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VISIBILITY FROM TOURISM  
MARKETING  
CASE: KESKIPISTE TRAVEL  
ASSOCIATION R.A.

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## ABSTRACT

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The research problem of this study was to find out what is the best possible marketing channel for Keskipiste Travel Association Ra as well as find out the views of the local entrepreneurs. The research was made during spring and fall 2010.

The theory for this thesis examines tourism and tourism marketing issues relevant for a tourism association. A SWOT Analysis was also conducted for the center area of Finland.

The research method used to find out information from the member companies was qualitative research method, in the form of personal interviews. All together ten entrepreneur members were interviewed during this research. The interviews consisted of the entrepreneurs' thoughts on the company's customers, marketing issues and the center area's tourism supply as well as their own tourism development ideas. From this a customer segment common in the area was born, as well as other important ideas usable by the association in tourism marketing.

To find out the best marketing channel for the association, a comparison based on theory was conducted with the theme's advantages, disadvantages, rate of occurrence, targeting possibilities, the focus of targets, costs, campaign complexity and media constraints. The channels (the Internet, newspapers, magazines, fairs, events, notice boards, road signs and radio) were also considered by estimating how well they can be used to market the area to the customer segment. The conclusion was that not only one channel is the best, but today a company must use a media mix of different channels to get its messages across and to increase awareness among the target group. For this association, the channels of the internet, local newspapers and fairs were the best channel choices.

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Keywords: Tourism Marketing, Center of Finland, Marketing Channels

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## TIIVISTELMÄ

Tekijä	Kati Repo
Opinnäytetyön nimi	Näkyvyyttä Keskipisteelle Matkailun Markkinoinnilla: Keskipisteen Matkailu Ry
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Tämän opinnäytetyön tarkoitus on esittää Keskipisteen Matkailu Ry:lle ehdotus parhaasta markkinointikanavasta, sekä tutkiskella jäsenyritysten käsityksiä eri asioista. Tämä työ toteutettiin keväällä ja syksyllä 2010.

Työn teoria käsittelee matkailuyhdistyksen kannalta oleellisia turismin markkinointi käsitteitä. SWOT Analyysi toteutettiin myös keskipiste-alueelle.

Kvalitatiivinen tutkimusmenetelmä valittiin henkilökohtaisten jäsenhaastattelujen metodiksi. Kokonaisuudessaan kymmenen yrittäjää osallistui haastatteluihin. Haastattelujen sisältö koski yrittäjän käsityksiä asiakkaista, markkinointikanavista ja alueen palveluista, sekä heidän omia näkemyksiä turismin kehittämisestä keskipiste-alueella. Haastattelun pohjalta syntyi alueelle tavallisimmat asiakasryhmät sekä muita turismin markkinoinnin kannalta hyviä ideoita yhdistykselle.

Teoriaan perustuva markkinointikanavavertailu ja -valinta tehtiin käyttäen seuraavia käsitteitä vertailussa: edut, haitat, ilmestymistiheys, kohdistamismahdollisuudet, kohteiden keskittyminen, kulut, kampanjan monimutkaisuus ja median rajoitteet. Vertailtuja kanavia (Internet, sanomalehdet, lehdet, messut, tapahtumat, mainostaulut, tienvarsikyltit/taulut ja radio) myös pohdittiin niiden soveltuvuudesta alueen kohderyhmien kanssa. Johtopäätös oli että vain yhden kanavan käyttäminen ei ole suositeltavaa nykymaailmassa. Yrityksien täytyisi muodostaa medioista yhteensopiva sekoitus jotta markkinoinnissa saataisiin parhaat mahdolliset tulokset ja että lisää näkyvyyttä saavutettaisiin. Keskipisteen Matkailu Ry:lle parhaat kanavat olisivat Internet, paikalliset sanomalehdet sekä messut.

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Asiasanat: Matkailun markkinointi, Suomen keskipiste, markkinointikanavat

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 The aim of the research**

The aim of this research is to find the best marketing channel for Keskipiste Travel Association Ra. After this research has been conducted, the company will have a base that will help it in making some of its marketing decisions in the future. In addition to finding the most suitable channel, also information about member companies' customers and the entrepreneurs' opinions on a few subjects will be researched. This will be done through conducting personal interviews. From this the association will get opinions from its members. Marketing channel comparison will be based on secondary data and the data gained from the interviews.

### **1.2 The structure and restrictions**

This thesis begins with an introduction of Keskipiste Travel Association Ra and the center of Finland area. After this theory on tourism and tourism marketing as well as marketing channels will follow. Once these are explained, there is a SWOT analysis explained and conducted, after which the empirical study is conducted and analyzed. The empirical study is followed by the association's views, results of the interviews, marketing channel comparison and examples of possible channels to use for marketing. At the end there is my own observations or ideas and last there is a summary of this thesis.

This research is restricted to the center area of Finland, consisting of Haapavesi, Haapajärvi, Kärsämäki, Nivala, Pyhäntä, Pyhäjärvi, Reisjärvi and Siikalatva. Because the area is large and consists of many different types of areas, companies and services, a general view is taken. The theory about tourism and tourism marketing has to be restricted, because the concept is very broad and includes a wide variety of topics. The theory should in total explain what tourism and marketing are and what is essential for good tourism marketing. These are important things

for a starting tourism association to think about. Explaining different marketing channels is also essential.

The thesis consists of two research-areas; to find the marketing channel which to emphasize and to get information about customers visiting the member companies as well as some opinions from the entrepreneurs.

When discussing the marketing channels later on, the emphasis will be on the channels here in Finland that are relevant for Keskipiste Travel Association Ra and the area in question. The channels chosen are the Internet, newspapers, magazines, fairs, events, television, radio, videos, notice boards, road signs and cinema.

When doing the research about the customers of the companies belonging to Keskipiste Travel Association Ra, only some of the member companies are interviewed in the area. The sample is also limited to the companies that respond to inquiries by September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2010. The interview questions were created together with Mr. Pekka Luukkonen from Keskipiste Travel Association Ra and consist of information the association wanted to find out from its member companies. Conducting a broader research to find a clear target segment would be very time consuming and require effort from all the members to carry out a customer survey specific to their company. This would give more precise results about the customers, but it is not possible as this thesis is done by only one person. Therefore, the personal views of the entrepreneurs about the customers are the base for the customer segments. The themes for the interviews revolve around the company, its customers, tourism in the local area and marketing communication issues.

## 2. THE CENTER OF FINLAND

This chapter will talk about the center of Finland. It is a surprisingly unknown area to both foreign and Finns. This has been confirmed by my experiences over the years, when travelling and talking to people about where I am from, the center of Finland. I will first define the area and then give some general information on it.

### 2.1 Location of the center points

In 1958, the geographical center point of Finland was calculated to be in Piippola, Northern Ostrobothnia. The town now belongs to the municipality of Siikalatva. Back then in a study conducted by the National Land Survey of Finland, they measured the center point by taking into consideration the land and sea borders, including the islands. The center point turned out to be in an uninhabited area between Piippola and Kestilä, so it was decided to “move” the center point to the small side-town of Leskelä in Piippola. The small, hand-built stone statue stating “Suomen Keskipiste” was built there by the road E75 and announces the center of Finland. ([http://www.haapavesi-siikalatva.fi/sivu/fi/suomen\\_keskipiste/](http://www.haapavesi-siikalatva.fi/sivu/fi/suomen_keskipiste/))

This would be the logical center of Finland. However, there are other ways to measure the center of Finland as well. In a study conducted in 2005 by R. Ruotsalainen from The Land Survey of Finland, there are many ways to look at where the center point of Finland is located.

First is the *sea area center point* (since 1.7.1995). This is in Haapajärvi in the small side-town of Kuusaa. The center is measured by taking into consideration the land borders and the outer sea border of Finland. Before 1.7.1995, the center of this was thought to be in Kärsämäki.

Second is the *mainland and island center point*. This is measured by looking at the land and sea borders as well as the islands, and finding the center point of those. This middle point is in Piippola, east of Talasneva.

Third is the *mainland center point*. To find the center point the mainland area borders by land and sea are taken into consideration. This center is situated in Kestilä, northwest of Syväjärvi.

Fourth is the *economy-zone center point*. In this they look at the land borders and the economic zone, and find the center point from that. This point is in Tukkolanranta, Haapajärvi.

Then is the *mainland of Finland –center point*. This is measured by finding the latitudinal mean from the northernmost and the southernmost points of Finland and drawing a line north to south. To this is added a latitudinal line to the center. This center point is then in Puolanka, west of Housuvaara. (<http://www.keskipiste.info/suomen-keskipiste>)

Because there are so many center points in Finland, the concept “Center of Finland area” was born. This concept is usually used in different texts and projects, but not commonly used among people, at least not at the moment.

## 2.2 The center of Finland -area

In this thesis, when talking about the center of Finland, the area I am talking about consists of a group of towns and municipals around the center point of Finland. I will many times use the name “Keskipiste area” when discussing this area. The municipalities are located in Northern Ostrobothnia and are Haapavesi, Haapajärvi, Käsämäki, Nivala, Pyhäntä, Pyhäjärvi, Reisjärvi and Siikalatva.

**Haapavesi** is a city founded in 1866, located along the river Pyhäjoki, with a population of 7 364 people in March 2010. The surface area is 1 086, 27km<sup>2</sup>, out of which 36, 57 km<sup>2</sup> is water. It is a nice small town, with plenty of services for locals as well as visitors. The most known event in this city is the Haapavesi Folk Music Festival that is held every summer, which brings musicians and visitors from all over the world. Many famous cross country skiers are from Haapavesi,

such as Tapani Niku, the first Finn to win an Olympic medal in cross country skiing at the Winter Olympics. (Wikipedia: Haapavesi)

**Haapajärvi** is a city with a population of 7 709 people. The land area is 789, 17 km<sup>2</sup>, out of which 23, 68 km<sup>2</sup> is water. People have been living there since the early Stone Age, but officially it became a town in 1868. Haapajärvi has a strong agricultural background and the atmosphere is peaceful as is usual in country cities. Some famous people from Haapajärvi are Mika Myllylä, who is a former Finnish cross country skier, and K.J. Ståhlberg, Finland's 1<sup>st</sup> president, who lived his childhood in Haapajärvi. (Wikipedia: Haapajärvi)



Picture 1: The Center area of Finland

**Kärämäki** is a town located in the cross-section of Road 4 (Helsinki-Utsjoki) and Road 28 (Kokkola-Kajaani). It has a population of 2 924 and a land area of 700, 93 square km, of which 6, 05 km<sup>2</sup> is water area. Kärämäki has many culturally interesting events, such as art exhibitions and the Life-story Festival. Some famous people from this town are Paula Vesala, one of the two singers in the band PMMP, as well as Asko Hyvärinen, a Finnish composer. (Wikipedia: Kärämäki)

**Nivala** is a city along the Kalajoki River with a population of 11 042 people. It has a land area of 536, 91 km<sup>2</sup>, of which 8, 93 km<sup>2</sup> is water. There are many small museums in Nivala, as well as other places of interest. Kyösti Kallio, Finland's

4<sup>th</sup> president, was a resident in Nivala. Many politicians are also from this city, as well as athletes and people in the music industry. Esa Ruttunen, an opera singer, is from Nivala as well as the 2007 Tango King Henri Stenroth. (Wikipedia: Nivala)

**Pyhäntä** is a municipality with a population of 1 654 people. The land area is 847, 48 km<sup>2</sup> of which 36, 72 km<sup>2</sup> is water. The town center is located near the lake Pyhäntäjärvi. Until the end of 1960's, before industrialization, most of the population was centered in the small side town of Tavastkenkä. Now Pyhäntä is Finland's most industrialized town when compared to the population. The popular lake for swimming for people in this area, Iso-Lamujärvi, is located within the municipality. (Wikipedia: Pyhäntä)

**Pyhäjärvi** is a city founded in 1866. The population is 6 014 as of March 2010. The area is 1 459, 60 km<sup>2</sup>, of which 148, 35 km<sup>2</sup> is water. There are many interesting events, such as Hiijensoutu, a church boat rowing competition, and the Full Moon Dance Festival. Europe's deepest mine is also located here. Some famous people are Alpo Aaltokoski, who is a Finnish dancer and choreographer, and Matti Saari, the Kauhajoki school killer. (Wikipedia: Pyhäjärvi)

**Reisjärvi** is a municipality with a population of 3 015 people clustered into villages and covers an area of 503, 20 km<sup>2</sup>, of which 28, 79 km<sup>2</sup> is water. The nature is diverse and there are signs of habitation as early as 6000 BCE. Reisjärvi is also the ending point for Peuran Polku, a nature hiking trail, which starts from Perho. (Wikipedia: Reisjärvi)

**Siikalatva** is a municipality (since 2009), consisting of Kestilä, Piippola, Pulkkila and Rantsila. The administrative center is in the town of Pulkkila. The population is 6 259 people and the land area is 2 229, 35 km<sup>2</sup>, of which of which 58, 62 km<sup>2</sup> is water. Here in Siikalatva is the center of Finland. In Leskelä you can see the statue for it. There are also many other interesting places to visit, such as the museum road between Saviselkä and Kärsämäki, museums and old churches. Some famous people from Siikalatva are writers Pentti Haanpää and Ilmari Kianto, runner Juha Väätäinen and politician Antti Rantakangas. (Wikipedia: Siikalatva)

### 3. KESKIPISTE TRAVEL ASSOCIATION RA

Keskipiste Travel Association Ra is a marketing channel for the services in the center of Finland area. The travel association is brand new; it was founded on 12 January, 2010. It is also the first of its kind in this area. The association was founded by ten different companies functioning in this area. They are Nivala-Haapajärvi Sub region Ra, Emolahden Lystit Ltd / Emolahti camping, Wanha-koski Lp / Paakarinen Pysäkki, Foodhill Ltd Neste Paanulinna, Sydänmaan Town-society, Kärskäs Ltd, Uljuan Kahvila Ltd, Savipaja Sisko Kangas, Hiisiheimo Travel Association Ra and Maalaiskartano Pihkala Ltd. (<http://www.keskipiste.info/uutisia092010keskipiste>)

The aim of the association is to help develop the tourism industry in the Keskipiste area. In general this means that they will try to develop the themes in tourism marketing in this area, support companies in their attempts to productize their services and basically take care of general tourism marketing of the Keskipiste area. Keskipiste Travel Association Ra takes part in fairs and events, gaining visibility. During this summer there was the Summer Garden 2010 - Gardening Fair in Oulu in May 2010. There the association tried to raise awareness and pick up interest for the Keskipiste area. Another major fair they have taken part in was Suurmesut in Oulu in August. During the winter the Finnish Travel Fair is another one they take part in, to name but a few. The association has actively started working on raising people's awareness of the area. All companies, associations and communities in the tourism industry or related industries can become members of Keskipiste Travel Association Ra. Municipalities or municipality unions can become municipality members. Any person or community can become a supporter-member of this association. The association wishes for a broad scale of members to maximize the benefits and cooperation available. The current members consist of accommodation establishments, restaurants and cafés, museums, events, activity organizers, shops for food and souvenirs, places of interest, service stations etc. At the moment the association is actively wooing new members that are connected to the tourism industry in one way or another. (Keskipiste.info)

## **4. TOURISM**

Tourism is one of the main industries today, branching out all over the world to even the smallest of places. In this chapter tourism and some different sectors it withholds will be examined.

### **4.1 Defining tourism**

Everyone in the modern society has most likely been a tourist, as in a person who is staying in some certain destination overnight. When we travel outside our normal environment to a destination for a holiday, work-related purposes or for any other reason and stay there for no more than one consecutive year, we are taking part in tourism. (WTO, 1992: Middleton et al, 3)

Tourism is best understood as a market, according to Middleton et al. It consists of products and services, consumers and suppliers from a very wide range, spreading increasingly around the globe. Today it can be considered one of the world's largest industries, showing itself even in the most surprising destinations, from the modern world to the developing countries, even nowadays spreading into space.

Tourism benefits many people. The most visible benefits are from the employment it provides. People get work in accommodation, retail, transportation and other service professions. It also develops the supporting industries and increases the amount of professionals. The multiplier effect is also another thing tourism plays a part in, which is how many times the money spent by a tourist goes through a country's economy. For example in a hotel, the money spent helps create jobs in the hotel but elsewhere as well. The hotel needs transportation and food services from other companies, causing the money to start circulating. The farmer, where the food was bought for the hotel, might spend the money to buy clothes and fertilizer. Tourists like to buy souvenirs, so the demand increases and local craftspeople have more work. The tourist buys the wooden cow and the artists buys more wood. And the money keeps circulating until some of it is spent on imports and leave the country. Through tourism also the local products are ex-

ported. Another benefit is also from the revenues that are derived from the tourism taxes. (Kotler et al. 2003, 719-720)

Even though tourism is one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world today, it is not a new phenomenon. Tourism has existed from the beginning of time, earliest tracks tracing back to the Babylonian and Egyptian times. Even back then people travelled for many different reasons, such as religious purposes, festivals, trade and commerce. The mobility of people resulted in e.g. seaports being established, and at some point guidebooks became available and advertising sprouted, thus beginning the era of tourism marketing. (<http://www.eslteachersboard.com/cgi-bin/traveling/index.pl?read=1700>)

Tourism as we know it today began in Europe in 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century. This was when the average standard of living increased and transportation developed. The mass tourism we have these days started after World War II, when the middle class started to have the financial means and time for leisure traveling. When airplanes were further developed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the world became smaller and tourism really spread its wings. (<http://fi.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matkailu>)

## **4.2 Types of tourism**

The types of tourism can be divided into many different categories, but the two main categories are international and domestic tourism. International tourism consists of people who are travelling outside their normal country of residence and staying in the destination country no more than a year. These are many times thought to be the most important tourists, because they tend to stay longer and bring more money into the country. International tourism can be divided into two sub-categories; inbound and outbound tourism. In inbound tourism, tourists travel from their country to another country, such as a person travelling from Spain to Helsinki here in Finland. In outbound tourism a person is still travelling from their home country to another country for less than a year, but in this case it would be the person from Helsinki travelling to Spain.

Domestic tourism consists of people travelling within their country of residence and staying in a destination outside their usual environment for no longer than a year. This can also be divided into two sub-categories. Overnight visitors are tourists staying for a certain period of time in the destination. An overnight visitor would be a person from Helsinki travelling to Rovaniemi for a holiday. Day-visitors are the people that travel to some destination for only a day, and they are called visitors instead of tourists. For instance, a day-visitor would be a person travelling from Oulu to Helsinki to go shopping and travelling back home during the same day. ([http://www.tilastokeskus.fi/til/matk/kas\\_en.html](http://www.tilastokeskus.fi/til/matk/kas_en.html); Middleton et al., 6-8) Under international and domestic tourism there are many smaller categories. There are for example winter tourism, adjectival tourism such as cultural and eco-tourism, and business tourism. As the tourism world develops there are more and more different types of tourism arising. (Wikipedia: Tourism)

#### **4.2.1 Rural tourism**

The center of Finland area consists of rural cities, towns and villages. According to the Rural Tourism Policy in Finland, rural tourism is a type of business based on the natural resources of the countryside. These resources are the culture, the people, the scenery and the nature. In rural tourism the foundations are in smaller businesses and the service providers aim at taking care of the customers. The whole setting in rural tourism aims at getting closer to the customers and giving more personal service. The main thing about rural tourism is that the services and products, whatever they may be, are produced in the countryside. The services can be, among others, nature activities, cultural products and accommodation services. (<http://cs.joensuu.fi/forestcamp/ruralTourismPolicy.doc>)

In rural tourism you combine the principles of culturally, ecologically, socially and financially sustainable tourism with the Finnish countryside and the know-how of the rural people and the culture to make tourism services, which are then marketed and sold to tourists. If all this is done efficiently, this benefits the rural people as well as the tourism industry in Finland. Because the strength in Finnish

rural tourism is the clean nature we have, the eco-friendliness and sustainability in development has to be taken into consideration. In marketing the rural areas emphasis is put on the cleanliness, so this is the one thing we do not want to give up. Effort therefore has to be put into action behind the image, so that promises made to tourists are kept and our image as a clean country is not ruined. In rural tourism it is the actions of all the services in the area that matter. A service by itself is just a service, but when networked with others it becomes an efficient tourism product. In rural areas this is a fact that should be remembered. ([http://www.maaseutupolitiikka.fi/teemaryhmat/matkailu/maaritelma\\_ja\\_tilastoja](http://www.maaseutupolitiikka.fi/teemaryhmat/matkailu/maaritelma_ja_tilastoja))

Tourism is a growing industry and rural tourism will be even increasingly important in the future, according to the vision of rural tourism in Finland. The tourism products which rural tourism offers are seen as safe and reliable, which are factors people increasingly look for when choosing their travel destinations. The content and strengths of these services arise from the diversity of cultural heritage, the clean countryside environment, safety, the cycle of seasons, as well as the quality and the abilities of the local entrepreneurs in the rural communities. When the marketing and sales of rural tourism products are developed, the services are easier to reach and will be available to even more people. (<http://cs.joensuu.fi/forestcamp/ruralTourismPolicy.doc>)

#### **4.2.2 Cultural tourism**

With globalization taking place in this world, preserving the culture and familiarizing tourists with the customs and lifestyles of people in the destination area is an important part of tourism. It not only increases knowledge but adds to the authenticity feeling people can get when visiting a certain place.

