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CUSTOMER INSIGHT AND SAFETY EXPERIENCE OF INTERNATIONAL PEOPLE FOR NATURE-BASED SERVICES IN NORTHERN OSTROBOTHNIA

Case: Luota-project

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ABSTRACT

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The thesis was commissioned by the Luota-project, which the Oulu University of Applied Sciences carried out. Their objective was to develop safe nature-based services and experiences with rural service providers in Northern Ostrobothnia. The topic of the thesis was to acquire customer insight and form a customer profile of one of the project's target groups: international people.

The empirical data was collected by using qualitative methods. Semi-structured interviews were done with international people about their experiences and perspectives on the topic of nature-based services and experiences in Northern Ostrobothnia. The focus was solely on interviewing people who currently live in Northern Ostrobothnia but have origins from another country. The information from these interviews was then studied and formed into a customer profile.

The research showed that the person's international background does not affect them as a user of nature-based services in the sense that they have either lived in Finland for so long or have experience of living in multiple other countries that they are used to the cultural differences and the ways Finnish people behave. However, problems arise when it comes to language. Finnish service providers have the ability to speak English, but more often than not, the company's website and/or Facebook page, advertisements, safety instructions, and safety signs at the place where the service is being held are only in Finnish. This affects the international person's safety concerns, expectations, and ability to get information about the company and its services.

Keywords: Customer insight, safety experience, customer profile, nature-based services, international customers

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1 INTRODUCTION

The commissioner of this thesis is Luota-project, where they aim to develop safe nature-based services and experiences with rural service providers in Northern Ostrobothnia. Examples of these kinds of services and the percentage of them offered in Northern Ostrobothnia can be seen in figure 1. The project is carried out by the Oulu University of Applied Sciences between 1.3.2021 - 31.12.2022. The project has been divided into four work packages, and this thesis is part of the second one. The second work package looks more deeply into customer insight and customer profiles of the decided target groups: seniors (over 65-year-olds), remote workers, young couples, bikers, and international people that live in Northern Ostrobothnia.

For this thesis, the topic is to acquire customer insight of international people, from which a customer profile will be formed. The aim is to describe this profile and to understand the factors that affect the customers' safety experience. This thesis will solely focus on the international people-target group, and other participants in the project will focus their research on the remaining target groups.

The research problem is that the service providers that offer these nature-based services and experiences do not have much knowledge on the needs of international people or about their safety experiences. There is a need to get more information and clarification on the topic so that the services can be designed to meet the needs of international people as well.

From this, the following research questions can be formed: "What is included in the nature-based service customer profile of international people?" and "What kind of safety concerns and expectations do international people have regarding nature-based services?"

The empirical data for this thesis is collected by using service design to conduct qualitative customer understanding research. Semi-structured interviews will be done with international people about their experiences and perspectives on the topic of nature-based services and experiences in Northern Ostrobothnia. The focus will be solely on interviewing people who currently live in Northern Ostrobothnia but have origins from another country. The information gathered from these interviews will then be studied and formed into a customer profile.

Service	Amount	%
Tour and safari services	27	16,1
Recreational and program services	25	14,9
Horse related services (other than horse riding)	19	11,3
Husky and/or reindeer services	17	10,1
Guidance and training services	12	7,1
Parks and centers	11	6,5
Welfare services	11	6,5
Water based excursion services	11	6,5
Animal parks or yards	10	6,0
Horse riding services	9	5,4
Other services based on water	8	4,8
Green Care services	8	4,8
Total	168	100 %

Figure 1. Percentage of nature-based services in Northern Ostrobothnia (translated) (Aro, Mattila, Isopoussu-Koponen, Poutiainen, Virkkula 2021)

2 CUSTOMER INSIGHT

For a company, it is important to understand its customer's needs and the reality in which they live and operate on. When a company has knowledge about these exact things, it is called customer insight. The company is able to answer questions such as "What are the customers' expectations, needs, and goals for the service we are providing?" The company can use this knowledge to design services that truly meet the needs and desires of its customers, which will give the company a chance to succeed in the market. (Tuulaniemi 2013, 142.)

Tuulaniemi defines customer insight as understanding the customer's value creation, where the different components that form value are defined. For example, the customer's value for the service might be formed based on their own needs, expectations, habits, values, other people's opinions, or prices. If the customer is truly understood on these levels and the company designs their activities based on these facts, they will be able to minimize the risks of failure. In addition, it will allow the company to stand out from its competitors. (Tuulaniemi 2013, 71–72.)

Ahonen looks at the topic from a slightly different point of view. To Ahonen (2017, 50–51, 55), customer insight means understanding the customer's needs without explicitly explaining them. A service can be called high-quality when the customer receives a service based on their needs in the right place and time, and that gives added value to their life. Whether the customer uses the company's services again in the future depends on the service environment and the gained experience.

However, it is important to take the customer's emotions into consideration as well. The customer's emotional experience matters throughout the entire customer relationship, from the very first contact to the end of the service's life cycle and afterward. Salonen puts emphasis on the fact that emotions have an impact on everything a person thinks about, what they talk about and what they choose. Companies should put importance into making sure their customers have positive emotional paths when using their services. This is because customers will more likely return to use the service again when they're happy and have been treated well, and have had an overall positive experience of the service. Familiarizing yourself with the customer's needs and valuing them is more likely to lead to long-term customer relationships, even if a competitor offers the same service at a lower price. It is important for people to be heard, seen, and valued, and such

consideration of the customer's feelings increases the customer's confidence in the customer service's expertise and know-how. (Salonen 2017, 227–230.)

The focus should not only be on ensuring that the customer has a positive experience of the service but on making sure one has a plan when a customer's experience has been negative. Customers can be seen as the company's business cards, as they are the ones telling other people about their experiences of the service. Bad experiences in particular are sensitive to spreading, which is why it is important to ensure that the customer has a good image of the company. It is worth compensating and correcting mistakes, especially because the last emotions from the experience will be remembered well. But like bad experiences, customers will also spread their good experiences onward to others. The image that the customer has of the company after they have used their services will affect whether the customer will return to use it again in the future. (Salonen 2017, 231–234.)

Customer insight can be a beneficial part of a company's business model. A business model outlines the ways the company acquires necessary resources and delivers solutions to its customers, as well as how the company manages its business. And when a company has customer insight, these tasks will be easier. In addition, customer insight can be essential in gaining a competitive advantage in the market. (Arantola & Simonen 2009, 33–34.)

In this chapter, we will next look more into the different areas of customer insight, the steps that can be taken when developing customer insight, and customer segments and profiles that can be used to present and visualize customer information.

2.1 Areas of customer insight

The concept of customer insight is vast and takes into consideration many aspects of the customer. The chosen areas that both influence and are affected by customer insight are customer purchase motives and customer experience. Each of these topics is a unique part of customer insight and helps in answering questions such as "What things and feelings matter to customers, and their choices?" and "How important are these factors and to which customers are they relevant?" In addition, it will help in highlighting the factors that have the most significance to the company and its brand. (Ahonen & Rautakorpi 2008, 37.)

2.1.1 Customer purchase motives

Customer purchase motives can be defined as the urges and motives that fulfill the desire for a customer to buy a product or a service. Behind every purchase is a motive that provides the customer the impulse to buy and determines the choice when purchasing goods and services. A common mistake made by companies is that they misunderstand their customers' real purchase motives. But if they succeed in this task, they will be able to strengthen the customer's confidence that the service they are purchasing will meet their needs now and in the future as well. (Ahonen & Rautakorpi 2008, 32–38; 181.)

