Adventure tourism in Uusimaa: State and development

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The aim of the thesis is to identify the state and development possibilities of adventure tourism in Uusimaa region, ranging from companies in different scales of the operations. Finland’s Adventure tourism Scene is mainly focused in the Lapland region, but Uusimaa region has different type of scenery and areas to offer which are only included in Uusimaa region.

Theoretical framework identifies the concepts of adventure tourism and the typical adventure tourist will be identified. Also, current and future problems will be looked into. Theoretical framework is based on literature found on electronical sources and are both foreign and domestic.

The main strengths of adventure tourism in Uusimaa region will be identified in regards of different types of adventure tourism activities happening in the area. Different adventure tourism companies will be interviewed on their views about the current situation of adventure tourism possibilities in Uusimaa region as well as other people who have worked in the business.

On the results of the interview, the state of adventure tourism in Uusimaa is identified and suggestions given for development purposes for the future.

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1 Introduction

Adventure tourism is significant sector of tourism around the world. As tourists and travelers wants more different and unique experiences in the future compared to the classical mass tourism, adventure tourism could have more possibilities in the regions that are not heavily yet used in adventure tourism. In Finland, adventure tourism is mainly focused on Lapland and Finnish Lakeside, but a lot of different areas to have potential for becoming adventure tourism destination. In this research these possibilities will be investigated in a perspective of Uusimaa region.

Research focuses on the Uusimaa region and its possibilities on field of adventure tourism now and in the future. After the introduction chapter, adventure tourism will be defined and popular destinations in Uusimaa for adventure tourism will be identified. Future trends and challenges will be looked into as well as the climate and environmental issues that could affect adventure tourism sector in Uusimaa region.

Later in the research four different professionals were interviewed about the current stage of the adventure tourism in Uusimaa and the development possibilities for the future. From these interviews the answers were analysed and development possibilities and suggestions were brought up to later be used in for different adventure tourism business to use.

The results of this thesis can be used for both new and existing companies or persons operating in field of adventure tourism to gain insight of the current situation of the adventure tourism business in Uusimaa region and the challenges that has to be taken account in the future and how to possibility overcome them.
2 Defining adventure tourism

In this chapter adventure tourism will be defined and different types of adventure travelers will be identified. Also, the typical profile of the adventure tourists will be discussed.

2.1 Adventure tourism

Adventure tourism as a term is a broad and the clear definitions haven’t been clearly agreed upon. Term adventure tourism can be used to define from taking easy hike in the forest to flying in to a space with spacecraft. Usually term of adventure tourism can be used to define many other niche types of tourism that has a similar overlapping characteristic to adventure tourism. Adventure tourism can be even separated to sub categories such as soft and hard adventure tourism. (Swarbrooke, Beard, Leckie, Pomfret, 2003, 33)

For defining adventure tourism, it is important to define the word adventure itself. The word adventure can mean different things for different people, since everyone has a different goals and mind-sets and people receive the sense of adventure in different ways.

Still the core characteristics and qualities of word adventure can be summarized with few key points.

For adventure it is typical to have:

- uncertain outcomes
- exploration and discovery
- challenge
- escapism and separation
- danger and risk
  (Swarbrooke et al, 2003, 9).

The author believes that when most of these characteristics and qualities are in place, the adventure can be more or less guaranteed (Swarbrooke et al, 2003, 9).

On the other hand, it can be said that the main boundaries of the adventure tourism are not defined well enough, it core activities are (Buckley, 2004, 2). Most of these core activities, such as skiing, climbing, hiking and skydiving has the qualities and characteristics that Swarbrooke et al has summarized in his book Adventure Tourism. To achieve the sense of adventure, the activity does not need to be necessarily physical activity, but to be rather non-passive experience.
2.2 Different types of adventure tourism

There are two main categories which adventure tourism can be divided into two main categories; hard adventure or soft adventure. Hard adventures are more physically demanding and involves more risks and danger. Typical Hard adventure activities are for example trekking and mountain climbing. Hard adventures require more specialised knowledge and more physical and mental preparation compared to soft adventures. (UNWTO report, 2014, 12)

Soft adventure is more relaxed compared to hard adventure. Soft adventure contains less physical stress and offers more comfort than hard adventure. Typical soft activities are such as camping, safaris, and backpacking. Soft adventure is stepping out of the typical comforts of leisure travelling a little bit and experiencing more about themselves while keeping the balance between relaxed atmospheres and the challenges. (UNWTO report, 2014, 12).

Even though extreme adventurers can be seen as classical and most known adventure tourism, it is relatively small part of the adventure tourism as a business. They spend less money on the spot as they tend to own their own equipment and have prior knowledge of their field of activity (UNWTO report, 2014, 12)

The easiest way to distinguish the adventure trip as hard or soft is by its activity and purpose. It is possible to combine both hard and soft adventures together into multi activity adventures. For example, person can by day climb slopes and cliffs, but use lodges as accommodation and place to relax (UNWTO report, 2014, 12).

2.3 Profile of adventure traveler

In both hard and soft adventure tourism the ratio of male and female tourists is rather equal. Soft adventurers tend to be more female in presentence of 62.3%. The average age of adventure tourist is 35 on both soft and hard adventures (Adventure tourism market report, 2014, 4). It makes it considerably younger than another average traveller, which is 45. This can be explained by physicality of the activities of adventure travellers, which are more suitable for younger travellers.