When you consider the types of services and products the center area has to offer, there is a lot of culture. Cultural tourists are therefore some of the people coming to this area. Cultural tourism takes place when people travel from their normal place of residence to another to gather new information and experiences to satisfy

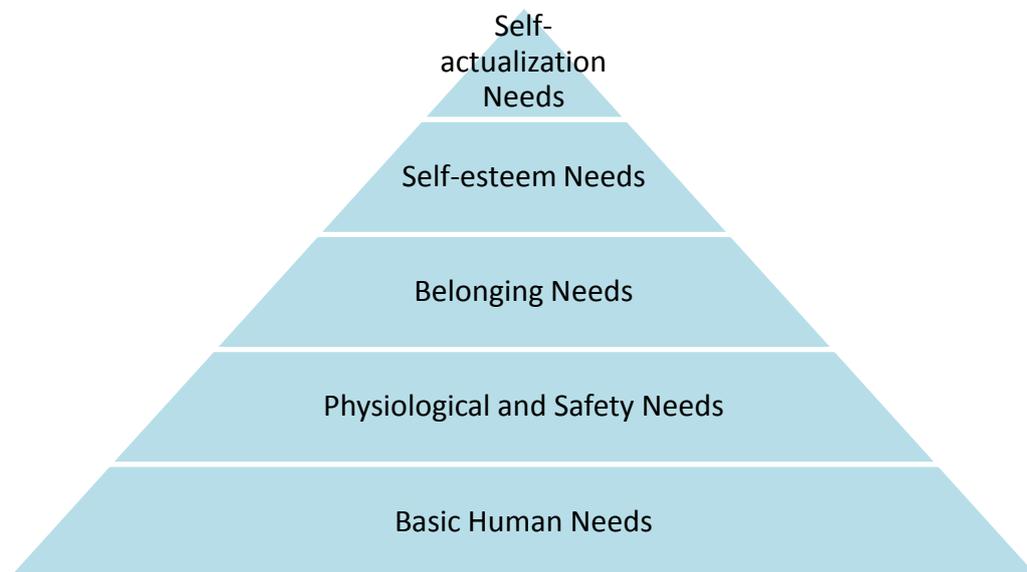
their cultural needs. Cultural tourism concerns the culture of a place, specifically the lifestyle of the local people, their history, art and elements that shape their way of life. It includes tourism in urban cities as well as rural areas, such as historically and culturally significant sites, museums or festivals. It also includes churches and other significant buildings, museum-roads, art centers and galleries, as well as reconstructions, copies or miniatures of original cultural things. It is commonly agreed that cultural tourists spend more money than normal tourists, and this type of tourism is becoming even more popular all over the world. (Wikipedia: Cultural tourism)

The cultural supply generally in Finland is extensive, as it is in the center area. According to the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, the tourism industry and the cultural field haven't established adequate cooperation in making good quality, attractive products to offer to tourists. A survey they did in 2003 showed that the cultural tourists in Finland rate the services high, but that there are not enough packages on offer. This is somewhat problematic but a development possibility that can be utilized. (<http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Kulttuuri/kulttuurivienti/kulttuurimatkailu.html?lang=en>)

### **4.3 Motivations for travel**

So why do people travel? There are as many reasons as there are individuals. Commonly we say that we either travel for work or for leisure. Leisure travel is the most common motivation for taking a trip somewhere. People want to relax and enjoy themselves when they have free time from work or other obligations. Traveling for leisure can be, for example, searching for cultural experiences, going on a holiday, health and fitness, sports, educational and religious purposes. Work related, hence business tourism focuses on work. Many people nowadays travel when working. Business tourism can for example include different trainings, conferences, meetings, fairs and events and exhibitions. There is also a reason for travelling that takes into consideration social relationships, called visiting

friends and relatives (VFR). This is very common all over, especially in rural areas. One of the best-known theories for motivation was developed by a man named Abraham Maslow. His theory called Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs describes five levels of needs that people want to fulfill.



Picture 2: Maslow's hierarchy of needs

It describes these needs in a hierarchy, starting with the *basic human needs* for survival, such as food, shelter and clothing. After these needs are met, there are safety and security. People want to stay out of harm's way. After the basic *psychological and safety* needs are met, people can start to fulfill their need for *love and belonging*. People need social relationships with others to feel that they belong somewhere and can feel loved and appreciated. After these needs have been met people want to gain self-esteem by standing out in some way from the crowd. This can be done for example by mastering a skill or by some other way of self improvement. The final need is *self-actualization*. When at this level a person wants to become all they can possibly be, but also to come to this level you not only need to go through the other needs, but master them. Only then can you begin self-actualization. (Kolb 2006, 137)

#### 4.4 Tourism in the center area

It is important to remember that it is not essential that a certain product or service is better than others because it is the opinion of the tourists that counts. It's not about what it is, is about what someone thinks of it. It doesn't matter if a service or product is exceptional, if no one knows about it. As in the case of the countryside; nature or the nice country cities have no value in the business world if they aren't turned into something profitable and the resources utilized. This is something a marketer should keep in mind when dealing with rural areas.

The center area is a part of Northern Ostrobothnia. Tourism is already a significant industry in this area, but is mainly centered around the few nationally known tourist attractions or tourism centers. None of these are in the center area, but in close proximity and the tourism flows of these places could be utilized. The well-known tourism centers in Northern Ostrobothnia are Ruka, Syöte, Kalajoen Hiekkasärkät and the city of Oulu. All of these are within easy reach from the central area. Networking with these centers would bring possibilities to the small businesses in the center area. The tourism strategy for the Northern Ostrobothnia for 2006-2013 is to strengthen the appreciation for tourism in the region, by globalization to increase tourism and to develop the tourism centers. (Northern Ostrobothnia Tourism Strategy 2006-2013)

The aim of Keskipiste Travel Association Ra is to develop the tourism and tourism activities in the center area. Marketing will be developed and the productization of services will be supported as well as the association will try to take care of the joint marketing in this area concerning tourism. If this is combined with networking with the major tourist destinations in the nearby area, it will give tourism a bit of a boost here as well.

In the center and surrounding area there have been many tourism development projects over the years and more keep coming up. There has been for example the Matka Kylämaisemaan –route, a project in 2001-2004 including a bit of a wider area around the center, the Siikajokilaakso region. The aim was to fix up the cultural and scenic areas as well as strengthen the touristic appeal and accessibility

by developing different routes for tourists to drive through. Then there was in Leskelä the Piippolan Vaarin Piha project, which was started in 2003 but the company in charge of the destination was only running for a couple of years before closing. Here a tourism attraction around Piippolan Vaari was established, with a country home with animals and activities for children. A third example was the METKAL project started in Haapavesi and running 2006-2007, the aim of which was to bring up the hunting and fishing tourism internationally in the center area as well as the surrounding areas. (Leader Keskipiste projects 2001-2006) The people are willing to be active in developing the area, but it is another thing to keep succeeding and get the desired results.

Tourism in the center area revolves around cultural rural tourism. It is mostly day visitors, people passing by or coming to visit relatives, or coming for work related purposes. There are some culturally interesting sites here, but none that are nationally well known. One of the problems is the lack of information provided for the visitors. Another is that the cultural providers and tourism people aren't networked together. There are many cultural events in the area, but the cultural heritage in tourism sense needs to be developed. A recent workshop in Siikalatva resulted in the decisions, for example, that road signs of significant places need to be put up, a brochure for tourists needs to be created and the natural resources need to be even more thoroughly utilized. (Article: Juuret ja Siivet poiki useita tuotteistamisprojekteja)

## 5. TOURISM MARKETING

Tourism marketing is an important part of tourism today. In this chapter we will take a look at what tourism marketing is and the things that should be considered when marketing tourism.

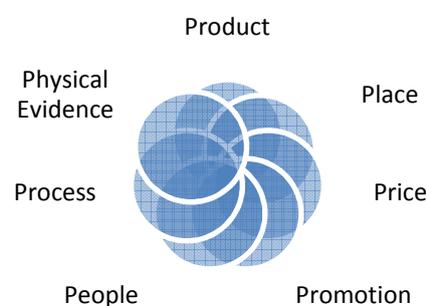
### 5.1 Marketing

Marketing is a very important part of all business activities for all kinds of companies. It is about foreseeing and recognizing the demand, inducing it and then finally satisfying it. In marketing it is also important to be aware of what can be sold, to whom, when and where, as well as in what amounts. Marketing has many definitions, but for example according to Kotler, marketing can be defined as “the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods and services to create exchanges that satisfy customer and organizational objectives”. The marketing concept a business has is what defines marketing as a process needed to find, satisfy and keep customers while the company is making a profit. The relationship between the customer and the product, as well the role of the customer is important. The product can be anything from an idea to a service or goods. (Hudson 2008, 9)

The marketing mix is also an essential part of marketing. It is defined as the four key decisions that managers must tackle to satisfy or exceed a customer’s needs better than the competitive company, or in as defined by Kotler, they are the set of marketing tools that a company uses to pursue its marketing objectives in the target market. The marketing mix consists of the four P’s: product, place, price and promotion. The *product* is either tangible or intangible, such as a physical thing or a service. It consists of the basic design of all the components, quality of it, the range, brand name and features and service elements of the service. *Place* is the location a product can be purchased or the location where a service is provided. It includes also the distribution channels used and methods for that distribution. *Price* is what the service or product costs. It includes discounts, commissions,

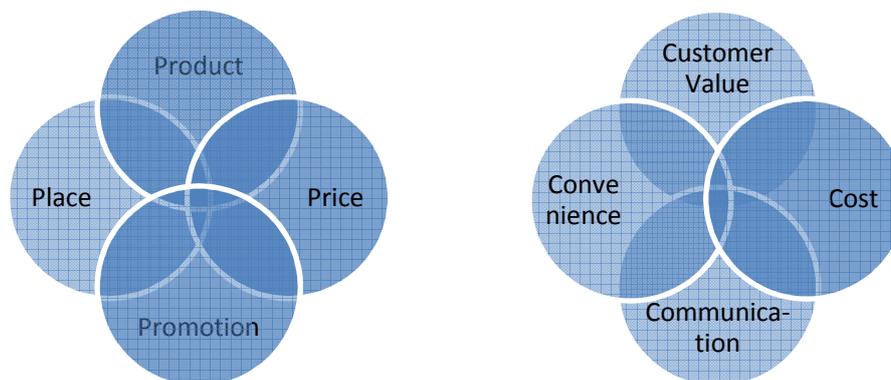
surcharges, extras as well as the list price. This is important because it will increase or slow down sales according to how the service or product is placed in the market. *Promotion* is all the communication about the product to the public, the elements being advertising, public relations, personal selling and sales promotion. Promotion is used to increase the amount of people who are aware of the service or product and are possible customers. The elements of the marketing mix are always to be considered when planning marketing to ensure that the product or service is placed in a way that works. (Holloway & Robinson 1995, 32)

In tourism marketing, the four P's have been extended into seven P's. The additional P's are *people*, *process* and *physical evidence*. The people element is important because it contributes to the variability of the tourism product from a service-encounter context. The people element proves that there is a link between marketing and the people, and highlights the importance of the co-operation and synergy between the two. The process element of the seven P's is many times instrumental in the final delivery of the service encounter, such as booking and payment systems. Many times the tourism experience depends on the quality of the service as seen by the customer, and in many cases this includes the process element of the marketing mix. The physical evidence, or the physical environment, is a key component of the tourism product. In the marketing mix, the physical evidence element refers to the built environment that is owned and controlled by a company. The physical element is used to meet many objectives, such as it contributes to the communication of different messages and facilitates the process of service delivery. (Fyall & Gallord 2005, 122-123)



Picture 3: The extended Marketing Mix

The basic four P's have also been known as the four C's. This is to reflect the customer orientation central to service marketing today. The product has been re-named as *customer value*. The needs and expectations of customers are prioritized and products are designed for and continuously adapted with the consumer in mind. Price is called *cost*. Price is the supply-side decision, where as cost is the consumer-side equivalent that is assessed against competitors. Promotion, the most visible of the four P's, means *communication*. It means assimilating all kinds of communication between customer and producer, including information and two-way interactive relationship marketing and not just basic sales persuasion. Place is renamed as *convenience*, as in how easy it is for a customer to have access to the service. (Middleton et al. 2009, 138-139)



Picture 4: Marketing Mix: McCarthy's four P's and Kotler's four C's (Middleton et al. 2009, 138-139)

### 5.1.1 Special characteristics of tourism marketing

Tourism marketing is simply using the right marketing concept when planning how to attract visitors to a certain destination. In tourism marketing it is a service that is marketed, not a tangible product. It is important that the marketing meets the needs of both visitors and the people who live in the area. A city or a town needs to keep in mind that the aim is to provide for needs of the people local to

the area. A city should be developed as a tourist destination only if it benefits the citizens. Partly this is because everyone as an individual has an effect on the experience a tourist will have at a destination. If the locals are not happy with people coming into the destination, they will make sure the tourist know that. This will then effect negatively on the tourist's experience of the place they are visiting and have the result that these people will not come back for a second visit.

The four main things to be considered when looking at tourism marketing are intangibility, heterogeneity, perishability and inseparability. When planning marketing these are things that should be thought of in addition to the P's and the four C's mentioned previously.

All services are intangible, which means they cannot be tried beforehand and there is always a bit of risk involved. Each individual time a service is under way is extremely important. Tangible products can be returned within a certain time limit, but services are bought and consumed at the same time. If a person has a bad experience, they will not return and will tell others to avoid making the same mistake they did.

Heterogeneity also comes into play. Services are a bit different each time for each person. Mass production is impossible. For example a holiday bought one week and spent in warmth and sunshine is completely different for someone else buying the same package and having rain and maybe food poisoning. A service cannot be guaranteed to be 100% perfect because so many things contribute to the experience a person has when taking part in a tourism service.

Inseparability is another thing. The service outcome is dependent on the person providing the service, so it is very personalized. In tourism a person usually purchases a set of services, and there it is impossible to control the whole process consisting of many different services and personnel. An individual is an important factor in tourism and how the whole process will go on.

Perishability is also something special to the tourism market. Not as in tangible products where an item can be stored for later, tourism services need to be sold

right then and there. You can always try to sell a bike for a cheaper price the next day, but let's say a tour to the valley cannot. If one tour is not sold on that specific day, it is lost forever. You cannot do a 12 o'clock tour 12.10.2010 the next day. Time cannot be saved. Here pricing is something a service company needs to keep in mind, to keep them at such a level that losses will not arise. A problem the tourism sector suffers from is time-variable demand. Peak times during holiday months put more people on the move and weekends move people going on short trips. Pricing can have a little influence on how the demand is spread, but cannot solve the problem of tourism waves. (Holloway&Robinson 1995, 10-12)

## **5.2 Marketing ethics**

In marketing reality is essential, as in being able to deliver what is marketed. If you advertise a place to be "close to nature" and have "great shopping possibilities" when you have a town with one shop and a few trees, the tourist will feel deceived. Ethics are the principles of right conduct that influence the decisions people or companies make. When you apply ethics in marketing, it means you put the base in fairness when making marketing decisions, conducting behavior and doing practice in the company. When you apply ethics, you not have only the company's best interest at heart, but you also think about the consumers. This is important, since getting customers and keeping them is essential to a company's survival. Even though the purpose of marketing is to create a competitive advantage, it should always be done in a way that the customers are not played. The companies that get the advantage are the ones that position themselves and their marketing in a way that benefits all involved. (<http://www.enotes.com/business-finance-encyclopedia/ethics-marketing>)

The American Marketing Association has created a code of ethics for marketing. According to them the norms are to do no harm, foster trust in the marketing system and embrace ethical values. The ethical values include honesty, responsibility, fairness, respect, transparency and citizenship. These are a good guideline for any company doing marketing, whether or not they belong to this particular asso-

ciation. Honesty here means to be sincere when dealing with customers and stakeholders. Responsibility is to deal with consequences that follow marketing decisions and strategies. Fairness is to balance reasonably the customers' needs with the seller's interests. Respect means to keep in mind the human dignity of all involved. Transparency is to be open in marketing operations. And last but not least, citizenship here means to fulfill the legal, economic, humanitarian and societal responsibilities. (<http://www.marketingpower.com/AboutAMA/Pages/Statement%20of%20Ethics.aspx>)

### **5.3 Success in marketing**

The aim in marketing is to create, maintain and develop competition in business, to create revenue, to make the marketed product or service more appealing and to get new customers while keeping and developing the relationships with the old ones. To succeed in marketing, you need to remember a few things. First of all, it is important to know your target segment, who you want to reach with your marketing activities. Knowing your target segment might take some research efforts, but it is worth it to know their needs so you can try to meet them. You should have an idea of what your potential customers want and what moves them out of their usual surroundings. Screening out the unwanted customer segments is also important, because it never works to target everyone. You need to have a golden guideline on who you want to gain as customers and remember the importance of the old customers. It is also important to know your business well and what you want to accomplish with your marketing efforts. Knowing what you want to accomplish will make it easier to decide the scale in marketing. Making marketing the top priority is also something to consider if you are truly intending to make the most of it. Effective marketing is continuous and starts from the beginning of creating a service or product. It consists of carefully assessing the price, product, place and promotion to make the service appealing and correctly positioned. Customers love to compare products and services they are considering. Here positioning your business is extremely important. You should create a positive identity

that appeals to people and show your customers why they are making the best choice when using your services.

People are emotional beings. That is why this is something to consider when marketing. When marketing it is a good idea to focus on the emotions of a person, so creating a need in a person when they are considering a service is something to try to achieve. This doesn't mean fooling the customer to buy something they do not want, but to show them that there is something they can gain when using your service or buying the silly hat. (<http://www.powerhomebiz.com/vol125/eight.htm>)

#### **5.4 Destination marketing**

A destination represents a range of tourism products that offer experiences to consumers/tourists. There are many kinds of destinations, with variable services and tourism potential. Destinations can be classified into 9 types of destinations and these are explained below.

*Major international destinations* are the ones that have international appeal, such as the romantic Paris, or the city of New York.

*Classic destinations* are places where the natural, cultural or historical appeal encourages people to want to stay longer. A place like this could be Saint-Tropez in France, which has been a popular holiday destination since the 1920's.

*Human-made destination resorts* are places where the tourists think of the resort to be the destination and do not wonder outside of it very often. They are mostly all-inclusive places like the Hilton Hawaiian Village in Honolulu.

*Natural landscape or wildlife destinations* have high natural appeal and they can host some special types of species. Galapagos Islands in Ecuador are an example of this type of destination, hosting many endemic species in the islands.

*Alternative destinations* are places such as theme parks or other modern destinations. Linnanmäki in Finland is an example of this type of a destination.

*Business tourism destinations* are locations where business tourists visit and are encouraged to stay because of the good retailing and entertainment sectors. A vibrant hospitality sector is also a characteristic of these types of destinations. An example of this can be Istanbul, Turkey, which is one of the top business cities today.

*Stopover destinations* are places situated between holiday destinations and generating areas. Many times these destinations have a variety of accommodation possibilities and many restaurants and cafes. A place like this can also be the final destination, but many times a passage along the way. For example for a person travelling from Southern Finland to Lapland by car, Oulu can be a stop-over destination on the way there.

*Short-break destinations* have national appeal, or international if the attraction in the area is popular enough. A good example of this can be the Niagara Falls located in North America which has always been a place of interest.

*Day trip destinations* pull mainly regional day visitors. This is the most common of all destination types. This can be anything from a man-made to natural, historical or cultural places of interest. (Hudson 2008, 398)

Destination marketing is an important part of developing and retaining a location's popularity. Many times, though, emphasis is put too much on the development and not on retaining and preserving the things the place has that have attracted people. When a place is planning their tourism, they need to remember to make sure that their plans take into consideration the whole capacity, not just tourists. The environment needs to be able to handle them all. When you are marketing a destination, you do not have just one physical object you want to sell to people; you have many things you want people to be attracted to, physical things as well as services.

## **5.5 Destination branding**

The tourism industry is very competitive these days. That is why even more places begin to build an image for their destination, to brand it so that people will remember it. According to Hudson, destination branding is creating a good statement that differs from competitors' and reveals meaning above and beyond the functional aspects of the destination. Branding works best for bigger destinations, but that doesn't mean smaller ones cannot try it as well. Paris, France has been branded as the City of Love and it's something everyone knows. Roswell New Mexico in USA is known for the UFO that supposedly crashed there. Rovaniemi, Finland is known for Santa Claus and the Arctic Circle. In all these cases imagination has been used and therefore they have succeeded in attracting tourists. (Hudson 2008, 401-402)

### **5.5.1 Stages of destination branding**

There are five stages in building a destination brand.

In the first step you need to establish the core values of the destination and its brand. Here considering what the brand will mean to a tourist and how it compares with competitors' brands is important. Some market investigation is essential to know who would be interested in the destination and therefore notice the marketing.

The second step is to develop the brand identity. Here is good to look at the brand benefit pyramid. Important to any brand's success is the way it interacts with the target market. The brand always has a head and a heart, meaning the logical features and the emotional benefits and associations. The propositions for the brand and communications around it can be based on either. The brand benefit pyramid sums up the tourist's relationship with the brand and are many times established when a tourist is searching for a potential destination, when they are asked to what a destination offers and what it means to them.



Picture 5: Destination Brand Benefit Pyramid (Hudson 2008)

The third stage is to tell about and launch the brand. It can be done with just a simple announcement or with a big campaign, depending on who you want to reach.

The fourth stage is implementation. It is about translating the personality of the brand and proposition into messages that can be delivered. It is good to create a consistency in the brands message by making a logo which reinforces the brand values. The core values should be consistently reinforced during marketing communications as well as other times. Every time the brand is under media attention contributes to maintaining the brand presence.

Last but not least is the evaluation stage. Continuous monitoring and evaluation is important here as well as the willingness to face changes this may bring. The se-

cret is to keep evolving and develop the original brand by focusing on the strengths to increase the appeal and widen the market. (Hudson 2008, 404-406)

### **5.5.2 Challenges in branding**

Destination branding has its challenges. In order to brand the destination, you need to figure out what is special about it and what can be used to attract tourists. This can be anything from the history or nature at the destination, the geographical location, man-made attractions or anything that one has the imagination to start developing.

