

THESIS

Kirsi Jokela 2013

**DEVELOPING A HOLIDAY PACKAGE IN
SWEDISH LAPLAND**



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Thesis

**DEVELOPING A HOLIDAY PACKAGE IN SWEDISH
LAPLAND**

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The purpose of this thesis project was to create a holiday package in destination Luleå for the commissioner Magnetic North Travel Ltd for international markets. The result of the thesis is a sample package brochure which can be used in the sales process of tailored holidays for individual leisure travellers to the region. The task was to find a unique selling point of the region for the best possible sample package to suit the product philosophy of Magnetic North. This thesis describes the development process of the Arctic Archipelago and the Northern Lights in Swedish Lapland holiday package.

The individual tourism products were evaluated and studied during a familiarization trip organised by the local destination management organisation. The field research method used during the familiarization trip was participant observation which resulted as a field diary. In order to further understand the destination and the goals of the commissioner, representatives from both were interviewed. The interview method used in this project was semi-structured theme interview.

The interview findings show similarities in the direction of tourism development in Swedish Lapland and the product and service philosophy of Magnetic North Travel. Based on all of the research material, the unique selling point and the individual products featured in the sample package were chosen. Based on the meetings and experiences during the familiarization trip, other tourism products were added into the menu of products which can be used for tailored holidays. The holiday package has been launched on the website for sale and is currently sold and subject to ongoing development.

Key words: commercialized holiday package development, package travel tour operator, distribution channels

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Opinnäytetyöprojektin tavoitteena oli kehittää tuotepaketti kansainväliselle matkanjärjestäjälle. Tuotteen kehittämisen tavoitteena oli saada tuote sovitettua yhteen yrityksen tuotefilosofian sekä räätälöityjen matkapakettien myyntiprosessin kanssa. Opinnäytetyö kuvaa Arctic Archipelago and the Northern Lights in Swedish Lapland-matkailutuotepaketin kehitysprosessia

Paketin kehitysprosessin ensimmäisessä vaiheessa osallistuin Ruotsin matkailunedistämiskeskuksen isobritannialaisille matkanjärjestäjille organisoimalle tutustumismatkalle Luulajaan. Tutkimusmetodina tutustumismatkan aikana suoritettiin osallistuvaa havainnointia. Havainnot kirjattiin kenttäpäiväkirjaan, jota analysoitiin matkan jälkeen eri kokemusten laadun kartoittamiseksi. Lisätietoa toimeksiantajasta sekä kohteesta kerättiin teemahaastatteluiden avulla.

Haastatteluista sekä kenttämateriaalista käy ilmi toimeksiantajan sekä paikallisen matkailuorganisaation samanlainen linja tuotefilosofiassa. Koko kenttämateriaalin analysoimisen päätteeksi tehtiin päätös siitä, kuinka kohdetta tulisi markkinoida pakettimatkana sekä tuotteista, jotka sisällytettiin näytepakettiin, jolla kohdetta myydään yrityksen asiakkaille. Tuote on tällä hetkellä myynnissä yrityksen web-sivuilla. Kohteen yhteistyökumppanien jatkuvan kehitystyön seurauksena myös matkailupaketti on jatkuvan kehitystyön alaisena.

Avainsanat: pakettimatkailu, matkanjärjestäjä, tuotekehitys, jakelukanavat, matkailutuotteiden kaupallistaminen

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1 INTRODUCTION

This package development project resulted from my personal idea for a holiday package to Luleå during my advanced practical training at Magnetic North Travel Ltd in Nottingham, United Kingdom. At the end of my practical training period, the company received an invitation to attend a familiarization trip in Luleå, which began the product development project process of this winter holiday package. Furthermore, this holiday package project also serves as a transition from my advanced practical training to my current position as a Product and Sales Consultant at Magnetic North.

Magnetic North Travel is a UK-based online tour operator that specialises in holidays to Scandinavia and Northern Europe. The customers of the company are individuals or small groups who are looking for tailored experiences with outdoor activities. The company philosophy is based on the Scandinavian concept of friluftsliv (free air life) which combines natural settings and meaningful experiences.

The aim of this thesis was to create a holiday package which is suitable for the sales process as Magnetic North and has a unique selling point compared to other destinations and could also be used in the planning process of multi-destination holidays. The research task has been to discover what the destination has to offer and how the products could be combined and commercialised into a tourist package with a unique selling point.

The first phase of the product development process task has been accomplished by attending a familiarization trip organized by the national tourist organisation and local destination management organisation where the research method used was participant observation. The second phase was to learn how well the destination brand corresponded to Magnetic North and to determine the final unique selling point which could be used in productising this holiday package. The second task was accomplished by interviewing the Managing Director of the commissioner and the Project Leader and Marketing Manager of Visit Luleå. In this thesis the destination Luleå also refers to the greater area and includes smaller villages and towns in its proximity.

This thesis also examines the relationship between a tour operator or a travel agent and destination stakeholders such as a national tourist organisation, a destination management organisation, a destination management company and the tourism product suppliers as information sources from the viewpoint of the tour operator in terms of creating a commercial holiday package for an international market.

2 TOUR OPERATOR PRACTICES

2.1 A Brief History of the Evolving Business of Tour Operations

The circumstances which package travel requires in order to evolve are large numbers of people affording and willing to travel to a certain destination as well as the technology and destination infrastructure to facilitate the customers. The first package tour in the United Kingdom is suspected to have taken place in 1841 when Thomas Cook organized a day excursion by train from Leicester to Loughborough for 600 holiday-makers. (Yale 1995, 33—35; Laws 1997, 45)

After the Second World War technology has evolved significantly during a short period of time. Consequently, there has been a surplus of aircrafts. In addition many households acquiring televisions which meant that holiday organizers could reach a larger audience at their homes, thus increasing awareness of destinations. Also, as a result of a shared war effort, there has been more equality and democracy in the western societies. Furthermore, education has improved and many workers have received paid holidays which means that population's knowledge of other cultures has increased and for the first time they also afford a short holiday at least once a year. Not only are people able to travel faster and further, but there has also been a growing number of people affording and wanting to travel. (Yale 1994, 37—38; Laws 1997, 6—7)

Since the exclusive holiday industry has evolved significantly, the revolution of internet and the ICT developments that followed set the pace for the changes in the trade for the last two decades. Despite the dynamic nature of tourism, the core product of the package holiday industry has remained the same. Most tour operators sell inclusive packaged tours. In principle, the tour operator's business idea is to bundle together tourism products which create the holiday package. A holiday package usually includes at least return flights, airport transfers and accommodation. As most tour operators are focused on the leisure market, the holiday packages often also include leisure activities in the destination. (Yale 1994, 38—39)

The Package Travel Directive defines a tourist package as a pre-arranged package when sold or offered for sale at an inclusive price and when the

service covers a period of more than twenty-four hours or includes overnight accommodation and includes two of the following: transport, accommodation or other tourist services not ancillary to the transportation or accommodation. Transport as a part of the inclusive holiday package is commonly the return travel to the destination, e.g. by plane, cruise ship or by train, and organized or booked by the operator. Accommodation as an element can for example mean a room in a hotel, a self-catering cabin or a berth in a caravan. The third element in an inclusive package is commonly the return transfers between airport and hotel. Other components of the package can be for example a welcoming service with a guide, organized excursions or activities and travel insurances. (Yale 1994, 3–8)

During the age of internet an increasing number of travelers choose to make their own holiday arrangements. This fact suggests that tour operators are becoming redundant. Arguments for disintermediation of tour operators include that tour operators only act as assemblers and do not add the necessary value to the products and decrease the quality as the packages are directed towards masses. The previously mentioned technological improvements do also allow consumers to book their holidays themselves. On the other hand, tour operators offer specialized service based on experience and put together holiday packages from products offered by individual suppliers. (Buhalis 2003, 254–255)

Tour operators are argued to reduce the insecurity of travel for inexperienced travelers and can offer cheaper prices on holidays. Tour operators are able to buy bulks of tourism products and therefore are in the position to buy the products at lower wholesale prices and consequently can offer their clients better deals on their holidays. Tour operators may have the expertise on certain destinations and therefore offer a specialist service. Often clients also search for the ease of planning a holiday by booking with tour operators; to be free of stress and being assured that everything will go smoothly during their holiday. (Buhalis 2003, 255)

2.2 Different Types of Tour Operators

Tour operators work as an intermediary between the service suppliers and the customer. Because of their presence and interaction with the public they are able to respond to the changing demands of the markets. However, tour operators vary in size and the nature of their operations. Tour operators are often divided between the mass tour operators and specialist operators. In addition, a differentiation is made between overseas and domestic tour operators. Overseas operators sell packages abroad from the tourist generating area. (Laws 1997 152—153)

Tour operators can also be inbound or outbound, meaning that inbound tour operators take care of the arrangements in the destination and outbound operators handle the arrangements from the area which generates customers. Outbound tour operators usually co-operate with the inbound tour operators who can organize meet and greet services, negotiate contracts with coach companies and hotels, organize excursions and offer other specialist services. (Yale 1994, 8—9, 18)

The most significant difference considering the size and strategies is between the mass tour operators and the specialist or niche tour operators. Mass tour operators are large in size and cover numerous amounts of destinations. Specialists, on the contrary, are usually focused on a certain market or selling holidays to a certain geographical area. (Evans—Campbell—Stonehouse 2003, 382.) Mass operators are able to buy bigger bulks of certain tourist products such as hotel rooms and can therefore achieve cost-advantage which increases their market share and sales volumes but does not affect their profit margin. In contrast, niche or specialist tour operators are more focused on value-added strategies and differentiation and make their profit in larger margins. (Buhalis 2003, 242—243.)

Larger tour operators tend to be vertically integrated, which means that the tourism companies on different levels of the distribution chain have integrated, e.g. tour operator owns a hotel or a transportation company in the destination. In other words, a mass operator is in the position to buy companies which are a

part of their tourist packages such as hotels or charter airlines. As a result, the mass operator has more control over the tourism products within the destination.

Paradoxically, tour operators that handle bigger masses of customers are argued to have the most power when it comes to influencing the sustainability of a destination. Although mass tourism is often argued to ruin destination landscape and eco-systems, mass tour operators are responsible for most of the incoming visitors of the destination and therefore the attitude of the company can influence the tourist flows to a destination. The visitor flows can be crucial for a destination during a crisis or if a destination is recovering from a crisis. (Budeanu 2005, 89—97; Cavlek 2002, 480; Sigala 2008, 10—11)

During the past two decades due to the continuously evolving ICT solutions and information being increasingly conveniently available, the customers have become more price-sensitive but also more sophisticated and experienced in travel. This has resulted as a trend away from the usual holiday package offering summer, sun and sea towards more varied destinations, which means that the inclusive holiday market is becoming increasingly complex. Consequently, the mass operators have not been as successful in creating economies of scale by vertical integration as previously. Several niche operators have established successful businesses by discovering new destinations or products. However, some of them have been acquired by the mass operators in order to gain more market share as their traditional advantages have not been successful in the changing markets. When a tour operating company integrates with another company on the same level of the distribution chain, it is referred to as horizontal integration. (Evans—Campbell—Stonehouse 2003, 383—385)

2.3 Tour Operator's Role as Part of the Distribution Chain and a Destination Stakeholder

A tour operator is an intermediary between the destination and the markets. As destinations are geographically located a long distance from their customers, the tour operators that are based close to the generating markets. As wholesalers they are an important part of the distribution chain regarding

product design, pricing, promotion and most of all distribution. Tour operators decide which products are featured and how they are presented to the prospective customers. Tour operators are also a valuable source of market trends and can therefore help in planning new tourism developments as they deal with the public. (UNWTO 2010, 9)

As an intermediary tour operators help the destination bridge gaps between the supplier and the customer. The first gap they fill is the time-to-market. Tour operators as intermediaries can communicate with the customers in the market area as well as have products for sale in a short amount of time. Thus, co-operation with tour operators grants suppliers wider coverage of the markets. This leads to the second gap which is knowledge of the market. In addition, tour operators tend to put a lot of effort in their online presence so that the customers can conveniently find them. Tour operators know their markets and know how to communicate with them when it comes to their expectations or need for information during the sales process as well as marketing of the destination. Lastly, this offers convenient points-of-sale for the supplier. Therefore suppliers save in their operating costs regarding sales. Some reasons why suppliers might choose not to work with intermediaries could be the loss of margin which they do not want to pay the distributor or loss of marketing control and dominance over the process. (Buhalis—Laws 2001, 35)

Distribution is one of the most important element of competitiveness for a destination and the suppliers within the destination. Traditionally a supplier would work with a wholesaler or a distributor who would then assemble a combination of products into a tourist package and distribute their product through agents who sell it to the customers. A supplier can either work directly with a tour operator or a destination management organization. If a supplier chooses to co-operate with a destination management company, the DMC usually would help them market and price their products for international tour operators. On the next level the DMC could operate as a wholesaler or as an incoming operator for tour operators, selling several individual destination products to the tour operator. This saves tour operator the time of contacting each individual supplier. (Buhalis—Laws 2001, 33—36.) As technologies used

in travel, e.g. booking and ticketing service technology, many tour operators have taken the roles of travel agents themselves which has led to disintermediation of agents and cutting off commissions from the costs for the operators. Various travel agents have developed new strategies for surviving in the changing business environment, for example by focusing on a niche market. (Buhalis 2003, 255.)

