



Fishing Tourism and its International Marketing in Finland

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In addition to considering fishing as an important part of Finland's traditional economy structure, fishing activities are strongly connected to tourism and experience economy. In 2017-2018, Finnish fishing tourism generated the annual turnover of around 21 millions and it employed 935 people.

Finland's fishing tourism has not been developing as fast as other Nordic countries even though Finland has equally unique fishing conditions and its second name is The Land of Thousand Lakes. The development of Finnish fishing tourism is a very current topic nowadays. Thus, The Finnish Government has budgeted 300,000€ for the development of fishing tourism in 2022. Development actions need to be taken in a country level as well as in a company level.

This thesis answers the question of how Finnish fishing tourism entrepreneurs see the current situation of international marketing. The thesis begins with a theoretical framework in which the key concepts and background and supporting information are being studied and explained. The research itself is conducted using qualitative research methods. The research consists of eight interviews from Finnish fishing tourism industry from all over Finland. The interviews are carried out with a semi-structured method. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Finally, the results are divided by the matter of subject.

The research shows the huge potential the international customers have for the fishing tourism industry. The fishing tourism entrepreneurs agree that the share of international fishing tourists will increase but some dynamic marketing actions in a tight cooperation between stakeholders need to be made so that the fishing tourists find the service providers and choose Finland over other Nordic countries. The thesis reveals the entrepreneurs' positive and welcoming attitudes and interest towards international fishing tourists. The entrepreneurs were asked about their current international marketing situation and how interested they would be in developing international marketing.

Instead of focusing on only marketing actions this thesis shows the main customer groups and present differences between Finnish and international fishing tourists since knowing the target customer group is the beginning of successful marketing process. The interviews revealed significant differences between foreign and domestic fishing customers. The foreign fishing tourists see fishing as more comprehensive nature experience whereas Finnish fishing tourists use fishing tourism services more to fulfill their specific need, for example, catching a record fish or trying a new fishing method.

Keywords

Fishing Tourism, International marketing, Fishing Tourist, Tourist Fishermen, Fishing Experience

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1 Introduction

The topic of this research-based thesis is international marketing of Finland's fishing tourism. This thesis aims to identify the current situation of Finnish fishing tourism's international marketing and examine marketing efforts made by Finnish fishing tourism entrepreneurs. This thesis takes into consideration stakeholders such as Visit Finland and The Federation of Finnish Fisheries Association in the marketing process. The research focuses on the current situation of Finnish fishing tourism international marketing done by entrepreneurs and the aim is to define effective and feasible ways to approach foreign customers using the right channels.

Fishing has always been an important part of the traditional economic structure of Finland. However, it must not be forgotten that it is also part of Finland's experience economy. Nature-based tourism is a booming trend worldwide and Finland as a destination country is growing in popularity (Business Finland 2018). Fishing tourism in Finland provides unforgettable experiences for tourists and supports Visit Finland's mission to becoming the most attractive tourist destination in the Nordic countries by 2025. With the right marketing methods Finnish fishing tourism entrepreneurs could expand their customer base abroad while promoting Finland as a fishing tourism destination country.

The government of Finland has budgeted 300,000€ for the development of fishing tourism in 2022 (Valtioneuvosto 2021). The importance of international marketing in the development of Finnish fishing tourism is crucial because already in 2018, over 30% of fishing tourism customers came from abroad. The percentage has increased over years.

The main research question that this thesis aims to answer is how Finnish fishing tourism entrepreneurs see the current situation of their international marketing. Sub questions supporting the main research question are: 1. How interested the entrepreneurs are in international marketing? 2. What actions are the entrepreneurs already taking for international marketing? 3. What are the most efficient channels to promote fishing tourism services based on entrepreneurs' opinion? 4. How domestic and international fishing tourist differ from each other? Questions are considered from the Finnish fishing tourism entrepreneurs' point of view. All companies are based and operate in Finland. International tourist in this research refers to an inbound tourist who come from any other country than Finland. When talking about international fishing tourists, they have not been narrowed down to any specific continent. Instead of trying to specify all the customer profiles, this research has divided the customer segments into two main groups (1) Fishing Tourists (in Finnish kalastusmatkailija) and (2) Tourist Fishermen (in Finnish matkailijakalastaja).