Limited budget is one big marketing challenge when branding and developing a destination. When a new brand is developed, it needs to be put out into the world and this costs time and money. Destination marketers need to outsmart rather than outspend their competition. Advertising needs to be innovative and attention-grabbing and spending on media is important. When there is a limited budget, all the help available should be taken. According to the example in the book, in Uganda high-school students were recruited to choose the country's slogan. Using them not only diminished the budget but gave fresh new ideas and views to the marketers. Using educational establishments to aid is a good idea, since students can have fresh, new ideas.

Politics is another challenge. Destination marketers in the public sector face political pressure. They need to take into consideration local and regional interests and promote an identity that suits a range of constituencies.

Destinations are increasingly vulnerable to the external environment. War, natural disasters, terrorism; it all effects the tourism flows. When the tsunami hit Thailand in 2004, it decreased the tourism flow and Thailand's image was changed forever. Even though tourists have come back to the country, it still carries a bit of uncertainty with it.

A tourism destination combines many elements that together attract the tourist to visit. There are catering and accommodation establishments, tourist attractions, arts, entertainment, cultural venues and the natural environment. Destination marketers do not have much control over these things and companies in the area are a part of making the brand identity.

Creating differentiation is the final challenge in destination branding. Destinations often promote their nature, culture and history in their marketing. Most places have those attributes, so it should be kept in mind that the branding should be done so that it uniquely connects the destination to tourists, or will do that in the future. The tone, personality, images and messages play an important role. The brand needs to tell people there is something at the destination that is good for them and that they are welcomed with open arms. (Hudson 2008, 403-404)

## 6. MARKETING CHANNELS

Marketing channels are important gateways a company needs to attract tourists. The structure and functions a marketing channel has are not very complicated. There are two essential parts to them: the physical distribution structure and the firm's marketing programs. The channel structure used for physical distribution moves the products from the producer to the customer. The marketing programs that are used to achieve the company's business objectives have an effect on all the channel members. Because of this the physical structure of the distribution system should support the marketing programs and the channel partners. According to McCalley, the marketing channel can be defined as a business structure that reaches from the starting point of the product to the consumer, through which the marketer motivates, communicates, sells, delivers, ships, stores and services the customer's expectations and the product's needs. The marketing channel therefore includes every aspect of the business, from the product to the guarantee of value to the customer.

Most marketing channels are created with one or several intermediaries between the customer and the producer. By employing others to do some of their marketing, companies lose some control over their markets as well as products. This is a good thing, however, since by taking on outside forces the company will get a broader perspective on what can work in marketing and what cannot. The company should keep in mind that all marketing channels are the company's customers. This is why the policies and programs must support all the links in the chain. Intermediaries need to be able to balance and blend many different ambitions, products and programs of the companies they are doing marketing for. Because of this it is essential that companies evaluate capabilities of the channels they are considering using. Intermediary selection and qualification is an important part of the development of marketing channels. (McCalley 1996, 3-6)

There are many different types of marketing channels these days. In this thesis the focus is on the channels of communication. These are the internet and social media, fairs and events, word-of-mouth, newspapers and other written media, notice

boards and other outdoor advertising, radio etc. All of them reach people, but it must be carefully assessed which one is the most suitable for a specific company to target the people they want as customers.

In tourism, the marketing channels are different because they enable the tourist to be lured to the destination. In tourism there is no actual product that is distributed to a new owner. This special nature of the tourism product also makes the role of the intermediaries important in the marketing channel. There are a few special aspects to tourism channels. They give a wide range of travel opportunities to the tourist, they give information about the destination prior to purchase as well as present supplementary services. The channels offer easier access to the supplier and enables faster reaction to the changes in market conditions considering the perishability of tourism products. Marketing channels also bring different economies into the supply chain and offer important feedback of tourism products which would be hard to get from distant markets.

When thinking about marketing channels and which ones to use, there are some things that should be kept in mind. All channels are there to serve customers. The purpose of them is to build customer value efficiently for above-average profits. Marketing channels are segmented, so they will achieve differentiation and serve different customer needs. They also can add value to a certain brand's consumer proposition by giving services, image and point of sale impact. (Fyall & Garrod 2005, 115-116)

When it is time to choose the most suitable way to get messages across to the wanted audience, marketers have choices. The traditional ways in which messages can be delivered are public relations, advertising, sales promotions, direct and database marketing as well as personal selling.

Public relations are the planned and maintained efforts to establish and sustain goodwill and understanding between companies, their services and its publics. In tourism an example of public relations is attending fairs and exhibitions. Advertising is a non-personal way to reach a large audience by some commercially available medium, such as a magazine. If done correctly, using advertising is increa-

singly convincing and it's a good way to build long-term imaging for a company. Sales promotions are short-term incentives created to provoke some action in the target audience. These are good when the company wants to induce brand trial and increase purchasing. Direct and database marketing is when the company deals with the customers directly. Direct marketing, which is usually in databases, often uses intranets, extranets and the Internet. Direct marketing has been growing because of its ability to target accurately and make communications more personalized. It also stimulates a behavioral response from the person. Personal selling is verbal communication between the seller and the buyer. It can be very costly but beneficial when the company is attempting to build relationships out in the real world. Other forms of communication, popular especially at destinations, are telemarketing, e-mail and the making and distribution of CD's, videos and DVD's.

All the above mentioned ways of communicating with the target audience are used to achieve a different objective. This can be to attract a small proportion of people, or to spread information to masses of potential customers. Before selecting a way to communicate with the market, it is important to think about the bigger picture: the nature of the service, the objectives of the company, marketplace characteristics and the communication strategy, the stage of the destination as well as the evolution stage of the market. Further down the decision making the company needs to also consider the type and size of the audience, their mood, production costs, reach frequency as well as impact and the availability of media space. (Fyall & Garrod 2005, 120-121)

Media selection is an important step. It involves two decisions the marketer must make. The first one is to decide which media to use. The second is to think about the media types and choose the ones that best complement each other, so that a media mix is developed that most successfully communicates with the customers.

According to Middleton et al. (2009) there are some criteria which a business needs go through when choosing the channels for marketing.

The first is to look at the consumer preference and habits. Here the task is to ask where the target group normally looks for information. Nowadays it has switched from just one source to several, with internet being a strong channel.

The second thing is to look at the coverage of the target market. The distribution strategy has to be decided. There are three types: extensive distribution, intensive distribution and exclusive distribution. In *extensive distribution* the company chooses to cover all the outlets in the catchment area. In *intensive distribution* the company chooses only those outlets that have proven to be cost-effective. The *exclusive distribution* strategy deals with one chosen partner or channel.

Comparative costs need to be considered. Distribution is the biggest cost in the marketing budget. When deciding options for distribution, the expenses of the different options need to be checked. The costs for printing and physical distribution of promotional literature need to be checked, the required staffing to service each channel, the advertising and publicity costs for each channel, the discounts for trade and group bookings to support channels as well as the commissions and incentives for intermediaries. Once staffing decisions have been made, the cost of making and distributing brochures is usually the biggest element. The costs change frequently, so an eye needs to be kept on the changes.

Control of the channel is another thing. Smaller companies easily lose control and get run over by bigger companies in the same field because of their better coverage and retail power. Companies need to consider the extent to which access to channels is controlled by other companies and the implications of it for businesses that aren't directly connected. (Middleton et al., p 285-286)

Three types of promotion methods are needed in tourism marketing. The first method is informative marketing, the task of which is to create awareness among potential tourists. The second is persuasive marketing. The task in this type of marketing is to persuade the first-time visitor to come back again. The third is reminding marketing, where the task is to reinforce the destination so that tourists consider visiting again and spread positive information to other people by word-of-mouth.

Social media and the internet play a vital role in all marketing today, for any kind of purpose. An electronic revolution due to the Internet has happened in tourism marketing, making tourism one of the few truly global industries. This is why in tourism these channels on the Internet are increasingly important to vitalize. These social channels are basically the same as word-of-mouth marketing, which is the most important way to advertise anything. Here comes into play the fact that it is crucial to meet the expectations of tourists or better yet, to exceed them. Word of mouth marketing promotes destination awareness and encourages potential visitors to become tourists. It is also integral to the overall performance of a company. (Uysal&Fesenmaier 1993, 6-22, Fyall&Garrod 2005, 16)

## **6.1 Marketing Communications**

The scale of different marketing communication channel has grown over the years. More increasingly it is about connecting with the customer on a more personal basis, compared to the mass media behavior of the past. The customer market is also changing, becoming more independent and splitting into even smaller groups because of the changes in the lifestyles and basic buying behavior.

Marketing communications is creating channels of information and persuasion, with the goal of selling products and services as well as promoting ideas to the public. Advertising, publicity, personal selling and promoting sales are a part of marketing communications. It can be divided into three categories: media advertising, direct marketing and sales promotion. Media advertising includes all advertising in different mass medias, such as magazines and newspapers, television, radio, Internet, movies and outdoor advertisements. Direct marketing is things such as phone and e-mail marketing, direct marketing by telephone and brochures. Sales promotion includes fairs, sponsoring, advertising in stores as well as different give-aways and business gifts. (MTL: Markkinoinnin määrä suomessa 2009)

Making sure communications work is an important step in marketing, and a check-list of the aims should be kept handy. The AIDA model, one of the models

that assume customers follow predetermined stages from awareness to purchase, is the most commonly cited model. AIDA stands for attraction, interest, desire and action. The idea here is that marketing communications should first attract attention from the customer and then get their interest. After that the customer should get a desire for the product or service, and last, create action. When putting together advertising, the AIDA model is something to keep in mind because the customers viewpoint is important for the success of the communications. (Hudson 2008, 256)

## **6.2 Internet**

Internet is one of the important advertising mediums these days. It is widely used by all groups of people nationally and internationally. It is an everyday communication tool, being used by the general public from children to elders, as well as organizations. According to J. Juslén (p.28), in 2009 70% of private households in Finland had a broadband connection and the amount is expected to increase. The amount of people using the internet is over 80% of the population. When marketing on the internet, it is beneficial to notice that it is not like any other marketing media. There the focus is on action and discussion, on getting the consumers attention and interacting with them. People on the internet are not increasingly interested on marketing advertisements and flashing banners; they want information on the things that interest them. The focus is also turning to smaller customer groups. Before the birth of the internet, sensible ways to produce and offer services efficiently and cheaply to specific smaller customer groups wasn't possible. Internet makes it possible to forget the traditional marketing media and the costs of it and target the wanted people directly. Opening web-pages and starting blogs is a convenient way to gather audience in the same way traditional media does, but it gives you the advantage of designing your message in a way that it is specifically directed at your target customers.

Social media, such as Twitter, Facebook, forums and blogs, are places where a service company or a destination can raise awareness about themselves. Messages

spread fast and if there is, for example, an alluring price of some sort involved to be raffled among the people “liking” your page, awareness is likely to spread like wildfire. The great thing about internet marketing is that it is continuous, whether or not you are doing a campaign at the moment or not. People can visit your internet site any day and any time. And if your site is very good it can start a snowball effect: that is living its own life and spreading among internet users through blogs, links and bookmarks and such without the marketer having to have to do anything. (J. Juslén 2009, 58- 61)

According to Hudson (2008), the advantages of using Internet are several. In addition to the global impact of the messages and the many possibilities for a marketer to be creative when doing internet marketing, the messages are delivered instantly. There are usually no waiting periods or very short ones for information to be published and seen by the general public. Because the internet works as a communication channel where customers can also give direct responses to your advertisement or message, it can become a personal way of getting in touch with your audience. Or at least personally in the cyber style. Profiling the audience with many tools is also possible, and results can be seen almost immediately. For instance for how many people click on your ad or visit your webpage daily. There are disadvantages as well. The life span can be short and seeing the action created by the advertising can be hard to notice in real life. Costs can also be high if the company is using a professional web designer to create messages for them. Targeting on the internet can also be difficult, because of the mobility of people on the net. Putting your ad on a specific interest website has better potential to reach the wanted customer segment. Attention the advertisement gets can also be low, but people interested and looking for information about the subject your ad is about are more likely to follow up on it. (Hudson 2008, 273)

### **6.3 Written Media**

Written media concept covers newspapers, magazines, guidebooks and so on. It is advertising and text that is printed. There are hundreds of different magazines and

papers available, some free of charge and others with a price on them. In this thesis the emphasis is on newspapers and magazines.

People in Finland read a lot. According to statistics, 80% of the population reads newspapers regularly. People who are middle aged and over read more newspapers than the younger population. (Stat.fi: Suomalaiset luottaa klassikoihin) Newspapers are also commonly distributed in Finland. In the Keskipiste area there are over ten different kinds of newspapers where people can read about local things. There are local newspapers, county newspapers and city newspapers. Local newspapers are the papers that are published once or more times a week in one or several municipalities. In the Keskipiste area, an example would be the Nivala-newspaper. County newspapers are papers that are distributed in a wider area than local newspapers, in the county at hand and can have news from other areas than where distributed. An example of this would be the Pyhäjokiseutu in the center area, which is distributed in 6 towns twice a week. A city newspaper would be Oulun Sanomat, which is distributed in Oulu and comes out 2-3 times a month.

The advantages of using national newspapers are that for example that the circulation is very large and it appeals to all income levels. There are many creative options for the designs for the layout of advertisements or news stories. The target can be chosen by picking a certain area newspaper and concentrating on that geographical region. Newspapers are relatively cheap for advertising and spreading information, as well as the frequency of their appearance gives good opportunity for repetition of messages. The disadvantages of using newspapers for advertising can be several. If the geographical region is chosen wrong or the advertisement is poorly reproduced, attention will be low. People usually are focused when they are reading a newspaper, but many also read selectively. This means advertisements can go unnoticed by people not searching for that information. Newspapers are also full of information, so the advertisement can get lost in the clutter if it isn't cleverly designed. The life span is also pretty short, since people can look through the newspaper and then forget about it, missing the advertisements. (Hudson 2008, 271)

According to a study by VPT (National local newspaper research) in 2007-2009, people do read newspapers. In the study it showed that 89% of people ages 15-79 years of age read their local papers weekly. For the papers distributed in the province, the amount was 73%. For the city paper, the amount was 59%, which is still good but less than the others. (<http://www.paikallismediat.fi/vpt/>)

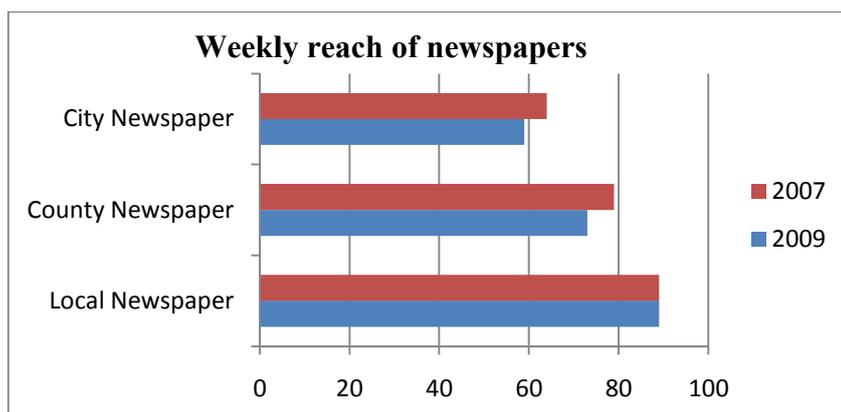


Diagram 1: VPT study 2007-2009: Amount of people that read the paper this week

(VPT study 2007-2009, <http://www.paikallismediat.fi/vpt/>)

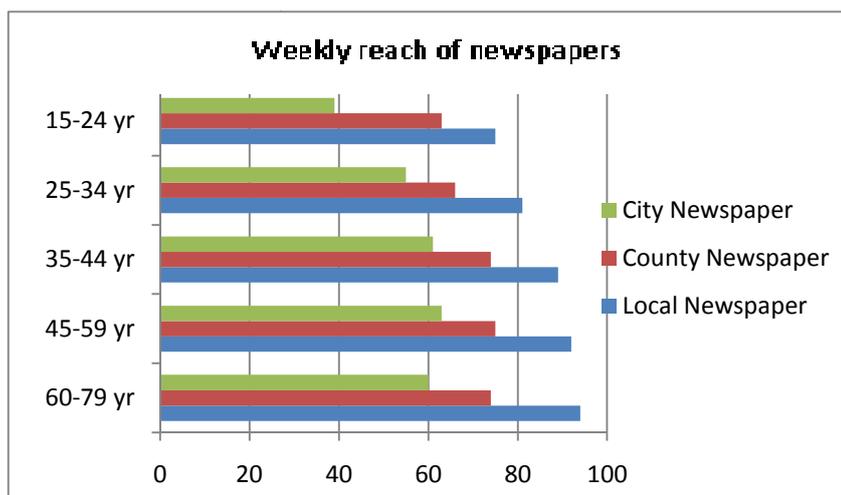


Diagram 2: VPT study 2007-2009: People that read the paper once a week

(VPT study 2007-2009, <http://www.paikallismediat.fi/vpt/>)

Local newspapers are read more intently, according to the VPT study. The newspapers create and support the local image, and people are many times interested more in what is happening in their exact area than far away. One advantage of using local newspapers to market is the high market coverage. The lead time to publishing is also pretty short and the information and ads are easily laid out. Advertising on local newspapers is not that expensive, and many different sized ads can be placed. The frequency is good: local newspapers come out one to more times a week and putting the ad in for weeks is easy as well as can be cheaper than just one time. Repetition possibilities and the chances for a person to notice the ad are good. There are disadvantages as well, as in the low attention possible readers will give your advertisement. People read selectively, but repeating the message a few times increases the possibility for attention. The quality in newspaper advertisements is not that great, which can possibly limit the attention it can get. Locally there are usually many newspapers distributed, which causes media clutter. (Hudson 2008, 271)

Magazines are read at least once a month by nine out of ten people. The emphasis has been turning more to the special interest magazines, which in part might be caused by the increased importance of hobbies. (Stat.fi: Suomalaiset luottaa klassikoihin) There are many special interest magazines in Finland for tourism. Some are focusing on the international tourist destinations, such as the magazine *Matkaopas*, and some on international and national destinations, such as *Matkalehti*. Magazines have a large circulation and they can be targeted well. Choosing a special interest magazine to suit your field increases the possibility for the right people to see your advertisement or read your story. Magazines are usually read intently and advertisements noticed more easily because they are related to the field of the magazine. The advertisements and stories are high quality and color can be included, which makes them more appealing. Magazines are kept longer and can be repeatedly read in a leisurely fashion. The disadvantage is that they are expensive tools to use in marketing. The copy dates are also distant, meaning your ad or story needs to be delivered one to six months before publishing. (Hudson 2008, 271)

## 6.4 Fairs and Events

There are over 90 fairs in Finland yearly, arranged for different purposes, such as boat fairs, education fairs, sports fairs and of course, travel fairs. There are 11 different fair organizers. According to the Finnish Union of Trade Fair Organizers, fairs are an important media nowadays, offering direct contact between companies and customers. People come to fairs because they choose to, so the audience at fairs is more responsive to information. Fairs can create a large amount of good customer contacts cost-effectively. ([http://www.fairsunion.fi/english/media\\_frame.htm](http://www.fairsunion.fi/english/media_frame.htm))

Fairs are meeting points for professionals, where they can establish lines of action, new strategies and business alliances to energize and reinforce the business. Tourism fairs help professionals follow up on the current tourism trends and changes in the demand of the market. Fairs spread information between the professionals as well as customers visiting the fairs. Some fairs are aimed at professionals only, but many in Finland usually are aimed at giving something to the general public, so they are customer oriented. Fairs usually last from one to a few days, so thousands of people can be reached and visibility achieved. At fairs the exhibitor sets up an exhibition for their company or destination, and presenters meet fair customer at the booth providing information and trying to achieve interest.

The target audience at fairs is large, so it is possible to reach a large number of customers and potential customers at one time. Exhibiting at fairs is a great way to get attention, gain new customers, nurture old customer relationships and do business with partners. The production costs are high for fairs. There is setting up, staffing, getting material and transportation costs. Fairs are also full of exhibitors, so there is a lot of clutter. The exhibitor needs to have something attention grabbing for it not to be lost in the crowd. (Hudson 2008, 272)

Events can mean many things. In this context, when talking about events, different gatherings are in question. These are events such as competitions, conventions, happenings, festivals, media events, parties and sporting events. There are thousands of events in Finland, private and ones open to the general public. For

marketing purposes, events open to everyone are the place to try to achieve visibility. The company itself can organize an event and get noticed, or sponsor an event and get visibility. Passing out brochures or arranging small scale raffles at events is also a way to get attention and gain interest. Organizing weird events is a sure way to get on the event map in Finland or even abroad. Events, such as wife carrying world championships, air guitar world championships and ant nest sitting competitions are events that gotten worldwide attention and stirred the public. Why not arrange a swamp boxing championship or a competition for building out of pine cones? An event that is entertaining or even a bit silly is a good way to gather people together and get a certain message across. Events that are known in this area are for example Old McDonald's Children's Song Festival in Piippola (Piippolan Vaarin Lastenlaulufestivaali) and Haapavesi Folk Music Festival.