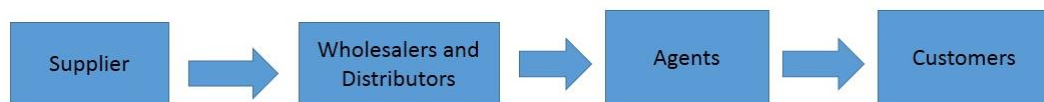


Figure 1. Traditional Distribution Chain (Buhalis 2003)

3 OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT - NORRBOTTEN AS A DESTINATION

3.1 Norrbotten as a Destination

Norrbotten is the largest and northernmost province of Sweden sharing borders with both Finland and Norway. Norrbotten consists of 14 municipalities; Boden, Jokkmokk, Luleå, Älvsbyn, Arjeplog, Gällivare, Kalix, Pajala, Övertorneå, Arvidsjaur, Haparanda, Kiruna, Piteå and Övertorneå. The total population of the Norrbotten is approximately 250 000 of which about 170 000 live in the greater coastal area of Luleå which is also the administrative centre of the area. The main industries are mining, forestry and agriculture in addition to tourism, which has been quickly developing and relatively new industry competing with the iron ore mining. (Norrbotten County Administrative Board 2010.) From 2010 to 2011, tourism-related income has increased by 5% in the province and the overall amount of 2.4 million overnights per year (Tillväxtverket 2012).

The whole region of Norrbotten is marketed as Swedish Lapland to travel consumers. The marketing and destination management tasks of the whole area are carried out by destination management organisation Swedish Lapland. The area is marketed with the elements such as aurora borealis, pure nature, outdoor activities, local food, Sami culture and the midnight sun. (Swedish Lapland 2013.) The most internationally well-known tourist destinations are Treehotel in Harads, the ICEHOTEL in Jukkasjärvi, Kiruna Space Station and the Aurora Sky Station in Abisko (Tillväxtverket 2012).

Swedish Lapland as a destination management organisation carries out co-operation with both Visit Sweden, which is the national tourist board of Sweden, as well as Visit Luleå, the local destination management organisation which is a part of Swedish Lapland. Together Visit Luleå and Swedish Lapland co-operate with the local suppliers helping them penetrate international markets effectively through marketing, liaising with international distributors and internal destination development. Swedish Lapland also co-operates with local tourism product suppliers as a distributor of the products conducting wholesale of various products by suppliers who have agreed to offer consistent pricing. Swedish Lapland also co-operates with destination management companies such as Luleå Guided Tours. Consequently, Swedish Lapland fills a gap

between the international distributors such as tour operators and the local suppliers by offering a service, which saves time for the international distributors when they make sales with the end-customers in their market area. (Jokela 2012a; Richardson 2012)

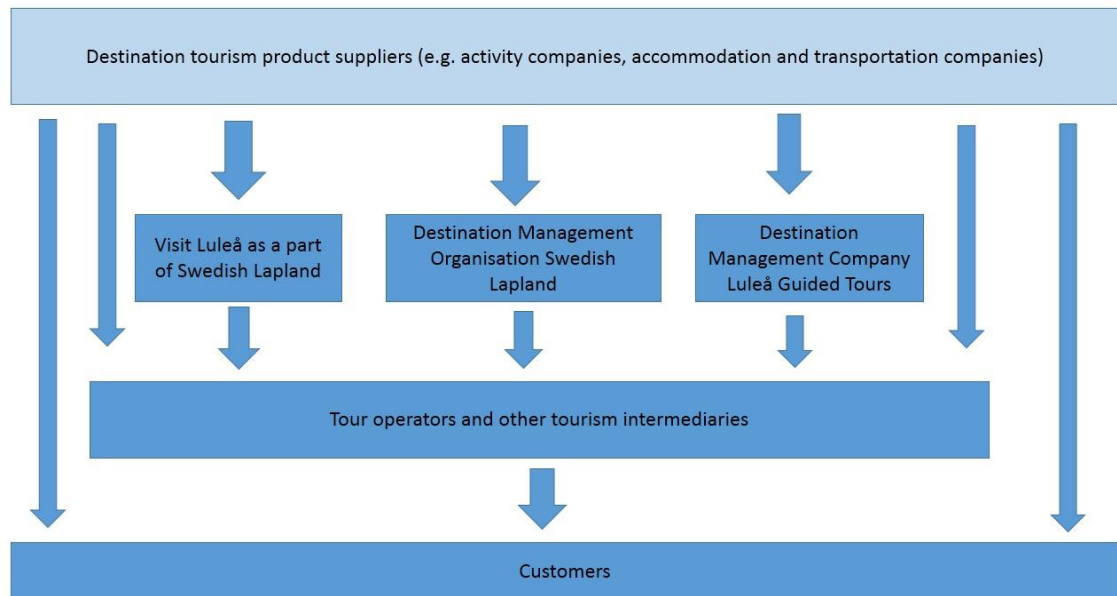


Figure 2. Tourism Distribution Chain Structure in Norrbotten Area. (Richardson 2012; Jokela 2012a)

The whole region of Norrbotten does not concern this tourist package although other destinations can be combined with this holiday package for a tailored multi-destination tourist package. The area of this thesis consists of Luleå and parts of the smaller bordering villages of Boden, Älvsbyn and Piteå which are all accessible from Luleå. The reason why this package also contains areas outside of Luleå is that a number of tourism products included in the tourist package are located in these regions and are easily accessible from Luleå due to existing transportation infrastructure.

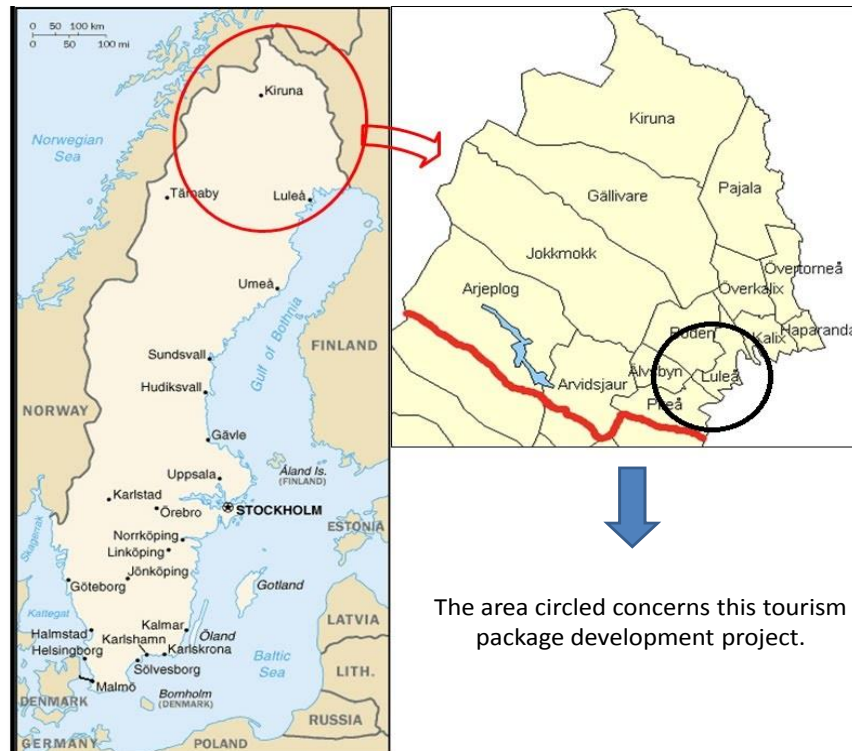


Figure 3. Operational Area Concerning This Project (adapted from Norrbotten County Council 2010)

An international tourist can access Luleå by plane, train or coach. Currently most flights to Luleå Kallax airport arrive via Stockholm with approximately 1 million passengers a year (Swedavia 2013). Luleå can also be reached within the same day from Finland by train or coach from Tornio-Haparanda and from Norway by train from Narvik. The travel time to Luleå from cities such as London and Berlin is less than 5 hours which indicates that the destination is within relatively easy reach from large European cities with international airports (See Figure 3). The tourist attractions in the area of Luleå include the old church town of Gammelstad and the coast, archipelago and inland river valleys provide operational environments for activities like snow shoeing, snow mobileing, ice karting, hover craft safaris, skiing, ice fishing and dog sledding during winter time (Visit Luleå 2012).



Figure 4. Example of Flight Routes to Luleå (Visit Luleå 2012)

3.2 Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Tourism in the area of Norrbotten is increasing and development efforts are made to ensure the competitiveness of the area. However, tourism in Sweden is still undeveloped compared to competing bordering destinations such as Norway and Finland. One of the reasons for this is that public bodies have not previously showed interest in the tourism sector and its development. (Tillväxtverket 2011.) Similarly, one of the challenges in tourism for Norrbotten is the local government's interest in production-related industries (Tillväxtverket 2012). However, on the international markets Norrbotten has many excelling tourism products in comparison, and has more overnights than the rest of the country (Regional Council of Lapland 2011).

Tourism products which Swedish Lapland has focused on are targeted towards a niche market with unique products for clients with higher disposable income e.g. spacetourism in Kiruna (Richardson 2012). However, there has not yet been a similar success story to the ICEHOTEL in Swedish Lapland or in the whole Scandinavia (O'dell 2005, 31—32). Therefore, Swedish Lapland's goal is not to become a mass destination, but to be successful in offering steady income to those who work in the tourism industry (Richardson 2012; Regional Council of Lapland 2011). Meanwhile, the tourism entrepreneurs have developed their co-operation in order to save in costs (Regional Council of Lapland 2011).

The whole area of Norrbotten is marketed under the brand of Swedish Lapland. As locals may perceive the distinction between the areas inside Norrbotten differently than what is conveyed to international tourism product consumers, this may lead to conflicts in the destination. When a traveller has specifically bought a trip to Swedish Lapland, the experience may be ruined by a local attitude of Norrbotten not being a part of Lapland. This can be resolved by including the local people in the brand development, so that all actors within the destination understand the meaning and concept of Swedish Lapland. (Regional Council of Lapland 2011)

A number of tourism providers in Swedish Lapland are focusing on environmentally friendly sources of energy e.g. the Treehotel. Also, energy costs in the area are low. Together with the growing awareness of environmental issues and demand for eco-tourism from the traveling public, this is one of the strengths of the area. However, this may lead to complaints about renewable energy source production facilities ruining the landscapes. (Regional Council of Lapland 2011)

Previously tourism in Norrbotten has been to a great extent focused on conference and MICE tourism due to the presence of production and technology industry. However, the amount of bed spaces may not always meet the demand and especially Luleå occasionally let's the conference tourism drift outside of its borders. (Richardson 2012.) Because of the presence of technology industry, there are opportunities in cross-industry co-operation in the field of tourism which could attract investment, e.g. space tourism and cold conditions testing.

Overall, Swedish Lapland is branded and marketed with the elements of the host's hospitality, local raw materials and food, authenticity, contrasts, safety and clean nature (Regional Council of Lapland 2011). In the area of Coastal Lapland the brackish water freezes over during the winter creating opportunities for various winter activities in the area of the archipelago. In addition, it creates a habitat for unique marine life which makes the archipelago a possible area of growth for tourism when it is marketed with the right products to meet the interest of the consumers (Richardson 2012).