All the motives that influence a customer to buy a particular product or service are limitless. To make understanding these motives easier, there are five common aspects that affect the customer's decision-making: the decisive motives for the choice, for example, pride or imitation, prerequisites, meaning things that are required prior to the purchase, personality traits of brands/companies, barriers to purchase, and gaps in the market. (Ahonen & Rautakorpi 2008, 122–123.) Defining these motives will allow the company to better understand their customers and thus develop better services that meet their needs. For nature-based services, an example of decisive motives for the choice to use these kinds of services is that they improve both the physical and mental wellbeing of the person when they are able to be active in nature and escape their busy daily life.

2.1.2 Customer experience

A company can improve its customer experience with the help of customer insight. In addition to getting ideas on how to improve already existing services, it can give the company ideas and information on how new services could be developed (Hein 2021).

There is no single agreed-upon definition for customer experience, as people have looked at the concept from different perspectives over time. The concept is thought to be first mentioned in the 1982 article by Holbrook and Hirschman, "The Experiential Aspects of Consumption: Consumer Fantasies, Feelings, and Fun." In their article Holbrook and Hirschman point out the importance of the customer's feelings in business, which was the opposite belief at the time. Prior to the release of the article, consumers were seen as rational individuals with the goal of getting the best

product at a reasonable price. (Petermans, Van Cleempoel, Nuyts, & Vanrie 2009.) Holbrook and Hirschman believed that if the customer is only seen as a processor of information, the true understanding of customer behavior will be limited (Holbrook & Hirschman 1982).

Ahvenainen, Gylling, and Leino (2017, 9–10, 121) emphasize that the only way to stand out and succeed in a competitive market is to have a unique and memorable customer experience. In their work, Ahvenainen et al. define customer experience as an image and feeling that arises from all encounters with company representatives, channels, and services. The company's brand and related emotional connections also affect customer experience.

One of the most notable ways customer insight can be utilized is in streamlining the customer journey. It is normal for customers to stop using the company's services. Analyzing customer data and collecting feedback makes it possible to better understand what turns people away during the customer journey. That way, the company can optimize the buying process and customer journey for a more streamlined customer experience. If the company is concerned with its service's functionality or quality and wants to improve those aspects, customer insight is a great way to do so. (Hein 2021.)

Customer insight can also be used in improving a company's marketing strategy by finding the key traits among its already existing customers, such as their concerns and needs. If a company is able to understand what its target audience wants through insights from current customers, the company can provide a great customer experience for new customers as well. (Hein 2021.)

2.2 Developing customer insight

When developing customer insight, the different areas of customer insight need to be taken into consideration, such as those described earlier. When customer insight is going to be used to support business design, the information must be developed purposefully and systematically in addition to being easily accessible to everybody in the company. (Arantola & Simonen 2009, 29.) This task can be divided into four stages, and in this chapter, the step-by-step approach to developing customer insight outlined by Arantola and Simonen will be described with the help of other resources.

2.2.1 Step 1: Starting point

Both the means and tools of collecting customer information and the operating methods related to it should be mapped out. The company can do this by analyzing all the available background material it has about its customers, market, and competitors, and in which situations the information is available currently. In addition, the specific activities during which data collection is already happening can be listed as well as the tools and methods used during the process. This information can be found from the company's previous customer satisfaction surveys and market research as well as from tacit information within the company. After these have been outlined, it is beneficial to look into who is using the information and what it is used for. Doing a basic report about the company's customer base and its structure could also be beneficial. This report could include information such as the number of customers across different locations, the largest customer groups, and the distribution of customer turnover. As a part of the first step, the investments required to identify customers and collect customer information should also be considered. (Arantola & Simonen 2009, 29-30; Tuulane 2013, 145-146.)

2.2.2 Step 2: Setting customer insight goals

After the first step, the company should clearly define its goals in regard to customer insight. If customer insight is not already being utilized in decision-making within the company, this should become one of the most important goals. Outlining the different activities that are going to be taken and the amount of time they will require is also recommended (Arantola & Simonen 2009, 30.) On the basis of these goals, the company can start deepening its customer insight in the next step.

2.2.3 Step 3: Researching

When customer insight development is done systematically for the first time or old operating methods are being revised, it is best to approach the process as a project, where the project manager sets stakeholders, tasks, and a schedule. Figure 2 visually presents the customer insight process and the connection between the different stages. (Arantola & Simonen 2009, 31.)

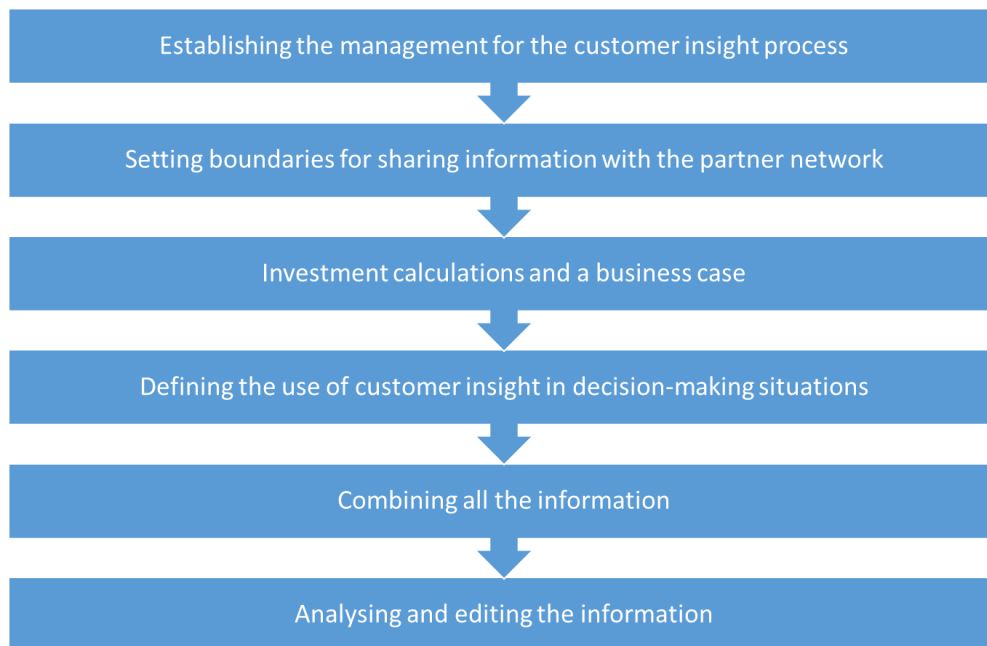


Figure 2. Customer insight process (translated) (Arantola & Simonen 2009, 31.)

The process starts with establishing the management for the process, from where boundaries are set for sharing the information with the partner network. After these have been determined, the process can continue with investment calculations and a business case, where the justification for undertaking the project is provided. One of the most important parts of this process is defining how customer insight is going to be helping future decision-making situations: for what purpose is the information going to be used for, who is going to use it, and what information exactly is going to be needed. The process will end with combining all the information and finally analyzing it.

In business design, customer research is used to gather appropriate information that in return can be utilized in solving a design challenge that the company is facing with its service. This information can be collected by using both quantitative- or qualitative research methods, but the knowledge of the customer's needs and desires can generally be better understood by using qualitative research methods. Instead, quantitative research can be best utilized in assessing the success of service delivery. (Tuulaniemi 2013, 142-144.)