At events it is possible to reach attractive segments of customers or market to the masses. The many different events available give possibilities for marketers. Companies can create attention-grabbing, unusual activities for marketing at events. Events give the possibility for a company to build credibility among the people as well as benefit from the success. Events can become expensive, which is a disadvantage. They are also time consuming, in the sense of building relationships and links with partners, as well as setting up and execution. It is difficult to evaluate impact from the marketing at events. The event is momentary, which means the messages can be easily forgotten. At events people also are focused on the event, so marketing can go unnoticed. (Hudson 2008, 273)

## **6.5 Television, radio, videos and cinema**

Television, radio, videos and cinema advertisements are the most expensive media to use. For Keskipiste Travel Association Ra I would not recommend any of these. Maybe a short advertisement could be made for radio, saying things like "Do you know where the heart of Finland is? Find out at Keskipiste.fi". Radio advertising is not as easy as people might think. Listeners are commonly involved in many activities at the same time as they are listening to the radio. This means

the radio advertisement needs to be very interesting for someone to really pay attention to it. Another thing is that the advertising might need to be even annoying for a person to remember it, or it needs to be connected to some kind of jingle that will stick to mind automatically. For products radio advertising might be a good tool, but not so much for destinations because many times destinations cannot be compressed into a few sentences to provide the vision intended. Destination advertisement needs the visual aspect as well to more effectively catch the potential visitor's attention. Radio advertisements reach a large audience, on the other hand. Deadlines are flexible and local recognition can be gained with radio advertising. The audience can be segmented well by the listener types for each channel and repeat messages can be delivered. The downside is the potential high costs and that audio messages can be only delivered. The life span is also short, meaning the message is over in a few seconds. (Hudson 2008,.272)

Television advertisements require excessive amounts of time, money and energy. It works for bigger destinations, like Rovaniemi and Kalajoki, but not for small ones. To advertise on television would require the destination to have services to suit large groups' needs, as well as be able to accommodate, feed and activate the visitors. The service structure needs to be developed and well maintained to meet the expectations of people. The same goes for videos and the cinema. A destination in the early stages of development cannot aim at attracting the mass tourists, but emphasis needs to be on the smaller markets. Advertising on television is very effective, on the other hand. Watching television is a popular leisure time activity for people, and commercials are "forced" on them between shows. A wide audience of all income levels is showed and told about your product, service or company, so the attention is high. On television you can demonstrate why it is beneficial to buy visually with image and sound, and potential customers will see your products and therefore notice it easier at the points of purchase. Same goes for destinations. A customer recognizes the name, forms some kinds of visions from the advertisement on television and when it comes to finding places to visit on holiday, the advertisement easily comes to mind from the subconsciousness. Therefore it can influence the decisions people make, as long as the advertisement appeals to the people on the personal level. Marketing on television is good for

the image and target audience can be selected by selecting the right channels and times for advertising. The life span is short and it is expensive to market on television. (Hudson 2008, 271-272)

Marketing at cinemas and videos is not for small destinations. They are expensive and it is difficult to establish a profile for the audience. Cinema advertising gives a possibility to segment audience or mass market, and the ads can be aired frequently. The impact and attention of ads in cinemas is high, because people are forced to listen and see. Other ads are also shown, so competition is essential. The message passes fairly quickly, so it needs to have something people will remember. Videos are expensive to make. Production costs, staffing and other elements cost and take time. Distribution costs. Placement needs to be thought carefully. If a video was made of the center of Finland area, careful thought would need to be put into how to make this area sellable. (Hudson 2008, 272)

## **6.6 Unusual media**

The concept unusual media includes things not so commonly used for marketing by every company. They are things such as floor posters, ceiling posters, aerial banners, balloons on display or to be given out, logos on packaging, clothes and products. One idea is a flyer made to look like a parking ticket. (Godfrey & Clarke 2000, 149) The point in unusual media is to surprise the potential customer to notice the company and increase interest. When a person finds advertising on something they might not expect, like toilet paper, a napkin or a pizza box, it is easily remembered. Clever ideas are appreciated and the word spreads easily from person to person when they have made an interesting or surprising discovery.

Using unusual media, or ambient media, is one of the fastest growing sectors. In addition to the advertisements on receipts and other above mentioned things, live advertising is also a part of ambient advertising. For example, the mobile company Sony Ericsson hired actors to act as tourists wanting their picture taken on their

new mobile phone's camera. This persuaded people to try the product and create attention and desire for this new interesting phone. (Hudson 2008, 274)

## **6.7 Road signs and notice boards**

These two media types, road signs and notice boards, are aimed at people in the immediate proximity. They are ways to catch attention and stop people. Road signs are located either close to your business or anywhere else along the roads. These can either be signs to direct the people to a service or a place of interest, or signs advertising something on the side of a road. The best places to place signs are busy intersections, four way stops and exits from gas stations and convenience stores. Along the busiest roads and places where nothing else interesting is around are also good places to place a sign. Messages on road signs need to be short and simple. They should tell the person what you do, what they should do and how can they do that. For example an attractive sign along E4 could be placed with "Looking for accommodation? Keskipiste Travel Association Ra can help. Check out Keskipiste.info or call xxx-xxxxxxx for more information". This would perk the interest of a person travelling and wondering where to stay the night. Road signs are work all day and all night, seven days a week, so everyone passing can be affected by them. Unlike newspapers and magazines, a person sees the sign even if they aren't looking for it.

Notice boards are located in public places. Anyone can leave messages, advertisements and announcements on these boards. Notice boards at information points in each municipality are a good way to advertise a tourism association and provide information about the area. An advertisement on a notice board needs to be very attractive for a person passing by to stop and notice. Or it needs to be easily read in a matter of seconds while a person is walking by. Advertisements on notice boards cannot be very complex, so the message delivered is simple. People usually check out notice boards for information about local events and possible sales. Visibility can therefore be reached on this media. The impact is high for those who see the advertisement. They are also cheap and reach a large audience

for a long time. The disadvantage is that the exposure can be brief and the ad needs to be distributed in a large area to create influence. (Hudson 2008, 272)

## **6.8 Word of mouth**

This is an extremely important marketing channel and communication tool but it is also uncontrollable and can either damage or bring up the image of the destination. The changes in media culture are causing more people to give up part of the mass media. People listen increasingly to others on blogs and on the street and form their opinions on the spot, many times avoiding marketing. People see other people as a more reliable source for information than marketing medias, and therefore advertising isn't seen as important as it has been in the past. (J. Juslén 2009, 41-42)

Because word-of-mouth is a continuous process every day, it brings with it the importance of customer satisfaction. Satisfied people give positive feedback to others. Unsatisfied people eagerly make sure others know what has gone wrong and recommend their friends and family, or whoever is willing to listen, not to go to that destination or to use the service they did.

## 7. SWOT ANALYSIS

The SWOT analysis, invented by Albert Humphrey, is a strategic method of evaluating for example an area. It is also used to analyze projects and used by companies as well as by individuals. It is very helpful when looking for things to develop and when you need to get a clear picture of the current situation. When you begin with an SWOT analysis, you must first have in mind what the desired end result is and that in mind start evaluating the subject. (Wikipedia: SWOT analysis)

SWOT itself stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

*Strengths* are the advantages a place has. In this case, the benefits the Keskipiste area has when comparing to the surrounding area and other destinations. For accommodation businesses location can be a possible strength; for destinations it can be the image brought on by extremely good marketing strategies. When doing a SWOT analysis, all the strengths you can think of should be included, no matter what type of tourist they might attract to the area.

*Weaknesses* are the things that have a negative influence or are lacking from the area, thus might be keeping the tourists from visiting. Weaknesses can be things such as a lack of services or poorly maintained tourist attractions.

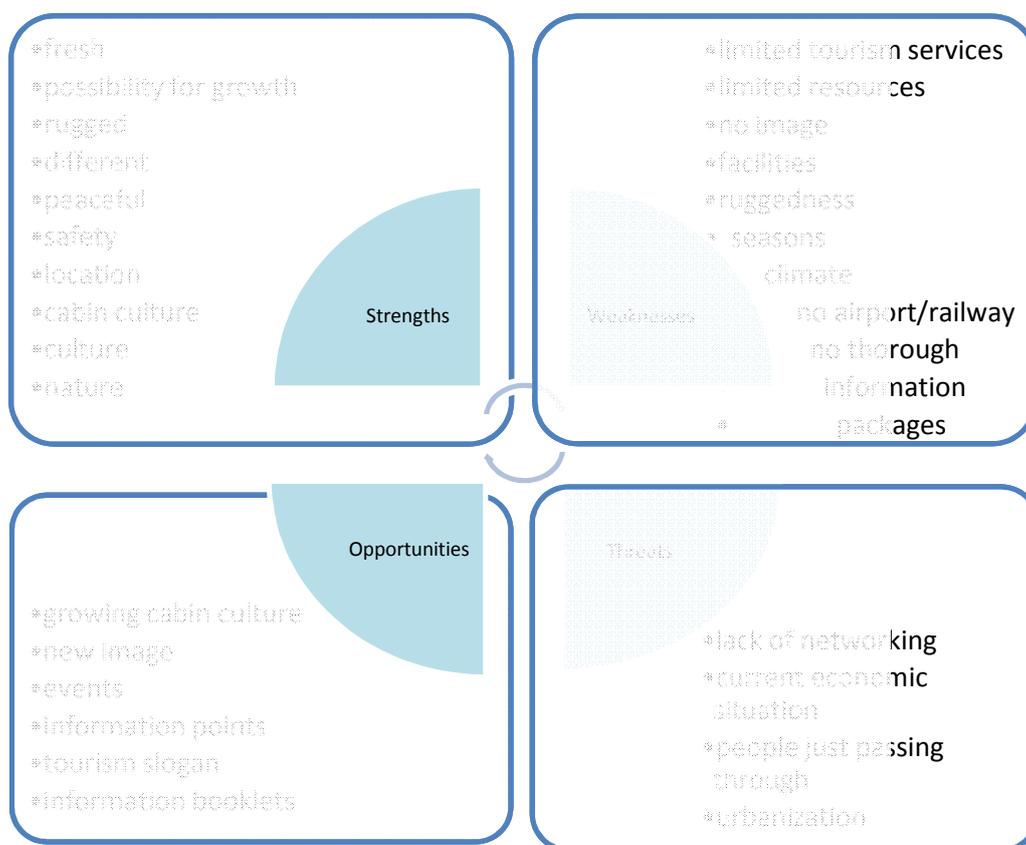
*Opportunities* are positive factors or trends in the environment that contain possibility for the area. The opportunities can come from elements that are controllable, such as a specific tourism product from a company. Or they can come from the external environment, such as the risen popularity of the internet and the thought to make the services of a company available to potential customers online.

*Threats* are the negative factors or trends that might keep the people from traveling to the area and using the services provided. They are the challenges that a place faces and needs to take into consideration. Threats can come from the area within or from the external environment. It can be the poor economic situation which influences people not to travel, or a natural disaster, or a major festival in a nearby area which steals potential visitors from coming to the wanted destination. (Kolb 2006, 78-7; Holloway&Robinson 1995, 18-20; Middleton et al., 209-212)

The time spent in proceeding with a SWOT analysis has been proven to be productive. The analysis should be creative, extensive and systematic for it to give the best results, making it a bit more than just a routine evaluation of market statistics. Staff of an organization and other managers should also take part in this, to receive their knowledge and perceptions of the subject in question. But it should be kept in mind that times change continuously, so there is never one right conclusion to be drawn from a SWOT analysis. Best guesses are permitted when making this evaluation, and it should be conducted every once in a while to keep surveying the environment. (Middleton et al., 212)

### 7.1 SWOT Analysis for the center of Finland -area

The SWOT for the center of Finland is done with tourism development of the area in mind.



Picture 6: SWOT Analysis for the center of Finland area

Let's begin with the **strengths**. The tourism in the central area is fairly small scale. This means that the area is *fresh* and hasn't been spoiled with pollution, bad reputation or crowds. There is a *possibility for growth* in tourism, because not many tourism activities have yet been established or kept in action. The area is in the middle of *clean nature*. Because there is nature, there are also animals in their natural habitats as well as natural attractions. The nature, however, is a bit *rugged* and some might even say "ugly" compared to many other places. But this I see to be a strength, because it means our area is very *different* to many destinations. This area's *nature* with its forests, swamps, fields, lakes and rivers can be exotic for someone coming from the big city or abroad. The area is *peaceful* and people come here looking for that. With peacefulness comes *safety*. This area is safe when considering crime and other activities that could be harmful to the tourist. With terrorism, wars and political battles going on, it is increasingly important in the minds of travelers today that the destination they are going to is safe. The center of Finland is obviously *located in the center* of the country. This means the distances from people travelling within Finland are more or less the same when coming to this area. It is within easy reach, especially since two major roads pass through the area. These are Route 4, which is the Finnish national road going from Helsinki all the way to Utsjoki, and Highway 28 which runs from Kokkola to Kaajaani. People pass through this area on their way to other places and the question here is only how to stop them on their way. The center of Finland is something that people should be persuaded to be interested in. *Cabin culture* is another thing popular in Finland, as can be seen from the almost 500 000 cabins there was in this country in 2006, according to Statistics Finland ([www.stat.fi](http://www.stat.fi)). The center area is a good place to build cabins if one wants a bit of peace and quiet, since in this area the norm is that there is less than one cabin per square kilometer. *Culture* is also strong in this area. There are many different cultural events, exhibitions and other activity in this area. This is something that needs to be even more actively promoted to the general public.

The **weaknesses** of this area are mainly due to the fact that tourism is not the most important resource in this area. There are *limited tourism services* and *limited resources*. There aren't many businesses focusing on the tourism flow and they are

scattered all over the area. The entrepreneurs in this area need to have lots of stamina to survive because business is not as strong as it might be in other destinations. This area also focuses on mainly on cultural and somewhat on family tourists. There are services to suit nearly everyone, but this area attracts more people coming on calm holidays or just passing through and stopping. A weakness is that the central area has *no specific image* it can sell to tourists. A brand should be invented to make people notice and remember. There are rest stops in the area, but when passing through many have been closed down and are poorly maintained. For example the rest stop here in the exact center in Leskelä along Road 4: the bathrooms have been closed. This is one important factor tourists look at, the facilities. Not maintaining or closing down important *facilities* a tourist might need during their travel is not very wise for business. The happenings in this area are also pretty tied to *seasons*. During the summer there is action but winters are fairly quiet. The *ruggedness* of the area and the *climate* can also be thought as weaknesses. People going on holidays many times prefer places pleasing to the eye, or they go warm destinations as in the case of many Finnish people. Even though this area is along commonly used highways, a weakness is that *no railway* goes through here. It causes the people who prefer railway on their travels to skip this area. There is *no big airport* either in this area. There are only small ones for very small planes, which aren't used commonly for touristic purposes. People flying in and possibly coming to this area need transport from the cities. A weakness is also that there aren't any good, thorough *information packages* to present to tourists that would have the essential information about the area and the services offered.

The central area has a lot of potential, **opportunities** to thrive. Because the area is fresh, a lot can be developed and invented to attract the potential visitors. The *growing cabin culture* is a great opportunity to jump at. With lots of free sites to build on, people looking for a place to place their cabins have a lot of choice. The *image* could be built on the clean nature, culture and the centrality of the area, for instance. Because there isn't yet a set image, there is possibility in building that and feeding it to the public. Different *events* can be a possibility for free marketing activity to bring in people. The existing event organizers could do surprising campaigns to get attention and wake people. Setting up *information points* that

cover the whole area and the services could be another possibility to attract tourists. If people find information they need easily they will be more likely to use that information. But because the center area covers many towns, it could also be an idea to make a *tourism slogan* for each town to describe what they are made of. These slogans could be then, for example, put into *information booklets* about the whole area that could be distributed at different places, such as fairs, airports etc; wherever found most suitable.

**Threats** to tourism in the center area mainly revolve around people not coming here. *Bad networking* among companies is one threat. If companies have the mentality that only they are who count and forget that they are only a link in the chain, it will be bad for tourism. Team work is essential in rural areas to maximize the tourism potential. The current *economic situation* is causing people not to travel so much as well as preventing entrepreneurs from starting new businesses as easily. Because the center area is situated between the main tourist areas of Finland, the north and the south, *people pass through* many times without really looking at this area and what there is to offer. This is a big threat, but the flow of people is also something that could be utilized more extensively. *Urbanization* is also a small threat. By this I mean people moving away from this area to find work etc. instead of setting up businesses here. This in turn results in less and less people trying to have a go at the area and provide something new to the tourists.

## **8. DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH**

In this chapter I will first explain the theoretical framework. I will then present different research methods as well as the research methods chosen for this thesis. The process of my research will also be introduced.

### **8.1 Theoretical framework**

The theory for this thesis was picked out on a few bases. The association that this thesis was done for is a new association. Tourism marketing is what they do. This is why the tourism and tourism marketing theory with the relevant topics were chosen. In the association view part, the marketing topics are then discussed. The marketing channel theory is the bases for the channel comparison and choice part of this thesis. The interviews do not directly refer to the theory, but were beneficial for myself to study to help in the interviewing process to have a better idea of tourism marketing and what it includes. The Keskipiste area is a travel destination in whole and the theory can help the marketers by giving them information about different aspects of tourism marketing on the destination level. The aim for the theory is to assist in considerations, to define and direct the objectives of this thesis.

### **8.2 Research methods**

People conduct research when there is a question they want to answer. It is about discovering something new or testing an existing knowledge. Marketing research is an organized process to gather information. It deals with the gathering, processing, analyzing, storage and communication of information to help make marketing decisions. (Middleton et al. 2009, 162)

There are three basic research approaches. They are observational research, survey research and experimental research. Observational research is about getting primary data by observing people, actions and situations relevant to the research.

Observational research can give information that people normally unwillingly provide, such as buying behavior. Things such as feelings that motivate buying cannot be observed, however. Survey research is the best for gathering descriptive information and is the most common way to do research in tourism. The surveys can be structured or unstructured. The unstructured surveys have a fairly free flow. The interviewer has a basic guideline with possible topics and can guide the interview by what the person being interviewed says. With structured surveys there is a list of questions that are presented to a person and in all instances the questions are the same. Experimental research is best for getting causal information. Here researchers test responses in matched groups of people, after giving the subjects different treatments. For example putting a certain price for the same product at two similar destinations and observing the consumer actions. (Kotler, Bowen & Makens 2003, 169-172)

### **8.2.1 Primary and secondary research**

When conducting a research, one important step is to choose whether to use old existing data or to start collecting new information. Commonly it is beneficial to use both types of information. Primary research is done when you collect information for your research for a specific purpose. It can be done in many ways, such as holding interviews, conducting surveys and observing focus groups. Secondary information is simply collecting information that already exists. This type of information can be press articles, data on the Internet, different reports and previous researches. Using secondary data is of course cheaper, but with primary data you will get only the information you want. (Middleton et al. 2009, 166)

In this research I have used both primary and secondary research to gather the needed information. Secondary information came from different sources, such as books and the internet. Primary information was gathered by interviewing people one-on-one.

### **8.2.2 Quantitative and qualitative methods**

Usually most consumer research studies are based on questions to be asked from random customers. The analysis and presentation is then presented in a statistical way. Two methods are used to analyze the received data. They are qualitative and quantitative methods.

Quantitative research is a study from which numerical estimates can be made. It's always based on questionnaires with a structure, where all respondents are asked the same questions. To get reliable results, a large amount of respondents are needed and many times computers are used to analyze the data. Structured questionnaires are tools that are commonly used.

The qualitative method is used when small amounts of people are asked to present their opinions. This can be done one-on-one or in focus groups, for example, and is usually done by interviewing or observing people. The information gathered from qualitative research cannot usually be put into numerical form. They can be used, though, to structure quantitative research. The point in qualitative research is to get answers that cannot be predicted beforehand and therefore give researchers valuable information about attitudes and motivations of customers. (Middleton et al. 2009, 165-166)

For my research I chose to use the qualitative method in the form of personal interviews with relevant people. I chose this because not a large number of members were being interviewed. In the interviews the aim was to find out personal opinions, which cannot be done by quantitative methods.

### **8.2.3 Interviews**

In qualitative research interviewing is used often. Personal interviews can provide a lot of information for the researcher. They are time consuming and many times more expensive than other forms of gathering research. There are three interview methods: structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. Structured in-

Interviews have a pre-set form, and this type is usually used in quantitative research. There are questions which are asked a person in a same way every time, and only those questions are asked.

Semi-structured and unstructured methods are usually used in qualitative research. Semi-structured interviews are more relaxed than structured ones. There are questions the interviewer must ask, but they can also add additional questions if needed to clarify something. Using this method gives the researcher more information about the motivations and thoughts of the interviewee.

Unstructured interviews are more like conversations between people. The interviewer has a checklist of topics to discuss during the interview, but can guide the interview any way they like and decide the depth of the discussion as it proceeds. Unstructured interviews are used when the researcher wants to find out as much as they can from the person they are interviewing. (Examiner.com: Interview types)

There are two types of personal interviews, group interviews and individual interviews. Interviews are guided by a specific person and a semi-structured or an unstructured survey is many times used to guide the interview.

Individual interviews are commonly used in tourism research. Individual interviewing takes place at someone's home, office, in the street or anywhere. It is very flexible but as mentioned, it takes time to conduct and requires more planning than many other forms of research. Individual interviews can last from a few minutes to several hours. The interviewee must gain the other persons cooperation to get wanted answers.

Group interviews usually consists six to ten people and are usually lead by a trained moderator. The moderator guides the discussion and encourages open opinions. These interviews usually last a few hours and are held in a pleasant place. Participants are usually given a small compensation for participating. (Kotler et al. 2003, 174-175)

For the member research I chose semi-structured personal interviews. The members were interviewed one-one-one at the locations of their businesses. I had questions that I wanted each to answer, so semi-structured interviews were the best choice.

### **8.3 The research process**

Firstly, to find the topic for this thesis was under a lot of work. Markku Pietikäinen helped me to find a topic. I first met with Mr. Pietikäinen privately to discuss what I needed from my thesis. Then I attended several evening meetings with Mr. Pietikäinen and local entrepreneurs and other influential people to get potential thesis ideas. It gave me good insight into what is happening in the area among the business people in the tourism field, as well as provided me with a clear view of what happens in the actual meetings. Finally I found a topic with Keskipiste Travel Association Ra. Once I had my topic I began to meet with the association and my contact there was Pekka Luukkonen. I met with him privately about the thesis on a regular basis and the rest of the association in a several meetings where they discussed other topics as well as my thesis.