Adventure tourists are also usually higher educated than other travellers. 70% of adventure travellers have post-secondary education. Also, adventure tourists have higher levels of income. (Adventure tourism market report, 2014, 4). Performing adventure activities requires more income and more time than normal tourist activities.
For researching about the destination, most of the adventure travellers relies on online research. According to report made by UNWTO in 2014, 69% of adventure travellers made their research online. 64% of travellers consulted their friends and family members for their destination, so peer reviews and experiences have big role on deciding new destinations for travelling. The average adventure traveller has already experience in travelling abroad and is keen on finding less known destinations. (Adventure tourism market report, 2014, 9)

Most adventure tourists value finding experiences and experiencing authenticity while traveling both abroad and domestically.
3 Uusimaa region

Uusimaa region is located on the southern Finland by the Baltic sea. The region consists of 26 different municipalities covering a total area of 16,059 km². There are 1.6 million inhabitants on the region which makes it 29% of the entire population of Finland. The population in the region is constantly growing compared to many other regions in Finland that have steady loss of inhabitants yearly. Uusimaa region is the most multilingual region in Finland. 55% of people who speak different language as their mother language other than Finnish live in this region. (Uusimaa Region in Figures, 2016)

The capital of Finland Helsinki also locates also in the Uusimaa region. Helsinki has been the capital of Finland since it gained its Autonomy from Russian Empire in 1812 making the capital of Finland part of the Uusimaa region.

The region is important economically and financially as it covers 39.6% of total GDP in Finland. The region is heavily focused on Service type of industries (Uusimaa Region in Figures, 2016).

Image 1. Streets of Helsinki, Riku Villanen, 2018
The Uusimaa region is an important transportation hub for both domestic and international travellers in Finland. Helsinki is linked with ferry connections from Sweden, Estonia and Latvia. Helsinki is also a start or end point for multiple different bus and train routes and different connections make it easy to reach Helsinki by land transportation from different parts of the country. Finland’s biggest airport is also located in the Vantaa, just 18km north of Helsinki city centre making it convenient to reach. In 2015 there were 16.4 million people traveling through Helsinki-Vantaa airport in a year (Uusimaa Region in Figures, 2016).

3.2 billion travellers were accommodating in Uusimaa during 2015. For these travellers over half (59%) were domestic travellers. The most share of the international travellers in Uusimaa were from China, Russia, Germany and Sweden. (Uusimaa Region in Figures, 2016)
4 Popular adventure tourism destinations in Uusimaa

In this chapter different popular destinations and areas for adventure tourism will be identified and introduced.

4.1 Nuuksio national park

Nuuksio national park was founded on 1994 and it remains one of the most visited national parks in Finland due its easy access and location from the capital region (Visit Espoo, 2018). There are several bus lines connecting from Helsinki to Espoo and to the national park, making it possible to reach the national park even with public transportation or with own transportation.

There are several marked routes in the national park for hiking ranged from beginners to more advanced ones and the range of the routes varies from few kilometres to tens of kilometres in distance. Camping is popular activity on Nuuksio national park and often hikers tend to camp in one of the designated camping areas around the national park. Most of the camping spots around the national park are free of charge (Visit Espoo, 2018).

In the national park there are several other activities that the visitors can perform. Paddling on the lakes and ponds during the summer time is popular way to experience the Finnish lakeside. Using the extensive path network that the national park provides, mountain biking around the national park is possible as well. Rock climbing and ziplining is also possible in the national park.

The usage of the Nuuksio national park for performing both soft and hard adventure tourism activities doesn’t exclude only for the summer season. During the winter season new activities take in place on the park. Tour skating offers unique way to get to know the winter landscape. Instead of hiking, it is possible to do cross-country skiing on the marked paths. Ice climbing is possible to do al over the park during the winter season.

The national park locates on Espoo, Kirkkonummi and Vihti. The approximate size of the national park is 55km² (Visit Espoo, 2018).
4.2 Archipelago

The archipelago impacts heavily on the landscape of Uusimaa region as the 40% of the Uusimaa locates on the sea (Uusimaa Region in Figures, 2016). Even only on the area of Helsinki there are approximately 300 islands which are both private and state owned (Saaristo-Opas, 2010, 1).

Archipelago has been significant part of the livelihood of the people in the past, and nowadays its used mostly on transportation route of the goods and people, as well as in recreational use.

The archipelago is suitable for many different activities, both land and water based. The archipelago offers unique scenery for camping and hiking and is possible to perform due Everyman’s right on a summertime and cross-country skiing and tour skating during the winter. There are several skiing tracks on the ice during the winter for people to explore the archipelago on winter time. During the summertime there are several ferry connections between the islands, so it is possible to move around in archipelago without need of own boat.

Water based activities are more focused on the summertime. From high speed RIB boat safaris to calm kayak paddling the archipelago has a lot to offer as a playground for different needs. As the archipelago is unique environment it draws a lot of visitors from abroad. It is expected that the popularity of the Finnish archipelago will draw more foreign visitors in the future (Saaristo-opas, 2010, 1)

Image 4. Tourists cross country skiing in frozen Helsinki archipelago, Riku Villanen, 2018
5 Adventure tourism and future trends and challenge

The future lays both challenges and opportunities for adventure tourism business overall. In last year's shifts in global politics, terrorist attacks and natural disasters have impacted the world. Despite all of these negative factors, the tourism market, as well as adventure tourism have continued to grow globally (ATTA, 2018, 5).

For destinations the instabilities or other current ongoing issues might create demand and other opportunities for other destinations. For example, overpopulated and polluted environment won't attract travellers who seek for pristine conditions and clean environment. This can lead people to seek more pristine conditions in areas that are yet not well known within the specific industry of tourism. The developed nations will see more customers arriving from emerging economies (UNWTO report, 2014, 21). For destinations it is important to be able to adapt on the markets need.

