 8), but Päivättärenpolku was more simplistic in terms on scenery.



Figure 8. A lookout spot to the Pitkäjärvi lake from the Maahisenkierros route (Ilona Laine 2017)

In regards of time, it was estimated that approximately one hour would be suitable time to use for the walking tour. This decision was based on the transportation time from Helsinki to Nuksio and back, as well as the time needed for the visit to Haltia. After comparing all the aspects, Maahisenkierros was decided as the spot for the walking tour.

The next step included a visit to the Haltia nature centre, with the aim to check its facilities and services. The visit proved Haltia's diversity and confirmed the decision to incorporate it as part of the Nuksio tour. The centre itself was free to visit, but the exhibitions were chargeable, thus one of the purposes of the visit was also to examine should the ticket for the exhibitions be included in the price of the tour. Based on the fact that the exhibits are one of Haltia's main attractions and that there are a total of four exhibitions included in the ticket price, it was decided that it would be worthwhile to have the entrance in the tour cost.

Overall the fieldwork at Nuuksio helped to understand the possibilities in terms of organizing the tour and the factors that should be considered in the planning process. Furthermore, it cleared the idea of the product concept and gave valuable resources to move forward in the product development process.

6.3 Marketing - target customers

Next step was to think about the marketing aspect of the tour, with the focus on identifying the target customers for the product. The marketing part of the new product development process also includes setting goals for sales, profits and markets shares, but in this case it was left out for the commissioner, since those parts contain mostly private and confidential information.

New products are developed because they are the main means in which a company can satisfy customer's needs. Thus, the basis of determining the target market is to think about the problem that the product solves and the people who might best benefit from the product. One of the key reasons for developing this nature-based tour was to fulfil the desire of foreign visitors to explore the Finnish nature. Albeit experiencing nature is possible without participating in a tour, having a guide that is able to provide with additional knowledge about the surroundings, brings an added value. Participating in a guided tour is also practical and easy, since everything is organized for the customers in advance. Moreover, the tour responds to tourists' intrinsic motivation, such as relaxation and the need to escape.

The commissioner has a wide customer base, of which foreign visitors from a major part. When the desire that this tour aims to satisfy and the commissioner's customer base was combined, it was specified that the target audience of the tour consist of foreign visitors who travel to Helsinki, and have an interest in nature-based activities and the Finnish nature. The participants should also have enough time to invest in the tour, thus this would quite possibly eliminate those visitors staying for less than a day. Furthermore, tourists who come from countries where the nature is very different from that of Finland's, would be expected to be interested in this kind of product. For instance, many tourists from Asian countries such as China and Japan are interested in experiencing the pure Finnish nature (YLE 2016, Suomen Suurlähetystö, Tokio 2014). Although the tour is marketed towards foreign visitors, Finns can of course participate in it as well. However, the guidance would most likely be

in English so that it would cater to a wide audience. In terms of age, the tour is available for people of all ages.

Table 1. Characteristics of the target audience of the tour

Target audience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - foreign visitors - travelling to Helsinki - interested in nature-based activities and the Finnish nature - people off all ages

6.4 Duration and season of the tour

After the key concept of the tour had been developed, it was important to think about the further details of the tour. In this case they were the duration of the tour, and the season and day in which it would be organized. Based on the commissioner's schedule for the regular sightseeing tours, it was suggested that the tour would start around 1 pm. The duration of the tour was quite easy to determine based on the travel time to Nuuksio as well as the concept testing. Table 2 presents the factors that were considered when choosing how long the tour would last.

Table 2 . The factors that determine the duration of the tour

Travel time to Nuuksio	45 minutes Helsinki – Nuuksio 45 minutes Nuuksio – Helsinki = 1,5 hours total
Walking tour	1 hour
Visit to Haltia nature centre	1 hour 15 minutes
Extra time	A short break before the walking tour for 5-10 minutes, if needed
Total duration	approx. 4 hours

The travel time was calculated based on driving time from Google Maps and the duration of the walking tour was estimated based on the fieldwork done in Nuukio. Although the length of the walking tour wasn't that long (2 kilometers), it was considered that it would take more time with the guidance as well as with the possible stop on the lookout spot along the way. The time spent in Haltia was estimated based on the visit to the centre and the size of the exhibitions. The extra time was reserved for a possible break before the walking tour, but could also be used to lengthen the walking tour a bit, if needed.