I began the research by writing the theory and doing personal interviews with the companies who are a part of Keskipiste Travel Association Ra. The aim in this was to familiarize myself with the companies and get information about their customers. As a base for these interviews I had a semi-structured interview survey, which was used to give information about the customers moving in the area and other relevant information the association wanted to know. The interviews were conducted during May, August and September. The end of September was the latest deadline, and not all the member companies had replied to first or second enquiries by that time. They were then left out of the study. The interviews required a lot of time and effort. The companies were located in different towns, so it meant a lot of travelling for me by car. The furthest were an hour away (one way) from where I was based. It meant lots of hassle with timetables and arranging transportation and convenient interview times to suit all parties. During the

whole time the theory was forming, and as the interviews came down to the last one, the theory was completed. Then the process continued with analyzing the data and eventually the presentation occasion arrived.

#### **8.4 Target group and description of the interviews**

The target group for all the interviews were the members of Keskipiste Travel Association Ra. They consist of many different types of places of business, from hotels to art galleries in the center area. From them I wanted to hear about the customers their company or association attracts, from the viewpoint of the entrepreneur.

The interviews were conducted in May, August and September at the locations of the member companies. Each interview was relatively free-flowing and lasted 25-45 minutes, depending on how much the interviewee was willing to share. Each of the topics on the survey was discussed as well as other things that came to mind. This makes it somewhat harder to unravel the information to be analyzed, since there are no set answers.

The survey was semi-structured, meaning that topics were made up prior to interviews, but more questions could be asked than planned. The first question revolved around *introduction of the company*. Here the entrepreneur was asked to describe the company and why people come there. The second was about the customers. Here the customers the company has, according to the interviewee, were discussed, whether it was families, older people, etc. Also, the questions of where the customers come from and why they have come to the area were brought up. Third was *information flow*, meaning how the customer had got information about the company and where and how the company markets itself. The fourth question was about the *tourism marketing* and the important channels according to the entrepreneur. The fifth question took a wider look at the center area in general. Here it was discussed what kind of information customers want, what they are missing in the area and their satisfaction in general with the services the center area has to

offer. In the end discussion turned to the entrepreneur and their *ideas* about *how to develop tourism in the area*. The topics were compiled together with the association to find out the information they wanted to know.

## **9. RESULTS FOR THE MEMBER INTERVIEWS**

In this chapter I will examine the answers I got in the interviews. The language for the interviews was Finnish and the semi-structured survey form I carried with me was also in Finnish. The association communicates in this language and the entrepreneurs are Finns, so this is the reason for choosing the Finnish language instead of English, which is the language of the thesis. In the end the number of interviews turned out to be ten. In two cases the interviewee was in charge of two member companies. The point in the member interviews was to find out about their customers and get information on information flow, marketing channels, their perceived views of customers' opinions on the area as well as on the development ideas. At this point only the themes for the interviews are analyzed, and the introductions of the companies are left out.

### **9.1 The customers**

The customers in the center area are of many age groups, according to the entrepreneurs interviewed. Older people, couples and families with children are the most common travelers mentioned. People often have to travel for work-related purposes, so work-groups and business guests were mentioned. Hunting groups, holiday groups, people attending courses and regular customers are also people visiting the area. Day visitors, people on holiday, students, young people over eighteen years of age and many different types of party groups form a part of the customers. For some companies, religious people and pilgrims are common. The center area has a lot of cultural events, so people interested in culture are coming to this area. One company mentioned that appreciable shares of customers are coming year after year, even in the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation.

The customers of the members come mainly from the nearby area and southern Finland. Helsinki, Turku, Tampere, Oulu, Kokkola, Viitasaari and Lestijärvi are other cities mentioned by name. The people coming from southern Finland many times come from Helsinki, from inside ring 3 or "kehä 3" as it is called in Finnish.

The interviewees also mentioned that a 200km ring could be formed around the center and many of the customers come from within that area. The Oulu region and the city of Oulu are also mentioned as customer generating areas. Also, international visitors are visiting the center area of Finland. Germans were mentioned a few times, as well as Russians. Other nationalities included people from the Nordic countries such as Norway, the Baltic area, especially Estonia, the Eastern block and the Netherlands. India, Canada, Japan, Italy and New Zealand were also mentioned by the member companies, so people come from far away destinations as well.

The reasons mentioned by the interviewees for why the customers have been in the area were several. Many have been passing through, on their way from southern Finland to the north or vice versa. Travelling from east to west and the other way around are also reasons to visit. Many come for a specific purpose to the area: for a party, a holiday, to visit friends and family, for hunting trips, company visits and other work related reasons. Coming for a day of swimming and pilgrimages were also mentioned.

## **9.2 Information flow**

People get information about services and companies in many ways. The interviewees mentioned the Internet and local newspapers as the most common way for someone to notice their companies. For the Internet, Google, Facebook, the companies' own websites, tourism websites and the municipality's webpage were mentioned. Word-of-mouth is also a strong channel in this area. People have mentioned they have heard good things about the company to the entrepreneur, so this was mentioned a few times during the interviews. Some companies have been in the area for a long time, so they are familiar with the people and trusted by them. Different events and fairs are also places where people get information about the companies. Road signs and notice boards were also mentioned. As for the magazines and newspapers mentioned by name, Maaseutu, Selänne, Camping Finland and Caravan magazine have been mentioned to the entrepreneurs. When it

comes to offering tangible products, the companies have heard customers have found them through products sold in places to where the company has distributed them. The customers are also finding the companies in the center area through Google and searching there for the center area and possible places of interest and accommodation on their way north or south.

All the member companies market themselves, of course, on the Keskipiste Travel Association Ra's pages. The Internet was mentioned by all companies as an important channel. In addition to that, their own Internet page is an important channel. The local municipality's page is another internet site commonly mentioned. Members market at different events, at travel fairs and in local newspapers as advertisements or news stories. Posters and road signs are also mentioned. Some contact other companies directly to get networking going and to get marketing that way. One company mentioned belonging to the Keskipiste-Leader group and another to an agro-tourism loop. Companies also put emphasis on good service, which will then benefit as positive word-of-mouth and marketing in that way.

### **9.3 Marketing channels**

According to the members, one of the most important marketing channels today is the internet. A company's own webpage says a lot about the company itself, so it needs to be designed with thought and the customer in mind. Good service for the customers is important, which works together with the word-of-mouth marketing by regular people in their everyday lives. Local newspapers are good for marketing to the people in the local area, whom seem to be the most common customers. For newspapers, the entrepreneurs mentioned free advertising as being a good way to market, in the form of news stories. Road signs and advertisements on notice boards were also thought to be a good way to stop people in the area. Traditional ways in marketing were mentioned as something to focus on by one entrepreneur. Events were thought to be another good channel to market and also in getting the free advertising by possible news people visiting the event. Fairs were mentioned as a good place to create awareness, but a few interviewees mentioned

it was not the best channel to create sales. Advertising in the newspaper was also mentioned by one company as not being beneficial enough to the business. Marketing through networking with other companies was mentioned to be important for any kind of a business.

#### **9.4 The area's tourism supply**

According to the entrepreneurs, not a lot of questions are asked about the area and what there is for tourists. They emphasize the fact that the customers are told without asking about the things that might interest them, attractions and so forth. Many companies have information booklets and brochures available for the tourists to look at in their own time and according to interest. This perks up interest about the available activities or other services in the area. The information that people usually ask for, according to the entrepreneurs, are things for children to do, the services in the area, attractions and other interesting sites, dances, karaoke and museums. Hiking areas are also on the list of things inquired about. The time for most people to be interested about the local area is during the high season, which is the summer in the center area. During winter and low season, people are travelling more for work related purposes and do not miss activities or other things to occupy their time.

People have been pleased with the services in the area, as the interviewees all stated. Most did not have anything negative on their mind about what the customers have said. However, there were a few things mentioned. They were the dullness of the road to Kajaani (road 28), the lack of information in the area for tourists and the small number of tourism services and companies in the area. Other things that were mentioned were the opening hours, especially for restaurants, and the lack of nightlife.

#### **9.5 Entrepreneur's thoughts and tourism development ideas for the area**

There were many good development ideas from the entrepreneurs on what should be done to develop the tourism in the area. One of the most important facts that surfaced was the importance of networking. Here I will list each answer given during the interviews:

- Networking between companies and bringing out the area is important. It would be good to get people interested in the area's supply and in stopping here for more than one night when passing through.
- The area needs more different types of active tourism entrepreneurs.
- The cities/municipalities could put some emphasis on increasing the tourism by putting information and links for the local tourism companies.
- The local entrepreneurs should network themselves better and cooperate less selfishly.
- The road signs should be a bit clearer in the area and more could be put up for interesting places.
- The member companies could put stickers on their cars with the associations name and their own companies name on it to give a little extra marketing.
- Information should be put out more easily for tourists to find.
- The tourism portal should be made a little clearer.
- The opening hours in the area are somewhat limited for tourism, for example, the museums in Nivala. Many places are open just a few hours or not at all during weekends, when many tourists are on the move.
- The Summer Garden: Gardening Fair in Oulu is somewhat useless when considering tourism. Sales are not that great there.
- A "pilgrimage route" could be made for the center area, going from one center point to the other, or just going from one municipality to the next. For example, a puzzle could be made with information about the different areas. The whole puzzle could be sold in one piece, or a piece at a time in different municipalities. An information package with possible accommodation, places of interest etc. should be also linked to this.
- The center area does not have enough information for tourists. There are few tourism services, such as excursion organizers. On information boards

and other places there should be clear information for tourists about the different services and interesting places in the area.

- Centralizing the tourism is important and there should be a sturdy tourism package that can be marketed to tourists.
- More active tourism entrepreneurs are needed in the area.
- Information about the area should be supplied to the tourists more clearly. The possible services should be boosted and brought to a tourist's attention.
- Networking is important, beneficial for the companies as well as tourists.
- Networking between companies is important.
- Tourism companies should be supported more by the municipality.
- A sturdier tourism chain should be created between the companies.
- Different tourism projects are good for the area
- Emphasis should be put on free advertising, in the form of news stories for local newspapers. People read a lot in this area, and it would create awareness.
- Road signs area important. Ones with lights stand out more and therefore are good when wanting to stop and wake up people passing through.
- Networking is important. It is good to guide people to other tourism companies if cannot help them, such as if no room in the motel, tell them information on how to contact and find another place nearby.
- More young entrepreneurs are needed in the area to put up businesses with perseverance.
- News stories are a good way to create awareness among people.
- Networking between companies is important.
- Different events are a good way to boost tourism.
- Bringing up the essential information in authentic ways and starting with basics.
- Getting as much free advertising as possible is a good way to create awareness.
- The “Keskipiste-alue” concept is a bit too much like project language. A more appealing and visional concept should be created.

- The cooperation between companies is very important, to network with companies that can help each other.
- A good information booklet should be created for the whole area with all the essential information from introduction to where to eat, sleep and what to do. It should be colorful and the cover should be interesting to the potential customers.
- A tourism route should be made for the area. It should have the information booklet to support it. People should be persuaded to come to the center area and they should be shown that there is something here for them.
- Electronic media should be put up along the roads.
- The marketing at fairs should be a bit more aggressive. The center area and what there is here should be hammered to people to create awareness. Ready-made packages should be introduced to potential visitors.
- Packages should be created that could be sold to potential visitors to this area. For example ones aimed at retired people from southern Finland and the Oulu region.
- Networking is important. Persistence and cooperation between companies is essential and the trust between companies.
- Different events should be organized to create awareness as well as news stories about things happening in the area.
- A new tourism service should be offered to bus tours going through the area. For example, a guide familiar with the center area could hop on a bus in Pyhäsalmi and travel with the group all the way to Rantsila. The guide could tell about the history, different attractions and other information about the area. The information about the area should be introduced with keeping in mind the type of a group in question, so the guide should be very professional and know how to go with the flow to create maximum interest. This would create awareness and potential visitors within the groups.

## **9.6 Conclusions for the interviews**

From the interviews important information was learned. The aim in the interviews was to find out information from the members point of view. The questions concerned customers, marketing channels, information flow, the areas service supply as well as the members own thoughts and ideas. The number of interviews turned out to be ten. Two interviewees owned two different member companies, to they were considered as one. The interviews were conducted during May, August and September. The contact was initiated by contacting the members by e-mail. The ones that answered to the first or second enquiry by September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2010 were included in the study. The members who I managed to contact and interview were from Nivala, Käsämäki, Haapajärvi, Reisjärvi and Pyhäjärvi.

In the interviews the questions about information flows and marketing channels merged many times. This could have been formed as one theme on paper as well. During the interview a problem of the discussion going a bit off track happened many times. Things not relevant for the study were increasingly discussed, making the interviews longer but also more personal. The interviewing process was a learning experience for me as well because I had not interviewed people for any kind of a purpose, so the professionalism of these interviews was also in the mid-section.

When discussing the customers and their features, the answers everyone gave me were “people of all ages” visit the companies. The customers were always lead by an adult, so no kids come on their own. The emphasis is then on the adults, and customers travelling with family or as a couple or a group. People who come to visit come many times while passing through, going from south to north or from east to west. Many are on holiday and stop by intentionally. They can be in the area visiting someone, or come to the company only to use the services, like a hunting holiday. Most of the customers come from Finland, from the nearby area and municipalities surrounding the businesses. A 200km ring could be formed around to explain the most common customer. Many also come from southern Finland, especially Helsinki area. The nearby big cities, such as Oulu, also generate customers. Some customers do come from abroad as well, from the nearby

counties and, for example, from Germany. However, the emphasis for the customer base is on Finns.

Information flows mainly through the internet and newspapers. Word-of-mouth is also important, linked with good customer service to achieve positive word-of-mouth. On the internet the company's own websites are essential in attracting customers. Tourism sites, the municipality's site, Facebook and Google were also tools for getting customers and achieving attention. The local newspapers are seen as a great way to get in touch with the people in the area, in the form of advertisements or news stories. Free advertising is seen as a great tool. Road signs and advertisements on notice boards are also a good way to attract attention, according to the interviewees. Events and fairs are good for getting attention. People do not ask a lot about the area and what is offered. Companies do provide brochures and information booklets for tourists to take a look at, but interest seems to be minimal in the areas attractions. Companies actively tell people about what can be done here in their company's area, which is a good thing. The tourism in this area is seasonal, the high season being the summer. At that time people are on the move and are more interested in what can be done here. The main problems the area faces, according to the interviewees' chats with customers, are the dullness of roads, road 28 for instance, and the opening hours and the lack of nightlife. Also, the lack of information for tourists is an issue, mainly meaning the public sites. Other than that, customers seem to have been happy when travelling in this area.

The interviews were semi-structured. This means the conversation flowed quite freely around the questions asked. The point was to find out the entrepreneurs' opinions on several themes. They provided that, which means the research was dependable on each member interviewed. To get even more dependable results about the customers and their habits, each member would have had to do a specific study that would have been then analyzed. But as this thesis is done by only one person the resources were limited. And as the interviews were aimed at getting information from the members and for me to get acquainted with the businesses, they served their purpose. The interviews provided the needed information pretty well.

## **10. THE ASSOCIATION'S VIEW**

This chapter is about Keskipiste Travel Association Ra and what is important for it in marketing, linked with the theory of this thesis. The theory for themes discussed can be found under chapters 4, 5 and 8.

### **10.1 Tourism Marketing: Keskipiste Travel Association Ra**

Keskipiste Travel Association Ra is a new association. The marketing history is slowly building itself from scratch. The center area has no tourism image, which is one of the objectives for the association to build in the future. The association is starting its only operations, which is a great opportunity, but this also brings a lot of challenges with it.

The center area of Finland does not enjoy international attention at the moment, but is focusing on the Finnish tourists. The area is focused on cultural and rural tourism. The services and attractions in the area support those. As explained earlier in chapter 4, rural tourism is based on the natural resources of a destination, these being the people, the culture, the scenery and, of course, nature. Rural tourism is increasingly important in the future, when safety and reliability of destinations becomes even more important than it is at the moment. Cultural tourism takes place when people travel to a destination to fulfill their cultural needs. The center area has a lot of cultural events especially during the summer. The image of the area the association can build on is based on these two types of tourism.

Because the association is so new, it needs to consider tourism marketing factors for building a customer friendly destination out of the whole area. Tourism marketing and the subjects relevant were discussed in chapter 5. When the association tries to motivate tourists to come to the center area, it is important to keep in mind the ethics in marketing. At the early stage of destination marketing this is vital. If it is started by giving people false information and disappointing visitors once they come, the destination will soon stop developing. People make a tourism destination and this is an important thing to keep in mind. The seven P's of the mar-

keting mix are a good tool for tourism marketing. Here it is important to consider: product, price, place, promotion, people, process and physical evidence. These concepts were explained earlier in chapter 5. In addition to those, a destination marketer needs to remember that services are not like a product. Marketing of tourism needs to keep this in mind. Services are intangible, so they cannot be tried beforehand and each time can be different depending on a lot on the outside factors. Heterogeneity reminds us that mass production is not possible and with each person the service elements are different. Perishability is also important to remember, because services cannot be stored. If a summer is very low in tourism, income has been lost. Time cannot be reused and services stored for later. It is important to keep going 100% all the time to try to prevent losses. For the center area this is increasingly important. The area is not on the “top-tourism destinations in Finland”, which means competition for tourists is hard. If the tourists pass by one summer in increasing numbers, money is lost and entrepreneurs might feel defeated. Persistency is therefore a “must”.

For a young association to succeed in marketing, it needs to take a look at a few things. The target segment is important to know: to who are you marketing and what motivates them. Creating a golden guideline for wanted customers and not forgetting the old customers is important. Knowing your business and what you are trying to accomplish with marketing is important. It will help you decide the scale of your marketing. For Keskipiste Travel Association Ra, the most important thing is to gain visibility in the tourism market before anything else. With visibility comes customers and with customers come stability. Positioning yourself is also very important not only in the beginning but during the rest of the time as well. The association needs to continuously assess its place in the market and what the customers want. Moods change continuously, so being able to adapt is important.

Since the center area is a fairly new destination within the concept “Keskipiste-area”, destination marketing issues need to be considered. Hudson’s classifications for the nine different types of destinations can be found in chapter 5. The center area falls into the categories short-break, stop-over and day-trip destina-

tions. Destination marketing is important for developing and later maintaining a place's popularity. Emphasis needs to be put into developing, but also into retaining and preserving the things the area has to offer. The resources a destination has are what makes it authentic, and these things can make a difference to someone making choices between travel destinations. Destination marketing is closely connected to destination branding. With marketing comes branding and building a certain image to sell to potential visitors. The center area has no set brand or image yet, such as Rovaniemi with Santa and Kalajoki with family fun by the beach, for example. Image is something that makes a place easier to remember. For example, everyone knows Old McDonald and the song "Old McDonald had a farm (Piippolan Vaarilla oli talo)". This is a possible theme to build the image around. It is something familiar to the general public, internationally and nationally. It can trigger memories in people and that is what brings motivation.

To brand a destination, there are some steps that need to be taken. First the core values of the destination need to be set and the brand must be created. Taking the emotions of tourists into consideration is a good tool: to think who would be interested in this type of destination. The question "What is special about the area that can be used to attract people" needs to be asked. For example, who would come to the center area if it was branded with Old McDonald and the countryside fun? The second step would be to develop the brand identity. Using the brand benefit pyramid mentioned by Hudson and explained in chapter 5 is a good way to put the questions into categories. The tourist's relationship with the brand is summed up in this and is created when tourists are asked to explain what a destination means to them. After these steps have been taken and the brand is all set, it is time to launch it. It can be done by a simple announcement or a big campaign, whatever works for the company in question. If Keskipiste Travel Association Ra created a brand for its area, the way to go would be a bigger campaign to gain the most visibility possible. Getting visibility and the foot in the door at fairs is a simple tool and useful as introducing the brand at different fairs would serve other purposes as well. The fourth step is implementation, such as creating the brand into messages deliverable to the public. Many times creating a logo is the way to proceed. Consistency needs to be created and brand values need to be present

whenever media attention is available. Consistency creates remembrance. Outsmarting rather than outspending is a good way to proceed.

Keskipiste Travel Association Ra is partly at this stage: a logo has been made for association. The association needs to assess whether the steps prior to making the logo have also been taken carefully, because a logo is a large part of the brand, which has not yet been created. To build a solid logo to suit the brand needs careful planning.

The last stage is evaluation, which should be carried on continuously. Monitoring and being willing to change with the markets is important here. Evolution and development of the brand is the secret to longer life. Focusing on strengths to increase the appeal and widening the markets is important. Vulnerability is common in the tourism market, so carefully analyzing the visitors as well as the businesses and people in the local area is important. When the association has developed the brand and the logo supports and answers the question “Why THIS destination is a place you should come to” following the tourists’ motions are to be looked after.

After the destination has created a set of boundaries, marketing channels are the next thing on the list. Before media selection, the saying “Think Big” is important. Marketing just for the joy of marketing is useless and does not benefit anyone in the long run. General marketing might bring a little action into the area, but if the marketing is not well planned, it won’t bring lasting results. Since the association has just started out, targeting is important. The area does not have the essential elements for mass tourism, which means marketing needs to be chopped to create motivation in some specific segment whose needs the existing service supply can meet. The AIDA model, explained in Hudson’s book and in chapter 8 of this thesis, is a good checklist for marketers. Getting attention, stirring interest, awaking desire and creating action should be the aim in any marketing strategy.

Marketing channels are gateways between people and the service. Keskipiste Travel Association Ra is a gateway between the members and the potential tourists. Members lose some of the power in their marketing, but are gained with expertise

and new ideas on how to attract potential customers. A new channel for people to find the company is also created, increasing the chance for visibility.