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> +internationally unique climate and raw materials +Travel industry is well-developed and due to geographical location year-round tourism is possible +Swedish Lapland has done consistent brand development focusing on authenticity, contrasts, safety and host's hospitality +Focus on creating unique experiences for niche markets - not a mass tourism destination +More overnights than other regions in Sweden +Co-operation between entrepreneurs for saving costs and offering more flexibility in services for clients +Using environmentally friendly sources of energy (water and wind) +Sami culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The amount of bed spaces and their quality (5 star and for big conference groups) -Lack of bigger networks in tourism -The attitudes of locals towards the use of the term Lapland in marketing ("Norrbotten is not Lapland")
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> +Cross-industry co-operation in order to develop business and investment opportunities in the area +Niche-markets such as weddings, food tourism and MICE +Nature and eco tourism, local ingredients and raw materials +A successful destination does not need to be a mass destination, +Spaceport Sweden in Kiruna, spaceturism +Involving locals in the Lapland brand +Mining industry +Energy industry - the lowest energy costs +Cold conditions testing +Archipelago 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Negative attitudes towards sustainable energy sources such as water and wind as they might ruin the landscapes -The amount of bed spaces cannot always meet the demand (large conferences)

Figure 5. SWOT Analysis of Tourism in Norrbotten. (Adapted from Regional Council of Lapland 2011)

4 DEVELOPMENT PROCESS OF THE HOLIDAY PACKAGE IN SWEDISH LAPLAND

4.1 Magnetic North Travel Ltd.

Magnetic North Travel is an online-based tour operator specialised in arranging holidays to the Nordic regions for individual leisure travellers. The holidays that Magnetic North offers combine high-standard accommodation with outdoor activities. The accommodation can be cabin or hotel accommodation for example. The value that Magnetic North as a specialist tour operator adds to a holiday package is the travel experience and knowledge of the Nordic regions. (Magnetic North 2013; Greenman 2012)

The business philosophy of Magnetic North is based on the Scandinavian concept of friluftsliv which means learning by being in nature. This is why all holiday packages include outdoors activities or give the client a chance to choose their own from a hand-picked menu with the help of a travel consultant who assists the client to assemble a tour itinerary. This presents customers flexibility and freedom to tailor holiday suitable for their schedule and priorities. The holidays Magnetic North sells always offer the possibility to learn about the local way of life and respect for nature in past and present. (Magnetic North Travel 2013; Jokela 2011)

The product development and search for new products and holiday package development is carried out in active contact with the individual suppliers, the local destination management and marketing organizations and the national tourist board. The tour operator becomes acquainted with new destinations and providers in that area by attending workshops or familiarization trips organised by the national tourist board and the local destination management organization in addition to traveling to the area independently. Once providers are discovered and the packages established for the market, the importance of communication and feedback between the suppliers is a considerable part of the ongoing product development for both the supplier and the tour operator. (Greenman 2012; Jokela 2011)

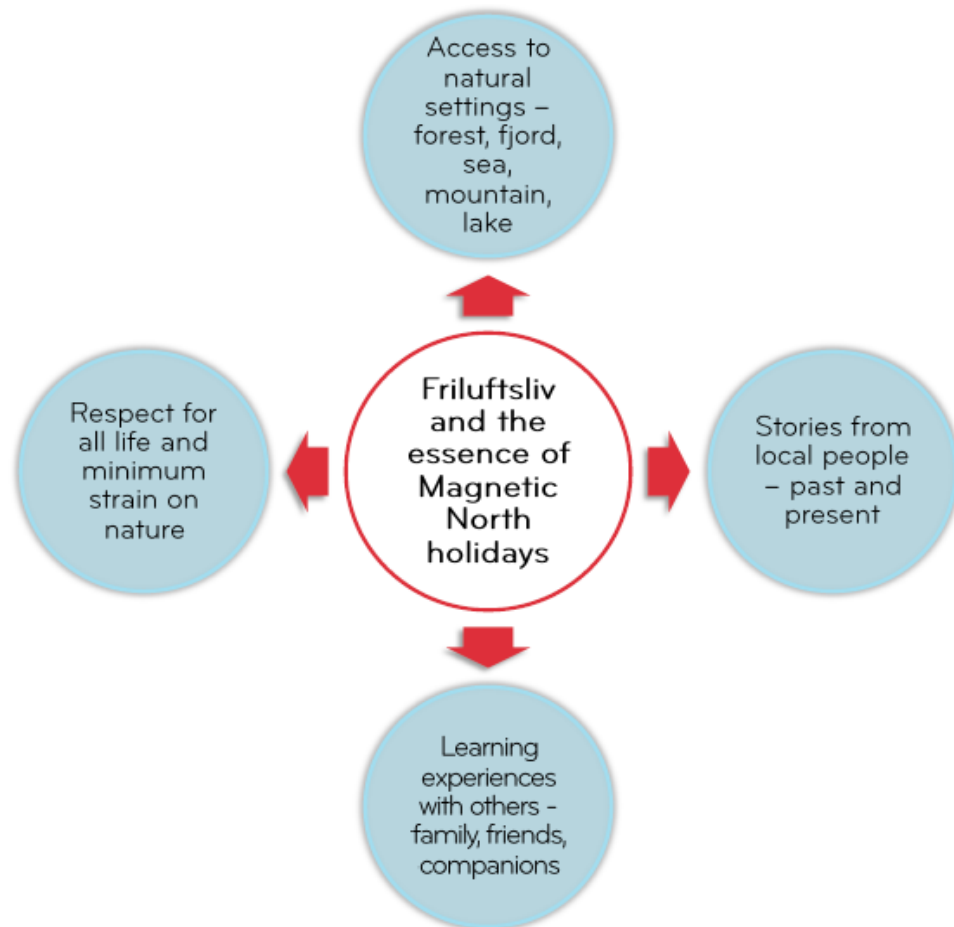


Figure 6. Friluftsliv and the Essence of Magnetic North Holidays (Magnetic North 2010)

The sales process at Magnetic North follows the guidelines of customer co-creation. In the sales process co-creation concerning the tailor made packages the sales person does not have the total control of the final itinerary. Instead the process takes place in an active dialogue and consultation between the specialist and the client. (Jokela 2011.) A company must be able to facilitate and provide customer with opportunities for this to happen and welcome the client into the process using certain guidelines or a blue print of the service encounter (Winsor 2006, 137). Each product or element of the holiday is booked individually from either a destination management company or independent suppliers (Greenman 2012).

A tailored holiday by Magnetic North consists of several different destination components, e.g. transportation, activities or accommodation, which can be

combined based on availability and customer's choices. Thus, the production of the service is linked with varying customer needs. This can be defined as modularity, where a system of complementary products that are joined together to create the final product. (Sanchez—Mahoney 1996, 65.) However, in tourism the line between the process and the products is hard to describe. In essence modularization means that the services are standardized, but they can be recombined as modules for a service package. In this case, a service provider creates value by offering the customer various standard service modules from which they can choose to bundle their own personalised package. As customers are internalized into the production process through interaction, they become co-creators instead of just receivers of the product. (Pekkarinen—Ulkuniemi, 2007)

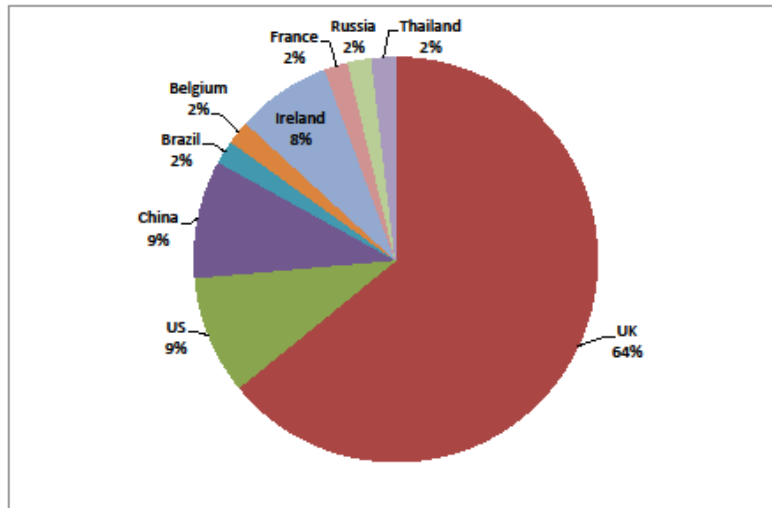
Most of the holidays are booked online by providing consultation through e-mails and online brochures which can be modified to meet the preferences of the client. Every destination has a sample holiday brochure with a core package which can be modified for customer needs. As specialist operators often tend to be more devoted to the area of their expertise, at Magnetic North the consultants are also prepared to spend more time in consulting and advising the clients of different destinations and options available for them which adds quality and value to the products. The service is personal and this theme continues once the customers reach their destination with the local providers who co-create the experience with the clients. The expected optimum outcome of the holiday booked with Magnetic North is that the clients would return from their holiday with their own story to tell from the 'Magnetic North' with knowledge passed on to them by their local guides. (Jokela 2011)

The clients of the company come from diverse cultural backgrounds which is why it can be assumed that a modularized product model works better than a single standard product when customers have varying preferences for their holiday. On average, more than half of the customer base of Magnetic North is from the United Kingdom. However, the rest of the clients are of various nationalities. More than a third of the clients are in their thirties, and almost 40% are older than in their thirties, the rest are mixed family groups and the

smallest group are clients in their twenties. (See Figure 6, Magnetic North 2012)

MAGNETIC NORTH TRAVEL CLIENT DATA – 2011 – 2012

1. MARKET – WHERE THE CLIENTS LIVE



2. AGE

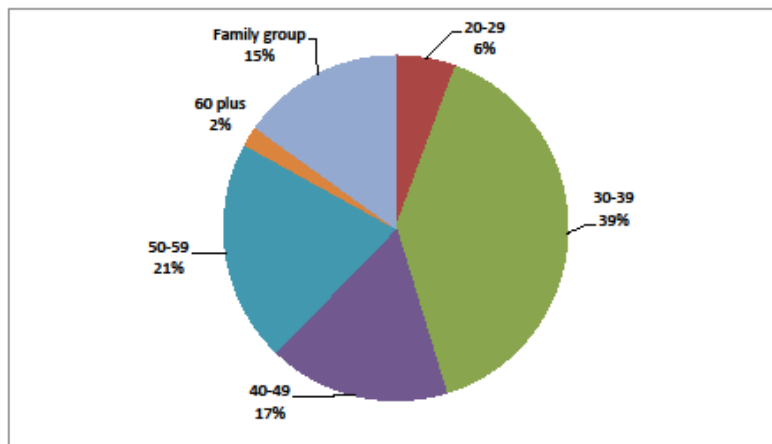


Figure 7. Magnetic North Travel Client Data 2011-2012 (Magnetic North Travel 2012)

4.2 Thesis Process as Holiday Package Development Process

4.2.1 General Description of the Development Process

The project process progressed in four phases from idea generation to the launch the fine-tuned package for sale on the Magnetic North website. During the first phase I was completing my advanced practical training at Magnetic North at their office in Nottingham, United Kingdom in the fall semester of 2011. During the training I participated in sales, package development, marketing as well as liaising with individual suppliers and destination management organisation representatives. Towards the end of the training period I began generating the idea of creating a tourist package in the area of Luleå in the county of Norrbotten, Sweden, as I had travelled there independently previously. Prior to returning from my advanced training, the company received an invitation to a familiarization trip in Luleå which began actualising the original holiday package idea.

The second phase of the project process started with preparation for the familiarization trip by searching for literature regarding tour operations, distribution channels in services and destination development. Empirical data from the familiarisation trip was gathered in the form of a field diary which contains my participant observations. During the familiarization trip I gained first-hand experience of the tourism products in the area as well as the standard of services and infrastructure. Moreover, the pre-packaging phase of the tourist package commenced after returning from the trip as the participants also received product cards of individual tourism products and pricing information. Based on my experiences in the destination I started developing the ideas for the sample package and the online brochure.

After searching and reading background literature and gathering empirical data in the form of participant observation during a familiarization trip and interviews with the key people involved. The people interviewed were the Managing Director of Magnetic North and the Project and Marketing Manager of Visit Luleå. The first task in forming the interviews was to define the interview method and then find suitable themes for the interviews. The main goal of the interviews was to gather further data on the commissioner's values and wishes

for the product as well as information about Luleå as a destination in order to evaluate how the destination brand and offerings meet with the brand of the tour operator. Primarily, the interviews helped to conclude the final decisions regarding the commercialization of this holiday package and the unique selling points included in the sample package.

The interviews were based on themes which were selected from literature regarding destination development and themes found in the Tourism Strategy of Finnish Lapland as well as discussions with the commissioner. The empirical data collection ended in the end of May 2012 with the interviews. The interviews revealed that Magnetic North and Luleå are compatible as Magnetic North is a specialist operator and Luleå is targeting niche markets and tailored, high-quality experiences for travellers. The fact that the destination's goal is not to become a mass destination makes it a suitable partner for specialist operators. In addition, the market segments are similar in terms of geographical and socio-cultural markets. Furthermore, the interviews brought into light the challenges and opportunities of the destination in the future.