Tuulaniemi (2013, 146) list methods to gathering customer information as follows:

- Ready-made sources i.e., existing background material about customers
- Interviews and surveys by using different methods
- Observation, which can be passive observation or varying degrees of participation in the life of the target customer

- Involving the target customer in the development process

There are multiple ways to present and visualize customer information, and those will be further explained in chapter 2.3.

2.2.4 Step 4: Implementation and monitoring

As with any project, the development of all activities will be continuously monitored during the project. Based on the gathered information, the company can assess whether something could be further developed and whether the project plan has stayed valid. If there is evidence that the original plans do not meet the expectations set in the beginning, it could be possible to change them at an early stage of the development process. While customer insight is being implemented, it is important to take into account the fact that customer insight usually requires new resources from the company: not only will new types of expertise be needed, but time spent on monitoring these new changes as well. (Arantola & Simonen 2009, 32.)

Overall, customer insight development aims to build new and improved methods for the company. Customer insight should become a natural part of all operations, where continuous improvement keeps customer insight up to date and ensures that new means are put in place appropriately. (Arantola & Simonen 2009, 32.)

2.3 Customer segments and profiles

When customer research is being utilized in business design, what matters the most is how the information is taken advantage of and refined when creating new value. The obtained information must be interpreted in a meaningful way that benefits the development of the service. Examples of methods to present and visualize customer information are customer segments and profiles, which will be explained deeper in this chapter. (Tuulaniemi 2013, 154.)

Although customer segmentation and customer profiling are not mutually exclusive, they do have subtle differences. In customer segmentation, the company's customer base or marketplace is divided into segments according to its demographic, geographic, and behavioral information as well as interests, whereas in customer profiling, the aim is to understand the customer on a per-

sonal level and describe their personality. The main idea between both of these practices is that having a better understanding of the customer will allow the company to make informed decisions, which will lead to better customer service and satisfaction. (Softweb Solutions 2021.)

In customer segmentation, customers are put into similar but clearly distinguishable groups. As Penny describes it: "Segments are generally developed through big-data analysis and are defined using demographic information such as age, income, and location or behavioral information such as interests, opinions, values, lifestyle, risk aversion, or life stage." Customer segmentation enables the company to distinguish between the different customers that exist and what their interests are. (Penny 2021.) According to Storbacka (2003, 39, 42-43), the benefit of customer segmentation is that it gives the company a chance to choose their target customer so that interaction and marketing efforts can be properly focused on them. In addition, customer segmentation allows the company to identify the groups that are not suitable for the company's chosen customer strategy.

A customer profile summarizes the information gathered during research on the customer's goals, motivations, fears, and desires. However, customer profiling is not about restrictively categorizing customers but rather about representing observations about the emotional and behavioral traits of some customers. (Penny 2021.) Customer profiling can help in understanding for whom services should be developed and why. When customer profiles are utilized as a basis for business processes and design, the company can simultaneously respond to the customer's needs and generate loyalty to the company. In addition, customer behavior can be guided to meet business goals. Tuulaniemi 2011, 154–156.)

There is no one agreed upon template for customer profiles, but at least the following information should be included:

1. Behavior patterns – a recurring way they target group behaves towards a certain objective, such as using the service, for example if they follow safety rules
2. Motivations for action – what motivates the target group to become active and use the service, for example relaxing from busy daily life
3. Goals – what are the target group's goals when it comes to using the service, for example to improve physical and mental wellbeing

4. Values – what kind of values does the use of the service provider for the target group, for example it offers things to do together with friends and family
5. Fears and concerns – what kind of fears and concerns the target group has regarding their physical, physiological and other kinds of safety or other aspects of using the service, for example there not being enough safety instructions
6. Needs – what the target group needs in order to use the service, for example an instructor that speaks their native language
7. Wants and desires – an aspect of the service that the target group would want and desires to have, for example accommodations for their whole family

(Penny 2021; Tuulaniemi 2011, 155–156.)

According to Miettinen et al. (2011, 14), the benefits of customer profiles are that they help the company to understand the changing needs and the internal differences in behavior within the customer group. Customer profiles make sure that routine decisions within the company are made while taking into consideration the underlying assumptions about who uses the service and how it is used. (Grudin and Pruitt 2003, 5.)

When to choose customer segmentation, and when is customer profiling more beneficial? Customer segmentation is primarily based on large datasets from where the company can get a broad overview of the entire customer base. This gathered information can be used in making strategic decisions and in marketing to communicate with customers in a well-founded way. Comparatively, customer profiling can be used to make more detailed design decisions as these profiles help the company to understand their customers in greater depth. Customer profiles can offer answers to questions such as "why people behave in certain ways" and "what are the customer's needs, motivations, and concerns." One way to describe customer profiles is that they "bring research to life." (Penny 2021.)

3 SAFETY EXPERIENCE

Safety has many definitions, as it can describe both the subjective experiences of individuals and interstate relations. One way to look at safety is to think of it as the absence of risks that cause harm, and the goal is to keep them at an acceptable level. It is impossible to reach absolute safety because it is a relative concept that is dependent on the vulnerability of the individual and/or group and the risks that they are experiencing. Each person's view of safety is different. (Iivari 2012, 18-19.)

Correspondingly, feeling unsafe comes from the lack of safety. This feeling presents itself as the individual's fears, insecurities, and anxieties in sudden situations where the person cannot influence themselves or the environment. Not only can the cause for the individual's feelings of unsafety come from things happening within their inner circle, but also from external influences. Examples of these are globalization, environmental and climate change. (Tikkanen et al. 2017, 14; Ranta-Tyrkkö & Ropo 2003, 8.) Koskela (2009, 67) agrees with this viewpoint and believes that the lack of safety is intertwined in many ways with the global order, local social policy, media-mediated images, and the construction of individuals' identities.

When looking at safety from the point of view of a company, the customer's safety experience should be considered, as different customer groups have their own definition of the acceptable level of risks. This is important because when the company understands how their customers are experiencing safety differently, it will allow the company to develop its services to better meet these needs. This is one of the reasons why having customer insight is beneficial for companies. For nature-based services, some ways they increase the feeling of safety for their customer is by providing safety instructions either in a written format that can be found on their websites or that is provided after the online booking is finished, or in a spoken format after the customer has arrived at the place where the service is being held.

In English, the concepts of safety and security are often mixed together. An easy way to differentiate these two concepts is to remember that safety directly impacts the person, whereas security has a technical dimension to it. Examples of safety would be environmental, fire and personal safety, while security is related more to data and information security. (Iivari 2012, 19.) As the

focus of this thesis is to get more information on customers and their experiences, the word safety will be used from this point onwards.

3.1 Different types of safety

Depending on the perspective that safety is examined from, we can find different types of safety. These different types are psychological, physical, social, spiritual and sexual safety.

Psychological safety, or sometimes referred to as emotional safety, means that the individual is not afraid of negative consequences to their self-image, status, or career when they bring up their ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes. Eliminating places and situations that create a sense of fear as well as recognizing people's efforts are some ways psychological safety can be improved. (Leading Effectively Staff 2020; Harney 2020.) In nature-based services, this could be seen, for example, during safety instructions before the participants are allowed to use the equipment that will be used during the service, such as mountain bikes. If the participant is worried about voicing their questions or concerns regarding how to ride the bike because they feel like the service provider might make fun of them, the participant feels physiologically unsafe. It is the service provider's job to make sure all participants feel physiologically safe so that situations like this does not occur.