Marketing communications are the way for channels to get in contact with tourists. Different marketing communication channels can be divided into three categories: media advertising, direct marketing and sales promotion. Media advertising includes all advertising in mass media. Direct marketing is about contacting the people by tools such as the telephone, brochures and e-mail. Sales promotion is the most personal way to get in contact with customers. It includes things such as fairs, store advertising and personal gifts to people of importance or companies. As with all young companies, the emphasis in the beginning is on getting attention and finding the people who are interested in the product, service or area.

Before selecting which channel of communication to use, the association needs to take a look at the bigger picture. Here the nature of the destination and the services within it are an important factor. Since the tourism is on a relatively small scale in the center area, many tourism segments can be deleted from the plan of who to attract. For instance mass tourism cannot be supported here in the center area and neither are there services for the tourists wanting a super shopping holiday. With chopping up the destination into things that can and cannot be done here, potential customer segments will arise. Objectives of the association also need to be considered. Keskipiste Travel Association Ra wants to boost the tourism in the center area. The objective of the association is to support its members, develop the tourism in the center area as well as organize the general tourism marketing, creating visibility and more tourism flow into the area. So the objectives revolve around developing the tourism industry. The marketing for this area therefore needs to be created with that development in mind. The marketplace characteristics need to be considered, as in what kind of a destination is the place in question. This links closely to the development stage of the destination, which is also something to think about. The center area is not very developed tourism wise. There are tourism services, but the destination is at the beginning of the development stages. The characteristics of the area are rural and the services offered are limited. The evolution stage of the market is to be considered. For the center area, the market is

mainly in the nearby municipalities. The market to be considered is around this area, but nationally as well. Travelling within Finland instead of travelling abroad has been increasing within the current economical crisis, which means more people are potential customers. To get the people from the nearby area to notice the potential tourism possibilities around them needs prominent marketing. For example, how many people interested in hiking choose the hiking trail “Peuranpolku” starting in Reisjärvi for a weekend of hiking? The last thing on the list before selecting communication channels is to choose the communication strategy or media mix which will be used. There are three types of communication strategies: extensive distribution, intensive distribution and exclusive distribution. In extensive distribution, all channels in the area are used. This might be a good way for someone trying to get the most coverage, but can become expensive. In intensive distribution only those channels that are cost-effective are used. In exclusive distribution only one channel is used. This can work for a company that has established a steady customer flow and does not need to increase visibility. For Keskipiste Travel Association Ra, getting the most visibility is the important thing. Using something between the intensive and extensive distribution strategy would be the best possible choice. Since the company is new, the budget is not excessively high for marketing activities, and set channels have not yet been created and proven cost-effective. The cost-effectiveness of different media will be proved with experience and time.

The association can also choose to use different methods in its marketing. These are promotional marketing, persuasive marketing and reminding marketing. The first method, promotional marketing, is used to create awareness among tourists. This is the task the association is working on at the moment, creating visibility. It is also the most important method for new companies. Getting noticed is what will start bringing the people to the destination and back as well. Persuasive marketing is trying to get the first-time visitor to come back. Reminding marketing is trying to reinforce the area so that tourists choose to come back time after time and spread positive information to others.

When it comes to choosing the marketing channel, it is time to take even a closer look at the target groups. The question the association needs to itself is “Where do our customers search for information?”. Today people use several different media, so choosing accordingly is important. To get the best idea about this, a broad research about the people who come to this area should be conducted. From the member interviews some of information about the customers was accumulated. According to them, many are from the surrounding areas and get their information from the internet and from the local newspapers. To find out which newspaper works the best and is the most popular among the target group, another study could be conducted. Waiting and seeing what happens is also another way to go, but it takes more time and the results can be unclear. To get the most visibility, papers covering the biggest areas could be used for marketing. The costs are the next thing to examine: how much is the budget for marketing? Since marketing is an essential part of the association’s tasks, much of the budget can go to marketing and the things connected.

When everything else has been considered, it is time to choose the marketing channel. There are many available: newspapers, local newspaperapers, magazines, fairs, events, television, radio, posters etc. The association wants to create visibility for the destination and the services available. With the fact in mind that the tourism in the center area is not large scale and developed enough to support large numbers of people at once, I will leave television, videos and cinema out from the marketing channel comparison in the next chapter. Those channels I believe to be better suited to larger destinations with a built image and developed service structure. Keskipiste area needs to focus on smaller numbers of people to create a regular tourism flow and the service structure needs to be developed before masses can be attempted to influence to come to the area.

## 11. MARKETING CHANNEL COMPARISON

In this chapter I will compare different marketing channels. To do this, I will take a look at the disadvantages and advantages of each and consider the rate of occurrence, targeting possibilities, focus of targets, costs, campaign complexity and media constraints. I will also take a look at how they fit together with the assumed customer segment of the center area. From the interviews with members the customer segments most common in this area are adults on holiday or business, elders and families. From the point of view of the association, the channels that create the most visibility are the ones most beneficial. From this comparison I will leave out cinema, videos and television, because they are better suited for destinations further in the development stages. Theory about the channels explained in chapter 8 is used as a base.

### 11.1 Advantages

**The Internet:** The Internet has global impact. It is cheap to use for marketing, if free sites and ads are used. The message is immediately delivered for people to see. There are many different options and ways to design and distribute your message, such as regular ads or blinking ads, small or large, with voice or without. Adding motion is also possible. There is a possibility for direct response and audience profiling. (Hudson 2008, p.273) The Internet is available to the customer any time of the day, seven days a week. It can be used reach almost any customer segment. In Finland 80% of the population is connected to the Internet. Marketing on the Internet can have continuous results, but many times the results cannot be noticed immediately.

**Newspapers:** According to VPT's study (National local newspaper research), 73% of people read their newspapers. Large newspapers, such as Kaleva, have a large circulation, so a lot of people are reached. There are many creative options for layout and newspapers appeal to all income levels. Newspapers are relatively cheap to use for advertising and allow for frequent repetition. By advertising on

newspapers it is possible to target people geographically. According to VPT's study, 89% of people read their local newspaper. Local papers play a part in creating the local image, and people are usually interested in what is happening in their area and what is advertised. With local papers there is high market coverage and you can target the people in the immediate area of the services on offer.

**Magazines:** Magazines have a large circulation. With special interest magazines, it is easy to reach a certain segment, in this case the people interested in tourism. Magazines are well read through and advertisements are related to the industry, so people are more likely to take notice. Quality and visuals in magazine advertisements are higher than in newspapers, so marketers have more choices on designs. Magazines are read in a leisurely manner, which means skipping ads and stories is not so common. The information of content is high as well as magazines allow for sales promotions to be inserted.

**Fairs:** Different fairs target a large audience and it is possible to reach numbers of customers at the same time. Fairs are good for getting new and maintaining old customers. Fairs are also handy places to develop and create business relationships. At fairs, potential customers are provided information on why this particular destination is worth visiting. Chatting with the exhibitors is an effective way to find out things not mentioned on brochures or on websites about services. Personal advertising is more efficient than just sticking a brochure in someone's hand. Attending various fairs is also part of public relations for a company.

**Events:** At events it is possible to reach new attractive segments or a mass market. Credibility can be built and benefits gained from successful marketing. At events it is possible to surprise people with unusual activities.

**Unusual media:** The advantage of unusual media is that it is surprising and therefore catches attention easily. Imagination has no limits with unusual media, and creativity should be used. This type of marketing is not limited to a certain time, and the marketer can independently choose where, when and how to do it.

**Notice boards:** Notice boards have high impact if placed correctly. The costs are low and the advertisements have a long life on notice boards, especially if they are covered with plastic. On this type of media, the aim is to create awareness among all else.

**Road signs/boards:** As with notice boards, high impact is reached if placed correctly. The signs on the road are visible 24/7, even in the dark if lights are situated near or above the sign or if the advertisement has reflective attributes. They are seen by large numbers of people relatively easily.

**Radio:** With radio advertising, the audience can be large as well as local recognition can be gained. Deadlines with radio are quite flexible. If the channel and advertising times are chosen correctly, segmenting a certain audience is possible. With radio, repeating messages is possible.

## 11.2 Disadvantages

**The Internet:** Advertisements on the internet can get a low amount of attention and skip the target market, if placed incorrectly. Because people are usually looking for information on the internet, ads are often ignored. If the marketer cannot design web pages and other material themselves, costs can be high. In many cases, results from internet marketing cannot be seen immediately.

**Newspapers:** With newspapers, the readers can go through the paper selectively, therefore missing and skipping stories and advertisements not interesting to them. Newspapers have lots of information in them, so advertising can get lost in the clutter.

**Magazines:** Using magazines in advertising is relatively expensive. Material also needs to be delivered to the magazine very early, in some cases one to six months before publishing. An ad in a magazine can also get lost in the clutter of all the information.

**Fairs:** Costs of participating in a fair is high. Setting up, staffing, material and transportation to a fair can cost quite a lot of money. Fairs are only organized a few times a year and the many exhibitors present at the fair can steal the attention from your stand.

**Events:** Marketing at an event can be costly and time consuming. The evaluation of the impact your marketing has at people at the event can be hard.

**Unusual media:** It can be expensive and time consuming to create and execute the marketing with unusual media. The marketing needs to be creative and surprising. If the marketer does not have imagination, unusual media cannot be used.

**Notice boards:** With this channel, exposure is brief and messages are limited. Complex advertisements with lots of information cannot be situated on notice boards. Creativity is needed to gain attention, as well as large-scale distribution is needed.

**Road signs/boards:** As with notice boards, the exposure is brief. If situated in a bad spot, they can go unnoticed. The information needs to be right to the point and the advertising needs to be cleverly designed.

**Radio:** Marketing on the radio can be expensive. Because only audio messages can be delivered, creativity in creating the message needs to be used excessively. People listening to the radio are often doing other things at the same time, so thought needs to be put into how to get people to notice and listen to the advertisement. Radio advertisements are over in a matter of seconds.

### **11.3 Rate of occurrence**

*The rate of occurrence means how often marketing can be carried out on each media.*

**The Internet:** Marketing on the internet is frequent and is visible 24/7 to potential customers. Once the advertisement is set, it is there for everyone to see regardless of time and place.

**Newspapers:** Newspapers have high frequency, depending on how often advertisements are run in the paper. Newspapers come out one to seven times a week so the rate of occurrence depends on what kind of deal is made with the newspaper and which paper is chosen. Advertisements can be put into the newspaper on a fairly short notice, commonly a few days before the newspaper comes out.

**Magazines:** Magazines come out one to four times a month. Travel magazines usually come out once a month, so the frequency is not that high. Advertisements need to be delivered to magazine anywhere from 1-6 months before it is published.

**Fairs:** Fairs are arranged every once in a while. Frequency can be from one to many times a year, depending on how many fairs a company takes part in and how many are suitable to them. The exhibiting at the fairs can last anywhere from a day to a few days, depending on the type of the fair.

**Events:** Many different kinds of events are available. Rate of occurrence depends on what is happening. Summers are usually busier times for events, which means the possibilities to market at events during the summer is higher. Frequency is not that high, from one to more times a year. In this area a lot of cultural events are organized that could be used to market the tourism, mainly during the summer.

**Unusual media:** Frequency is low, depending entirely on the company and what they are willing to do. Marketing with unusual media happens usually on one or a few occasions, such as passing out logo balloons at the grocery store, or getting actors to promote a product or destination out among the general public.

**Notice boards:** Rate of occurrence is high. The ad can be seen on the notice board all the time and depending on how often ads are placed on notice boards and kept there, the occurrence is higher. Advertisements can be kept on notice boards for a long time and usually free of charge.

**Road signs/boards:** Once put up the rate of occurrence is high. The notice board is there 24/7 for everyone passing to see. Road signs and boards can be used whole year round. If the sign is lighted, people are even more likely to see it, increasing frequency.

**Radio:** Frequency is medium, depending on how many times an hour the ads are run. But since reach builds slowly on radio, results are hard to see. Commonly the more you advertise on the radio, the higher the annoyance factor towards your company is.

#### 11.4 Targeting possibilities

*Targeting possibilities mean how good the specific media is for targeting a certain customer group.*

**The Internet:** Targeting can be difficult. Ads on special interest pages can reach the wanted segment, but other than that it is difficult to choose who looks at your advertisement or reads your story.

**Newspapers:** They can be targeted by regions, by the population and by the type of newspaper. Targeting possibilities are good when aiming at a general segment and large numbers of people can be reached at once.

**Magazines:** Targeting can be done easily. With special interest magazines, the wanted message is delivered to only those interested in the subject.

**Fairs:** Targeting possibilities good and a large number of people can be reached at the same time. People come to fairs because they want to find out new information, so interest is higher and the right target segment is reached, if the fair is aimed at people interested in tourism, in the case of the association.

**Events:** Targeting possibilities are good if the people in the events are interested in tourism or the products advertised. At events large number of people can be

reached easily, but since events are attended by several segments, aiming the advertising at just one segment is hard.

**Unusual media:** Targeting possibilities vary. The unusual media can be presented wherever the marketer thinks is the best place. Targeting a specific segment with unusual media can be a great idea and be aimed especially well, but it requires a lot of planning.

**Notice boards:** Targeting is difficult. Notice boards are placed at public areas. For tourism purposes, a good place can be a gas station, motel or a place where tourists stop, like the information point in a town. It is hard to follow who looks at the advertisement on a notice board.

**Road signs/boards:** Targeting is difficult. Large amounts of people see the road signs. To target more intensively, the content on the sign needs to be specifically attractive to a certain segment. Still, it is hard to know if the segment is reached.

**Radio:** Targeting possibilities are pretty good. By choosing a specific channel and run times, targeting a certain audience is possible. Following up on who all is listening is another thing.

## 11.5 Focus of targets

*The focus of targets is about how focused people are when coming across a certain media.*

**The Internet:** Focus is low. People on the internet are looking for information and do not pay much attention to advertisements unless they have something in them they have been searching for or hold a personal importance.

**Newspapers:** People who are reading a newspaper are usually focused. So focus is high, but many times readers read selectively, which decreases the attention. People read according to their personal interests, focusing on things that matter to them.

**Magazines:** If advertising in a special interest magazine, focus is high. People who buy special interest magazines are interested in the advertisements, because they are related to the field of the magazine and can give ideas and information.

**Fairs:** Focus is average. People who are interested and whose attention is caught are focused. At fairs people can skip the exhibitors that do not interest them or do not catch their attention.

**Events:** Focus is low. People usually come for the event itself. If the advertising is attention-grabbing, then focus can be high, but it depends much on the design.

**Unusual media:** Unusual media commonly surprises people, so at the point of interaction focus is high.

**Notice boards:** Focus is low. People usually just scan through notice board advertisements, unless they are looking for something specific and in that case, that is the only thing that they pay attention to.

**Road signs/boards:** Focus can vary. It depends much on where the sign is situated and the mood of the target passing by, on how focused they are on the advertisement on it. For example, if a very attention grabbing sign is in the middle of a very boring part of the road, attention is more likely to be paid to it.

**Radio:** Focus of people listening to the radio is low. They are many times doing other things at the same time, so for an advertisement on the radio to be noticed, it needs to be catchy or even annoying, or hold a certain importance to the people.

## 11.6 Costs

*Costs are about how cheap or expensive a channel is to use for marketing.*

**The Internet:** Costs for marketing on the internet are from low to none. If using a company to design your internet advertising, costs depend on what they charge.

But in the best scenario, the company marketing can design the advertisement themselves and put it online, making no extra costs.

**Newspapers:** Costs for newspaper advertising is low to medium, depending on the type, size, positioning and number of runs for the advertisement. Costs will usually go down the more times you are willing to advertise.

**Magazines:** Costs for advertising on magazines are from medium to high, more likely high. A magazine can only run so many ads, making space expensive. Magazines are also targeted at specific segments, making them more popular places to advertise a special service or a product. Printing on magazines is also more expensive than printing on newspapers. Costs will usually be less expensive if you are willing to advertise more than just once and buy the space in a bulk.

**Fairs:** Fairs are expensive. Set-up, staffing, material and transportation costs to the fair can be quite big. The more popular the fair, the more expensive it is.

**Events:** Costs are from medium to high, depending on the part played at the event. If organizing, costs extremely high. If just sponsoring or working in the background passing out flyers etc., costs are high to medium.

**Unusual media:** Costs are medium to high. If you put a flier on a plane and drag it on the sky, that can be very expensive. If you paint the logo on snow during the winter, the costs can be medium. If you print out ten thousand balloons to pass out to the public, it can be expensive. Using this type of media requires a lot of planning, which means the planning stage can also cost a lot of money as well as time.

**Notice boards:** Costs are low. Notice boards are usually free to use, so the main costs come from producing the material and the labor for doing that.

**Road signs/boards:** Costs are low. Once the advertisement is on the sign, costs stay to the minimum. The costs for advertising on notice boards come from designing and the material, and later costs for renting the space can occur.

**Radio:** Production and air time can be expensive, depending on the channel, airing time and length of the advertisement.

## 11.7 Campaign complexity

*Campaign complexity is about how difficult the marketing on a specific channel is to organize.*

**The Internet:** Campaigns on the Internet are fairly easy to create if the person knows what they are doing. Knowledge on the internet and web design is needed to some extent, even though many questions are answered on the internet on how to design web-pages and web advertisements. Complexity is from low to medium.

**Newspapers:** Newspapers many times offer packages for advertisement to be put on many papers. Campaigns reach a large amount of people with fairly little effort on your part. Ads can be created yourself or the advertising team in the paper can help you. Complexity therefore is medium to low.

**Magazines:** Complexity medium. Magazines allow more complex advertisements than newspapers. Ads can be designed yourself, but many times professionals are advised. Because of the high costs of placing an ad in a magazine, it would be a shame if it didn't catch potential customers' eyes.

**Fairs:** Complexity is high. Fairs require a lot of planning beforehand and at the scene also, on the visual side especially. Placement and visuals need to be carefully thought out to create maximum interest. The fair itself needs to be picked out with thought, so that the wanted customer groups are the people coming to the fair.

**Events:** Complexity is high. Events need careful planning, and to gain attention at an event needs some special actions.

**Unusual media:** Complexity is high. For unusual media to be effective a lot of creativity is needed. The product or way to market with unusual media and the execution of for example the showing of an aerial banner needs to be well planned.

**Notice boards:** Marketing on notice boards is easy. The design stage requires effort, and after a suitable place with a notice board has been found, not much else is required.

**Road signs/boards:** Campaigning with road signs is easy. The design stage needs careful planning, but once the advertisement is on the road, it takes care of itself.

**Radio:** Arranging radio advertising takes effort. Channels and times need to be assessed to find out which are the best for reaching a specific customer segment. Multiple channels and times can be needed. Designing the advertisement requires a lot of effort, because audio advertisements do not have the visual side to attract people. The message needs to be attention-grabbing and interesting to be heard.

## 11.8 Media constraints

*What are the limits of each marketing channel?*

**The Internet:** The messages are limited to the internet. People not using it cannot come across the messages. Placing advertising on the internet requires knowledge and planning. There are many different places ads can be put on the internet, so choices are several. Audio and visual ads can be placed on the internet, in many form, size and color, giving marketers many options.

**Newspapers:** On newspapers, only visual advertisements are possible. Many times they have to be simple to fit the image of the paper, making them somewhat boring. Creativity needs to be emphasized for newspaper advertisements to be noticed.

**Magazines:** Magazines allow more complex advertising. Designs can be colorful, many sizes and shapes, according to the rules of the publisher.

**Fairs:** At fairs the advertising happens continuously and only for one to few days in a row. The people need to be trained and willing to aggressively pursue the marketing at the stand. As well as passing out brochures, the exhibitors need to

promote their stands and lure people to stop and listen. Creativity is possible in stand design and marketing efforts. Anything is possible from mascots, video footage, sound, entertainers to plain brochures and sales activities.

**Events:** At events the marketer has a possibility for attention-grabbing marketing. As in fairs, video, sound, entertainers, aerial banners in outside events can be options. At events people many times are focused on the event itself, so creativity is important to catch attention.

**Unusual media:** This is usually connected to a specific place or a time. The planning needs to be carefully conducted for maximum marketing benefits. If passing out balloons with a logo on it, it needs to be assessed where this is beneficial and who is the target group. If sending out business gifts, like a miniature of the center of Finland statue located in Leskelä, it needs to be considered who the best targets are for it. If passing out ads made out to look like fake parking tickets, you need to think where the best place to do that is. Unusual media should be very imaginative and therefore interesting.

**Notice boards:** Advertisements on notice boards are usually surrounded by many others and different types of advertisements and notifications. It is easy to miss an ad on the notice board. Advertisements usually have a certain size they can be, and extremely large advertisements on public notice boards are not that common. The message cannot be complex but easily read and understood. Notice board advertisements are only seen by people making a stop by the notice board.

**Road signs/boards:** Signs are placed in a certain spot, so only those passing by have the potential to notice them. Coverage cannot be large. Road signs have the possibility to be made electronic or plain. With electronic road signs, attention is more easily reached. The advertisement cannot include much text. People are usually going by in a matter of seconds, so the message needs to be clear and easily understood.

**Radio:** Only audio messages can be delivered to the public. This means creativity is the key to advertising on the radio. Messages have a short life span, which means they pass quickly and can be easily forgotten.