5.1 Chinese travellers

In the future the influence of global economic factors will influence the demand of the tourism around the world. By 2022 China will be the largest source of outbound tourism in the whole world and countries that are able to receive the tourist from countries that wealth is developing will benefit most of the growth of the demand of tourism (2018 travel trends, 2018, 8). Chinese tourists typically young and wealthy and they want to visit photogenic places that can be shared in the social media in forms of videos and photos. Chinese customers tend to go for the trending destinations, but are willing to change the destinations if the safety or the political situation is compromised (2018 travel trends, 2018, 8).

Since Helsinki has fairly good flight connections to China, it benefits the whole area on influence of Chinese tourists. Finnish airline Finnair has been operating straight flights from China to Finland for 30 years. Nowadays Finnair operates straight flight from several major Chinese cities such as Peking, Shanghai, Nanjing and Chongqing (Finnair, 2018, 20.10.2018).

Typical Chinese tourist seeks escapism from their ordinary everyday life while traveling. Since China is heavily populated and full of polluted environments, countries such as Finland offers Chinese tourists way to experience the unique and more pristine environment that's not available in China. The clean nature and the silence of the environment is one of
the key elements that are used in marketing for Chinese customers. (Katse Kiinaan, 2013, 2)

As it is privilege for the Chinese tourists to travel, it is important to be able to offer them unique and memorable experience. This is one of the key elements to make a trip successful (Katse Kiinaan, 2013, 2). Chinese tourists often travel in a group and they value flexibility and good customer service on the destination or activity. Since majority of Chinese tourists do not speak English even mediocre way, it’s vital to have Chinese staff to make the service encounter more smooth and easier for the Chinese customer (Katse Kiinaan, 2013, 2).

Chinese tourists rarely want to experience on physically demanding activities during their tours and travels. The most typical reasons for Chinese tourist to travel are:

9% of tourists looks for adventure
17% of tourists seeks for better understanding of foreign cultures

The rest of the 74% are willing to spend time and energy on planning their trip, they need to support of travel providers to determine what's relevant for them (2018 Travel trends, 2018, 8)

The most common adventure experience in Finland for Chinese customers are commonly reindeer and Husky sledging in small groups. Also visiting Icebergs and going sailing with Iceberg has been popular among the Chinese tourists. The newest adventure tourism activities trends with Chinese tourist are hunting, boating and other light type of activities that can be done on group. The Chinese travellers enjoy the activities that has something to do with clean nature, environment and can be done as part of the group. Since Chinese tourists one of the main motivations for traveling are photography for social media use, combining scenic routes in guided environment are good combination with Chinese customers. Also, cars are typically associated in China typically for wealth and success, so ice rally driving and motorsports overall are popular among the Chinese (Katse Kiinaan, 2013, 3).
5.2 Global warming and environmental issues

Global warming’s impact on the world and the tourism business has grown in the past years as the climate continues to change. Different natural disasters such as floods, hurricanes and rising climate temperatures causing decrease in snow cover has affected the adventure tourism business overall.

As the most of adventure tourism attractions and activities depend on the healthy environment, there are direct connections between the adventure tourism operators and the climate change. The environment has to be safeguarded that it won’t be ruined for the future generations to use (UNWTO global report, 2014, 34).

Image 5. Nuksio national park, Ruuhijärvi. Venla Tahvanainen, 2018

The impacts of the climate change can be heavy on the destinations that depend on snow coverage year around. Also, the climate change can alter the hiking and camping routes and destinations which used to be popular among the tourists in the past. The key element of successful adventure tourism experience relies on interaction between the tourists and the natural environment (Williams, 2005). If the natural environment and resources are destroyed there are no business to run in the area anymore as it relies on the environment. Damages in the environmental areas are usually irreversible to the point it was before the damages.
There are several examples on adventure tourism causing directly environmental damages. The environmental damages can be caused on by constructed tourism infrastructure for performing the activities on the area. Construction of the skiing centres causes deforestation and can increase the risk of avalanches on the mountainous area. Some activities such as rock climbing with artificial aid also requires harming the natural environment to perform the activity. Before starting adventure tourism operations, it is important to note the physical limits of the area; how much can the environment take infrastructure and people. (Swarbrooke et al, 2003, 194)

Leaving non-biodegradable waste alongside the hiking routes around the world has been an issue. Also, local wildlife in the area of where high-volume safaris are performed has had problems on feeding and breeding naturally. As adventure tourists typically thrive for seeking places which us unknown and unusual to visit or try to get “off the beaten track it can be harmful for local fragile ecosystems as it has not been used of exposure of humans. (Swarbrooke et al, 2003, 194)

5.3 Impact of technology in adventure travel

In the modern society technology plays important part in everyday life. It also has affected adventure traveling in many ways. Internet has been listed most used platform of finding information about travelling and booking tickets (Adventure tourism market report, 2014, 8).

Internet has allowed to create different platforms of sharing experiences and inspiring travellers to pursue new destinations and trips. It also has made travel operators to be able to make more individual experiences for customers and appeal to larger audience.

Since peer reviews were ranked second most used source of finding information (Adventure tourism market report, 2014, 8) use of social media has growing impact on decision making of the customers for buying products and services. With social media the travelers can share their experiences during and after trip effectively.
For marketing wise, use of virtual reality (VR) in the marketing of the destination has been popularising in the recent years and the use of VR technology will be used even more. Use of virtual reality technologies has made easier for customers to get the feel of the destinations before they get to travel there.