Following the interviews I analyzed the compatibility of Luleå as a destination and Magnetic North Travel Ltd as a tour operator. After the analysis, I produced the holiday package to Luleå basing it on the tailored holiday package template used by Magnetic North and the material provided by Visit Luleå. Visit Luleå is a part of Swedish Lapland which also acts as a wholesaler of a number of individual tourist products based in the destination. The pricing is based on a certain margin or commission that some of the suppliers have agreed to. As suppliers usually want to see their products sold with a consistent price, the commission is defined in the pricing provided by Visit Luleå. As pricing is one of the business secrets of tour operators, it will not be covered any further in the public part of this project.

As a result of this project I created a holiday package suitable for the sales process of Magnetic North. Lastly, the ready holiday package was sent to the company for evaluation and approval. Shortly after the approval the product was launched on the website of Magnetic North where it is currently being sold

for international clients. Since its launch, the product has been purchased by UK clients.

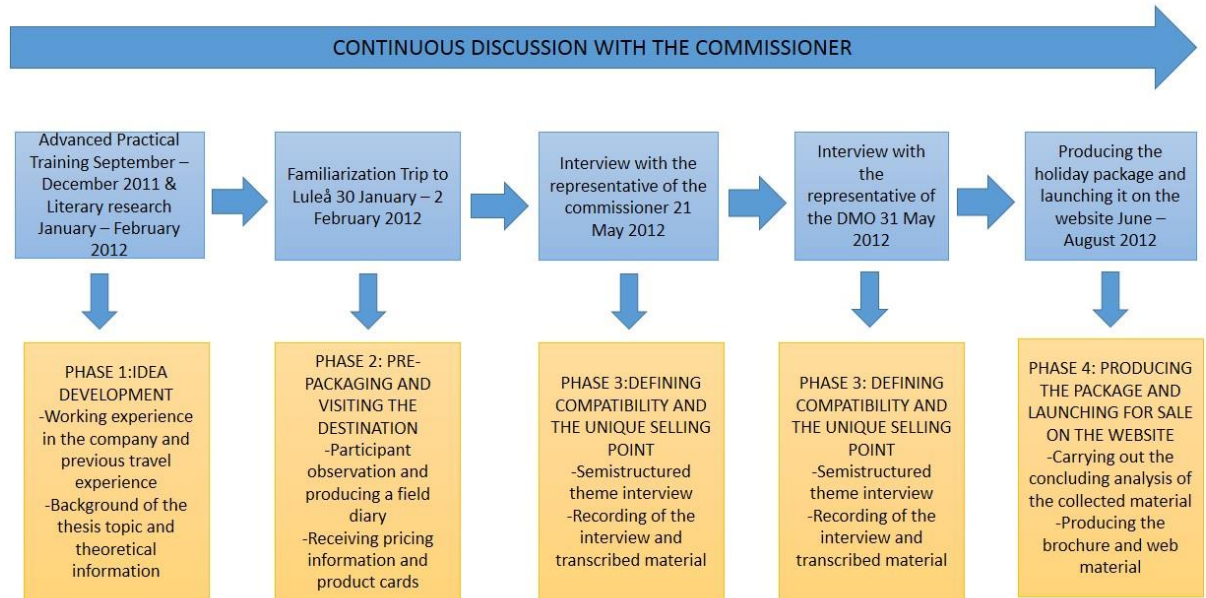


Figure 8. Product Development Process as Thesis Process (Jokela 2012)

4.2.2 Visiting the Destination and Pre-packaging

The familiarization trip organised by VisitSweden and VisitLuleå in co-operation with Scandinavian Airlines 30 January – 2 February 2011 was the point where the idea of creating the holiday package in Luleå started actualising. As I was based in Finland during the time, I did not arrive by the flights provided by Scandinavian Airlines from London via Stockholm to Luleå Kallax airport. Material gathered and received as well as experiences that resulted progressed to the second phase of the project where I began the pre-packaging of the individual products.

Familiarization trips are organised by regional destination management organisations in co-operation with the national tourism organisation. The goal of a familiarization trip is to give tour operators and travel agents an overall view of the destination and mutually beneficial networking opportunities between the suppliers and the tour operators. Participating on familiarization trips and different tours are essential for specialist tour operators as they need to be able to provide their clients up-to-date information on the destinations. After a

familiarization trip has been planned, the representatives of the national and regional tourist boards usually contact tour operators and travel agents with an invitation to a familiarization trip. On some occasions familiarization trips are organised in combination with press trips.

The research method used during this trip was participant observation. Participant observation is an ethnographic field research method where the purpose is to document the surroundings and happenings in a certain time period. The aim is to participate in the experiences and interactions and observe them all at the same time. Documentation may be limited to structured observations which are planned and usually follow a guide such as questions or themes that the observer focuses on. As contrast, unstructured observations do not follow a guide but allow for more flexibility. (Hume—Mulcock, 2005, 2)

The material which resulted was a field diary of observations during the trip. Concurrently with the days full of activities I wrote field notes and took photos to aid my memory. In the evenings I tried to write down all the observations I regarded primarily important for the commissioner and the development of the holiday package. The themes that were considered essential were customer experience and participation as well as standard and quality of the tourism products. Moreover, I kept a note of my own thoughts and feelings as well as the remarks of other participants. As the participants were all tourism professionals, some of the remarks and comments they made were helpful concerning steering my attention to elements I perhaps wouldn't have noticed myself. In essence, my task was to attempt to evaluate the tourism products just like a client who had purchased a holiday from Magnetic North would as well as as a tourism professional.

Outdoor Activities and Weather Conditions

In an ideal setting during a familiarization trip a participant would experience tourism products just as their clients would. However, often the time constraints only allow for brief tasters of some products. As in all outdoor tourism products, weather plays a major role on the activities. Before the realization of this familiarization trip the winter had been unusually mild but the temperatures had

suddenly plunged below -20 degrees celcius for most of the duration of the trip. These circumstances created challenges in organising some of the outdoor activities such as pack ice excursions to the Bothnian Bay as they require thick ice.

The representative of the local destination management organization who was also the project leader informed us that the ice situation is not as good as it normally is as the weather had been quite mild this year and one of the participants asked him if there would be enough ice for our ice related activities to which he did not have a definite answer. (Jokela 2012)

The drive to our next location in the shore of the Bothnian Bay took about 25 minutes from the centre of the town. The air was very crisp this morning and the thermometer on the bus had gone down to -29 C the previous night. It was about -25 C. We were met by couple of smiling men outside what seemed to be the main building. They shook hands with everyone and they laughingly told us that we better move inside for a coffee since it is a little chilly. (Jokela 2012)

I heard the DMO representative on the phone. After he was done with the phone call he said that he had just been on the phone with the provider and it might be that the hover craft tour might not be possible in these conditions. We were also informed that because it had been such a mild winter until now, the ice is not thick enough for the hover craft to take us all the way out to see the pack ice. (Jokela 2012)

Safety in Tourism Products

As the area is located just 100 kilometers below the Arctic Circle, the winters are cold but the weather can also change, which makes safety a very essential part of the tourism products. For example, many of the clients may have no experience of driving a snow mobile, which may make the safety briefing an important part of the customer experience and confidence to try new activities. In addition to knowing how to operate vehicles, clients coming from warmer climates often also prefer to take part in excursions where warm thermal winter clothing is provided for them.

When we stepped outside, the guide gathered us around one snowmobile and gave us a short one-minute briefing of how to drive as most of us had driven a snow mobiles before. We were basically told where to find the gas and brake. We were also

advised to keep a 15 meter safety distance from one another. One of the participants was a bit hesitant and told the guide that she felt that she had not been very good at driving a snow mobile before and ended up not participating on the tour. (Jokela 2012)

The snowmobiles were quite new and could accelerate to 100 km/h effortlessly. After that the guide turned on all of the snowmobiles and put the head lights on as well. He made sure we were all seated on the back of our snowmobiles and then we drove off from the yard to the frozen lake. There were five of us in the group including the guide which made it easy for us to make stops and hear the guidance during the breaks. The snowmobiling tour lasted for about an hour and took us on the icy lake and the forest. There were no steep hills on the way which made it easy for beginners. We stopped two times. First time the guide just asked us if we were ok and told us that we should take our time and travel at a speed that felt comfortable without taking any stress. (Jokela 2012)



Figure 9. Snow mobiling excursion (Jokela 2012)

When we went outside the snow mobiles were already placed in a line. I had no idea how they had gotten them there that quickly as they were not there before we went in to put the thermal winter clothing on. When the guides joined us, they first gave us a briefing on how to drive the snowmobile. One of them began with showing us the controls such as gas and brake. At this point I was curious as to what this safety briefing would be like as one of the participants had previously decided not to join the other snowmobiling excursion. After this the guide asked one of us to sit on a snow mobile. He then asked us if we knew how to use our weight on a snow mobile. Then he lifted the snow mobile from the front and told her to use her body to keep the snow mobile in balance by leaning forward. Most of us had to share snow mobiles which I thought was smart because the tour was not going to be a short one (at least 2 hours). Surprisingly I saw the participant who had

previously been hesitant getting on the driver's seat of one of the snow mobiles. (Jokela 2012)



Figure 10. Wearing Thermal Winter Clothing on a Snowmobiling Excursion (Jokela 2012)

Physical Settings

Physical settings play a key role in participant observations. An observer is more likely to pay attention to the social implications of the surroundings rather than the plain surroundings as they are. The observations of physical surroundings include size of the space, lighting, colour, sounds, objects and smells. (Bailey 2007, 84.) A hotel room, a restaurant or a safari office may have a crucial impact on the way customer views the value of the experience. Whether the observed space is outdoors or a hotel room, it is important for a tour operator that it corresponds to the way it is marketed to the end-customer.

When we arrived to the hotel, there was a stuffed lynx greeting us with a rather scary grin in the hallway. At the reception there was also a stuffed wolf, a one-year-old female as the plate stated. There was also a member of the staff greeting us. The hotel had been decorated in a very Lappish/Northern hunting lodge style, the smell of the wood from the walls instantly filled my nose and reminded me of the summers at the cottage. What caught my attention were the lamps that had been made of a dead standing tree. In some places there were decorations that resembled Sami drums with some Lappish style symbols. (Jokela 2012)



Figure 11. Hotel Reception Area. (Jokela 2012)

As we walked to the restaurant it was hard to miss that there was a stuffed bear in the corridor which led to the restaurant. As someone petted the bear, I noticed that it was not in a very good condition. Especially the nose was rather worn off by all the petting it had received over the years. (Jokela 2012)

Size 36 was the smallest one they had in thermal boots. Later on I chatted with another participant who had been able to get up to size 48 boots. As we were divided in two groups, I was also soon given a winter hat and a helmet for driving a snowmobile. (Jokela 2012)

The NTO representative came to fetch us to a large wooden lavvu building in a teepee shape where we would have our dinner. The others were already sitting on bar stools by the open fire. The whole space was lit with natural light – either candles or the fire that also kept the room warm. We were seated in one of the longer tables. The food was served by the owner alone. He served us wine and local salmon. Before the food, we were served aperitifs, vodka on a glass shaped like an ice stick. For desert we had was panna cotta with cloudberry on top. (Jokela 2012)

They had less than ten rooms in the building right next to the main building. The rooms were typical twins that could be made in to a double by pushing the two together which the participants from the UK found quite peculiar although they knew that it was quite common in Sweden. Down in the corridor one could find a shared bathroom. I thought it was not consistent with the quality of the excellent meal we had just enjoyed in the hotel restaurant. I also overheard that the cabins on the shore (which we did not get to see as they are not in use during the winter) did not have electricity or running water. (Jokela 2012)



Figure 12. Hotel Rooms (Jokela 2012)

Observations of the Reactions of Participants

During the familiarization trip I also took notes of some of the reactions of other participants and my own thoughts and experiences. As tourism professionals, they were very valuable as evaluators of the experiences. Destination management organizations also gather feedback from tour operators or other intermediary representatives as they deal directly with the public and are more likely to give an honest opinion of the products as well as suggestions for improving the services.