### **11.9 How well can the media be aimed at area's customer segment?**

*According to interviews and the supply of services in the center area, the customers are mainly people from the same or nearby municipalities and cities, as well as people passing through, on their way to northern or southern Finland. The tourists are mainly Finnish adults traveling for leisure or work, elders and families.*

**The Internet:** If the advertising is situated in the right manner, internet is aimed at the customer segment well. It can reach large amounts of people with limited efforts. A company's own website is found by people searching for something specific, so it is always a good marketing channel. Advertisement on specific interest websites can attract the needed segment. Advertising on general websites cannot be targeted to specific customer groups easily. The internet as an information source is very important today, especially for people travelling. Being available in search engines is a sure way to create more customer flow. Also for example, creating a web page on Facebook for the center area, where different sweepstakes and information about events in the area are introduced, is a way to create awareness and spread information.

**Newspapers:** Newspapers can be aimed at the customer segment in a broader perspective. Regular newspapers reach a general audience, but geographically targeting is potential. Targeting the local customer segment is easy with local newspapers. There are many different newspapers published locally, so marketers also have a choice on which one to use.

**Magazines:** Using magazines, a broader target group interested in tourism can be reached. Marketing in tourism magazines targets people potentially coming to the

center area. Using magazines that concentrate more on tourism within Finland are best for targeting people coming to or passing by this area.

**Fairs:** At fairs, many different customer segments are reached. Fairs increase awareness among the people. Attracting a specific segment can be done by designing visuals that appeal to a certain segment. At fairs, general customers interested in tourism are reached.

**Events:** Marketing at local events is aimed at local people. Therefore the customer segments most common to this area are reached. Specifically targeting only a part of the customer segment is not that easy at events.

**Unusual media:** Reaching the wanted segment can be easy if a good idea comes up for what the unusual media can be. If used just generally, targeting can be hard but awareness among many different groups can be reached.

**Notice boards:** Targeting the people moving in the area can be quite easily reached with notice boards, if the advertising is noticeable enough. Notice boards are usually situated in or outside stores and gas stations, in tourism information points and around the towns in certain spots. A specific part of a segment cannot be reached just with notice board advertising, because it is hard to make sure just those people notice the advertisement.

**Road signs/boards:** This media can be easily aimed at people passing through this area. Road signs are seen by everyone, so targeting them at one specific segment is hard.

**Radio:** Targeting a specific segment can be hard. A lot of research is needed about times and channels. Radio targets a bigger audience, so awareness can be spread in a larger area.

### 11.10 Choosing the “best” channel

Nowadays people follow many media's to find the information they need. This is why not just one marketing channel is the right one to use. To get the wanted attention and customer flow, a media mix of different channels needs to be created. A media mix is a combination of traditional, non-traditional and marketing communication tools. Traditional media means newspapers and broadcasts, non-traditional electronic and unusual media and marketing communication tools are things such as sales promotions, direct marketing and public relations activities, such as attending trade fairs. (Hudson 2008, 270) The channels that companies use to market themselves in are many times chosen by the costs of the media. To reach the largest amounts of people with the lowest amount of money is cost-efficient. Measuring cost efficiency or cost per thousand (CPM) is easy. You need two figures, the costs of the unit and the estimated target audience. The cost is divided by the audience gross impression and that is multiplied by a thousand. (Hudson 2008, 273)

$$\text{CPM} = \frac{\text{Cost of message unit}}{\text{Gross impressions}} \times 1000$$

For example, if a television show has 50 500 viewers and the cost for the 30 second advertisement is 750 €, the CPM will be 14,85€ (CPM= 750€/50500 X 1000).

Tourism advertisers use all types of media, but the key channels are printed ads, electronic media and brochures. The most popular is the brochure. Making, producing and distributing the tourism brochure is many times the most expensive item in the company's marketing budget. (Hudson 2008, 273)

From the analysis in this chapter, I think the best channel is the internet. It is the cheapest and easiest way to reach a large amount of people of all ages with limited efforts, 24/7 and any time of the year. It is not limited by region or country, or by financial status. Internet can be used free of charge in certain places, so anyone can have access to it. With internet marketing, knowledge on the part of the marketer is needed, but once internet marketing is set up, it is there for everyone to see and over time, the effectiveness can even increase. In the next chapter, some suggestions for marketing channels on the internet are introduced.

Nowadays, using only one channel for marketing is not smart or beneficial, so not just one can be claimed to be the best. To get the best possible results in the case of the association, a media mix with the internet, local newspapers and fairs are the way to proceed when creating awareness. The internet is the cheapest, local newspapers come second and fairs are the most expensive of these three, but all are important and good ways to increase tourism and spread awareness.

Starting locally is the best way to start spreading information. With local people the information will be delivered away from the immediate area, by word-of-mouth. The Keskipiste Travel Association Ra association is a new association, making spreading awareness the most important task at the moment. By creating awareness, new customers are brought to the area. Local newspapers are fairly cheap to advertise in, and they reach the customers that majorly are using the area's services. There are several choices of newspapers in the area, with different circulation areas and numbers, and different prices for advertising. It is up to the marketer then to decide which one could be the most suitable media, depending on the budget available. Different local newspapers that can be used for marketing and their circulations are introduced in the next chapter, as well as the frequency of their appearance.

Fairs are places for creating awareness and building relationships. With companies in their early development stage, attending fairs is taking care of public relations. Fairs reach a large audience at the one time, and are a good tool for saying "Hey, did you know...?" to potential customers. The people attending fairs come to search for information and therefore are open to marketing happening around

them. The exhibitors at fairs need to be creative and aggressive, without being suffocating and annoying. This is why professionalism and maybe a little knowledge of psychology are never bad for an exhibitor. It is important to know what motivates people, especially the ones you want to target, and how to create desire in that segment.

### **11.11 Conclusions for the channel comparison**

For Keskipiste Travel Association Ra and the aim to create awareness and boost the tourism in the center area, so not just one channel for marketing can be used. When taking into consideration the interviews and opinions of entrepreneurs, internet and local newspapers are the most effective channels to reach customers. Fairs are also important for creating partnerships, creating awareness and building customer relationships.

All channels have their sides to them and some are better than others for different companies to use in marketing. The internet is great because it covers the world and can be used any time of the year, any time. It reaches large amounts of people from all segments quite easily. If someone in the company has knowledge of web design, using internet for marketing is very easy. You might not know who looks at your advertising, but placing ads on tourism related pages makes it more likely for people to notice it. Internet is an increasingly important media today, but one must remember that it does not work like all other media. It is more about interacting with the customers. This is a good thing, since allowing people to comment for example on your web pages gives you important information about who your customers are.

Newspapers provide information for people. People read selectively, so not everyone cares about the advertisements. People skip the things that do not interest them. But marketing on newspapers, especially local ones, is a good way to increase awareness. It is fairly cheap and people who are interested in the subject will take notice of the advertisements. Segmenting people geographically is poss-

ible, and since a large number of the customers for the members of Keskipiste Travel Association Ra are local people or people from nearby areas, marketing on local newspapers is a good way to proceed. Newspapers have a good frequency, so advertising can happen repeatedly.

Magazines are great for reaching a certain segment, in this case people interested in tourism, especially within Finland. They are however quite expensive to use and designing ads or writing stories for magazines needs a lot of thought. Magazines are published commonly once a month, but advertising and stories many times need to be delivered very early, from one to six months before. This does not allow for quick actions. People who read tourism magazines usually pay attention to all of it, not only because they have paid for it but the field interests them, thus making the advertisements more interesting.

Fairs are a great channel, not only for marketing but building relationships with customers and partners. Attending fairs not only increases awareness among customers about a product, service or a destination, but can also build a company's team spirit. Fairs are expensive to organize and the job does not stop at the fair. It is a continuous process that needs lots of planning beforehand as well as action at the spot. The exhibitors need to know what they are talking about and they have to be aggressive without annoying customers. Creating attention at fairs and making people want to come and see what your stand has to offer is very important. Fairs are organized many times a year, but there are lots of different kinds, so careful thought needs to be put into which one is the one with a large number of our wanted customer segments.

Events are good for attracting a mass of people or a certain segment. Attracting just the tourism segment is hard at events. Events are organized all year round, but mainly during the summer. If a company organizes an event, it can get very expensive and require a lot of time as well as money. Just marketing at events is not cheap either. People coming to events are usually interested in the event, so effort needs to be put into marketing if the company wants people to take notice of it. At events the marketer has a possibility to use surprising tactics to attract attention. Events commonly gather together people from the immediate area, so marketing

to locals at events is a good way to make them realize there is something interesting in their area as well.

Unusual media is an increasing trend in marketing. Surprising marketing tactics are interesting to the customers and they stick to their minds. Using this type of media to market can be expensive, and not very frequent. Targeting with unusual media can be either easy or hard, depending on the ideas of the marketer. Using unusual media also requires a lot of thought and planning from the marketer.

Notice boards are cheap and easy marketing channels. The advertisements on them need to be designed carefully to catch peoples' attention. Complexity needs to be kept to the minimum, so the message is easily understood. Notice boards are usually located in public places, so they are free to use. To get the most people to notice the advertisement, it needs to be distributed in a large area. But since notice boards are aimed at the general public, it is hard to target a certain customer group with notice board advertising. Everyone who passes either sees or misses the advertisement.

Road signs are good for advertising to people passing through. They cannot, on the other hand, be specifically aimed at a certain segment. All who pass are vulnerable to noticing the ads. Advertising with road signs is easy. Design stage requires thought and the placement of the sign is also something to consider carefully. Once the advertisement is on the sign and the sign in place, costs are none to medium, depending on the maintenance and if the land is owned or rented. Messages on road signs need to be simple. They can either inform of a place or give information about something. Since people pass through road signs fairly fast, the message needs to be short and easily remembered. Attention-grabbing lights or other simple attractive features are important.

Radio is a channel for creating attention. It is fairly expensive but can reach a large audience. Segmenting the customers can be possible, but requires a lot of research on which channel, time and how often to advertise. People are many times multitasking while listening to the radio, so the advertisement would need to

be very attention-grabbing or annoying for people to take notice. It is hard to follow up on how effective radio advertising has been.

When choosing the one to use for marketing, the company's marketing budget plays a big part. Many times the cost-effectiveness of each channel is good to consider. A media mix of the most beneficial channels is the way to proceed. With more attention and awareness, attracting customers becomes easier. Marketing is a continuous process in a company. It is not only advertising, but things before and continuous evaluation after, before the next actions in marketing.

## 12. EXAMPLES OF MARKETING CHANNELS

In this chapter I will introduce some possible channels Keskipiste Travel Association Ra could use to market the association, the members and the area.

### 12.1 The Internet

**Facebook** is a social networking website with more than 500 million active users. An average person has about 130 Facebook friends, many have more. Out of these 500 million people belonging to Facebook, about 50% log on to their pages each day. People follow their friends' activities, chat, add pictures, join interesting groups and post their own opinions. (Wikipedia: Facebook)

According to statistics Finland, around 1,8 million Finnish people belong to Facebook at the moment, which is 34% of our population. There are a bit more women than men on Facebook, and the largest age group is 25-34 year olds. During the last year, however, the age group 45 and over has been growing rapidly.

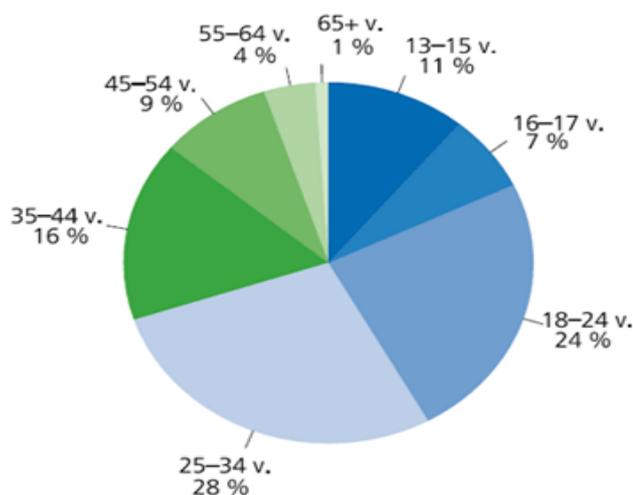


Diagram 3: The ages of Facebook users in Finland in 2010 (stat.fi)

Facebook is free to join and anyone can do it, companies, groups or individuals. Advertising is increasingly visible on the social media's pages. Possibilities stretch far if friends actively share a company's link along to other friends. This is pushed along by different promotions on the pages, a competition or so forth.

**Google** is the most important search engine in Finland and a good place to advertise. Here you can focus on search-engine visibility or search-engine advertising. In increasing visibility, your web pages need to be carefully designed so that your pages will pop up on the beginning of search results. This is free but requires careful planning of your web pages to have words that will pop up on the search engine. In search engine advertising, you pay Google to put your link on the special section. It is fast and gets your link visible almost immediately, but it is not free. Studies have shown that in the search results provided by Google, the free links get more attention than the paid ones that come first. According to Juslén, about 65% of people never click on the paid links. Getting visible on Google is therefore something to put more emphasis on first than the search engine advertising. Using both does not cause any harm, but does not directly increase the amount of visitors on your pages either. (J. Juslén 2009, 242-244)

*Google AdWords* and *Google AdSense* are two Google's advertising programs. They are not free of charge, but not excessively expensive either. When using AdWords, you do not have any set fees, you only pay by the amount of clicks your link gets on the search results. Here attracting the right people to visit your site is important, so that the only benefit won't be to Google itself. The activation cost for AdWords is 5,00€, and the minimum cost per click is 0,01€. You can create your daily budget yourself. (Google Adwords)

Google AdSense focuses on bringing the advertising to the right people. The focus is on the content of the pages the ad is shown on, so for example an ad for a safari company in Saariselkä, Finland, is shown on the pages of an article introducing Saariselkä itself. AdSense is operating on pages belonging to the Google network. In AdSense the Internet publisher can earn money per click on the advertisements that are on their pages. (Wikipedia: Google AdSense)

*Google Maps* is another thing that should be considered. Here it would be a good idea to add information and places of interest about the center area on the map when clicked on it. Google itself is a global search engine. A study by Arbor Networks in 2009 showed that Google is responsible for 6% of all Internet activity in the world. (Wikipedia: Google)

**Wikipedia** is a free internet encyclopedia. It is written collaboratively by anonymous people, but texts need to be referenced from a set source for clarity. It would be a useful channel to give information about the center area. There aren't pages created yet for the center area of Finland, to which the association could be linked. People nowadays use Wikipedia often to explain things to them, making it one of the largest reference sites on the Internet. Monthly Wikipedia is visited by 78 million people from all over the world, as of January 2010. (Wikipedia: About)

**Company's own web-site** is the most important portal on the internet for each company. It needs to be easy to navigate in, attractive and provide all the needed information and possibly links to other information that might be needed by possible customer. After the sites are designed to be customer friendly and interesting, it is time to look for the best place to start spreading the word.

**Travel Blogs** are widely used to spread information about different destinations. This cannot be done by the company itself, but can be initiated by them for someone travelling in the area.

**Visit Finland.com** is a travel page with information about Finland and the activities, accommodation etc. there is here. It is run by the Finnish Travel Board, MEK. One link there to consider putting some information on is the Visit Finland: Insider's Guide that can be downloaded free of charge.

**Oluon.fi** is a travel page consisting information about the Oulu region. During this research the association joined this network.

**This is FINLAND** (<http://finland.fi>) is a travel page for Finland, formerly known as Virtual Finland. The pages cover things related to Finland and the Finnish society.

**Mondo.fi** is an Internet society for travelers. Destinations can be introduced, blogs put up and information shared with other travelers.

**Oulusouth.com** is an information site about the Northern Ostbothnia region, the Southern part of the Oulu province. This could be a site to advertise on, if a central tourism information was set up in the center area.

**Olet.info**, Oulun Eteläinen, is an Internet portal for Nivala-Haapajärvi and Siikalatva-Ylivieska subregions that is developed to be a place for information and interaction for the people in the area.

## 12.2 Newspapers

**Kaleva** is the biggest newspaper in Northern Finland and Finland's fourth largest paper that comes out seven days a week. The heartland of Kaleva is in the Oulu region, but does not forget Northern Finland, national or international news. According to a study KMT about how many people read a certain newspaper, the number for Kaleva during fall 2009 and spring 2010 was 190 000 people. The circulation numbers are almost to 90 000 papers.

**Maaseudun Tulevaisuus**, "The Rural Future", is a special newspaper that comes out three times a week. It focuses on the countryside; the economy and rural enterprises, culture and life in general in the countryside. It is a magazine that one can order if interested. According to a study by KMT (fall 2009/spring2010), it is the third most popular ordered newspaper after Ilta-Sanomat and Iltalehti, with 309 000 people reading it. It is a good newspaper to advertise in because the reader numbers keep growing and the target group is so wide. It is also not shadowed by many newspapers because it is so unique. MT has an attachment that comes out once a month called Kantri. **Kantri** has a circulation of 86 000 copies and covers rural lifestyle, events, hobbies and phenomena in a bit more relaxed manner than the MT. MT can also be read on the internet, as can companies put advertisements on their web-pages.

### 12.2.1 Local newspapers

Advertising on local newspapers can be done one paper at a time, or as with Finnish Local Media (Suomen Paikallismediat), many newspapers in one go. With this 5-140 newspapers can be linked at once to reach all the wanted readers. FLM is a network consisting of 139 newspaper members, creating a marketing and media chain. Buying a package not only saves time and money, but is very easy as well. One order, one bill and the possibility to use the same material for every newspaper is very convenient in the busy world of today. (<http://www.paikallismediat.fi/yritys.php>)

The following newspapers are from the nearby area and belong to Finnish Local Media. These are possibilities to be utilized by Keskipiste Travel Association Ra for marketing purposes, to create awareness in the surrounding municipalities and towns around the center area. The information for these newspapers is from Paikallismediat.fi.

**Haapavesi-newspaper** is distributed in Haapavesi. The total circulation is 3050 papers and the newspaper comes out once a week. In addition to this, the newspaper is distributed to Rantsila, Pulkkila, Kestilä, Piippola, Pyhäntä and Kärsämäki once a month. This causes about 7800 extra newspapers.

**Maaselkä** is distributed in Haapajärvi and Reisjärvi twice a week. The total circulation of this newspaper is 4561 copies.

**Nivala-newspaper** is distributed in Nivala twice a week. The total circulation is 6106 copies. Once a month it is also distributed to Haapajärvi, Haapavesi, Ylivieska, Kärsämäki, Reisjärvi and Sievi, with 13 900 extra copies.

**Pyhäjokiseutu** is distributed in Oulainen, Pyhäjoki, Haapavesi, Vihanti, Merijärvi and Kärsämäki. The total circulation is 6840 newspapers, but the reader numbers are about 19 000. The newspaper comes out twice a week, once a month also in Piippola, Pulkkila and Pyhäntä.

**Pyhjärven Sanomat** is distributed in Pyhäjärvi, the total circulation being 4393 newspapers. Pyhäjärven Sanomat comes out once a week.

**Reisjärvi-newspaper** comes out in Reisjärvi. The total circulation is 2125 copies.

**Siikajokilaakso** is distributed in Siikajoki, Siikalatva and Pyhäntä. The total circulation is 4631 copies and the newspaper comes out two times a week.

**Kalajokilaakso** is distributed in Sievi, Nivala, Alavieska and Ylivieska. The newspaper comes out four times a week and the total circulation is 7436 copies. Wednesdays are broader distribution days with 36 000 copies, going out to Kalajoki, Reisjärvi, Haapavesi, Vihanti, Nivala, Pyhäjärvi, Oulainen, Haapajärvi, Kärsämäki, Merijärvi, Pulkkila, Piippola, Pyhäntä and Kestilä.

**Kalajoki** newspaper is distributed in Kalajoki, with a circulation of 2027 copies. The paper comes out once a week.

**Kalajoen Seutu** is a newspaper also distributed in Kalajoki. The total circulation is 2613 copies and the paper comes out once a week, 52 times a year.

**Koillissanomat** comes out in Kuusamo, Posio and Taivalkoski. The total circulation is 7358 copies. The paper comes out five times a week. Six times a year is a special distribution with 18 000 copies.

**Raahen Seutu** is distributed in Siikajoki, Vihanti, Pyhäjoki and Raahen with 9067 copies. The newspaper comes out six times a week.

**Rantalakeus** comes out in Liminka, Lumijoki, Tyrnävä, Kempele, Oulunsalo and Hailuoto. The total circulation is 3086 copies. It comes out once a week

**Rantapohja** is distributed in Ylikiiminki, Yli-Ii, Ii, Haukipudas, Kuivaniemi and Kiiminki with 10 321 copies. The newspaper comes out twice a week.

**Tervareitti** comes out in Muhos, Utajärvi and Vaala. The total circulation is 6118 copies and it comes out twice a week.

**Kuhmolainen** is distributed in Kuhmo with 6104 copies twice a week.

**Puolanka** newspaper is distributed in Puolanka with 2381 copies. It comes out once a week.

**Sotkamo-newspaper** comes out in Sotkamo. The total circulation is 5855 copies and is read by about 15 000 people. The paper comes out twice a week.

**Ylä-Kainuu** newspaper is distributed in Hyrynsalmi, Puolanka and Suomussalmi. The total circulation is 8080 copies and it has over 21 000 readers. The newspaper comes out twice a week.

**Kainuu Plus** is a advertising packet with Kuhmolainen, Sotkamo-newspaper and Ylä-Kainuu newspapers as partners. With this packet readers in Kuhmo, Sotkamo, Suomussalmi, Hyrynsalmi, Ristijärvi and Puolanka can be reached. With this packed over 52 000 readers can be reached.

Other newspapers distributed in the local or nearby areas from which customers could be lured to the center municipalities are listed below.