Most of the entrepreneurs have been selected from www.fishinginfinland.fi portal from different provinces in Finland. In order to interview companies from all around Finland, two companies have been found using relevant keywords on Google Search. To make valid conclusions, an inclusive overview from all around Finland is necessary.

To understand the current role of international marketing of Finnish fishing tourism businesses, the concept will be viewed from entrepreneurs' perspective. Firstly, it is necessary to explain the key elements of fishing tourism. After this, fishing tourism companies will be interviewed and conclusions of the current situation of international marketing in Finnish fishing tourism businesses will be made. This data will be analyzed to recognize how international marketing is incorporated into the businesses and to define what kind of actions are being taken. Understanding the concept and research in the tourism industry will lead to being able to map out the role of international marketing in the fishing tourism industry in Finland. With a clear picture of how it is being seen and why companies choose to focus on certain actions, functional development ideas can be produced.

1.1 Previous Research

Despite an increase in international travel to take part in recreational activities, and the obvious connection between recreational fishing and tourism, there have been only a few academic efforts to study recreational fishing from a tourism perspective. (Borch & Aas 2008.) Still in 2021, only a very few international and Finnish research and literature identify fishing tourism as an independent form of tourism. Fishing tourism is often considered under the category of outdoor and nature-based tourism in literature.

Visit Finland and its predecessor MEK have conducted several research about international interest in Finnish nature and outdoor activities. Visit Finland's predecessor, MEK, conducted research in 2010 about the popularity of Finnish outdoor- and nature-based tourism by interviewing international travel agencies. The research pointed out that fishing has increased its popularity among nature-based and outdoor holiday seekers over years. The main conclusions from the research are that especially Russians find fishing the most interesting outdoor activity in Finland. In general, fishing seems to be more popular during summer season than in winter. Russian tourists, however, practice fishing throughout the year unlike many other nationalities. MEK research identified Norway and Sweden as the main competitors due to the catch of salmon, more interesting nature, and better climate. Most of the interviewees agreed that passengers coming to Finland do not differ from passengers going to Sweden or Norway.

Visit Finland's travel research (2018), shows that over 50 % of the inbound leisure tourists define Finnish nature as the principal source of attraction. The research indicates that there is a significant potential in nature-based activities among international tourists since 46% of the respondents were interested in nature-based activities but only 26% of them took it into action. According to the Visit Finland's research, 18% of the tourists were interested in fishing activities during their trip but only 4% took it into action in 2018.

1.2 The Federation of Finnish Fisheries Association

This thesis is commissioned by The Federation of Finnish Fisheries Associations. Together with numerous organizations and stakeholders The Federation works for healthy fishing grounds and sustainable fishing. The Federation of Finnish Fisheries Associations promotes Finnish fishing tourism by owning a web portal www.fishinginfinland.fi, which will be presented in 3.3.

The Federation of Finnish Fisheries Associations was founded in 1891. The Federation works towards its goals through variety of trainings, tight cooperation with stakeholders, and with social influencing. The Federation has been publishing The Finnish Fishing Magazine since 1892 in addition to a wide selection of guidebooks and informative brochures. (Kalatalouden Keskusliitto.)

2 Fishing Tourism

According to the definition used by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, fishing tourism is fishing elsewhere than in the fishing waters close to home and summer cottage. Fishing tourism also includes all business activities that derive their livelihood completely or partly from the tourism-related fishing services. (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry 2008.)

Fishing tourism is traveling and staying outside a permanent residence for the purpose of fishing and experiencing recreation (Jaakkola, Lankinen & Koiranen 1990). When a person travels away from home to take part in fishing for recreational purposes and purchases services from a multifaceted tourism industry, the person is defined as a fishing tourist. The relationship between recreational fishing as tourism and the natural resources make the basis for fishing tourism. Even though tourism is a commercial activity, many important elements of the tourist experience are free. Tourism is only partly commercialized, and many elements that tourists enjoy are free goods. In dealing with fishing tourism, scenery, clean water, tranquility, and cultural assets of places are often free goods (Borch & Aas 2008).