I noticed one of the participants who was taking landscape photos down to the Valley was mentioning that there was a road beneath us. Not a very busy one, but I could see a truck driving there. I did not notice it at first, but now that he had pointed it out, it was hard not to be bothered by it. He noted that it kind of ruined the experience of being out there in the forest. (Jokela 2012)

The meal was delicious and presented in an original gourmet style. I heard someone pointing out that it was a bit sad to eat what you had just seen walking in the forest. As most of the participants had tried dishes made of Lappish game before, the previous comment was soon replaced with praises. (Jokela 2012)



Figure 13. Locally sourced restaurant meal (Jokela 2012)

There was also some uphill with ropes to hold onto right before we reached the Cabin. I could hear the excited exclamations and people exclaiming “Oh my god, I’m so excited!”. The next tree room could be seen from the Cabin and it was Blue Cone. Right next to the Blue Cone, maybe 100 meters away was the Mirror Cube. (Jokela 2012)



Figure 14. The Treehotel (Jokela 2012)

I heard one of the participants being giving positive comments about the hover craft even though she had not participated on the snow mobiling or the snow karting on the first night. However, she was now saying that she would warmly recommend the hover craft experience. (Jokela 2012)



Figure 15. Hovercraft, Excursion at Luleå Archipelago (Jokela 2012)

Although it was quite a cold day, the sun was shining from a cloudless sky making it a beautiful day to be out on the ice. As we drove further out, there was barely any land in the horizon which made the frozen sea seem like a vast desert of snow and ice. (Jokela 2012)



Figure 16. Excursion at Luleå Archipelago. (Jokela 2012)

Local Culture in Tourism Products

Tour operators are often seen as only the compilers and distributors of tourism products. However, some operators do present cultural products with stories, histories and symbolism. Tourists encounter various sights in a destination and need mediators to assist the tourist in making sense of all the information surrounding them in a historical and local context. Tour guides can be cultural mediators that engage in activities with the tourists and offer information that make the sights meaningful. Cultural mediators can also appeal to tourist's emotions by directing their attention to certain sights. Thus, encounters with these cultural mediators largely impact the tourist's experience of the destination. However, the tourist can freely interpret the meanings and create their own understanding of the authenticity of local culture which may not

always be what the mediators aim at. The goal in its simplicity is that tourists have the sense of having experienced local culture. (Ooi 2002, 80—82)

The others were quite far ahead as I could not see them but still heard one of the participants and the guide chattering behind me so I stopped to take some landscape photos. When the owner caught up with me, he pointed out that there was a moose standing on the frozen lake about 2 kilometers from us. It was facing right towards us and it almost felt as if it was looking right back at us. I was rather impressed by his ability to spot wild life from such a distance. Even though the moose was quite far away, it was easily visible once you knew where to look. The guide helped me to get a steady shot with my camera by placing his walking stick on the snow and holding it in place whilst I took my photos. We exchanged a few words about hunting. He told me that he does not hunt moose but smaller game such as birds. He also told us that the Sami herders usually bring their reindeer along the Valley for grazing and it is the best time for spotting some wildlife. (Jokela 2012)



Figure 17. View to the River Valley on a snowhoeing tour (Jokela 2012)

When we got out of the sleighs at precisely 5 o'clock, most of us were already taking pictures of the reindeer that the Sami family we were meeting had brought along with them. There was a calf and two adult reindeer, one of them completely white. The Sami family greeted us and the mother immediately started to tell us about the eight seasons the Sami traditionally divide the year. As there were quite many people circled around them, I doubt that all of us could hear them and some were just focusing on taking photos rather than listening. (Jokela 2012)

Then the family moved on to the other side of the lavvu where they had set some Sami artifacts; a small sledge, shoes made of reindeer skin, baby cradle, an engagement box, a women's dress and some children's clothing. She also told us stories about her daughter (now 21 years old) when she was a baby and she used to lie in the baby cradle made of reindeer skin. Once she had dropped the cradle and her heart had fell but then it turned out that the baby was just fine in the cradle – the story's purpose was to show how steadily the baby is tucked in inside the cradle. After a couple questions about the clothing (shoes being tucked with hay for insulation, for example) the mother asked if we were cold and she gestured towards the lavvu (a traditional teepee-type of accommodation). We stepped in and she added some wood to the fire. It was really nice and cosy sitting inside. At first there were just three of us inside the lavvu as some of the others were still talking to the father of the family. She asked us if we wanted some fish soup and handed us some from the steel pot she had heating up next to the fire. As people were coming in and settling inside the lavvu, there was a more relaxed atmosphere and questions from processing reindeer meat and the current state of Sami language and education were flying around the small space as the mother calmly answered each question one by one. All in all I found the experience very informative and honest. (Jokela 2012)



Figure 18. Sami culture tourism product (Jokela 2012)

Customer Participation and Co-Creation

Traditionally customership in tourism had meant that a tourist is a faceless part in a statistic. As tourism products are generally consumed as they are produced, in a holistic manner customer would be a part of the process, a co-creator of the tourism product. (García-Rosell et al. 2010.) Hence it was important to pay attention to customer participation on each product. Especially outdoors activities often require some active participation on the customer's behalf as being challenged often partly creates the feeling of a unique

experience. However, in some activity products customers who lack knowledge and experience may be hesitant to take the role of an active participant, for example on dog sledding or snow mobiling excursions. Nevertheless, it is important that customer has the opportunity to participate and and act as co-creators if they choose to do so.

After we got off the snowmobiles at about 16.30, we followed the owner and guide to the shore of the lake where we found two ice karts. The owner suggested that the women will drive first, so I got behind the wheel. There was a rather short track but it had plenty of turns to make it interesting. He showed us how the karts work. As they were already running, he only needed to show us the break and gas. After a few laps, I gave mine over to the men to try. We were not wearing helmets as it would be impossible for the kart to fall or the driver to fall off from it. The karts did not have a reverse, which is why every time we drove off the track into the snow, we had to push the kart back on the track. (Jokela 2012)



Figure 19. Ice karting (Jokela 2012)

As we were standing in a line taking photos, the owner and his colleague had conveniently time and space to set the snowshoeing equipment on their right spots. Then he asked us to gather around him so that he could show how the shoes were used. He called it the “first test of intelligence during the excursion”. I among a few others had to ask for help with the shoes as they were quite stiff to fasten. The walking sticks were mostly one size and quite long for the shortest participants. Soon I realized that it did not quite matter on the snow if they were longer but more likely to help push oneself forward. His colleague took the lead and the group followed him to the forest. I was at the end of the line in front of one of the participants and the owner who was the last one making sure everyone was fine and no one got lost. (Jokela 2012)



Figure 20. Snowshoeing excursion in the River Valley (Jokela 2012)

Figure 21. Preparing for the snowshoeing excursion (Jokela 2012)

A woman came to guide us to the dogs where sleds had already put in place and ready only some of the dogs were missing from the harnesses. She told us that they have about 60 dogs. Again, some of the people who had been with dogs before went straight to pet them whereas the rest seemed a bit unsure and maybe a bit put off by all the noise made by the eager huskies. There were four mushers all in all setting up the sledges. We stood there for quite a while and started getting a bit cold in our overalls. I was appointed to sit in a long sledge with four other people. We were not going to drive sledges but sit and enjoy the tour. We were the second last sledge to leave for the tour. I noticed one of the workers was following us with a snow mobile. As I had never been on a dog sledding tour before, I was not sure if it was a safety measure. The tour took us through a forest, onto the frozen lake. On the final uphill before we reached the safari house, our husky sledge got pulled to the side to the soft snow and three of us got up and walked for the rest of the journey. All in all the tour lasted for about 40 minutes. When we got off the sledges, we headed straight to the warmth of the fire in the lavvu where we were served hot drinks and pastries. (Jokela 2012)



Figure 22. Husky Sledding Tour and Warming Up in a Lavvu Afterwards (Jokela 2012)

After the trip I reported my experiences and opinions of the services I tested during the trip to the commissioner. In addition, I shared my own recommendations of places to visit and suggest to clients, as well as tips and practical information regarding travelling in Luleå in general because I had previously travelled there several times myself. This would be useful in the future when product packages to Sweden are sold as Magnetic North as a specialist tour operator must be able to provide the added value as knowledge regarding the destination which gives customer the feeling of assurance that everything will go smoothly during their holiday.

4.2.3 Defining Compatibility and the Unique Selling Point

The third phase of the project was to determine the compatibility of Magnetic North as a specialist tour operator and Luleå as a destination in combination with defining the unique selling point of the tourist package. These goals have been reached by interviewing the Managing Director of Magnetic North and the Marketing and Project Manager of Visit Luleå. In addition to observations, interviews as a method are an essential part of qualitative research. Discussions are a part of observations but in an interview the researcher can ask questions which are directly related to the research. (Bailey 2007, 95.) Moreover, in an interview setting, the conversation is documented more accurately as it is often recorded.

Interviews are divided into three different types that are most commonly used by researchers: structured, non-structured and semi-structured. Structured interviews are planned in advance and contain specific questions which are asked in a particular order during a limited amount of time. Unstructured interviews, which often are referred to as informal interviews are not precisely planned but let interviewees freely discuss the topic. Semistructured interviews are in between an informal interview and a structured interview. A semistructured interview is planned in advance in terms of time and questions that are asked. However, the questions are often based on different themes or topics and the questions are not as specific as in a structured interview. The

questions are also not asked in a certain order. Because of the broader nature of the questions in a semi-structured interview, interviewees may answer questions before they are asked. In this case a question is skipped. Generally interviewers conducting structured interviews are advised not to engage in a conversation whereas semistructured interviews and unstructured interviews do allow varying amounts of room for dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee. (Bailey 2007, 95—100)

The goal of the interviews in this thesis project was to define the unique selling point of this tourist package, to acquire more information about Norrbotten and the greater area of Luleå as a destination as well as the compatibility of Magnetic North and the destination. The interview method used in the interviews was semistructured interview. The interview topic was divided into different themes for each interview. Interview themes were chosen by using literature regarding destination competitiveness by Ritchie and Groutch (2003) as well as tourism strategy of a competing destination, which in this thesis is Finnish Lapland. Since the interviewees were both tourism professionals and familiar with the thesis topic, it was expected that they would perhaps answer some of the questions before they would be asked.

When planning the interview with the commissioner the primary goal was to learn how Magnetic North carries out product development and which type of destinations and products are suitable for the company and their customers. Furthermore, the tourist package had to be suitable for the sales process at Magnetic North. During the planning phase of the interview with the representative of the local destination management organisation, the topics were discussed with the commissioner to confirm that all of the necessary questions were asked during the interview and that all required information would be gathered.

The first step of the interview was to determine the type of packages Magnetic North looks for in a destination and the starting point of the company. This was essential in order to understand how this concept has been commercialised in the tours that the company assembles and sells. The information that resulted

from this part of the interview contributed to the final packaging of this holiday package.

We're looking at mainly Norway and obviously Finland and Sweden and Iceland. Destinations with the kind of Northern theme as it were. We just felt like that even though they were very different countries, they have different scenery and landscapes. There was also a commonality amongst people in the sense that they value being outdoors and this is an important part of what we offer as a company. (Greenman 2012)

The important part of the business was to commercialize that idea (friluftsliv) and make sure there was a market and that we were offering things that were unique and that were new but we had to understand what the people wanted as well. So there's kind of a fine balance between being innovative and different to be offering packages that people are really looking for. An example of that would be the demand for the Northern Lights. And obviously, this is very high at the moment. We didn't set the company up to sell one place to search the Northern Lights but this has been a big part of what we've offered in the first couple of years. So it has helped to get business up and running so we hope that the holidays we sell obviously give people the chance to search for the Northern Lights but to do other things as well, to understand nature and the Northern Lights in the wider sense and also to do other things and to meet local people. (Greenman 2012)

Similar to the interview with the commissioner, it was also essential to acquire information about the starting point and development of Luleå and the area of Norrbotten as a destination in order to understand the direction of future development and goals. This part of the interview also provided clarity as to why Visit Luleå and Visit Sweden had decided to invite tour operators to Luleå for a familiarization trip.

The biggest issue is having product that is ready for tour operators to sell, product that has the right information, the right pricing, the right transport solutions, the right information even down to the level of insurances that the products have or whether the hotel has tea and coffee in the room and detailed information in English in a consistent way. Product development has been a huge problem for them. Then, once the products are developed the next step of the process is to develop a relationship with tour operators and the next step in the process hasn't been done very well either so far. (Richardson 2012)

During the interviews I wanted to learn about the customer segments of both Magnetic North and Luleå, thus investigating further if their goals meet and if the destination is suitable for the clients of the commissioner. In the course of the familiarization trip one observation was that many of the suppliers had previously only worked with incentive and conference groups. During the interview the task was to find out if these are still the markets they focus on.