**Iso-Magneetti** is a newspaper created by Kärkkäinen Oy. It is distributed in the North and in the South, in 118 different cities or towns in the Ylivieska, Oulu and Lahti areas. In the North 266 690 copies are printed and in the South 233 799 copies. This paper comes out 30 times a year, two or three times a month, depending on what month is in question. It reaches a wide scale of people from this country, and is a good media for any kind of company to advertise themselves. (ISO Magneetti)

**Kymppisanomat** is distributed to 27 000 households in Pyhäjärvi, Haapajärvi, Nivala, Ylivieska, Alavieska, Sievi, Reisjärvi, Muurasjärvi, Lestijärvi, Toholampi, Kannus and Himanka. It advertises, markets and provides news for the people once a week. (Kymppisanomat)

**Viikkoviisari** comes out every other weekend in Haapavesi, Kärämäki, Pyhäntä and Siikalatva with 8 800 copies. (Viikkoviisari)

**Kainuun Sanomat** is distributed in Kajaani with more than 22 000 copies. It comes out seven times a week.

**Koti-Kajaani** is distributed in Sotkamo, Kajaani, Paltamo, Ristijärvi and ordered places. The normal circulation is 28 556 copies. Once a month the newspaper is also distributed to Kuhmo, Suomussalmi, Puolanka and Hyrynsalmi with 36 761 copies. The newspaper has more than 66 000 readers.

**Selänne** is distributed once a week to Haapajärvi, Kärsämäki, Pyhäjärvi and Reisjärvi. The circulation is 9 200 copies.

### 12.3 Magazines

**Matkaopas** is the largest travel magazine in Finland, offering the newest travel ideas in the trade. It is aimed at the hot new destinations, mainly abroad, so this is not the best place to market small destination in Finland. A new column has been created, though, called Travel Finland. Here best events etc. are outlined nationally. The magazine has 124 000 readers, according to KMT's research.

**Mondo** is a travel magazine intended for people interested in travelling. According to KMT's research, it has 96 000 readers. The biggest portion of readers (30%) is people between the ages 45 and 64.

**Matkalehti** is a leading travel magazine concerning holiday and business travel, nationally and internationally. It is aimed at travelers who want to find out things about the culture, what to do on holidays and free-time. The magazine can be ordered in electronic form as well as in paper. Matkalehti magazine is also distributed to hotels, public transportation and to professionals. According to Matkalehti in 2009, it has 137 721 readers for the printed form. Due to the fact that for example people travelling on busses read the magazine, the reader numbers are much higher than with many other travel magazines. According to a customer survey done in 2007 by Matkalehti, over 70% of readers take at least two trips within Finland each year. Almost 35% take 4-6 trips. According to the survey, over 66% of readers live in the capital area or in cities with over 33 000 inhabitants. According to the Matkalehti reader survey, 43% of readers use the maga-

zine to influence their travel decisions and to find out new interesting places in Finland as well as abroad. (Matkalehti.fi)

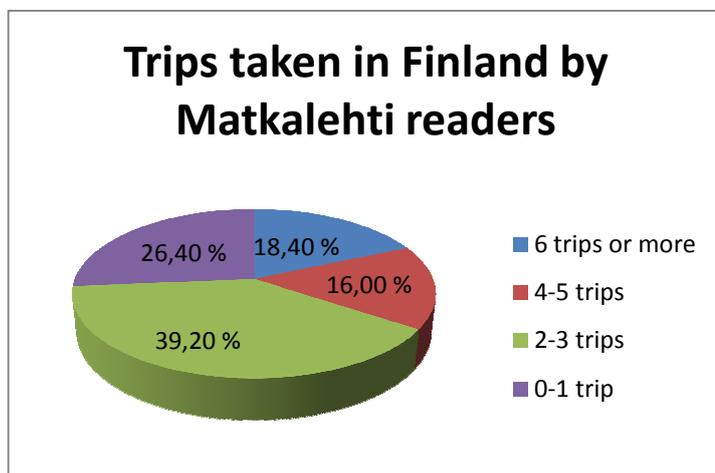


Diagram 4. Matkalehti reader trips in Finland per year (Matkalehti reader survey 2007)

**Caravan** is a magazine aimed at people travelling on caravans. It introduces different subjects about caravans and destinations. According to a study by Caravan magazine, people travelling on their caravans in Finland are interested in camping, dancing, cultural events and visiting friends and relatives. According to KMT's research, Caravan magazine has 175 000 readers in Finland. The average age of readers is 56 years and most readers are over 40 years old. (Caravan:Reader research 2008)

**Maaseutu & Matkailu** is a magazine concerning rural tourism. It is an Internet magazine that can be ordered free of charge from [maaseutupolitiikka.fi](http://maaseutupolitiikka.fi).

**Matkailusilmä**, "Travel Eye", published by the Finnish Tourism Board, is a magazine that comes out four times a year. It introduces the important themes in tourism at the moment.

## 12.4 Fairs and Events

**Summer Garden Gardening Fair** is a special exhibition aimed to gather together people interested in gardening and cottages. The themes presented cover cottages, gardening, structures and furniture's of cottages and gardens as well as maintenance. Summer activities and games are also a part of the fair category. Keskipiste Travel Association Ra took part in this fair in May 2010 in Oulu.

**International Oulu Grand Fair** is a fair created to increase visibility. It is open to all kinds of exhibitors and products from Finland as well as abroad. The target group consists of people from all age groups, meaning there is something for everyone and all exhibitors will find some people interested in what they have to offer. This fair is a good place to create contacts, present your company to potential partners and customers, create sales as well as strengthen the image of your company. Keskipiste Travel Association Ra took part in this fair in August 2010 in Oulu.

**Nordic Travel Fair** is the biggest travel fair in the Nordic Countries by visitor numbers, arranged since 1999. It is aimed at people interested in traveling, the general public and professionals. The exhibitors are national and international companies and destination presenters. Keskipiste Travel Association Ra is taking part in the next fair, which is in January 2011.

**Caravan Show & Camping Fair** in Turku is a special exhibition aimed at the caravan people. The theme revolves around caravans, new models, travelling and camping. It is a good place to make contacts with the caravan travel segment. The next fair is in January 2011.

**Travelling in Finland: Domestic Travel Fair** is a travel fair arranged in Tampere. The emphasis is on domestic travel; the destinations and activity possibilities we have in this country. The fair is aimed at people of all ages interested in traveling. The exhibitors are, for example, B&B places, event organizers, hotels, municipalities and their tourism supply as well as travel agencies and associations. The next fair in Tampere is in April 2012.

**ELMA Helsinki Food and Countryside Show** is a fair organized to bring together people interested in shopping, the countryside and tourism. This fair will attract around 30 000 visitors from all over Finland, especially the capital city area. The product groups for exhibitors are countryside services and products, animals and maintenance, countryside development, agro-tourism and travel adventure products as well as food, organic and regular. (ELMA:Helsingin maaseutumessut.Pdf)

**Northern Finland's Outdoor Life Fair (Erämessut)** is a exhibition of wilderness and outdoor life. There visitors will get new ideas for leisure activities and see demonstrations of products, services and goods. Themes at the fair are nature and nature activities, people in the wilderness and tourism, with products to suit these themes. (Northern Finland's Outdoor Life fair)

**Tourest Fair** is the biggest travel trade fair in the Baltic countries. It is an important gateway to spread information for the host Estonia as well as countries exhibiting. The next Tourest fair is in February 2011. This fair is something to consider in the future, if the tourism in the center develops and international markets are to be wooed.

**Travel & Business – inside sales event** (Matkailua&Bisnestä: sisäinen myyntipäivä) is a fair aimed at travel professionals in Northern Ostrobothnia. The exhibitors or salespeople are travel organizers and other related companies. The guests invited to this fair are different secretaries and other relevant people from companies, organizations and institutions in the Oulu region that are responsible for the company's guests, incentive trips and corporate gifts. Keskipiste Travel Association Ra took part in this fair in May 2010 on the sales side.

**Suoma kiertue** is Finland's only national tourism sales tour. The objective of the tour is to increase the visibility and familiarity of Finnish tourism destinations and services as well as create group sales. It is an excellent place to launch new products and get familiar with what competitors are doing. During the tour personal contacts are possibly created with customers and old customer relations are nurtured. Another aim is to network with other tourism operators and companies. As customers and buyers the tours invite representatives and travel professionals

from thousands of associations, organizations and companies. The salesmen are significant area organizers, destinations, hotel chains and tourism companies from all over Finland. ([http://www.commagroup.com/suomeksi/Tapahtumat/Kotimaan\\_matkailutapahtumat/Suoma\\_Kierture.iw3](http://www.commagroup.com/suomeksi/Tapahtumat/Kotimaan_matkailutapahtumat/Suoma_Kierture.iw3))

### **13. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF THE RESEARCH**

Research results are commonly assessed by using terms validity and reliability. For a test to be accurate, it needs to be both. Reliability means that the test results would come out to be the same even if the test was conducted somewhere else at another time or with other respondents. Validity means that the research proves what it was set out to prove. (Holloway&Robinson 1995, 45) However, in qualitative research these terms are not commonly separated, but terms like credibility, dependability and trustworthiness are used. In qualitative research, using the term reliability would be misleading and result in results would be no good. (Nahid Golfhani: Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research, 601-602)

In this research, the interviews were conducted with the qualitative method. The entrepreneur's were asked questions and the answers were based on their own personal opinions. The term reliability, as explained above, means that the results would be the same regardless of where, when or with whom the study was conducted. In this case, this is hard to measure. With personal interviews and semi-structured surveys, answers can vary each time. Personal views and opinions are not set in stone. The topics discussed in each interview were basically the same, but room was left for discussion about other things as well, if needed. When people have the chance to answer questions freely in their own words, the answers and their openness can vary according to who is asking, what they are asking and what mood the respondent is in. When asking someone's opinion on something, the answer can never be wrong. This is why qualitative research is better assessed in terms like dependability or trustworthiness. When considering the trustworthiness of the answers given by the entrepreneurs, I would consider them dependable. Each respondent answered freely and without much thinking to the questions asked. They seemed to have a good insight into what is happening in their company, who comes there and information on their habits. Each respondent was a professional in their field and had experience. All the respondents were interviewed at the location of their business, making it easy for them to participate and the comfort of the situation was then high for the participants. I believe this is some-

thing that increases the trustworthiness. When the respondent is in their own environment, they are more likely to open up and give honest, thorough answers. For the association to get a better understanding about the customers, each company should do a separate customer survey, the results of which could be then gathered into one. The marketing channel comparison was based mainly on theory as well as opinions from the entrepreneurs. Theory is reliable but to get more profound results, in-depth interviews could have been conducted with only the marketing channels in question. This would have required background information on the target segments and current customer groups in the area. A comparison based on theory is a good way to get the basic information, but to get a better understanding of which channel gives the best results in marketing the area, it would have been a good idea to do interviews with the customer segment in question to learn what channels they follow to get information. This was something I came to think of at the end of the thesis, but since member interviews took so much time, it had to be left out. The comparison then based on theory is reliable because the information would be the same regarding when it would be done. It does, though, stay on the general level because no insight from the people who are marketed to is included. Opinions of what the entrepreneur's think to be good channels are included. These however are opinions, which can change. This does provide the association with information and a basic idea of attributes of channels, from which they can get ideas for their marketing decisions.

As for validity, the research answered the wanted questions. Respondents answered questions. The point was to learn from the entrepreneurs their opinions on the topics. Real, insightful information was gained in the interviews. All information provided by the respondents was included in the thesis. The channel comparison, as I mentioned before, was mainly based on theory but the opinions learned from the member interviews also affected the outcome. The aim in the channel comparison was to decide which channel is the best choice for marketing. Deciding this based mainly on theory makes the results valid because it proved that some channels have better qualities than others. This, however, depends on the type of company or association and who their customers are as well as where they come from, to decide which is best for the specific company in question.

## 14. OWN THOUGHTS

I personally think it is confusing to have many center points. It would be easier to have just one official one. It could be called the “heart of the lion”, so to speak. Because the statue of the center of Finland is located in Leskelä and has been there for a long time, this should be kept as the official center. It should be promoted to the people as the one and only, so the concept “center of Finland” might have some meaning to people. The problem here is that to make the center point an interesting destination for people, services around it are also needed. And that is what the Leskelä is missing. I do not believe the center of Finland can be made into such a popular destination as the Arctic Circle, but there is potential here. Old McDonald is from Piippola, which Leskelä is a part of originally. It’s not as big as Santa, which is the major pull factor of Lapland, but it is also internationally known. With creativeness and lots of stamina, who knows what can become of the center area. To bring up an image of the area, an idea could be to create an Old McDonald’s film competition for kids and young adults and advertise that on television. The point in this could be to make a short documentary about life in the countryside, maybe specifically in the center area. This could be used to promote the area, and who knows, maybe even be used to promote Finland internationally. People seem to be increasingly interested in things that will give them fame, if you take for example all the different television shows nowadays. To get maximum awareness, some kinds of events need to be organized that would appeal to the general public, not just the locals.

Another possibility is to make the area known as the heart of Finland. Personally I think the Keskipiste-area is a bit easy to forget. What if it was referred to the Heart of Finland, or the Heart of the Lion? The Finnish coat of arms has a lion in it, so that could be an idea to think about. Because the center area has a strong culture, a possibility could be to develop some kind of tourism ring in the area. It could be promoted for example in a slogan “Welcome to the heart of Finland, a trip into the culture of our country”. Or on the cover of a well informative tourism booklet, it could read in Finnish “Tervetuloa Suomen Sydämeen: Kesämatkailijan

kulttuuri-kierros”. A product around the culture of this area could be designed, to keep the people in the area instead of passing through. Different types of products could be made suitable for different types of travelers. But the point would be to create a package people can either buy or follow the path themselves, so to speak.

Driving around the Keskipiste area a traveler might notice that there aren't very many nice rest-stops. And something I think is very bad for the tourism image is that in Leskelä, near the statue for the center of Finland, there are nice, new toilet facilities. But, however, they are locked and people cannot use them. It's a small thing, but important to people passing through here. This is an issue the association is not responsible for directly, but considering the tourists in this area and their needs, it is something to take a look at. Rest-stops are important to travelers. It would be good to make sure they are in good condition throughout the area. Putting up advertising on the notice boards at rest-stops is also an idea to create awareness.

For the internet marketing and follow up of it, Keskipiste Travel Association Ra should take a close look at different web analyzing tools. Measuring the reasons for success and failure is one of the common problems with marketing, because you can never know beforehand what works and what doesn't. With internet marketing, you have the possibility to look at the amounts of people following the company on the internet daily, where they come from and what they come there for. So a web page should be set up to follow that information. One tool for this is the Google Analytics. It is free to use and gives you information such as the amount of visitors, the source of traffic, the visitors' geographical location etc. This is fairly easy to use and no software is required, only a user account and an internet connection. In Juslén book there are also mentioned the ten worst mistakes that can be made when designing your webpage, and those are something that could be taken a small look at. (J. Juslén 2009, 197-202, 360-361)

For the Keskipiste web pages, it would be a good idea to add a newsletter-possibility. It could be delivered to recipients once in a while, and it could have the important events and other information. For example, there could be special discounts and other prices delivered to the people ordering the newsletter. The

web pages could also be designed to be a little bit easier to navigate in. For instance, a map would be needed right in the beginning, so when a person opens the page, it would be the first thing they see and give them a clear idea of where this Keskipiste area is located. On the map could be linked the different areas, so when you click on a certain area of the map it will go to that towns information.

There is a Internet site for museums in Finland, called the Tourism Museum Network ( Matkailumuseoverkosto). I noticed there are no museums listen in the center area of Finland, and we do have many museums, even though they are fairly small ones. In the network there are many different types and sized museums, which have something tourism related in their material. The museums themselves look at the history of tourism thematically and regionally in the area. This network connects not only museums and tourists interested in culture and history, but also learning institutions and tourism professionals. (<http://matkoilla.fi/toimijat>)

## **15. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

There are possibilities for the association to do some further research.

They can get a deeper idea of the customers in the area by doing a specific customer research. This can be done by asking each of the member companies to do a customer survey over a summer period/winter period, depending on which customers are to be researched. The surveys could be done on paper and filled out at the spot, unless the members have a customer database online that could be used for electronic surveys, which would be easier to dissemble. The results from paper versions could be all put together and then analyzed, but this would require the effort of several people. For electronic surveys, the same could be used for each company, making the results to be easily analyzed.

After the customers in the area are categorized more specifically, they could be researched even further. The wanted customer segment could be interviewed by in-depth interviews or by regular surveys about their opinions. Asking them what they like, don't like, wish to be improved etc could be asked. Also it would be good to look deeper into how they come to the area, or why, and where they have found the information. This would provide information straight from the people who know best, as in the customers themselves.

Networking is an extremely important part of tourism. Tourism consists of a set of services, so companies need to be willing to work together. During the interviews I conducted for this thesis, networking and the lack of it was mentioned by most entrepreneurs. This could be another idea for further studies: the willingness of companies to develop the cooperation between other companies could be analyzed. This could also be a possible project-type of work for someone, to actually try to improve the cooperation between the companies in the center point area. It would be interesting to find out, for example, why some companies are refusing to work together with others, or to join the travel association. The means of what could make them want to participate more in the activities of businesses in the area could be studied.

## 16. SUMMARY

The idea for this research came from the association Keskipiste Travel Association Ra. The research was conducted in spring and fall 2010. Keskipiste Travel Association Ra is a fairly new association, with the aim of increasing tourism in the center area of Finland. The aim for the thesis was to find out information from the members via a member interview and solve tourism marketing issues, more precisely where the association should market itself. Tourism marketing is an important area of tourism today. Destination marketing is something the association is directly connected to, so learning more about different aspects of it is never unnecessary. The theory in this research explained different aspects of tourism marketing, things I believe would be beneficial in the association's case.

The interviews with members were the most time consuming part of the thesis. Arranging suitable times with entrepreneurs in other towns and getting transportation to those places required a lot of effort and cooperation. The interview themes were planned together with the association. Because not all members were reached after the first or second contact request, which was done by e-mail, ten different members were interviewed in the end. The members that were interviewed were from many different towns in the center area and of many different types. The towns where the interviewed member companies are located are in Haapajärvi, Kärsämäki, Reisjärvi and Nivala. Because the number for interviewed members was only ten, the results are more indicative in nature. They give an idea of what the association is dealing with, considering the customers and the opinions of the entrepreneurs on different issues. Important information was learned, however. It was interesting to see how well the entrepreneurs know their customers. The members were all aware of who their customers are and where they mainly come from. The biggest customer segments came from the nearby areas, being adults travelling for work or leisure, elders and families. People usually have an intention to stop at a certain place in the area. The companies near road 4 get more surprise visitors, people going north or south. Often they find information on the internet and the newspapers. Word-of-mouth is also strong among travelers. The employees in the companies actively tell the tourists about the services in the area,

so not much is enquired. What is problematic here is that many times the tourist is not intending to stay in the area, but is just passing through. This could be the reason for limited interest on the tourists' part. The entrepreneurs had very good ideas for tourism development in the area, so maybe a night of brainstorming together with the whole association about the possibilities and the problem areas could be a useful thing. New ideas never hurt anyone and for an association just starting its operations, it would be good to get the whole organization actively involved. The results are reliable considering each member, but for the association to get a wider perspective on the tourists moving around in the area, each member company should carry out a customer research on their own and deliver the results to the association. In this research the entrepreneurs themselves were the targets for getting information.

The channel comparison was based mainly on theory, making it reliable. For more profound results, in-depth interviews could have been conducted with only the different channels in question. But because the member interviews took so much time, resources to do this were limited and, therefore, this was left out. The theory does provide sufficient information on the different channels and what their attributes are, from which the association can get ideas for what can work for them. Different examples of channel choices were also provided. The association can use the information in this thesis to get ideas and develop their marketing. From the channel comparison I came to the conclusion that not only one marketing channel is best for Keskipiste Travel Association Ra, but it needs to emphasize on using a media mix. The best choices in this case would be to direct efforts into the channels that create the most awareness and attention for the new association, cost-efficiently. The best media for this case would be the Internet, local newspapers and trade fairs.

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## **APPENDIX 1**

# **MEMBER INTERVIEW: MEMBER OF KESKIPISTE TRAVEL ASSOCIATION RA**

### **1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF COMPANY**

- Description of the company
- What motivates customers to use the services

### **2. THEMES FOR INTERVIEW**

#### **A. The customers**

Support questions:

- Age and type of customers
- Where do they come from
- Why are they in the area

#### **B. The information flow**

Support questions:

- Where has the customer found information about the company
- Where does the company market itself

**C. The marketing channels**

Support questions:

- Tärkeimmät kanavat
- Missä kannattaa markkinoida

**D. The area's tourism supply**

Support questions:

- What information do they ask
- What is the area missing
- Have the customers been satisfied with the area's services

**E. The entrepreneur's thoughts and tourism ideas for the area**

Support questions:

- How can the tourism in the area be developed
- What is missing from the area

## APPENDIX 2

# JÄSENHAASTATTELU: KESKIPISTEEN MATKAILU RY:N JÄSEN

### 1. TAUSTATIETOA YRITYKSESTÄ

- Yrityksen kuvaus
- Mistä syntyy motivaatio palvelun käyttämiselle

### 2. TEEMOJA HAASTATTELULLE

#### **A. Asiakaskunnan pääpiirteet**

Tukikysymykset:

- Asiakkaiden ikä/tyyppi
- Mistä he tulevat
- Miksi ovat alueelle tulleet

#### **B. Informaation kulku**

Tukikysymykset:

- Mistä asiakas on saanut tietoa yrityksestä
- Missä yritys markkinoi itseään

### **C. Markkinointi kanavat**

Tukikysymykset:

- Tärkeimmät kanavat
- Missä kannattaa markkinoida

### **D. Alueen tarjonta**

Tukikysymykset:

- Mitä informaatiota kyselevät
- Mitä kaivataan
- Asiakkaiden tyytyväisyys palveluihin

### **E. Yrittäjän omia matkailullisia kehitys-ideoita**

Tukikysymykset:

- Miten kehittää alueen matkailua
- Mitä puuttuu alueelta