Next step was to identify when the tour would be organized, in terms of the days and season. It was helpful to look at the target audience, which in this case were the foreign visitors of Helsinki. The high season of tourism in Helsinki is during the summer months, mainly from May to September (Visit Helsinki 2015). Thus, it would make sense to organize the tour around that timeframe, possibly starting from June since the tour is a new product and it's not as busy yet in May. Furthermore, it would perhaps be safest to first arrange the tour once a week, and then if it became successful, organize it more frequently. Helsinki and its surrounding areas are quite popular for weekend tourism (Vuoristo 2002, 254), thus Saturday could be a good option to arrange the tour. Furthermore, during the summer months there are a lot of happenings during the weekend in Helsinki, which also brings a lot of visitors that might be interested in this tour.

6.5 Costs and pricing

Next was the time to research the estimated costs for developing the tour as well as pricing of the product. There are numerous ways in which a company can price their products, but in this instance, a method called cost-plus pricing was chosen, because it was a relatively easy method to use for this kind of product. To put it simply, cost-plus pricing means calculating the costs of the product and then adding a mark-up, which is a percentage of the costs; the profit of the product (Grasset 2015). There are no set rules on what the mark-up percentage should be, as it varies greatly between different industries and companies. However, a 50 percent mark-up is quite commonly used (Bond 2008), so it was chosen in this case as well.

The expenses of the tour consists of those components that are necessary for organizing the tour, thus additional costs, such as marketing costs are not included in this. Figure 9 shows all the different components that affect the pricing of the product.

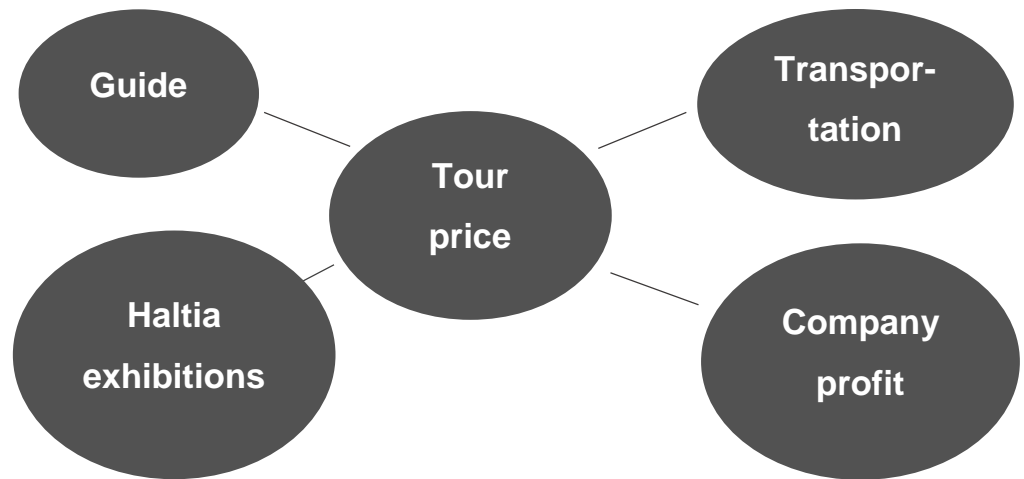


Figure 9. The factors that determine the price of the tour

The transportation costs are the cost of the bus transports, which are calculated to be from the city centre of Helsinki to Nuuksio and back. The transportation costs are based on prices from a bus company called Ventoniemi. The commissioner provided the cost of the guide, who will be with the group during the whole tour. The cost of the entrance to the exhibitions to the Haltia nature centre, were found from Haltia's website. Lastly, the company profit is the mark-up percentage, in this case 50%, which determines how much profit the commissioner would get from each product sold.

Table 2 shows the cost of the above mentioned components and the calculated selling price of the tour per person (adult). The calculations are based on a group of 50 people, which in this case is used as an example for the maximum group size.