Physical safety refers to the lack of physical objects or practices that include a physical object that could cause harm to a person. Examples of this would be the person themselves or the room they are in, furniture, equipment, items, and toys. However, physical safety needs to be established in co-operation with psychological safety. Only when psychological safety is reached can one start creating a safe physical environment by developing different practices, guidelines, and policies. (Your Experiences Matter 2021.) In nature-based services, physical safety can be seen by making sure that the equipment that will be used during the service is in good shape and does not pose a threat to the customer while they use it by making sure that, for example, the snowmobiles are inspected for any flaws frequently.

Social safety is when a culture reinforces safety and wellbeing, interaction, co-operation, and the fight against discrimination and racism. Spiritual safety is when a person is not afraid to practice their faith, commonly referred to as freedom of religion. (Kilpeläinen 2014, 4.) Sexual safety, in

turn, means that the person feels both psychologically and physically safe from being a target of unwanted behavior of a sexual nature and generally does not feel uncomfortable, afraid, or unsafe in these kinds of situations (Gibson 2020, 16).

Besides the aforementioned division of safety into different categories, safety can also be thought to be a subjective image and an actual state of being. With the help of various indicators, criteria and statistics, we can objectively measure the state of safety. livari (2020, 19-20) demonstrates this conflict of safety being both subjective, an opinion or feeling based on the individual's perceptions, and objective, unbiased and based on observable and variable facts, as follows "An air passenger can experience the fear of flying, even if the objective measurement results suggest otherwise. After all, air travel is one of the safest forms of travel. Instead, the same air passenger can travel to unknown restaurants at their destination during the wee hours of the night without experiencing any feeling of being unsafe, even though objective statistics show the exact opposite."

Based on this scenario, we can see how safety is a feeling and an irrational image to a considerable extent. In addition, safety is also relative in the sense that what makes one person feel safe can cause fear to another person. One person might feel safe going to work in a neighborhood known to have a bad reputation, but this would seem unimaginable to some other person. Following this example, safety can also be perceived collectively. Safety or feeling unsafe can affect the community, the district, the municipality, or the nation in which we live. As livari (2012, 20) puts it "Safety is a narrative of the individual's existence that extends to the survival of the nation."

Because safety is the subjective image of the individual's experiences, which can contrast with reality, safety oftentimes becomes a matter of opinion. The rational reasoning of the individual and numerical data do not always complement each other. Therefore, when safety is the basis or object of decision-making, it can give rise to controversy or disagreement. Not only does safety have a significant role in decision making, but other imagination-shaped perceptions as well, such as memories and other past experiences. (livari 2012, 20.)

3.2 Maslow's hierarchy of needs

In the 1950s, Abraham Maslow created the hierarchy of needs (see figure 3). It is a theory of motivation that states the five different categories of human needs that dictate the individual's behavior. In order from the bottom to the top, these needs are: physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. In this theory, the aforementioned categories are needed in relation to each other to maintain good mental health. (Kyyrönen & Mäenpää & Pohjanvirta-Hietanen 1992, 56–57.)



Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Figure 3. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Hopper 2020)

According to Maslow, the basis of human wellbeing is created by physical needs and their fulfillment. Examples of these are adequate food and water, shelter and clothing, and only when these have been guaranteed can other needs be activated. Thus, physical needs can be considered the most essential out of all the needs: if the person lacks in more than one need, they are most likely going to try to meet these physical needs first. (Kyyrönen et. al. 1992, 56–57; Hopper 2020.)

Next in the hierarchy are safety needs. Even from early childhood, the need for safety is apparent. For a child, the sense of safety and trust arises when the caregiver satisfies the child's physical needs as quickly as possible while creating intimacy at the same time. Only when the child has learned to trust the caregiver enough will the child endure the expectations when this need is

not satisfied. Otherwise, the child will typically react with fear or anxiety. In adults, the feeling of safety is influenced by adequate material conditions leading to the wellbeing of the body, such as employment, resources, and property. Maslow points out that these safety needs become more evident in emergency situations, which is why people purchase insurance for themselves and their belongings and have a savings account. (Kyyrönen et. al. 1992, 56–57; Hopper 2020.)

The next need in the hierarchy is love and belonging. Not only does this need include the feeling of being loved, but also the feelings of love towards other people. It includes both romantic relationships and non-romantic relationships towards our friends and family and the need to be accepted in our social group. (Hopper 2020) A study conducted by Julianne Holt-Lunstad, Timothy Smith, and Bradley Layton (2010) shows that better physical health is connected to social connections, and if a person does not have them, it will lead to negative consequences on the person's health and wellbeing.

After love and belonging comes esteem. This can be divided into two parts: feeling good about oneself and feeling valued by others. When the person's esteem needs are fulfilled, they will feel confident and see their contributions and achievements as important. Whereas when this need is not fulfilled, the person might have feelings of inferiority. This means that the person believes themselves to be lower in status than others. (Kyyrönen et. al. 1992, 57–58; Hopper 2020.)

At the top of the hierarchy is self-actualization, where the person has the desire to become the most that they can become, feeling like they are living up to their potential. However, self-actualization means different things for every person, for example one person might see self-actualization as helping the poor, but for another person, it is about succeeding academically. To simply put it, self-actualization is the feeling that we are doing what we believe we are meant to do in life. (Hopper 2020.)

As can be seen from Maslow's hierarchy of needs, safety is often treated as a necessity and is a requirement for other needs. Safety manifests itself as the desire to protect ourselves, and they want to defend against external dangers. It also manifests itself in the search for continuity and order and in the pursuit of internal mental balance. (Verhelä 2007, 141–142; Mäkinen 2007, 61–62.) In addition, safety can be seen as a value and a human right. As a value, safety refers to the certainty and reliability that there are no risks to one's safety. Thus, it can be said that the absence of various dangers is a value in itself. (Mäkinen 2007, 63.)

3.3 The development of safety experience

There are many aspects that have a part in the development of one's safety experience, and the aspects that will be discussed in this chapter are threats, danger, risks, and fear.

Out of all these concepts, threat is the most abstract and ambiguous and is closely related to risks and danger. A situation can be called a threat whenever there is no actual danger at the given moment, but its manifestation is possible. Ways that threats may come to light are verbal expressions or any active behavior that is destructive. (Niemelä 1997, 23; Tikkanen et. al. 2017, 16.) Comparatively, danger is more concrete and is easier to detect. Danger is defined as a situation or a factor that can possibly lead to personal injury, environmental damage, property damage, or a combination of these. (Tikkanen ym. 2017, 16.) Risk is closely associated with safety and the want to manage it. The goal in risk management is to minimize risk factors and predict the future to make it as safe as possible. (Niemelä 2000, 23.)

One of the ways that companies manage risks is by allocating them to a specific person, which usually is the service provider or the instructor. While customers seek experiences through different services, they also seek a sense of safety. This is why companies should focus on creating customer-oriented and high-quality services that take the customers' safety experience into consideration. (Verhelä 2007, 146–147.)

Niemelä (2000, 24) describes in their article that fear is a reaction that an individual has to a real or imagined threat. Although the individual might experience fear because they do not feel safe, this is not always the case. Experiencing feelings of unsafety does not always correlate with fear. One aspect of fear is that it can be either situational or permanent. Situational fears stem from specific types of circumstances that cause the individual to experience fear, whereas permanent fears are a part of the individual's identity. (Verhelä 2007, 142.)