According to study made in Wales, 85% of customers who tried a virtual reality version of wildlife destinations wanted to visit the said place in person later (2018-Travel Trends, 2018, 13). Also use of mobile devices and customising the content for the mobile platforms will be needed future. In 2014, 42% of the adventure tourism travellers used their mobile devices on vacation to search information about the (UNWTO global report, 2014, 32).

Since different technologies has been developed and the interfaces has been made more user friendly, it has made adventure tourism and soft tourism particularly more compelling and easily approachable to new customers. This have also made gears for different activities more user friendly and comfortable. With GPS navigators it is easier to orienteer during the camping trip or with new rucksack carrying heavier loads has been made more comfortable.
Technology has motivated people to adventure travel with different motives. There are many travellers who wish to escape the technology and go back to the basic way of doing activities. This can be seen as escapism and separation from the modern world, which are one of the main qualities of having sense of adventure (Swarbrooke et al, 2003, 9).

Changes in transportation methods and technology will enable faster transport between the destinations in the future. Even though development of the logistics and transportation methods allows faster way to move to destinations, it also disturbs local wildlife in forms of noise and visual disturbances as well as physical stress to plants and soil in the area (Buckley, 2011)

5.4 Older tourists as a new target group

Since the population is aging in the developed countries, a new target group is rising for the market. As a typical adventure tourist’s average age is 35 (Adventure tourism market report, 2014, 4), it is expected to rise, as some of the baby boomers refuse to feel old and will seek for more adventuristic holidays (Swarbrooke et al, 2003, 250). This large group of people are typically wealthy and as most of them are retired, they have usually a lot of time while they travel in the destinations. Many people on their fifties upwards who seek adventurous activities tries to avoid “old people activities”. Also, these people want to feel the nostalgia of being young try something fun and exiting they have never had time to experience and gain better physical and mental health while doing so (Naidoo, Ramseook-Munhurrun, Seebaluck and Janvier, 2014, 245-249)
According to study made in 2009 Queensland, Australia, the young participants of the adventure tourism activities had most of the minor accidents or incidents such as slips, trips and falls, but the older people had higher percentage of fatalities. The risk of fatalities and accidents also rise as the unfamiliar environment for the tourist is part of the activity (Bentley, Cater and Page, 2009, 563). As the older generation will be potential and more important adventure tourism market in the future, the adventure tourism operators need to have higher involvement in risk management as they plan their operations.
6 Research method used

This research was conducted by using semi-structured interviews. Structured interview was not chosen as it would have not allowed the flexibility needed to interview people from different backgrounds, making it difficult to get proper understanding on the subject and finding answers to the main research questions. Unstructured interview was not chosen either as the time limitations of the interviewer.

Semi-structured interview is done by using predetermined questions but, can be modified based on interviewer’s perception of what seems most appropriate. Question wording can be changed. Inappropriate questions for interviewee can be changed and additional ones can be added. The semi structured interviewers are used for researching sensitive topics or topics that are not widely researched. During the semi structured interview, the interviewer can research the interviewee as an individual. The gestures and the emotions can also be seen during the face to face interview, giving nonverbal cues about validity and truthfulness of the answer. Also even the tone of the voice and the pitch level can also help validate the answer given (Teijlingen, 2014)

Interviews were done by face to face interviewing, sending the questionnaire on email and interviewing through phone. Phone interview can allow participant to relax more and are easier to organise as the participants don’t need to be present on the same place. While doing phone interviews lack of visual cues and other nonverbal data can make the validations and data analysis more difficult (Teijlingen, 2014)

During the face to face and interviews through phone call the permission was asked to record, so transcription of the interview was possible for later use and for easier analysis for the results. Also, notes were made during the interview situation. Recording interviews needs to be transcribed for the analysis for the later use, as something could be missed out without by listening just the recording (Teijlingen, 2014) Reading the transcribed versions of the version helped on data analysis.

The interviews language was both in English and Finnish as some of the interviewees were not native Finnish speakers. Some of the questions were altered a bit according the background of the interviewees, so the different perspectives of the subject could be better seen.
6.1 The interview questions used

The questionnaire contained 10 questions. Questions were divided on finding more about the current state of the adventure tourism in the Uusimaa region, the potential interest of the foreign travellers as a target group and the challenges that the global warming and the environmental issues can bring. The interviewees were asked also possible development possibilities from their field and experiences of the past. The interviewees were also asked if they felt something would be missing from the questions asked, so the interviewees could fill the blind spots of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was made to give more insight and answers of the research questions of “What is the current state of the adventure tourism in Uusimaa region” and “How to develop adventure tourism in Uusimaa region”

The interview questions were designed with the theory in mind and to see if the theory and the practice would support each other.

The interview questions were following:

Name:

Description of the Company:

1. What is the typical profile of the customer (Age, Nationality, etc)

3. Do you think that foreign tourists are interested on adventure tourism activities/holidays in Uusimaa region? If no, why is that

4. Do you think that the Asian customers could be potential target group for adventure tourism activities in Uusimaa? Would their needs differentiate from the other nationalities?

5. Are there something special in Uusimaa region compared rest of the Finland in related of adventure tourism/activities?

7. How does the global warming and other environmental problems effect on adventure tourism activities in Uusimaa region now and in the future?

8. How would you see the adventure tourism to develop in Uusimaa in future?
9. What are the weaknesses of the Uusimaa region as adventure tourism destination?