We look for active families with older kids and we look for, obviously, couples of ages anywhere from 25 to 65 pretty much. As long as the kids are old enough and the couples are young enough to deal with -20, -30 degrees on occasions and being involved in active sports such as dog sledding or snow mobiling. They are the two key demographics. And the English and the German markets are our main focus. (Richardson 2012)

I guess we have a couple of different segments. We have honeymoon couples in their thirties looking for outdoors, something a bit special as well. Unusual accommodation, staying maybe from 5 nights to two weeks. So that's been pretty important and I think the honeymoon segment has come through google ranking so we've been quite good with that. Also older travelers in their forties and fifties, small groups.. again looking for outdoors and adventure but not extreme adventure. So they tend to have a lot of disposable income, maybe the children have left home. Sometimes the children come too - they're in their teens. I guess about 60 per cent come from the UK and the rest come from different countries and the US is important. We've got Malaysia, Taiwan, Australia, France.. We're trying to approach a global audience as well and we can do that largely by operating online. A website is a good shop window obviously because you can view it around the world so we're not just limited to the UK market. (Greenman 2012)

As Magnetic North's client base is international, the next phase was to establish how the product philosophies correspond to the products that Magnetic North endeavours to add in their itineraries. Similarly, both a destination and a specialist tour operator need to establish their own unique selling points in order to secure competitiveness. For a destination this means differentiation from competing destinations as for a tour operator it can mean focusing on different features of a destination or finding individual suppliers to co-operate with. Previously the area has attracted conference travelers but the entrepreneurs in the area have been working to open up more opportunities individual leisure tourists to visit the area.

You could end up working with regular operators and providers that offer mainstream experiences which people could book anywhere so it's a kind of balance really to offer unique ideas and things that not all the other tour operators are offering but also something that people are going to enjoy, they're not going to get hurt or that you don't have to worry about that sort of things because there are liability issues. What we try to do is find unique products that no one else is selling because there is a lot of competition out there and quite often we're finding that you're selling the same thing so it can come down to price. So it can be that it is cheaper with that other company, so what we have to do is offer is added value, like customer service, but long-term what we will be aiming to do is to have our own unique products that no one else would be selling. (Greenman 2012)

I think that Finnish Lapland is interesting. They've put Lapland on the map so people understand for better or worse the Finnish description of Lapland and I think that has many positives. I think there's also a lot of negatives there as well but that's not necessarily bad for Swedish Lapland. Finnish Lapland is getting a reputation of being over-commercialised, not focusing on personalized experiences, more of factory-type tourism, big charter planes. And the Santa Claus experience is mass market. Whereas people in Swedish Lapland are learning to even do small niche Santa visits where you have very limited exclusive numbers in a very unique environment. It could be a tepee in a middle of a lake somewhere and families go there and in lone numbers experience a very personalized Santa experience. So, Finnish Lapland is a huge competition but there are ways to benefit from that and turn the negative into a positive for sure. (Richardson 2012)

The destination management organizations in many cases are the key source of information tour operators have about the available products. According to Ritchie and Groutch, destination management organisations have previously mainly focused on their marketing and selling tasks which are a part of their external programmes. The effort that destination management organisations can put into international marketing depends largely on funding. As the interview revealed, funding strategies also affect how sustainably destination development is realised.

The Luleå City Council has just decided to give the Visit Luleå for example a new company entity, permanent funding which makes Visit Luleå's life much better. For a greater organization like Swedish Lapland, it has difficulties with funding. In Sweden a lot of these organizations are project funded. Most of the money comes from project money. And that's not permanent, so everyone

constantly has a 12-month focus on what they're doing instead of a 5 to 6 or 10-year focus. So in Luleå they have decided to have a longer term, strategic focus. So it's not project-based in Luleå. (Richardson 2012)

In addition to external programmes, destination management organisations have internal programmes which include managing the internal network of the destination and making sure that the products are ready to meet the expectations of international clients (Ritchie—Groutch 2003, 185—186). This may be helping the members with pricing and promotion of their products and helping the members in the destination to create an internal co-operation. Sometimes there may be challenges to get all the destination members on board when it comes to the international markets and what tour operators may expect.

Tourism in Sweden is in the Stone Ages in many ways. Swedish tourism is very much behind on many other parts of the world. Pricing, for example. Many hotels don't do net pricing that works and that's quite frustrating for tour operators to work with hotels that, you know, that give you one price for a year and sell direct to customers cheaper in the summer. These sorts of things which is crazy. That doesn't happen elsewhere in the world. We have pricing, a lot of our product owners have just come to grips that they might have to pay commission to somebody to sell their products. So, a lot of challenges there. (Richardson 2012)

Most of all it's about getting the regional tourism bodies structured correctly is a big challenge. Having expertise available to help entrepreneurs build and manage businesses. Entrepreneurs tend to be good at something but it's necessarily not tourism. They may be good at dog sledding, they may be good at guiding snow mobile tours but tourism may be something they don't have any competence with. To have regional tourism bodies that have in-house competence to help their members to develop and sort of work with tour operators and that is very important. (Richardson 2012)

As for the tour operator the challenge in commercialising holiday packages is to find something that the competitors are not selling or a unique way of selling certain destination. Similarly, a destination has its unique selling points to attract tourists and make the destination competitive. The final and most important task of the interview with the destination management organisation representative

was to also find the unique selling point of Luleå as a destination compared to competing destinations.

If we're talking about Swedish Lapland, it is unique because it has three distinct environmental areas. You have the mountains up on the border with Norway and that includes Kiruna, Abisko, Riksgränsen. It's just magnificent – summer or winter is just beautiful up there. Then you have the big rivers that flow down the mountains to the coast and in that huge area where there's just massive forest divided up by these three or four big, massive rivers. That's just a magnificent wilderness area where you have places like the Treehotel and Jokkmokk and within that culture of the Sami indigenous people and so forth which is fabulous. And then when you get down to the coast you've got other completely different environment. You've got the archipelago with the islands and the brackish water which creates unique marine life and bird life. And then you've got the city of Luleå which has infrastructure and it has good hotels and restaurants, theatres and they have this city of 75 000 people surrounded by forest and bears and moose and such. So it's those three unique environments within four hour's drive from one end to the other. (Richardson 2012)

In terms of meetings and incentives I think that Luleå has the infrastructure to take care of conferences, meetings, incentives, larger groups. It has an industry base here so it takes care of itself so I think Luleå lets a lot of its incentive tourism drift outside of its borders but in terms of leisure travel or FITs (free individual travellers) I don't think that Luleå has the advantage. I think people want to see the archipelago, they want to see Treehotel up in Harrads or Storforsen waterfall. Luleå is a great place to start but for leisure tourist Luleå is not one destination. They want to see Luleå and all those other smaller villages that are in the region. (Richardson 2012)

We also have other areas that are interesting as well if you look out to the archipelago, there's more recent history of several hundred years of people out there in fishing villages, fishing for salmon, seal hunting in winter etc. They've also got labyrinths out there, sort of stone structures that are thousands of years old and really a part of Sweden's history. So there's a lot of unique history. (Richardson 2012)

After transcribing the interviews they were analysed together for any similarities in goals. Firstly, the goals of both the destination and the tour operator are similar in terms of the experiences they offer. Swedish Lapland and Luleå pursue the destination identity of tailored, high-quality niche experiences which is similar to the products which Magnetic North adds to their itineraries. The interview with the destination management organisation representative helped

in finalizing the unique selling point of the sample holiday and confirmed the decisions made during the pre-packaging phase.

4.2.4 Finalizing the Holiday Package and Launching for Sale

The final phase of the project was to create a sample package in a brochure in form of a pdf file which will be sent to clients during consulting and sales process. After transcribing the interviews and analyzing the field diary, I came to the conclusion that the unique selling point of this area will be the archipelago as it offers unique activities and culture in an interesting way such as hovercraft experiences, pack ice snow mobiling excursions, visits to the traditional houses in the archipelago and specialities like staying in a small cabin on the frozen sea. I found that in these products co-creation was present because the clients were active participants. The tourist experiences offered appeared to connect with the life of the local people in past and present and tell their own story of arctic adaptation to overcome obstacles set by the environment and climate in the area. The current high demand for Northern Lights-themed holidays determined the other, more general, selling point of the package. However, the tourism product featured was picked based on positive experiences with the providers during the familiarization trip.

The sample package was produced following the guidelines and brochure style of Magnetic North. The first page provides the client a taster of a short-break holiday that has been hand-picked by Magnetic North specialists who have visited the destination in the form of day-to-day itinerary and photos. The second page provides further information about the accommodation and price as well as inclusions and exclusions. On the third page the client gets more information about the tourism products available in order to discuss their own tailored holiday with the travel consultant. The fourth and fifth page are attached to all brochures (See Appendices 3 and 4). The fourth page provides the client more information about Magnetic North holidays, the value that the specialist operator adds to their holiday and states reasons for booking with Magnetic North. The fourth page provides information about booking and cancellation conditions of the holidays.

Arctic Archipelago and Northern Lights in Swedish Lapland

LULEÅ, SWEDEN

MN
MAGNETIC
NORTH.TRAVEL

Vast open spaces on the frozen sea, snow-covered forests with its wildlife and other adventures are just a stone's throw away from the town of Luleå in the North of Sweden.

Join a safari on the Bothnian Bay or take a lesson on driving on snow and ice. Luleå caters arctic experiences for everyone. This holiday is available from January – April and can be tailored to suit your wishes.



DAY 1: ARRIVAL

Arrive in Luleå airport where you will be welcomed by your guide who will give you an introduction of the town. Transfer to your hotel in the town centre.

Enjoy an evening at your own pace exploring the warm atmosphere of this arctic town with our recommendations or perhaps join an evening excursion leaving from your hotel.



DAY 2:

After a breakfast buffet full of typical Nordic cuisine at your hotel, join a snow mobiling pack ice tour on the frozen sea with a guide who will teach you about the surroundings and life in the wilderness. During this tour you will have a chance to try ice fishing.

You will stop at a island called Brändöskär in the outermost archipelago, a fishing village which dates back to the 17th century. Outside the island you will find the frozen Bothnian Bay with seemingly endless fields of pack ice and snow. Sometimes the blue ice of the sea piles up to 10 metre high formations.

Hot drinks, lunch, warm clothing and guided return transfers from the hotel are included in this tour.

DAY 3:

Breakfast at the hotel.

Have a day at your own pace in the centre of Luleå with our recommendations.

In the evening you will join a guided snow shoeing excursion in the forests outside of the town for the best chances to spot the Aurora Borealis.

Your guide will teach you how to light a fire in the wilderness. Dinner will be prepared and enjoyed outdoors while sitting comfortably on warm reindeer hides.

Return transfers from the hotel, warm clothing, dinner and hot drinks are included in this tour.

DAY 4

Return to the airport and begin your journey back home with wonderful new experiences and memories of this arctic region.

Or perhaps add another day to your itinerary and visit the Tree Hotel in Harads.

PRICE: from £675 per person
(based on two people travelling)

Get in touch to make your
booking!
Tel. 0845 5195 242
Email:
laura@magneticnorth.travel

Figure 23. Holiday brochure: Inspiration for a Day-to-Day Itinerary (Magnetic North 2012)

About your trip

Accommodation

Your hotel will be a 4 star hotel in the very centre of the town of Luleå where modern comfort meets over 100-year-old craftsmanship. The hotel overlooks the central park and the north harbour.




Breakfast and wireless internet are included.

THE PRICE INCLUDES

- × 3 nights hotel accommodation (breakfast included)
- × Pack Ice Snow Mobile Excursion (total duration 5h 30 min)
- × Northern Lights Snow Shoe Excursion (total duration 3 hours)
- × Return airport transfers (guided welcome included)

THE PRICE EXCLUDES

- × Flights
- × Meals unless stated in the itinerary
- × Trips and incidental spend
- × Mandatory travel insurance

FLIGHTS


The price of this holiday excludes flights to Luleå. Flights can be booked directly with the airline to give you access to the best value fares. We'll be happy to provide you with recommended flight schedules based on your preferred departure airport.

Visit the following airlines to book flights:

www.flysas.com
www.norwegian.com

YOUR FINANCIAL PROTECTION

In order to provide clients with complete peace of mind, Magnetic North Travel Ltd is a member of Protected Travel Services. Your money is held in a trust account and is used for the purpose of fulfilling your booking. Any money you pay will go into the Protected Travel Services client account at HSBC. This is an account which we cannot access directly. The only people authorised to sign on the account are the Trustees from a highly respectable firm of chartered accountants. The money stays in the account until you've returned from your holiday. So your money is completely safe from start to finish. You will be able to see any money you have paid to us by following the booking link which we will send to you immediately after you have booked your holiday. For more information visit www.protectedtravelservices.com.



Booking this trip

Please telephone
0845 5195 242

Email us at
yourstory@magneticnorth.travel

Visit us online at
www.magneticnorth.travel
www.facebook.com/magneticnorthtravel
 Twitter: [@magnorthtravel](https://twitter.com/magnorthtravel)




Figure 24. Holiday brochure: Inclusions and Exclusions of the Sample Package (Magnetic North 2012)

DESIGN YOUR TAILORED HOLIDAY

Northern Lights Excursions

Optimise your chances of viewing the Northern Lights by participating in one or more of our evening excursions below.