Media plays an important role in safety, as the information conveyed through media can have a severe impact on people's perception of safety and, therefore with fear as well. People's imagination, media, and other sources of information can collectively preserve old stereotypical threats and also highlights new ones. Indirect exposure also plays a significant role in causing fear, to which media has a particularly strong influence. (Koskela 2009, 106.)

3.4 Culture's connection to safety experience

The individual's cultural background and the values, beliefs, norms, and practices that are connected to it influence the person's perception of things and their behavioral tendencies. (Yorio 2019, 2.) Thus, it can be said that culture has a connection to the individual's safety experience. The person's cultural background dictates the way they perceive communities and social situations and what they perceive, how they interpret, and how they communicate these perceptions. Thus, cultural background has an effect on the person's definition of safety and how they experience it. Different cultures have different experiences and views on safety, and they may not be transferable from one culture to another. (Iivari 2012, 20.) However, it should be noted that everyone that shares the same cultural background does not necessarily share the same sets of values and beliefs. Rather, culture gives context that helps in understanding individuals' behavior better. (Yorio 2019, 3.)

One of the most noteworthy studies that outlined how national culture could be operationalized, that is to turn abstract concepts into measurable observations, was published by Geert Hofstede in 1980. In his book "Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values," he demonstrates how empirical efforts can be used to classify shared values that are rooted within national society. (Yorio 2019, 7.) Hofstede defines culture as "the collective programming of the mind distinguishing the members of one group or category of people from others," and based on this definition, he divided national culture into the following six dimensions:

- **Power distance index (PDI)** - the point to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally.
- **Individualism versus collectivism (IDV)** – whether people only look after themselves and their immediate family or all their relatives and the members of a particular in-group in exchange for loyalty.
- **Masculinity versus femininity (MAS)** – the society's preference for achievements, heroism, assertiveness, and material rewards for success or for co-operation, modesty, caring for the weak, and quality of life. Whether society is more competitive or consensus-oriented.
- **Uncertainty avoidance index (UAI)** - the degree to which the members of a society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity.

- **Long term orientation versus short term normative orientation (LTO)** – whether the society prefers to maintain traditions and norms while viewing societal change with suspicion or take a more pragmatic approach by encouraging efforts that prepare for the future.
- **Indulgence versus restraint (IVR)** – whether the society allows gratification for natural human drives related to enjoying life and having fun or suppresses gratification of needs and regulates it by means of strict social norms.
(Hofstede Insights 2021.)

If we take a look at the individualism versus collectivism dimension more closely, we can get more insight into the ways people from different cultures experience safety. In collective cultures, in Eastern countries like Japan, China, and Korea, threats and other risks are perceived as challenges to which the whole community will respond. In general, the needs and objectives of the whole group are put first before the needs and desires of the individual. This is the opposite in individualistic, mainly Western countries, where the needs of the individual are put over the needs of the whole group. Thus, threats are seen as something that individuals should face by themselves. From this, it can be detected that a universal frame of reference for safety cannot be determined, as it is perceived and attended in a culturally connected way. (Iivari 2012, 20–21.)

Depending on the culture and the environment that the person has grown up in can affect the type of safety they put more emphasis on. The different types of safe listed in chapter 3.1 are: psychological, physical, social, spiritual and sexual safety. For example, suppose the person is from a country where religion is a big part of their everyday life, and they move or travel to a country that does not put the same amount of emphasis on the religion, or another religion is more prevalent in the region. In that case, it can make the person worried about their spiritual safety and whether they can practice their religion freely. In addition, the person might be concerned whether the service providers in the new country and culture are able to provide foods that align with their restrictions set by the religion, such as halal food eaten by Muslims.

4 RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCESS

As aforementioned, this thesis's empirical data is collected using service design to conduct qualitative customer understanding research. Semi-structured interviews will be done with international people about their experiences and perspectives on the topic of nature-based services and experiences in Northern Ostrobothnia. The focus will be on interviewing people who currently live in Northern Ostrobothnia but have origins from another country. The information gathered from these interviews will then be studied and formed into a customer profile.

4.1 Service design

Tuulaniemi (2010, 10-11) defines service design as follows: "Service design is a systematic way to approach service development and innovation both analytically and intuitively. Analytical approach refers to information related to a logical chain of reasoning, facts, customer research, and data. Intuitive means the skill and experience to see what might be possible in the future; seeing what does not yet exist."

In service design, the goal is to improve the quality of the service and the interactions between the service provider and the customers by taking into consideration the needs of the customers and the competencies and capabilities of the service provider. Service design provides a logical operating model for the company and combines organizational goals with the customer's perspective in a functional way (Tuulaniemi 2010, 95).

Service design offers many benefits. It helps the company identify new business opportunities and create services that create value for the customer while being strategically rational. The company will be able to focus its internal processes around the needs and values of the customer, which in return will deepen the brand and customers' relationship. (Tuulaniemi 2010, 96-99; Hellon 2021a.)

The service design process follows the principles of creative problem-solving. The process can be defined as a series of logically advancing and repetitive operations, which will eliminate the need for developing the chain of events each time. In the end, processes save resources for the

company and give time for creative work. The service design process consists of the following steps: defining the design challenge that needs to be solved, researching the design challenge, operating environment, resources, and user needs in order to specify the strategic objectives for the service provider, designing solutions for the design challenge and then introducing the new and improved service concept to the market. In the end, the success of the development process is evaluated and measured, and the service is fine-tuned according to the gained experiences. (Tuulaniemi 2010, 126, 128)

However, insufficient understanding of the service design process and relying on service development processes that are based on more traditional product development principles might cause the service design process to fail. Hellon (2021b) defines the most common service design mistakes to be:

1. Unclear definition of the desired outcome of service design
2. Overlooking the customer's underlying needs
3. Excluding the customer when generating ideas for solutions
4. Not testing solutions together with the customer
5. Forgetting your most important asset – Involving your employees

4.2 Semi-structured interviews

There are three main interview methods: structured, unstructured and semi-structured interviews. As the names imply, the difference comes whether the interviewer has planned their questions in advance. (Pollock 2021).

In a structured interview, the interviewer uses only the planned questions that they have created in advance and asks the same questions in the same order from every interviewee. Developing a structured interview can be harder compared to the other interview methods, as the interview questions need to be tested multiple times beforehand. Getting to know the interviewee on a more personal level might also pose a problem, but the main benefit of a structured interview is that evaluating the interview answers can be done in an objective and fair way. (Pollock 2021).

Comparatively, unstructured interviews are the opposite of structured interviews: the interviewer does not plan any questions in advance, and instead, they ask questions based on the conversation they have with the interviewee. This will result in a more relaxed atmosphere during the interview, which will allow the interviewee to answer more honestly. However, comparing and evaluating answers is objectively much harder, as all the interviewees are asked different questions. (Pollock 2021).

A semi-structured interview combines the two previous methods and their advantages. Pollock defines semi-structured interviews as follows: "A semi-structured interview is a type of interview in which the interviewer asks only a few predetermined questions while the rest of the questions are not planned in advance." This means that the interviewer is able to objectively compare the different answers given by the interviewees' thanks to the pre-planned questions, but they also get to know the interviewees on a more personal level as they are able to talk about other relevant topics that might arise during the interview. However, semi-structured interviews are still less objective compared to structured interviews as not all interviewees are asked the same questions. (Pollock 2021).