10. What is the image of the Uusimaa as adventure tourism destination currently / Do you think that Uusimaa region is marketed enough as adventure tourism destination?

11. Do you have anything else to add that was not mentioned on the previous questions?

Thank you for answering!

The results of the interviews and questionnaires sent could be affected by lack of experience from the interviewer on both interview situation and while designing the questions to be asked for the persons getting interviewed. While sending the questions by email and not using telephone or face to face interview some of the questions could have been misunderstood and further reference for the interview could not have been giving on the situation.

Also, as some of the interviews were done using English, which is not native language of the interviewer and the interviewee, miscommunication could have happened due language mistakes in both answers and while translating the questionnaire to English. During the interviews, the interviewee can feel the situation threatening if the interviewing is recorded. If the interviewee gives false answers and biased opinions from their agenda, the results are harder to conclude (Hirsijärvi, Remes and Sajavaara. 2009, 206 – 207)

6.2 Choosing the interviewees

While choosing the interviewees for the research about adventure tourism in Uusimaa internet was used for finding the possible candidates. As the adventure tourism business is relatively small field in Uusimaa compared to other parts in Finland and especially in Lapland, it was relatively difficult to find the interviewees for the research.

As most of the adventure tourism business owners are small scale entrepreneurs and usually operates on one to five-man operations, there were difficulties for finding people with enough time for telephone or face to face interviews, so email interviews had to be used. Some of the emails sent were suffering from the shortness in the answers compared to the ones gained through phone or face to face interview as there the interviewer was not leading the conversation

Most of the respondents had previous background working in field of tourism in Uusimaa region and had experience either producing or organising adventure tourism activities
around Finland and in Uusimaa region. As adventure tourism is a quite broad subject and it includes many different subsectors, the goal was to choose the interviewers from different positions in tourism and adventure tourism industry to get wide spectrum as possible for the research.

Total of eight requests for interviews was made using email and total of four interviews were conducted.

6.3 Background of the interviewees

First interviewee was Henrik Bischoff from Burnout City and the interview was conducted by using phone. Phone call was recorded for better later analysis. Burnout City describes itself as following in their website:

"Burnout City is a Finnish company established in 1998. We offer unforgettable activities and programs for companies, groups and tourists. The activities take place in the Helsinki region and its archipelago and surrounding areas. We aim to provide experiences and activities that you rarely get in everyday life.

You can enjoy the unique Finnish nature just a few minutes away from downtown Helsinki. We offer a wide variety of activities, but on top of these we can tailor almost any program that your group desires. We offer full service from transportation and accommodation to superb Scandinavian catering.

We combine our solid knowledge and experience with the unique northern nature and deliver activities that are far above expectations! Our crew is famous for the natural talent to entertain. Our multilingual skills will help to make your event a great experience." (Burnoutcity, 30.11.2018)

The second interview was Merja Hart, Director of The Travel Experience OY. The travel Experience has been in business for 20 years and locates itself in the center of the Helsinki but operates all around Finland. Travel Experience describes itself as following:

"The Travel Experience is a privately-owned award-winning Destination Management Company based in Helsinki. We handle a variety of incentive, conference, meeting, event, and group travel arrangements throughout Finland for a wide range of travel trade and corporate clients from all over the world."
Established in 1998, The Travel Experience are experienced and highly-respected members of the travel industry in Finland. Members of the national travel association AFTA, and Congress Network Finland, The Travel Experience have completed Quality 1000, the national travel Quality Development programme. Company directors are members of Site, the Society for Incentive Travel Excellence." (Travel Experience, 30.11.2018)

Email with questionnaire was sent to Daniel Ferreira who operates in Skydiving DFX. Skydiving DFX describes itself as:

"Tandem Skydives for first time jumpers. Tandem Skydive is the activity of experiencing the thrill of freefall jumping out of an airplane from 3000 – 4000 meters and after approximately 30 – 50 seconds freefall, followed by 5 minutes of peaceful parachute flying where the customer can enjoy once more the view after the airplane ride and the rush of freefall. All of this under the supervision and care of an experienced skydiving instructor. Customers need to be in reasonable health and no more than 100 kg or/and 2 meters height as well as above 18 years old (minors from 16 years old need parents’ consent), all need to sign a waiver of release of liability." (Daniel Ferreira, 2018)

Email was also sent to Jukka Punamäki, who works as Senior Advisor (Tourism) for City of Helsinki.
7  Research results

In this chapter the research results from the interviews will be gone through for later analysis and suggestions for development.

7.1  Pros as adventure tourism destination

As Uusimaa region can contain a lot of different possibilities of the adventure tourism activities, during the interviews few key things were identified regarding speciality of the Uusimaa region on the field of the adventure tourism.

As identified in the theory part of this thesis, all of the interviewees pointed out that Uusimaa is easily accessed with different modes of transportations. The Helsinki-Vantaa airport makes it convenient to arrive from both international and domestic destinations and from the airport the capital Helsinki can be reached in less than 30 minutes with a bus, which makes both group and individual travel convenient at least in the capital region as the traffic jams are scarce, the schedules in group travel can be mostly held on time due this (Merja Hart, 8.11.2018).

As the capital region has a good transportation infrastructure to the archipelagos, forests and the lakes, it has also good connection to the smaller airports in the area to be used in aerial activities, such as skydiving that can be used on admiring the view of the Finnish scenery. (Daniel Ferreira, 5.11.2018). Also, the ferry and train connections were identified as good methods of bringing in possible adventure tourists to Uusimaa.