About the Northern Lights

We cannot guarantee that you'll view the lights. Many different factors come into play such as weather and cloud cover. However, we'll endeavour to ensure you have the best opportunities to see the Northern Lights as possible.

About our excursions

This symbol means that warm outer clothing is provided:



All activities are subject to availability. In the case of adverse weather conditions and cancellation, you will receive a refund for the cost of the excursion. We're unable to provide a refund if you cancel your excursion. Snow and ice based activities are available from January to March.



Hovercraft Sea Ice Tour - £239 per person

- Hovercrafts operate on even surfaces whether it is on ice or sea. This excursion will take you to the outer edges of Luleå archipelago. The tour includes guided transfers from your hotel. Total duration about 3 hours. A light lunch and refreshments are included. Children under the age of 10 join the tour half price.



1-Day Sami Visit at Gorggim - 165 per person

- Your guide will meet you in the centre of Luleå from where you will transfer to meet a Sami family and their reindeer and learn about their way of life today and in the past. A traditional lunch will be served during your visit.



Ice Breaker Adventure Tour in Piteå - £209 per person

- Listen to ice blocks being crushed against the hull of the Arctic Explorer. This tour includes one hour of ice breaking. The ice breaker will stop after 30 minutes and you will have a chance to walk on the ice. If you are brave enough, you may even dip into the water in your survival suit. The tour includes return transfers from the hotel, hot drinks and snacks and the use of a survival suit at no extra cost. Total duration 4 hours. Children under the age of 14 join the tour half price.



1-Day Snow Shoe Adventure - £149 per person

- On this excursion your guide will take you to the highest peaks of Råne river valley. Your guide will teach you about survival in the arctic landscape whilst spotting wildlife. Lunch will be prepared in the outdoors for you. Total duration of the tour 6 h.



Snow Mobile Forest Tour - From £155 per person

- Tour goes to some beautiful places with great views and tranquility of the forest around every corner. Along the way stops are made and your experienced guide will tell you about the surroundings and life in the region. Choose from evening or daytime tours. Total duration of the tour 3 hours. Transfers from the hotel are included.



Dog Sledding Forest Tour 1 or 2 h - From £149 per person

- Meet 60 excited Alaskan huskies, all eager to give you a tour through the lake to the snow-covered forest. Going on an dog-sledding tour in arctic wilderness is an extraordinary experience in many ways. This tour includes transfers from the hotel. Total duration of the tour 3 hours 30 minutes. Warm clothing is available for hire. Children under the age of 10 join this tour half price.



Drive your own Dog Sled - £209 per person

- Pulling the sled in crisp winter cold is what Alaskan huskies love to do. Before the tour you will receive instructions on how to drive your own team of huskies. Then you will travel through frozen lakes and snowy forests with your new furry friends. This tour includes transfers from the hotel. Total duration 3 hours 30 minutes.



Driving on Ice - £179 per person

- Learn to drive like a Swede! This activity includes driving Volvos and go-carts on six different tracks made on ice with the instructions of your guide. Participants must be over 16 years of age in order to participate. Transfers from the hotel are included in the price. Choose from evening or day time activities. Total duration 3 hours.



Overnight experiences



A night in the Tree Hotel - From £209 per night per person

- Spend a night or two up in a tree room in the village of Hårads where you can forget about everyday constraints. Treehotel offers a unique hotel experience with tree rooms with contemporary design in the middle of unspoiled nature. A tree room in the forest will provide excellent chances for spotting the Northern Lights. Please enquire for more information about our holidays in the Treehotel.



2-Day Snow Mobile Overnight Tour Luleå Archipelago From £745 pp

- Join a snow mobile excursion to the Luleå archipelago and spend a night in a basic but comfortable fisherman cabin in the middle of the sea ice. Please enquire for more information about this tour.



2-day Miners Road Excursion - From £745 per person

- Snow mobiling combined with fine dining and high standard accommodation. The route will go along the old iron ore transportation route from the sea to the snowy forests. Please enquire for more information about this excursion.



2-Day Snow Mobile Arctic Circle Expedition - £369 per person

- An adventure in the heart of Lapland. Drive through the forest landscape along Råne river valley across the Arctic Circle and overnight in a wilderness camp. Please enquire for more information.

Figure 25. Holiday Brochure: Menu for a Tailored Holiday (Magnetic North 2012)

Luleå as a city destination is still relatively unknown for the international market and would not be likely to catch attention of a person visiting the website. The accommodation chosen as a basis of the sample package is a hotel based in the centre of the city. However, the transportation infrastructure allows customers to stay in the centre but also take part in scheduled activities outside the city. The Treehotel is a well-known tourist product, however there was already an existing tourist package to the Treehotel. In this project I wanted to focus on other products and unique selling points of the area, yet including a stay in the Treehotel as a modular element in this holiday package. Therefore a selling point such as the archipelago and soft adventure activities related to the archipelago were chosen based on my experiences during the familiarization trip and the interviews. During the process I wanted to pay attention to holistic approach to the tourism product development, focusing on co-creation from the sales process at Magnetic North to the encounters in the destination.

After the commissioner had approved the brochure and the sample package, the product was launched for sale on the Magnetic North website where clients can view various holiday options. The holiday package is currently being sold through the website where prospective clients can view the sample itinerary and enquire for more information on the holiday package. The website has a similar function to a shop window where prospective clients can receive an overall view of the holiday and search for packages based on country, season, activities or the type of a group they are travelling as. This holiday package labelled under the following categories: snow mobileing, friluftsliv, winter multi-activity, Sami experiences, dog sledding, wildlife and tailored experiences. Ice hotel is an added label as this holiday package can be combined with the ICEHOTEL in Jukkasjärvi for a multi-destination holiday. The groups suitable for this holiday package are clients who are travelling as two, honeymooners, an active group or simply looking for a tailored holiday. (See Figure 25).

The screenshot displays the website's interface. At the top left, there is a logo for 'MAGNETIC NORTH TRAVEL' featuring a stylized snowflake. The main header area shows a scenic landscape with a lake and mountains. Below this, a section titled 'Holidays in Sweden' presents search results for 'Arctic Archipelago and the Northern Lights in Swedish Lapland'. The package details include: 'Ideal for: Honeymooners, Travelling as two, Active Groups, Tailormade', a description of the experience, and a 'More info >' button. At the bottom of the package listing, it states 'Running: Winter (Nov-Mar)', 'Price from: £675', and 'Number of nights: 3'. To the right, a 'SEARCH' sidebar allows users to filter results by category, location (Sweden), time, who, activity, and type, with a 'SEARCH' button at the bottom.

Figure 26. The holiday Package and the Search Function on the Web Page (Magnetic North 2012)

5 CONCLUSIONS AND FEEDBACK FROM THE COMMISSIONER

The whole destination area of Norrbotten does not concern this thesis although existing holiday packages by Magnetic North in Norrbotten area have influenced decisions whilst combining and commercialising this tourist package. Moreover, the goal of this project was to assemble a tourist package, which could be used on its own or as a tool for planning and creating tailored holidays that include destinations outside the area which concerns this holiday package.

The limitations of the thesis include sharing pricing information or conducting any extensive market research and marketing plans for this specific holiday package. Pricing information has been discussed in a general sense as it is one of the business secrets of tour operators. Despite the market research or marketing plans being excluded from the area of this thesis, Swedish Lapland determines the UK market as one of their target markets which is why UK-operators were invited for a familiarisation trip in the area.

The familiarization trip in Luleå was the first one I have ever taken part in as a representative of a tour operator. Since then, I have been participating on other familiarization trips organised by individual suppliers and local destination management organisations in other Nordic countries such as Finland and Norway. The participant observations are limited to my personal observations and the casual verbal feedback which arose during conversations with other professional participants and encounters with a small number of actual customers visiting the area during the trip. Hence, the development of this holiday package continues as the company receives feedback from the end-customers who visit the area.

Prior to this project I had no experience in conducting interviews. The questions were based on literature on destination development by Ritchie and Grouch and a number of themes were inspired by topics discussed in the regional tourism strategy of Finnish Lapland. However, the goals of the interviews were accomplished as both of the interviewees were familiar with the thesis topic and were experienced professionals in the field of tourism.

After the product was launched, it has been sold to UK-clients using the brochure and the product menu as a tool for presenting the available tourism products. Based on this sales experience of the holiday package, the goal of creating a tailored holiday package based on modular tourism service items has been accomplished in an actual sales process. At the end of the project the Managing Director of the commissioning company provided feedback of the success of the project:

Kirsi showed great enthusiasm and consideration when putting together new product for Magnetic North Travel in the Lulea region of Sweden. This was a new destination for us and I gave the responsibility fully to Kirsi to research and put together a sample tailor made package. She spent some time in Lulea on a tour operator FAM trip during which she displayed great professionalism and built up good relations with the suppliers and destination representatives. She displayed courtesy and discretion when representing Magnetic North Travel and continues to do so in her current role. She developed the product quickly and efficiently and took on board all that she had learned during her internship. She costed out the product and also produced some excellent marketing materials for our website and sales channels. She has since sold the trip to some UK clients which is excellent and the required outcome. (Greenman 2013)

As the tourism stakeholders in the destination have carried out their development tasks simultaneously during this thesis project, the Arctic Archipelago and Northern Lights-holiday package is also subject to continuous development and changes. Currently the company has begun updating the holiday package for the upcoming winter season and will be adding more products in the area to its offerings. In future development it must be noted that perhaps not all tourism product suppliers choose to co-operate with Swedish Lapland which consequently makes it more difficult for tour operators to co-operate with them. In the future these suppliers may be discovered when the representatives of the tour operator attend workshops or travel independently in the area.

Professionally the project has been a transitioning phase from my advanced practical training to my current position as a Product and Sales Consultant of the company. Moreover, this project has given me the specialist knowledge of this destination and the competence to sell it to the clients of the company. In

addition, I learned how international tourism distribution channels like independent tour operators carry out their development and sales tasks in practice.

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Appendix 1: Interview Questions for the Commissioner

21.5.2012 interview with Laura Greenman, Managing Director of Magnetic North Travel Ltd.

General information about Magnetic North Travel

-Could you tell about Magnetic North, how did you get the business idea and the values of the company?

-the values etc.

Destination requirements

What type of destinations does Magnetic North sell?

Importance of the following topics regarding the destination/operational environment: geographical features, local culture, sustainability, safety

Are there other important factors to consider when choosing destinations and suppliers?

What type of holidays does MNT offer?

What type of activities and accommodation?

Customer segment

What is the average customer segment of MNT like? What is an average customer that comes to MNT like?

Was the customer segment clear from the beginning or did it form during time?

Social background etc.

Sales process

Could you describe the sales process at MNT?

What is the customer's role/involvement during the sales process at MNT? Does it link to the experience in the destination?

Productisation process

How does MNT find destinations?

What role does networking have in finding new destinations?

How do you find the suppliers in the destination? Is there a certain limit to the number of suppliers per destination?

How does the network affect the productisation process? (suppliers, NTOs, DMOs)

What happens after the destination and the supplier has been found, how does the process proceed?

Are there certain contracts which are made between the supplier and MNT? (Contracts)

Is there a yearly clock / schedule to the product development process?

Appendix 2: Interview Questions for the Representative of the Destination Management Organisation

31.5.2012 Interview questions for interview with Graeme Richardson, the project leader of VisitLuleå

The current state of tourism in Sweden, market position and competition

What has affected in the growth/development of tourism in Northern Sweden?

Development of different tourist centres in Northern Sweden and their affect on the economy of the surrounding smaller villages?

What is the current state of international tourism in Sweden (and Swedish Lapland in specific)?

How are Finnish and Norwegian Lapland seen? Are they seen as competitors or as co-operators?

Basis for Development

What is the target market and customer segment of the area?

What are the future challenges of the area?

Additional subjects for discussion: seasonality, climate change, carrying capacity, ecological impacts

(Are there any precautions taken towards the climate change and the changes in tourism trends resulting from increasing awareness of the climate change?)

What is the high season of the area?

What are the strengths of the area? (Values?)

How do the future trends in tourism affect the international tourism to Northern Sweden?

What is the significance of tourism to the local people? How does it affect their lives? is there seasonal work force from outside of Swedish Lapland?

The brand and the target markets

Could you tell about the Swedish brand and marketing? (values portrayed?)

What are the unique selling points of the Swedish Lapland? Which qualities are emphasized in marketing of the area?

Which areas need future development? / What will be the future developments?

Productisation of Northern Sweden

Which features of Swedish culture and history have been productized and can be productized?

Is there cross industry co-operation which can be beneficial to tourism?

Are there special events that bring tourism to the area or could bring to the area in the future?

Location and climate

What type of advantage does Luleå have of its geographical position and climate? Does the geographical position create a competitive advantage? Is it a disadvantage?