When people with different recreational fishing traditions travel away from home to fish, it adds variety in fishing preferences. As providers of fishing experiences must answer to this variety in demand, international fishing tourism takes many forms. Among the different fishing products and experiences offered around the world, fishing from aquaculture ponds, fishing in freshwater and coastal or ocean fishing are good examples of fishing tourism. (Borch & Aas 2008.)

Fishing tourism in Finland has a major economic significance. Most fishing tourism businesses are located in inland areas where the economic benefits of fishing tourism are very significant alongside other industries. Fishing tourism and its related services are developing sectors in Finland and there are clear signs for the expansion of the customer base since people's knowledge of nature and nature-based activities is declining. Due to the lack of practical knowledge, more and more fishing guides will be needed and the interest in paid fishing trips will increase. (Myllylä 2016.)

Tourists who fish during their leisure time may have purchased a trip or an arrangement focusing only on fishing activity. This can be researched under the label of special interest tourism. Other tourists may have fishing as one of the several activities during their holiday, combining fishing with other outdoor recreational activities or with visiting attractions, museums, and historic sites. (Borch & Aas 2008.)

Finnish fishing tourism is divided into two categories based on the motivational factors for traveling and the importance of the actual fishing activity (figure 1). These categories are: (1) Fishing Tourism in which the motivation for travelling is clearly fishing and (2) Tourism Fishing which means that a tourist uses fishing services as an additional part of a holiday together with other activities. This categorization is based on the perspective of how a tourist itself values actual fishing activity during the trip. (Kirjavainen 1997.)

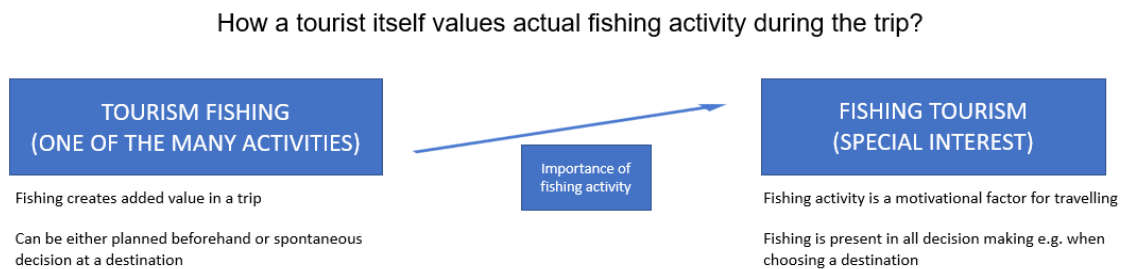


Figure 1. Division into Tourism Fishing & Fishing Tourism (Adapted from Kirjavainen 1997)

2.1 Special Interest Tourism (SIT)

Future Market Insights (FMI) reports that special interest tourism (SIT) market is set to register exponential growth between 2020 and 2030. According to FMI, adventure tourism is the fastest growing niche in the tourism industry creating a scope for expansion in the activity segment. Special interest tourism is primarily driven by rising demand for various recreational and adventurous activities. These activities are often associated with sustainable nature tourism.

Many forms of nature-based tourism are closely linked to an increasing demand for activity in tourism markets. As a result of this trend, there has been an increased focus on outdoor recreation and sports not only in the tourism industry but also in tourism research. (Borch & Aas 2008.)

The key motivation to travel in special interest tourism is the traveller's own interest in a specific field, which leads the traveller throughout all decision-making process. Fishing can be seen as a niche product under the concept of special interest tourism. Modern fishing tourism strongly focuses on some types of fishing, some fish species, and some tourist destinations which are more central for fishing tourism than the others. Foreign recreational fishermen are highly specialized, and they have high expectations about the catch and the environment. (Borch & Aas 2008.) To that end, fishing is strongly connected to special interest tourism.