Table 3. The cost of the components and the price of the tour per person

Pricing	
Guide	329€/4 hours = 6,58€/person
Transportation	390€/bus with 50 seats = 7.8€/person
Haltia entrance	12€/per person (adult)
Cost of the tour per person	6,58+7,8+12= 26,38€
Mark-up	50 %
Price of the tour per person	selling price = $[(26,38) \div (100-50)] \times 100$ selling price = $(26,38 \div 50) \times 100=$ 52,76€ ~ 53€
Profit per product sold	53-26,38 = 29,62€

Although the 50% mark-up gives the product a price of 52,76€, it was rounded up to 53€ as it is a much simpler price to both sell and advertise. The profit per product sold was then calculated by subtracting the costs of the tour from the selling price.

6.6 Choosing a name for the tour

The name of the tour is especially important in regards of the purchase-decision process of a customer. The name should be informative, and give a clear idea of what the product is about. If the name is attractive, then it is more likely to pique a person's interest.

The product name:

The Secrets of Finnish Nature- A Half-Day Tour to the Nuuksio National Park

In this case it was important that the name of the tour would contain the words "half-day" and "national park". The first one gives the customer information about the duration of the tour and the second explains the destination of the tour. Many foreign visitors most likely have not heard of Nuuksio, thus they do not have any prior information about it. Furthermore, the word "secret" gives the customer an impression that there is something unique about the Finnish nature and something they will only experience by participating in the tour.

6.7 Competitors

When developing new products, it is important to know similar products that already exist on the market. The Finnish Administration of Forests that operates the Nuuksio national park and its services, has multiple partners that offer nature excursions in Nuuksio and its surrounding areas. Table 4 shows some of the existing supply of tour offers in Nuuksio.

Table 4. Comparison of some of the nature-based excursions in Nuuksio

Tour offer	Group size	Duration	Price	Availability
Nice to Meet you, Nuuksio! by BioGeo – Traveller	not specified	5-6 hours	50€/person, discounts available for students and groups of 3+. Children under 16 free with an adult. Transportation from Helsinki extra 10-14€	Regularly throughout the year
Finnish Lakes and Forests Hiking tour in Nuuksio National Park by FeeltheNature	not limited	3,5 hours in the nature, 5 hours total with transportation	starting from 308€/person (private tour)	April-November
Magic of the Woods Walking Trip by Nuuksion Taika	4-12	2 hours	65€/person, minimum charge 4 people	On Sundays throughout the year. Other days available by request.

When doing research on all the companies that offer nature-based tours in Nuuksio, it was noticed that not all of them have websites in English. In fact, some of them were clearly targeted more towards the Finnish market, such as for companies who want to organize recreational activities for their employees. However, the three company offers shown in the table above had websites in English as well, thus they were more competing in the same market as the tour developed in this thesis.

One of the main differences between the tour in this thesis and the competitors was the amount of time spent in nature as well as the routes of the tours. Most of the competitors' tours were solely focused on hiking in nature and the visit to Haltia was not included, or it had to be separately requested. Therefore, the tour planned in this paper is unique in the sense that it combines both aspects within a reasonable timeframe. Furthermore, the tour can be offered by a competitive price due to the big group size.

6.8 Elements of Smith's tourism product model

A model of the tourism product model by Smith (1994), which was presented in the theoretical framework, suggests the tourism product is a combination of five elements. Reflecting back to it, these elements can all be found in the tour developed here, thus in theory it would be a good quality and successful product.

The physical plants is the destination of the tour, Nuuksio National Park. The service part consists of the staff that is involved in the tour, such as the salespeople selling the tour, the bus driver and the guide. Both before and during the tour, it will be made sure that all of the staff behaves friendly and professionally towards the customers. This fulfills the hospitality part of the tourism product model. As mentioned all tourism products should have a freedom of choice at least in some level. The lowest level is the decision to purchase the product. In addition to that, the customers have the option to choose, how they would like to spend their time during the Haltia visit. As for involvement, the customers not only physically participate in the tour, but are emotionally and intellectually invested as well. During the tour, they have the opportunity to ask questions and interact with the guide.

However, it is important to note that whether the product is successful in practice, can only be seen once all these elements are combined and communicate in harmony with each other.