For this thesis, the author chose to do semi-structured interviews because of the advantages the method provides. The author and the commissioner Luota-project had a workshop with the other students doing their thesis with the commissioner and agreed upon a list of basic interview questions. Doing this would guarantee that the interview content is similar between the different students and their assigned target groups, which would allow for objective evaluation. The students would also have the opportunity to modify their questions to fit their own target group and possibly ask other questions during the interview if needed. The interview questions that the author planned before the interviews can be found in appendix 1.

4.2.1 Conducting the semi-structured interviews and analyzing the information

The author sent interview invitations to Oulu University of Applied Sciences international business students by e-mail. The first interview invitation was sent at the end of October 2021, and a couple of weeks later another was sent. The e-mail covered the research topic and the commissioner of the thesis. The author stated that if somebody was interested, they should be in contact. After that a suitable time would be arranged for the interview, either face-to-face at the Oulu University

of Applied Sciences' Linnanmaa campus or via Zoom/Teams. Provided by the Luota-project, the interview participants were going to have an opportunity to win a gift card that entitled them to have one night's accommodation in Kalajoki Santa's Resort & Spa Hotel Sani for two people. In addition, other safety-related prizes were to be given. Contact information for the prizes was treated separately and was not combined with the interview answers. In addition to the invitations sent by e-mail, the author asked people from their own network to ask if they or somebody they knew was interested in participating in an interview. The interviews were estimated to last 30-60 min, and the goal was to interview 6-10 people.

In the end, the author was able to interview seven people: three people were interviewed face-to-face at the Oulu University of Applied Sciences' Linnanmaa campus, and four people were interviewed online through Zoom. The interviews were conducted during weeks 45-47 in 2021. The author recorded the sound during the interview either by using a phone application during face-to-face interviews or by using a feature on Zoom during online interviews. This was done to make analyzing easier for the author, as after the interview, they would transcribe based on the recording, that is to go over the recording and write down what the interviewee answered. From there, the author started to go over all the answers and group them into categories based on their similarity and whether the answer was connected to safety or any other parts of the customer profile. All the different parts of the customer profile will be further explained in the following chapter.

5 FINDINGS

This chapter will go through the customer profile of international people who live in Northern Ostrobothnia for nature-based services. The content is based on the conducted semi-structured interviews and the agreed-upon guidelines that were set together with the commissioner Luota-project. The following areas will be discussed in the customer profile:

- Demography – basic information, hobbies, lifestyle, values, when and with who are they active with and what kind of service user they are
- Motto – a quote that describes them as a customer of nature based services
- Activities – what kind of activities do they do and what kind of activities are they interested in
- Motivation, goals and place – motivations to be active, goals when being active, how do they choose the place to be active at and their expectations
- Safety – what they think of safety, their safety factors and any concerns related to safety
- International background – how does their international background affect them as a customer of nature-based services
- Money – how much are they willing to spend on nature-based services
- Searching information – where they get information about services and writing and reading reviews

The summary of this customer profile can be seen in figure 4.

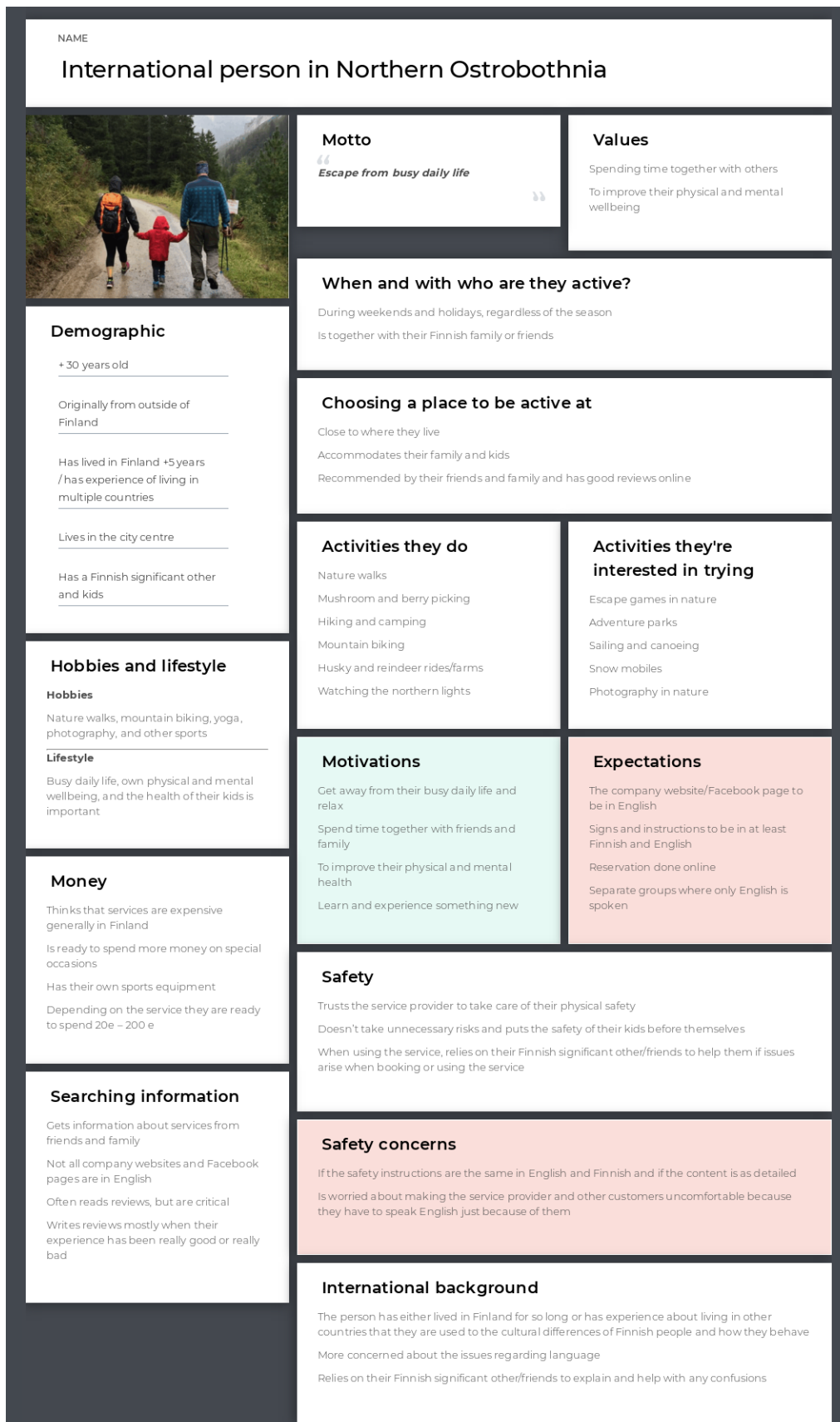


Figure 4: Customer profile of international people for nature-based services

(Picture used in the customer profile by Alberto Casetta on Unsplash)

5.1 Nature-based services customer profile of international people

The international person who uses nature-based services in Northern Ostrobothnia is over 30 years old and has origins from outside of Finland. Some countries where they might originate from include: Germany, Poland, Indonesia, The United States, and Portugal. They have been living in Finland for over five years and/or have experience of living in multiple other countries. They live in the city center and have settled down with their Finnish significant other and children.