2.2 Fishing Experience – The Four Realms of Experiences

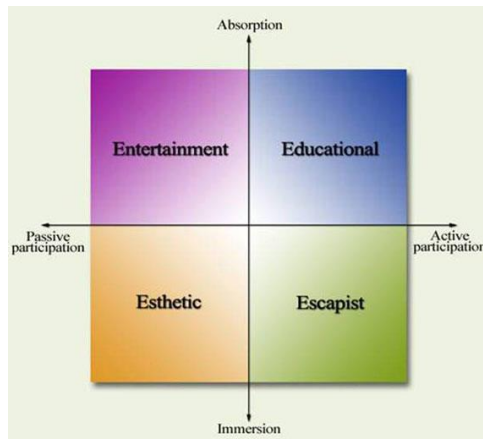


Figure 2. The 4 realms of experiences (Pine & Gilmore, 1999)

Borch & Aas (2008) conclude that fishing tourism provides higher long-term economic benefits than the effects generated from traditional commercial fisheries. This generation of added economic effect from natural resources through linking experience to the utilization of natural resources is in line with the overall perspective in what has been labelled 'the experience economy'.

Fishing has always been an important part of traditional economic structure of Finland but when considering fishing from tourism perspective, its importance in the experience economy sector cannot be underestimated. Below, fishing activity as an experience has been discussed using Pine and Gilmore's theory of four realms of experiences (figure 2).

The Experience Economy offers four realms of experiential value to add to a business. Pine and Gilmore (1999) termed these realms, the 4Es. The 4Es consist of adding Educational, Esthetic, Escapist, and Entertainment experiences to the business. The four experiences vary based on the customer's active or passive participation (X-axis) and on absorption or immersion (Y-axis) in the experience. Active – passive participation entails the level of customer involvement in creation of the experience. The intersection in the middle includes aspects from all the four realms. Pine and Gilmore's theory suggests that this intersection in which all four realms are being experienced is called a "sweet spot". All the four realms are individually experienced and defined. It means that the provided experience is not the same for everybody.

The top right corner is called educational and that is where a person absorbs information, increases skills, and enhances knowledge through active participation in the experience.

Active participation also stands for mental activity. In the context of fishing this could mean for example learning a new method of catching a fish.

The down right corner is called escapist. Escapist experiences require customer's active participation meanwhile actively shaping or contributing to the experience. The fishing activity itself is an escapist experience since it requires active and immersive participation.

Esthetic experiences on the down left corner involve customer enjoyment of a unique physical surroundings. The customer enjoys passively appreciating and just being in a location. Fishing in Finnish nature offers great opportunities for esthetic experiences. Esthetic realm in fishing-related experiences includes for example developing and conserving inviting and comfortable environment such as authentic beautiful nature and design fishing vessels.

Entertainment experiences entail watching the activities and performances of others. The customer is not actively involved in the creation of the entertainment, but the mind is actively engaged. In the context of fishing tourism, a person can be entertained by socializing and watching other people fishing.

2.3 The Development of Finnish Fishing Tourism

In 2008 the number of estimated fishing tourism enterprises in Finland was around 1,100. Although there were probably even more in reality, as the target set of companies did not include all the enterprises where fishing tourism was a minor part of the business. The annual turnover of fishing tourism in 2008 was 18.6 million euros. Foreign fishing tourists formed nearly a quarter of the sales. Foreign fishing tourists came mostly from Russia and Germany. (Toivonen 2008.)

In 2018 the annual turnover of fishing tourism was nearly 21 million euros (Pohja-Mykrä, Matilainen, Kujala, Hakala, Harvio, Törmä, Kurki 2018). Through the development of fishing tourism, new career opportunities and business models have been introduced, such as fishing guides (Myllylä 2016). In 2018, the number of foreign customers varied widely between fishing tourism companies, but on average the percentage of foreign customers increased significantly over the ten years. In the research of Toivonen (2008), foreigners formed about a quarter of all customers, while in the study (Pohja-Mykrä et al.) conducted in 2018, foreign customers accounted for 31% of all fishing tourism customers in Finland. The main customer countries remained the same during these ten years. Russians form a key group of foreign customers for both independent fishing tourism and guided fishing. Italian and German people use fishing guide services the most after Russians. (Myllylä

2016.) Pohja-Mykrä et al. (2018) concludes that this is a sign of strong cooperation networks and satisfied customers but slowly there is also a need to strengthen marketing to fishermen in new customer countries.

The trend towards more frequent and shorter holidays more evenly distributed throughout the year in combination with a demand for being active during holidays and travelling away from home to pursue hobbies and leisure interests, explain the increase in nature-based tourism. (Future market insights 2021.) Consequently, it explains the increase in international fishing tourism.