6.9 The final product

The Secrets of Finnish Nature – A Half-Day Tour to the Nuuksio National Park



Figure 10 A beautiful lakeview from Nuuksio (Ilona Laine 2017)

Season: Saturdays from June to September

Time: 13-17

Duration: 4 hours

Price: 53€ / person

Experience the beautiful and pure Finnish nature and join a 4 hour tour to the Nuuksio National Park. Nuuksio is one of Finland's most popular national parks, located just 45 minutes outside of Helsinki.

The tour includes bus transportations from the city centre of Helsinki to Nuuksio and back with a guide. Upon arriving the national park, you will join a one-hour guided walking tour (2km) in the nature and have chance to see some of the typical Finnish scenery. After the walking tour there will be free time to explore the Haltia nature centre, of which exhibitions give you a deeper look on the secrets of the Finnish wilderness. There is also a chance to purchase souvenirs from the gift shop and a nice cup of coffee in the Haltia restaurant. Important! Remember to wear comfortable shoes, such as sneakers that are good for walking in the forest.

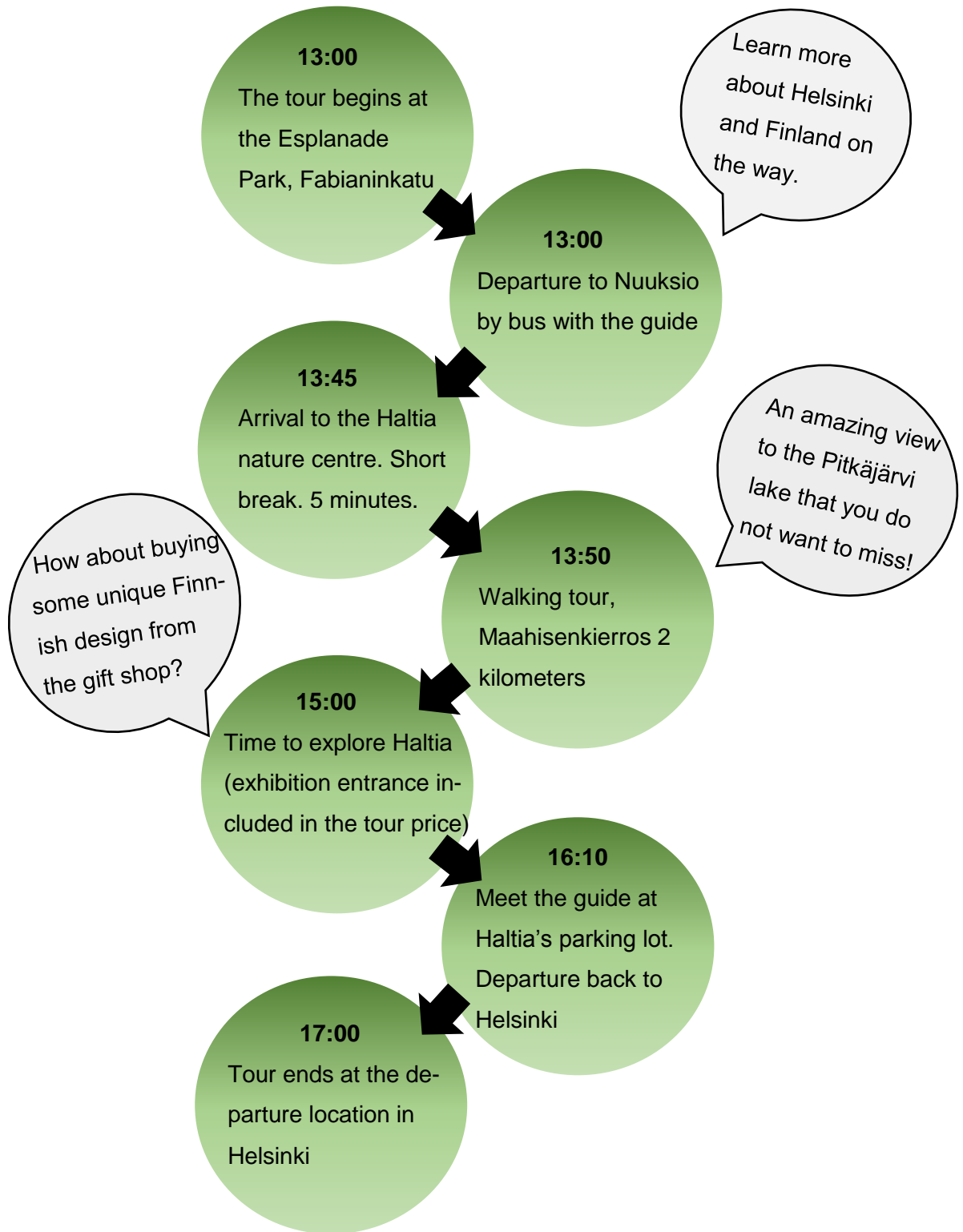


Figure 11. The program of the Nuuksio tour

7 Discussion

This is the last part of the thesis and it is divided into two sections. The first one is the conclusions part, which looks into the development process of the tour and summarizes the key points from this thesis. The second one is the evaluation part, which reflects on the thesis writing process from my viewpoint, and especially on the skills that I improved and learned over the course of this project.

7.1 Summary and conclusions

The aim of this thesis was to develop a nature-based tour to the Nuuksio National Park for Strömman Finland Oy Ab, which acted as the commissioning party. The purpose was not to implement the product, but more so create an idea that would fit the commissioner's line of products and could be carried out in the future.

The thesis started with a brief introduction of the commissioner's history, services and operations. The theoretical framework presented the concepts of nature-based tourism, the elements of the tourism product, procedures of product development as well as the customer viewpoint on tourism; all of which were essential to understand before developing the product. Furthermore, the product environment – in this case the Nuuksio National Park was introduced as part of the theoretical framework.

The empirical part consisted of the development of the tour. The product was created based on the new product development model by Kotler et. al, however it was modified to fit the context. Furthermore, Smith's tourism product model was also considered in the development part. The process started with the idea generation and screening, where the primary concept of the product was formed. The concept was then tested and further developed by visiting Nuuksio and researching several ways in which the tour could be executed. The target market was identified based on the commissioner's existing customer base as well as the purpose of the tour. Moreover, the process included calculating the costs and identifying a selling price for the tour, which ended up being 53 euros for an adult. An appealing name suggestion was also created, and the tour was decided to be called "The secrets of Finnish nature – a half-day tour to the Nuuksio National Park". The final part of the development