On their free time, they like to do sports such as mountain biking, yoga, martial arts, running, and nature walks. Photography and videography are also things they enjoy doing whenever they have free time from their busy daily life of school and work. Their own physical- and mental wellbeing is important to them. However, they tend to put the health of their children before themselves. The motto "escape from busy daily life" can be used to describe them as a user of nature-based services, as they value the opportunities these services offer for them to relax and take time off their hectic daily lives. Other things they value about nature-based services are the possibilities to spend time together with their friends and family and the chance to improve their physical- and mental wellbeing.

The international person is the most active during the weekends and holidays regardless of the season. They do different activities depending on the weather with their Finnish family and friends, and as a user of these nature-based services, they commonly combine special occasions such as family celebrations when using these services. During a normal week, they like to do activities that do not require much planning such, as nature walks. Generally, they prefer to stay within the city when using these services but can make exceptions for special occasions as mentioned before. Examples of activities they do often include: nature walks, mushroom and berry picking, hiking, camping, observing animals in the wild, mountain biking, husky and reindeer rides and farms, and watching the northern lights. Activities that they have not tried before and would be interested in are escape games in nature, adventure parks, sailing, boating, and canoeing, renting snowmobiles, and photography in nature.

Getting away from their busy daily life and improving their health are the main motivators for being active, and when they use nature-based services, their goals are to learn and experience something new and spend valuable time together with their friends and family. When choosing the exact place to be active, they take into consideration how close it is to where they live and if

the company offers accommodations for their family. Recommendations from acquaintances and good online reviews also affect which company they choose. They expect the company's website or Facebook page to be at least in Finnish and English. This also means that the service itself and all the necessary instructions and the signs at the place where the service is being held should also be available in these languages. The content on the website and instructions should be the same regardless of the language. If it were possible, separate groups for English and Finnish speaking people would be preferable.

As for safety, the international person trusts that the service provider will take care of their basic- and physical safety. They are known to follow the rules and do not take unnecessary risks that would be unsafe for their children or themselves. While they use nature-based services, they rely on their Finnish significant other and friends to help them if any issues arise when booking or using the service. Regarding safety, they have concerns about whether the safety instructions are the same in English and Finnish and if the content is as detailed. They are not worried about the service provider's ability to speak English, as in their experience, most Finnish people can speak English. However, they are worried about making the service provider and other customers uncomfortable because they have to speak English because of them.

The person's international background does not affect them as a user of nature-based services in the sense that they have either lived in Finland for so long or have experience of living in multiple other countries that they are used to the cultural differences and the ways Finnish people behave. However, as mentioned before, issues arise when it comes to language. Finnish service providers have the ability to speak English, and all the interviewed people said that they have never been refused service because of the differences in language. If the person they are speaking to does not know how to speak English, there is always somebody else in the company that can. However, there is a noticeable lack of companies that have their websites in English, and if they do, there is noticeably less content, which makes getting information about the company and the services they provide more difficult. It is common for these companies to have advertisements in Finnish as well, which discourages them from becoming customers for the company from the beginning.

However, it should also be noted that many international people living in Northern Ostrobothnia do know how to speak Finnish, which makes facing these issues much easier. Even if the person had the ability to speak Finnish to some extent, they should not have to rely on their Finnish sig-

nificant other or friends to take care of everything regarding the booking or be worried about making other people uncomfortable because they have to speak English just to accommodate them, and they should be offered the same quality of service regardless of the language.

When it comes to spending money on nature-based services, the international person is of the opinion that services are generally expensive in Finland, which applies to nature-based services as well. Because of this fact, many of them have bought their own equipment because investing in it is much cheaper in the long run than paying for the service every time. However, they are ready to spend more money on once-in-a-lifetime opportunities and experiences that last multiple days but would prefer some of the services to be less expensive. Making the service cheaper would allow them to use the service more frequently, but making it too cheap will run the risk of appearing like there is something wrong with the quality. As for the price range, depending on the service and its duration, the international person is ready to spend between 20€ – 200€ for the service.

The international person gets most of the information about nature-based services through word-of-mouth recommendations from their friends and family. In addition to this, they also get some information from Google and Facebook, but if the information or the advertisement is only in Finnish, they likely to use the help of an online translator such as Google translate to help them understand. Before using the service, they oftentimes read reviews online and are critical when reading them. One thing might be a bad quality for the writer of the review, but it might not be for them. After using the service, the international person is likely to leave a review when their experience has been extremely good or bad.

6 CONCLUSION

The results of the conducted qualitative customer understanding research gives the Luota-project insight into what is included in the nature-based service customer profile on international people and what kind of safety concerns and expectations they have regarding these services. The commissioner can use this knowledge to further develop safe nature-based services and experiences with rural service providers in Northern Ostrobothnia.

The content of the customer profile is based on the conducted semi-structured interviews and the agreed-upon guidelines that were set together with the Luota-project. The following areas were discussed in the customer profile: demography, motto, activities, motivation, goals, place, safety, international background, money, and searching information.

The international person who uses nature-based services in Northern Ostrobothnia can be described with the motto "escape from busy daily life" as they value the opportunities these services offer for them to relax and take time off their hectic daily lives. Other things they value about nature-based services are the possibilities to spend time together with their friends and family and the chance to improve their physical- and mental wellbeing. These factors can also be thought of as the motivations for using these services.

The fact that the international person has lived in Finland for over five years and has settled down with their Finnish significant other and children affects multiple aspects of the customer profile. Not only are the specific activities they do dictated by this fact, but the location of these activities as well. They are mostly active during the weekends and holidays when the whole family has more time, and they generally like to stay close to the city center where they live. Whether the company offers accommodations for their family is also a factor when choosing the service.

The international person uses nature-based services together with their Finnish friends and family and relies on them if any issues arise when booking or using the service, whether it be language or any other problem. Language is connected to their safety concerns and expectations when it comes to nature-based services, as they have concerns about whether the safety instructions are the same in English and Finnish and if the content is as detailed. They are not worried about the service provider's ability to speak English, as they expect at least one person in the company to

be able to speak English. However, they are worried about making the service provider and other customers uncomfortable because they have to speak English just because of them.

The main finding of the research is that the person's international background does not affect them as a user of nature-based services in the sense that they have either lived in Finland for so long or have experience of living in multiple other countries that they are used to the cultural differences and the ways Finnish people behave. However, as mentioned before, issues arise when it comes to language. Finnish service providers have the ability to speak English, and all the interviewed people said that they have never been refused service because of the differences in language. However, there is a noticeable lack of companies that have their websites in English, and if they do, there is noticeably less content, which makes getting information about the company and the services they provide more difficult. It is common for these companies to have advertisements in Finnish as well, which discourages them from becoming customers for the company from the beginning.

However, it should also be noted that many international people living in Northern Ostrobothnia do know how to speak Finnish, which makes facing these issues much easier. Even if the person had the ability to speak Finnish to some extent, they should not have to rely on their Finnish significant other or friends to take care of everything regarding the booking or be worried about making other people uncomfortable because they have to speak English just to accommodate them, and they should be offered the same quality of service regardless of the language.

Other expectations that the international person has regarding nature-based services are the prices and how high they will most likely be. However, they are ready to spend more money on once-in-a-lifetime opportunities and experiences that last multiple days but would prefer some of the services to be less expensive. But making it too cheap will run the risk of it appearing like there is something wrong with the quality. As for the price range, depending on the service and its duration, the international person is ready to spend between 20e – 200e for the service.