Modern tourists demand quality, and the future development of fishing products must focus on quality fishing, good fishing facilities, easy access to fishing localities through effective transportation as well as on quality booking systems, making it simple to plan and book fishing holidays

2.4 Variety of Finnish Fishing Tourism Businesses

The basis for fishing-related business is that the fishing tourist pays for fishing-related services so that it becomes a profitable business for the entrepreneur (Toivonen 2008).

In defining the complex network of tourism, it is common to sort the different elements into (1) the core tourism industry and (2) related tourism industry. The core and related elements of fishing tourism have been presented in the figure 3.

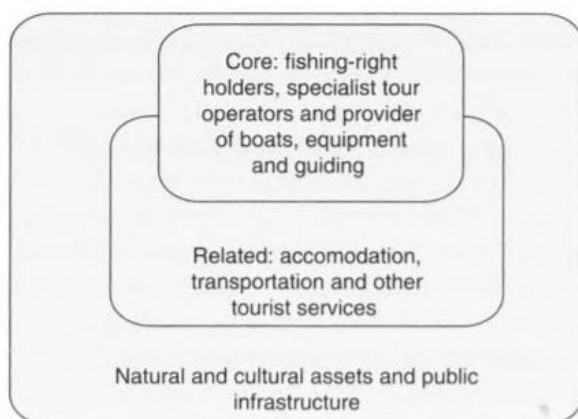


Figure 3. Core and related elements in fishing tourism industry (Borch & Aas 2008)

Fishing itself is not financially profitable but the products and services designed to support the fishing activity make the fishing tourism business profitable. By selling only fishing licenses, an entrepreneur cannot make a living. For this reason, fishing tourism businesses in Finland are very often conglomerates, which means that they offer a wide selection of

services such as transportation, foods and beverages, accommodation and guiding to support the fishing activity. (Myllylä 2016.) Since many of the fishing tourism services are small scale, quality is crucial to secure viable and profitable fishing tourism companies (Borch & Aas 2008).

An accommodation unit that only rents a boat or is located next to the fishing waters does not count as a fishing tourism business. However, an accommodation service, which business idea is offering fishing customers the opportunity to stay overnight, is counted as a fishing tourism company. (Toivonen 2008.)

The customer volumes, the variety of services and the aimed turnover vary a lot among Finnish fishing tourism businesses. Some entrepreneurs want to keep low profile and only work part-time and seasonally while others continuously try expanding their business. (Myllylä 2016.)

2.5 Fishing Tourist vs. Tourist Fishermen

Fishing tourists travel for the purpose of fishing whereas fishing activity as such is not a determining factor for tourist fishermen. These two different fishing customer segments have been presented in a table 1. The main motivation for travelling strongly differs between the two groups and it is not reasonable to evaluate them from the same perspective. This categorization is based on the perspective of how a tourist itself values actual fishing activity during the trip. (Kirjavainen 1997.)

Table 1. Differences between fishing tourism and tourism fishing (Adapted from Kirjavainen 1997)

	Fishing Tourism	Tourism Fishing
Motive to travel	Fishing	Leisure or Business / Something else than fishing
Planning	Well planned beforehand. Fishing leads decision-making	Often a spontaneous decision
Fishing as a hobby	Important hobby	Can be either an important hobby or the first fishing experience
Catch	At least big if not record fishes. Often specific species are wanted	Specific species are not as important as for fishing tourists
Accommodation	The most convenient for fishing e.g cottage	Chosen based on the main purpose of the trip e.g. hotel
Customers	Special interest tourists: e.g fly-, spin-, ice fishermen	Families, companies, pensioners
Equipment	Bring their own/expect very high quality	Rental equipment in a good shape

3 International Marketing of Finnish Fishing Tourism

International marketing refers to any marketing activity that occurs across country borders. International marketing begins with meeting the needs and wants of consumers in foreign markets. International marketing is the utilization and adaptation of the best marketing practices for the purposes of conducting commerce in other countries. International marketing always includes a home and host country. Home country refers to the nation in which the business or the headquarter is located and host country refers to the nation being targeted for expansion by a company. (Baack 2019.)