How does it show in the products?

How does the seasonality affect the tourism in the area?

Does the local culture/community support tourism? What is the local attitude towards tourism?

Accessibility

Could you evaluate the accessibility of Luleå as a destination?

Does seasonality affect the accessibility of the area?

How does the accessibility affect the target markets? Does it at all?

Does the seasonality affect the accessibility?

Safety

How would you regard safety in Luleå?

Are there certain measures or safety plans in the area?

What are the future challenges of the area?

Appendix 3. Holiday brochure: Why Book with Us (Magnetic North Travel 2012)

About your trip

WHY BOOK WITH US

- ✘ Booking your holiday with Magnetic North Travel Ltd gives you 100% peace of mind that your money is safe.
- ✘ We offer a personalised and attentive service from the moment you get in touch with us to the moment you return. We're here to answer all your questions and to ensure your trip goes smoothly. You can leave home knowing that we're at the end of the phone ready to help if necessary.
- ✘ We are experts at travel to Scandinavia and northern destinations. Our team has travelled (and even lived) in the places we include in our trips. We're constantly updating our holidays and we can choose the right itinerary for you based on our first hand experience.
- ✘ We respond to your needs. We impose no constraints on when you travel and what you do. We can offer the best value for money because you choose the activities and accommodation that you want. We're here to offer inspiration and advice.
- ✘ Our clients say nice things about us. You can read some of their feedback on our website at www.magneticnorthtravel.com.



Innovation Norway

RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

- ✘ Booking your holiday with us re-assures you that you are treading lightly on the planet and supporting local economies and livelihoods.
- ✘ Our partners, suppliers and providers in all of our destinations offer not only offer a high quality experience, but they care deeply for the place they live in. When you visit them in their home or surroundings, you'll see this attachment to place for yourself. From the time you spend in nature to the food served on your plate, our aim is to give you a true insight into the local culture and stunning natural scenery. This starts with the desire to protect it.
- ✘ The activities and excursions that we select are provided by local people. You are doing your part to support them and to support rural-based economies in remote areas. Wildlife watching trips are selected for their sustainability. We work with providers which protect vulnerable species and have exemplary levels of welfare standards.
- ✘ Our itineraries aim to reduce the consumption of non-renewable energies. We encourage low carbon transportation and will continue to include these as options whenever we can.
- ✘ Sustainability is an ongoing process and we ask for your help to ensure that the planet and people come first.



Arctic Home/Summer

ARCTIC CLIMATE

- ✘ The presence of the Gulf Stream in the Arctic region creates wide variation in temperatures and humidity. In particular the Lofoten Islands and Tromsø in Norway benefit from the slightly higher coastal temperatures, whereas inland the average temperatures drop dramatically. The lowest temperature ever recorded in Tromsø is around minus 18 degrees centigrade, whereas in Ivalo, Finland, temperatures frequently drop to minus 20 degrees.
- ✘ Snow fall tends to arrive in late October, early November for the majority of the Arctic region although this can also vary from year to year. In some areas snow doesn't ever leave the tops of mountains. Usually snow settles until April, or early May, making ski conditions in March and April very favourable.
- ✘ The sun disappears below the horizon at the start of the Polar Night at around the end of November and returns again mid-to-late January. There's a beautiful blue twilight at this time of the year which makes it very special. When the sun returns properly in February, you'll need to bring sunglasses with you!
- ✘ We will advise you about what to bring to stay warm in the Arctic. For many excursions and activities warm outer clothing is provided. However, layers are essential to stay warm. You'll receive a full kit list with your trip notes.



Visit Finland Image Bank

Appendix 4. Holiday brochure: Booking Conditions (Magnetic North Travel 2012)

Booking conditions Magnetic North Travel Ltd

Company number: 07183418

These booking conditions form a contract between you and Magnetic North Travel Ltd. So we ask that you read through them carefully.

Magnetic North Travel Ltd (the 'Company', 'us', 'our' and 'we') accepts bookings subject to the conditions below. These conditions apply only to tour arrangements booked by the client with the Company and which the Company agrees to make or provide as part of their contract with the client. All references to 'tour', 'booking', 'contract' or 'arrangements' in these booking conditions mean such tour arrangements unless clearly stated otherwise.

1. Your contract with Magnetic North Travel Ltd

The contract is between the Company and the client ('the client' and 'you' in these conditions), being any person travelling or intending to travel on a tour operated by the Company including any person who is substituted after booking. We agree that this contract, and any other claim or dispute arising from or related to this contract, will be governed by English law and the courts of England and Wales shall have exclusive jurisdiction over any claim arising out of it. No promise of a discount or refund will be binding on us unless we confirm this in writing.

2. Making a booking

To make and confirm your booking, the Company must receive payment of the minimum deposit of 30% of the total tour price, per person (or full payment if booking within 60 days of the start of the tour). The applicable deposit will be confirmed when booking. We will confirm in writing acceptance of your booking. Our contract comes into existence on the date shown on that email or letter. The booking conditions are binding when your booking is confirmed in writing to you or your travel agent.

Payment of the deposit will form acceptance by you of these booking conditions. We will send you an invoice for the remainder of the cost, which you must pay not later than 60 days before departure. If you do not pay the balance by the due date your booking will be cancelled and you will forfeit your deposit.

All clients will be deemed to have agreed to the following four conditions:

- They and all persons named on the booking have read and accepted our booking conditions.
- They or anyone else named on the booking does not suffer from any pre-existing medical condition or disability which may prevent them from actively participating in the tour. Please contact us if any person suffers from a condition which may prevent them from actively participating in the tour at the time of booking or before departure.
- They and all persons named on the booking understand and accept the risks involved in adventure and outdoor travel.
- The person making the booking confirms that he/she is at least 18 years of age and has full authority to enter into a contract on the basis of these conditions on behalf of all persons named on the booking and confirms that all such persons are fully aware of and accept these conditions.

If you book via our website at www.magneticnorth.travel, we will communicate with you by email. It is your responsibility to regularly check your emails for correspondence from us. We may also contact you by telephone and/or post.

3. Your tour with Magnetic North Travel Ltd

Magnetic North Travel Ltd sometimes operates trips in remote regions. Occasionally standards of accommodation, transport and other facilities may be lower than you are normally used to. We ask that when you book and travel with us you take this into consideration. Our trips require a certain amount of flexibility to allow for changes in weather conditions and other aspects of the itinerary. All itineraries are subject to change at late or no notice, due to circumstances beyond our control. By agreeing to these Booking Conditions, you agree to Magnetic North Travel making any changes it reasonably deems necessary.

All our trips, particularly those involving outdoor activity will expose you to the possibility of injury, psychological trauma, loss or damage to property, inconvenience and discomfort. By agreeing to these Booking Conditions, you agree to assume all risks associated with the trip to the maximum extent permitted

by law.

We are able to provide some basic advice to clients with regard to passports and visa requirements. However you should also contact the appropriate Embassy, Consulate or British Foreign Office for the exact requirements for your chosen tour and date of travel. It is your responsibility to make sure that you have the correct passport and visas to gain access to any country/region included in the travel arrangements which you purchase from us. If you fail to do this, we have no liability to you for any cost, loss or damage which you suffer, nor will we be able to refund you the cost of any unused portion of your travel arrangements.

4. Changing your booking

We will charge an administration fee of £15 per booking plus any additional costs or charges incurred by us or by any of our suppliers if a confirmed booking is changed or transferred to a different departure date or tour, up to 60 days prior to departure. These changes are subject to availability.

If a client is unable to travel, in circumstances which the Company considers to be reasonable, the booking or that client's place on the booking may be transferred to another person (introduced by you). However, the original tour arrangements must stay unchanged. If we are able to transfer the booking, an administration charge of £40 will be made per person to cover our administration costs.

5. Cancelling your booking

If clients wish to cancel their booking, cancellation charges will be payable. Notification of cancellation must be made in writing to Magnetic North Travel by letter or email. The date when written confirmation of cancellation is received by Magnetic North Travel will determine the charges applicable as follows:

Number of days before departure Charge applicable

36 days and more before the tour start date
Retention of deposit

35 - 42 days before the tour start date

Loss of 30% of total booking cost

41 - 33 days before the tour start date

Loss of 60% of total booking cost

27 - 14 days before the tour start date

Loss of 90% of total booking cost

Less than 14 days before the tour start date

Loss of 100% of total booking cost

Depending on your reason for cancellation, you may be able to recover these charges under your insurance policy. All claims must be made directly with the insurance company.

We are unable to make any refunds if you leave a trip for any reason after the trip has begun.

6. Travel insurance

Travel insurance is mandatory for all clients whilst on a tour organised by Magnetic North Travel. Clients together with their personal property including their baggage are at all times solely their own risk. Clients are responsible for arranging their own travel insurance.

7. Cancellation or change by Magnetic North Travel

We reserve the right to cancel your booking or change any of the facilities, services or prices described in our brochures, marketing materials or website. We will endeavour to inform you of any changes that we know about at the time of booking.

Where possible, any changes we have made will be contained in the Trip Notes that are sent to you with your Final Confirmation. It is your responsibility to read the up-to-date Trip Notes that we send to you with the Final Confirmation. If you make a booking less than 36 days before departure you must ensure you are fully aware of the contents of the Trip Notes. The information and conditions in the Trip Notes will be considered to be part of the contract with us.

Occasionally we will have to make changes to your tour, sometimes at short notice. Most of these will be minor changes. Changes may occur because of Force Majeure, poor road conditions, weather, availability of tickets, vehicle breakdowns, changes in transport schedules, or other circumstances that are beyond our control. Magnetic North Travel does not accept any responsibility for loss of enjoyment, delays or compensation resulting from changes due to Force Majeure or any reasons beyond our control. Group sizes may also vary. If a major change

becomes necessary, we will advise you of the change as soon as possible. In this case, you will have the option of either accepting the change, or accepting a replacement tour from us of equivalent or closely similar standard and price, or cancelling your tour, in which case we will refund you in full. In all cases, except where a major change arises from circumstances amounting to force majeure or consolidation, we will pay you compensation as appropriate.

Compensation will not be payable if we are obliged to cancel, or in any way change your tour for reasons of consolidation due to minimum numbers not being attained or force majeure. Operation of all tours is dependent on a minimum number of persons booking places on the tour. If that number is not attained, we reserve the right to cancel the tour.

In no circumstances will we cancel your tour less than four weeks before the scheduled departure date except for reasons of consolidation, force majeure or failure on your part to pay the final balance. We recommend that you make no travel arrangements to your point of departure, make any connecting travel that is non-refundable or non-changeable or incurs penalties or incur any costs in respect of visas or vaccinations until such time as your travel itinerary has been confirmed. If you make such arrangements which you are then unable to use due to a change in your itinerary we shall not be liable to you for the cost of those arrangements. If we are obliged to cancel your tour after departure we will, wherever possible, make suitable alternative travel arrangements. If we are unable to make such alternative arrangements, or you reject these for good reason then we will return you to your point of departure and refund you for any unused services, if appropriate.

8. Complaints

If you have any complaint about your trip, you must make it known at the earliest opportunity to the leader and/or Magnetic North Travel local representative, who will normally be able to take appropriate action. If at the end of the trip you feel your complaint has not been properly dealt with you must notify us in writing within 33 days of the end of your trip.

9. Force Majeure

'Force Majeure' means (without restriction) any event which Magnetic North Travel could not, even with all due care, foresee or avoid. Force Majeure covers events such as, but not limited to, war or threat of war, riot, civil strife, terrorist activity, industrial dispute, disease, industrial or nuclear disaster, adverse weather conditions, fire and all similar events beyond our control. In the case of Force Majeure Magnetic North Travel will not accept liability, and reserves the right to change and cancel trips.

10. Our responsibility for your tour

Magnetic North Travel is responsible to you for the proper performance of our obligations under the contract whether those obligations are provided directly by us, or by third-party service providers engaged by us and acting within the proper course of their employment and we will provide these services with reasonable skill and care.

We are liable to you for any damage caused to you by our failure to perform the contract or by our improper performance of the contract, unless that failure is

- attributable to you;
- attributable to a third party unconnected with the provision of services to you;
- due to unusual and unforeseeable circumstances beyond our control that could not have been avoided even if all due care had been taken;
- due to an event which even with all due care we could not foresee or forestall.

Magnetic North Travel will not accept responsibility or liability for any passenger who contravenes any law or regulation of any country visited.

Any independent arrangements that you make that are not part of the holiday are entirely at your own risk.

Should you or any member of your party by misadventure suffer illness, injury or death during the period of your holiday from an activity which does not form part of the arrangements made by us or an excursion purchased through us, we shall at our absolute discretion give you every assistance including advice and guidance.