It would be advisable for the rural service providers to consider these safety concerns and expectations of international people. As a customer group, international people living in Northern Ostrobothnia have potential: there is a large community of international people in the region that are not taken into consideration to the same extent as Finnish people in the region. The international person is already knowledgeable about the cultural differences and the ways Finnish people be-

have, so much would not be needed to change in the way the service itself is being provided, such as how the booking is made or how instructions are given. However, more attention should be given to language and how the same information should be given in both Finnish and English and that the content is detailed and correct in both languages. The company's website and/or Facebook page, advertisements, safety instructions, and safety signs at the place where the service is being held should be provided in at least in Finnish and English. Doing this would not only ease the international person's safety concerns regarding nature-based services and make it easier for them to search for information about the company and the services they provide, but it would also be beneficial for other target groups such as tourists. Having separate groups where only one language is spoken would also ease these concerns. The company could invest in a professional to translate their website and other instructions and signs into English. And as was discovered, most companies already have employees that are able to speak English, so doing advertisements in Finnish and English would be possible in the long run. As for the separate groups depending on the language, the company would have to look into and train their employees to be able to offer the service with the same quality both in English and Finnish.

If the company was able to lower their prices for the service, it would ease the international person's expectation that they have to use a lot of money to use nature-based services, and in return, make them use the service more frequently. However, if reducing the price of the service permanently is not suitable for the company, they could consider doing sales for holidays or some weekends, as those are the times when the international person is most active.

A summary of the solutions for rural service providers in Norther Ostrobothnia based on the international person's customer profile can be seen in figure 5.

Solution	Description
More focus on English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website and/or Facebook page, advertisements, safety instructions, and safety signs at least in Finnish and English • Would meet the international person's expectations, ease safety concerns and make searching information easier • Utilize expertise within the company or invest in a professional
Separate groups depending on the language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would ease the international person's concerns about making other's uncomfortable because of language differences • Training for employees to be able to offer the service with the same quality both in English and Finnish
Price reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would ease the international person's expectation that they have to use a lot of money to use nature-based services • Could use nature-based services more frequently • If not possible to reduce price permanently, have sales on weekends and holidays

Figure 5: Summary of solutions for rural service providers in Norther Ostrobothnia

7 DISCUSSION

In this chapter, we will discuss how the author's writing and research processes went from finding the topic to the conduction and analysis of the actual research. Further areas of research will also be discussed where the author gives their comments on the possibilities based on the research.

7.1 Writing and research process

The thesis got its start in Spring of 2021 when the author discovered a notice in Oiva, a website for the students of Oulu University of applied sciences, from Luota-project where they were looking for students to do their thesis in collaboration with them in order to further help the project reach its goals. From there, the author sent the Luota-project's contact person an e-mail about being interested in doing their thesis together with the project, which led to a Teams meeting where the topic of the thesis was discussed in more detail. After the meeting, the author finished narrowing down the topic and sent a thesis proposal to the school. Once the proposal was approved, a thesis teacher was appointed who would give directions and information throughout the thesis process. An informal meeting was held between the author and thesis teacher about the thesis, and the writing process could finally start.

For the theoretical background, the author read other thesis' on the same topic of customer insight and customer profiles to better understand what kind of research had already been done. From there, the author looked at what references were used in these thesis' and loaned these books from the school's library. Other than that, the author searched their own books and online sources by using keywords such as international customer, customer insight, customer profile, safety, safety experience, safety concerns, and business design. The Luota-project was also able to provide sources that they had found while working on the project.

In order to make the customer profiles similar between the different target groups of the project, the commissioner held online workshops for all the students that were involved with the project to agree upon a basic guideline for the customer profiles and interview questions. However, the students were allowed to modify these guidelines to fit their own target group. After sending an interview invitation to the school's international business degree students and asking around the

author's own network, the author was able to interview seven people. Out of all the interviews, three were conducted face-to-face at the Linnanmaa campus, and four were done through Zoom, and they lasted 30-60 minutes. Finding the interview participants was not hard for the author, as the interview invitation e-mail was sent two times well in advance before the interviews needed to be conducted. In addition, the pre-planned and modified interview questions helped during the interview process as the author did not have to worry about coming up with questions during the interview itself. There were no problems regarding language between the author and the interview participants, as the author is a part of the international business degree program and has been doing their studies in English for the entirety of it.

Regarding the scheduling of the thesis, the author could have done better in keeping up with her original plan. As a whole, the thesis process was delayed by one month, but it was still finished before the end of 2021, as was originally planned. Despite the scheduling issues, the author was able to find answers to the thesis questions set in the beginning in a well-founded way. Writing the thesis taught the author concretely how the research process is done from start to finish and how to search for information to support the research topic.

7.2 Future areas of research

Based on the research, there are multiple areas that could be further researched. The interview results are quite generic, as the author was only able to interview seven people. If the sample size was larger, new findings that were not discovered yet might arise. More research could also be done on people that are originally from a specific country or a region, as in this thesis the focus was generally on people that have their origins from outside of Finland. Research could also be done on tourists to highlight their differences in safety experience thanks to their cultural background. This is because it was found that the international people that live in Finland have either been here for long enough or have experience of living in multiple countries that they are used to the cultural differences and the ways Finnish people behave. There is a possibility that tourists have different perspectives of safety which could affect the way nature-based services are provided.

As for the customer profile of international people that was formed in this thesis, further research could be done on the best possible way to visualize and communicate these findings to the rural service providers in Northern Ostrobothnia. The Luota-project will further develop that exact topic as they continue to work on the project.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1. Interview questions

1. Where do you live currently? How long have you been in Finland?
2. Where are you originally from?
3. How old are you?
5. What kind of hobbies do you have?
6. What kind of previous education or occupation have you had?

Before using the service

7. What motivates you to go to nature and be active?
8. When and where are you usually active?
9. What things do you value when choosing activities? (For example, it improves health, offers things to do together)
10. What kind of nature-based services have you used previously?
11. Let's focus on one time when you used a nature based service. Why did you choose that service?
12. Was there anything interesting about that service or its location?
13. Where did you get information about that service? (For example, Facebook, the company's website)
14. Did you receive enough information in advance?
15. Was there any safety information you would have liked to receive?
16. Did the company seem reliable?
17. How did you make the reservation? Was there any challenges? (For example, language)
18. Were the terms of the contract clear?

While using the service

19. What kind of activities did you do at the site?
20. Why did you choose these activities?
21. Did you have any expectations for the activities/guidance? What was good, what was bad?
 - a. What was the condition of the equipment like? (If any)
22. Did you encounter any challenges during the service? Was there any cultural differences?

23. How did you solve the challenge at that moment?
24. How were safety concerns taken into consideration at the place and during the activities?
25. Do you have any important safety factors? Examples?
26. Was there a particular issue related to safety? Did something go wrong?
27. Were there any stress factors associated with the situation or the use of the service?
 - a. Mental (e.g., service chain functionality, risk of injury)
 - b. Social (e.g., how do I adapt to a group, other clients, embarrassed if I do not know the language or don't know how to communication with employees)
 - c. Physical, (e.g., customer has physical limitations?)
28. Did your expectations about the service match reality?
29. Comments, feedback, or suggestions for improvement based on your previous experiences
30. How much are you willing to spend on nature-based services in general/within a day?

After using the service

31. Did you share any feedback afterwards, how?
32. Who did you tell about your visit?
33. Afterwards, do you feel like the activity or service you experienced was a safe experience?
34. What are the things that would make you go there back again?
35. Did you miss something during the service? If so, what? And would you be willing to pay for it?
36. Do you recommend the service you received to others? Why?
37. Do you have any plans to use any nature-based services in the future?