Both Jukka Palomäki and Merja Hart pointed out that one of the unique points in the Uusimaa region regarding tourism is ‘Urban nature” concept; the closeness of the nature and a capital city. (Merja Hart, 8.11.2018).

This might not attract the adventure tourists that seek Hard type of adventure tourism activities, but for those who wants to challenge and immerse themselves, but still having the comforts of the city that it offers. You can still enjoy of the warmth of the four-star hotel and a dinner in a nice restaurant, but in short you can immerse and test yourself. This way it is possible to combine the two elements urban and the nature and its one of the elements that Uusimaa has.
Around Uusimaa region, Archipelago and the Nuuksio national park were identified to attract a lot of adventure travellers in the region as they offer unique setting to do different kind of activities on different times of the season. As Uusimaa locates in the coast of Finland, the archipelago plays important role.

Travellers and tourists come to archipelago to do different types activities around the world. These activities include speedboating, sailing on the summer time and during the winter if the weather and climate permits, snowshoeing, walking on the ice or driving with snowmobiles on the ice. Also, there are Huskey rides possible as well. (Merja Hart, 8.11.2018).

7.2 Foreign customers as a target group

Foreign customers can be seen as potential target group now and on future adventure tourism operations. as it is expected to Chinese travellers and other Asian markets to grow globally. But it has some matters to be consider. Two of the interviewees pointed out that, for adventure tourism activities it is important to have guides and materials on their native languages as their level of other foreign language such as English, is not on high enough level to communicate safely.

Also, as all of the Uusimaa region is not covered reliably and extensively by the public transportation network on all of the destinations and spots for performing different activities can be difficult to reach as foreign traveller and renting a car or hiring a taxi can be seen as the expensive choice. It would be beneficial for foreign tourist to have van or shuttle service to collect and return customers to their accommodations or other drop-points after the different activities. These shuttle services could also be used for marketing different activities on the area or selling merchandise. It could make the customer experience better as they don’t need to worry about finding their destination or navigate in foreign language in remote locations. (Daniel Ferreira, 5.11.2018)

Foreigners can be generally interested on doing adventure tourism activities. On the group travel perspective, it can be seen, that different business groups are interested on adventure tourism activities. Cost of the adventure activities can be high, and it can be issue for many groups as the budget of the travel won’t allow it. Chinese travellers have generally low budget for activities in Finland and usually it won’t be enough for performing adventure tourism activities in Finland (Merja Hart, 8.11.2018).
For marketing wise Henrick Bischoff mentioned that as the adventure tourism operators in Uusimaa region are generally one to five persons operations, the budget or resources won’t allow for extensive marketing in Asia on different fairs or exhibitions and different activities could be brought up more by different umbrella organisations, state, or the city itself.

Also Ferreira pointed out that face to face marketing could be used more on different arrival spots for foreign tourists such as harbour. These tourists could be potentially interested on doing activities out of ordinary tourist activities like hot air balloon rides, Helicopter tours or even tandem skydiving to see the city from above perspective during their trip. (Daniel Ferreira, 5.11.2018)

7.3 Environmental issues as future challenge

During the interviews, the shortening of the winter season was noted as challenge by interviewees. As the winter season gets shorter, there is a risk on producing and selling winter activities at least in the southern Finland, not like in the Lapland were the season cycle is more reliable. These winter activities can be advertised as “subject to weather” as the snow and ice situation can be unpredictable. Even if the snow and ice situation turns out to be better than predicted it can be problematic at least in the international tourist groups as they book everything in well in advance, so the unpredictability of the weather has to be taken into account (Merja Hart, 8.11.2018).

When the customers and tourists are not booking too far in advance, good winter in terms of weather and ice situation it opens lot of possibilities on the possible activities. During the summer time, if the weather is rainy or other ways inconvenient, most of the adventure tourism activities are still be possible to perform, but with lack of snow it will be impossible to go snowshoe trekking or snowmobiling on the ice as there won’t be anything to snowshoe on (Henrick Bishoff, 2.11.2018)

As the shortening of the winter season affects around the Finland and the places that rely more on the winter season than summer season such as Lapland. In Helsinki the range of products are not heavily depended on the snow, so the impact won’t be that high. In the future the sustainability will be noted on the city level and in the companies, which will have notable effect. (Jukka Punamäki, 22.11.2018)
7.4 Development for the future

As the incoming traveling to Finland is rising, it could be seen that there could be potential on producing different activities for tourists in Uusimaa (Merja Hart, 8.11.2018). As the profile of the tourists are getting more fragmented, the supply of the activities has to be more variable and more customizable making adventure tourism growing potentially sector in Finland overall on the future (Jukka Punamäki, 22.11.2018). As the sustainability is a current trend now and, in the future, there could be possibilities of customers not participating on activities requiring motored vehicles such as snowmobiles and prefer using public transportations during their travels to reduce the impact on the environment. For now, it is mostly enough for the customers when the companies producing the activities that the activity is done by using the most responsible way possible for the environment and the environment is respected during the activity (Merja Hart, 8.11.2018).

On a group travel side one of the weaknesses in Finland excluding Lapland in different companies producing adventure type of activities is that they are too used on Finnish companies as their customers, which might be problematic when dealing with international groups and customers. International customers can require the service to be on another level compared to Finnish customers. The group leaders for the activities should be confident and to be able to keep the group under control during the activities and the foreigners expect that the service will be on higher quality. (Merja Hart, 8.11.2018).