process was an outlook on the competitors' offers, as it was important to understand the existing market. After the development process, the final product was presented.

The final result of this thesis was a complete tour package, thus the main goal of this thesis was reached. The tour provides foreign visitors with the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the Finnish nature conveniently and in a reasonable time. The tour is expected to have demand, due to foreign visitors' interest in Finnish nature. Furthermore, the tour also fulfils the five elements of Smith's product model, thus in theory it would be a successful product. However, the tour would need to be tested in practice to perceive its profitability and success.

7.2 Evaluation of the thesis process

The thesis process started in August 2017, when the topic of the thesis was chosen and the subject analysis was submitted. The beginning was perhaps the hardest part, because it was quite demanding and time consuming to delimit the theoretical framework and find the most useful and relevant literature to use. However, having to do a lot of research I definitely improved my critical evaluation skills, and became more aware of the kind of sources that are appropriate to use in research papers. Furthermore, I learned how to exploit different platforms, such as Google Scholar and e-libraries, when searching content for the theoretical framework.

After the structure of the thesis had been created, and the main sources had been found, the process was able to progress at a pretty steady pace. One of the main things that the process improved was my writing skills as well as proper sourcing. Furthermore, the theoretical framework required a lot of reading and re-phrasing text in my own words, thus I was able to broaden my vocabulary and learn how to use a more professional language.

In my experience, the empirical part was more challenging in comparison with the theory, since it required more independent thinking and problem solving. However, I had good contact with the commissioner as well as a clear idea of the product concept which was helpful. At times, it was hard to find the motivation to push forward, but since the thesis was the last step for me before graduation, it definitely boosted me to keep going.

Overall the thesis writing process was challenging, but also very instructive, especially since I did not have any prior experience on the chosen subject – product development. After writing this thesis, I have a good understanding of nature-based tourism, the elements of tourism products, as well as the procedures in new product development. Furthermore, I also learned to understand the things that I still need to work on, such as staying more organized as well as managing my time more efficiently. However, I am content with the whole process and appreciate all the knowledge and skills that I gained and improved during it.

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