Sometimes the capacity of the activity can be problematic as sometimes adventure type of activities can be only done by smaller groups, as the activity could not work with bigger groups. While marketing these activities some of the companies producing these activities have poor descriptions of their activities that could be improved with better descriptions and photos. (Merja Hart, 8.11.2018).

The Archipelago was seen possible point of development in Uusimaa. Currently archipelago lacks indoor bathrooms, restaurants and accommodations outside of suomenlinna in the archipelago. (Merja Hart, 8.11.2018). These elements could bring people interested on soft tourism activities and combining the hard and soft adventure tourism activities could be easier and more people could enjoy the archipelago. Henrick Bischoff points out that nature of this region should be marketed better abroad as these elements are the real gems of the region nature wise.

As most of the adventure tourism operators don’t have resources or budget to market abroad extensively, the state and cities marketing channels could aid on marketing more
adventure type of activities as now it focuses more on the design and architecture aspects of the region. (Henrick Bishoff, 2.11.2018). Some of the activities can be done in the city environment and as part of different team building activities (Merja Hart, 8.11.2018).

It could be beneficial to market some of the elements as nature experiences as they in Lapland. In the region, Nuuksio national park is one of the only areas that has the adventure tourism developed well and some of the areas could take example from there. In Nuuksio national park there are different collaborators between the operators and the state such as Metsähallitus who operates different camping spots around the national park. (Henrick Bishoff, 2.11.2018).

It is also suspected that lack of collaboration between different sectors in tourism can affect on adventure tourism companies. Different sectors in tourism such as accommodations, restaurants and different transportation services could lead customers on different companies. Simple things like posters on wall of accommodations or discounts of a hotel stay if the customer buys an adventure tourism service or vice-versa could bring more volume on the activities. This method has been used widely around the world. The collaboration between companies organising adventure tourism activities and other companies could bring more customers for the companies organising adventure activities as the other companies usually wants or are willing to offer special activities for their employees. (Daniel Ferreira, 5.11.2018)

Apart from the foreign and international tourists, Ferreira also believes that it would be necessary to stimulate more Finnish customers to participate in different adventure tourism activities outside their usual schedule. The Youth segment and the students especially could be keenest on participating different adventure tourism activities, but as the adventure tourism activities tend to be pricy, most of them cannot afford yet. As the customer segment is usually above 25 years of age at least in Tandem skydiving activities, marketing towards parents or different sponsors could be effective. As the youth segment can mostly lack of funds, instalments could be introduced for the young customers who lacks funds to pay for the experience in upfront. (Daniel Ferreira, 5.11.2018)

Currently Uusimaa region is not branded itself and the different cities and the state has their own agendas and marketing policies. Uusimaa is not sold as adventure tourism destination abroad and most of the international visitors from the leisure side tend to visit the Finnish Lakelands and the Lapland for their longer adventure tourism activities. The tourists visiting Uusimaa mainly does the combinations of the city and small trip and not the activities that requires longer period of time to perform it.
8 Discussion about the results

From the interview results it was possible to make SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) chart to showcase the different areas regarding the adventure tourism in Uusimaa region. SWOT Analysis is a good tool to showcase these aspects in clear and structured way as it focuses both internal and external aspects.

Table 1. SWOT Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Closeness to major transportation hubs (Harbours, Airports, Railways)</td>
<td>• Lack of infrastructure on archipelago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Nature</td>
<td>• Some of the companies too used on Finnish customers and not able to adjust on foreigners needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Archipelago and its unique surrounding and possibilities for activities</td>
<td>• Lack of Collaboration between sectors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Urban nature” Concept</td>
<td>• Difficulties on marketing niche activities for new and international audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• International</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Capital Helsinki is known internationally</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Developing archipelago to suit different types of activities needs</td>
<td>• Global warming and shortening of the winter season</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Alternative winter activities and focusing on summer season</td>
<td>• Companies tend to have small operations and can lack resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Developing the collaboration between different tourism sections and organisations</td>
<td>• Generally not known as adventure tourism destination</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As the customer’s needs and interests are getting more fragmented on the future on regarding tourism and different activities and customers want more personalised and unique content, adventure tourism can have changes on growing in Finland and in Uusimaa region as well. Currently Uusimaa region is not well known as an adventure tourism destination, but it still offers different variety of activities to people to enjoy.

Some of the areas that could be utilized better in the region such as archipelago as it offers unique surrounding for both international and domestic travellers. For people interested on performing soft adventure tourism activities or combination between soft and hard, it would require more infrastructure on the archipelago in means of transportation, accommodation and catering. As many adventure travellers and other travellers from abroad who tend to seek pristine environments and escapism from modern conveniences that is not possible on their everyday life, the development of archipelago should be done in a way that it wont ruin the atmosphere of the unique environment, but to make it more accessible for people who seeks these elements. The capacity of the destination which it can hold people should be thought about carefully, that these environments would not be ruined as its often difficult to repair the damages that has been done.

Since in the capital region “urban nature” concept and the closeness of the city and the pristine environments are one the key elements that draws visitors from both domestically and internationally to Uusimaa and in the capital region. Cooperation between the different tourism sectors comes into important role as they could support each other, providing new customers for the businesses. Also, as the adventure tourism operations tend to be only few people operations, creating and using different umbrella organisations where people from different activities could promote their products could benefit the small businesses. On transportation side shuttle and pickup services could be used as well to make easier transportation between the places to perform activities and the accommodation.

In the Uusimaa the adventure tourism companies are investing more on the summer season as it is more reliable now a days. Winters are getting shorter and the predictability of the snow and ice situation will be more difficult in the future. Finding different replacement activities and experiences for the more traditional winter activities would be difficult but could be beneficial as the winter season won’t be as reliable anymore in the Southern-Finland. This has already been done in forms of ski tunnels around different parts of Finland, one locating already in Helsinki. Traditional cross-country skiing, sledding with huskies and downhill skiing in some extent is possible in these artificial ski tunnels. In Singapore artificial cave has been built to make cave climbing experience more available for the people with need of getting on the areas where caves are located. Places that lack of natural
wilderness areas can benefit on having different kind of adventure zones benefitting the tourism experiences and this can even help on creating image of “Urban Jungle” (Swarbrooke et al, 2003, 237) This kind of artificial environment combined to modern technologies could be outside of the box type of solutions for new activities. Also, it could create safer environment for example Chinese customers as their level of skills in such activities are generally low, but they might be interested on trying those activities.

It is also possible to create artificial elements for different activities. For different paths on forests, it is possible to create artificial elements for simulating rocks and different elements if the natural area lacks those, to make downhill and forest biking more challenging in different areas.

These artificial environments are costly to operate and maintain and there has been cases of some of the snow tunnel operators getting into financial troubles. Still it could be exotic for a person who has never seen snow in their lifetime, making it attractive visit for foreigners.

Since Helsinki is one of the most visited cities in Finland by foreign tourists, there can be demand of adventure activities as customers wants more different varieties of activities and do something that is out of the norm. For the companies finding right staff is important for the both customer service aspect and risk and safety management as many adventure tourism activities can lead to injuries if done unproperly or the instructions are not followed well enough because of the language barrier. Finding employees that have both skills of leading and guiding groups from different cultures and language groups can be difficult to find, but as Helsinki is one of the most international cities in the Finland it can be easier than most parts of the Finland due diverse and international population.

As mentioned in the theories and trough the interviews, adventure tourism activities are generally expensive, so the younger audience tend to be unable to perform such activities due lack of funds. To target younger audience who has genuine interest on such activities, a payment plans could be introduced to help on their funding of such activities. This could be problematic for foreign customers and could be more relevant towards the Finnish audience. Also rising popularity of VR technology could attract younger audience to try different activities later in real life.

From the interviews conducted It was possible to get answers and insight to the research questions “What is the current state of the adventure tourism in Uusimaa region” and “How to develop adventure tourism in Uusimaa region”. As adventure tourism is broad
sector and the sector covers a lot of different activities and phenomena’s, it is possible that some aspects and perspectives can be different for people operating in different activities. Nevertheless, it was possible to find common themes and answers from all of the interviewees about the current situation and the ways to develop, which could be used generally across the different operators in different activities.
9 Conclusion

Uusimaa region is not well known for adventure tourism activities, but it does offer unique and scenic setting for adventure tourism activities. In Finland most of the adventure tourism takes place on Finnish Lakesides and Lapland regions. The goal was to find current state of adventure tourism and ways to develop the activities in Uusimaa area to meet the challenges of the future. The key element of Uusimaa in adventure tourism and overall tourism setting is the vast amount of transportation methods available as the capital Helsinki lies there and connections to rest of the region is fairly good and the scenic archipelago offer unique scenery. Uusimaa might not be the most suitable place for performing Hard adventure activities, but it has definitely potential on either combination Hard and soft adventure tourism activities or just the soft activities.

As adventure tourism business is not a huge sector in Uusimaa region, it laid some challenges on finding enough participants for the interviews as well as theoretical framework to be used in the theoretical part. Results of the research conducted can be affected by the inexperience of the researcher on both designing the questionnaire’s and doing the interviews itself. Also, English is not the native language of the researcher, so due language barriers mistakes could have happened on translation.

Nevertheless, it was a good learning experience and if needed, skills gained from creation of this thesis can be used on different projects during the future projects and researches. The writing process of this thesis was a good learning experience on developing skills of academic writing and I feel that my abilities of writing longer texts improved during this time a lot. During the writing of the thesis I was working, so I had to balance my time of working and writing this thesis. Sometimes it was bit challenging, but I feel that I was able to develop my time management skills during the autumn and I was able to combine working full time job and writing this thesis. I was able to improve and develop my interviewing skills and I am confident that later these developed skills can be used in projects to come, improving the results as I was able to learn from the mistakes I have during this thesis. Also I learned a lot about adventure tourism while writing this thesis and it got me even more interested about the subject and perhaps in the future I could see myself working in this field.

The results of this thesis can be used for both new and existing companies or persons operating in field of adventure tourism to gain insight of the current situation of the adventure tourism business in Uusimaa region and the challenges that has to be taken account in the future and how to possibility overcome them.
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Appendix

Appendix 1. Interview Questions

Name:

Description of the Company:

1. What is the typical profile of the customer (Age, Nationality, etc)

3. Do you think that foreign tourists are interested in adventure tourism activities/holidays in Uusimaa region? If no, why is that

4. Do you think that the Asian customers could be potential target group for adventure tourism activities in Uusimaa? Would their needs differentiate from the other nationalities?

5. Are there something special in Uusimaa region compared rest of the Finland in related of adventure tourism/activities?

7. How does the global warming and other environmental problems effect on adventure tourism activities in Uusimaa region now and in the future?

8. How would you see the adventure tourism to develop in Uusimaa in future?

9. What are the weaknesses of the Uusimaa region as adventure tourism destination?

10. What is the image of the Uusimaa as adventure tourism destination currently / Do you think that Uusimaa region is marketed enough as adventure tourism destination?

11. Do you have anything else to add that was not mentioned on the previous questions?

Thank you for answering!