Networking is an important part of fishing tourism businesses where other tourist firms and entrepreneurs are the most important partners (Toivonen 2008). Myllylä (2016), also includes Visit Finland and regional tourism organizations as crucial partners especially in marketing.

The first step of starting both domestic and international marketing is to know who the target customer is. Fishing tourists are often being considered as one big target group but as Myllylä (2016) points out, it is where an entrepreneur goes wrong. By targeting the customer as detailed as possible, the entrepreneur saves significantly from marketing expenses. Careful planning means understanding the baseline situation in depth and defining clear objectives. With the help of technology, brands have a tremendous opportunity to impact their target audience throughout the decision-making process by showing them exactly what they have to offer, using the right message, at the right time. When marketing of fishing-related products and services abroad, it is important to remember that it is worthwhile to start international marketing only when the functionality on the domestic market has been ensured. (Kirjavainen 1997.)

3.1 Marketing plan

Marketing is an important part of business. Thus, the development of different aspects of marketing is crucial for boosting the success of a company. A marketing plan is the basis of a business plan. Creating a functional marketing plan requires carefully going through the key elements of marketing, which are analyzing market opportunities, developing marketing strategies, and planning operational marketing measures. A marketing plan is vital for a company because it helps ensure the company stays on the right track. (Rainisto 2006.) The goal of a marketing plan is to reach customers and achieve the goals set for the company. Customer segmentation must be taken into account when making a marketing plan (Rainisto 2006). Products, services, and marketing communications must be designed to suit the target groups. For example, a company will not be able to target all world citizens

as customers but will have to choose the target groups to which the business will be targeted. (Puustinen and Rouhiainen 2007.)

According to Albanese and Boedeker (2002), effective and efficient marketing requires plans. A tourism business needs clear goals against which the results achieved can be compared. The reasons for the importance of accurate marketing planning are the rapid changes in the tourism market and the varying needs of tourists, the need for a systematic and systematic action plan, changes in the external environment of a tourism business, and the nature of the tourism market. According to Puustinen and Rouhiainen (2007), the marketing plan must take into account the market analyzes, the choice of strategy and objectives, the implementation of the action plan, and monitoring, evaluation and development. The initial market analysis provides an overview of the company's current situation, such as the competitive situation in the market. The action plan and the implementation of measures include, for example, communication to selected target groups. In monitoring, evaluation and development, the marketing plan is evaluated, and development proposals and improvements are made. (Puustinen and Rouhiainen 2007.) There is a great variability of marketing plans, but the nature of all marketing plans is influenced by the goals and objectives set for the marketing. Some marketing plans give an overall idea of the future direction of the company, while some of the plans are more practical. (Albanese and Boedeker 2002.)

According to Albanese and Boedeker (2002), marketing planning can be divided into strategic and tactical levels. In strategic level planning, the future and the external environment of the company are considered important, and the timeline is usually at least three years long. Trends in consumer behavior, changes in the company's external environment and the future competitive situation are analyzed in the strategic level. The goal of strategic level planning is to adapt the company for future changes. According to Burk Wood (2010), the benefits of marketing planning are diverse. The plan helps to look at the competition between companies and makes it easier to achieve marketing effectiveness. When a company plans its marketing, the questions of who, what, when, where, how and how much are important. Marketing planning is not just planning for the next upcoming year, but it helps a company prepare for new and unexpected things in the long run. The role of a marketing plan, especially in the early stages of a business, is particularly important as it serves as a foundation for the company's marketing. The company must be prepared to change its marketing plan if necessary. Therefore, marketing planning must be both flexible and precise. It enables the company's position in the market if the company is able to meet the expectations, needs and requirements of its customers. Current market situation and environment is changing so rapidly that successful companies

are actively updating their marketing plans to maintain their competitiveness. (Burk Wood 2010.)

3.2 The Communication Circle

The communication circle (Figure 4) plays an important role when fishing tourism companies target their marketing to new target countries in the international market. The communication circle describes the formation of a customer relationship, from expectations to word-of-mouth communication.

According to Grönroos (2010), the circle of communication includes expectations, interaction, experiences, and word of mouth communication. It all starts with the expectations that the customer or potential customer has for the company. Through expectations, the customer may end up purchasing a product, such as a fishing trip. The customer relationship continues if it is an existing customer, or a new customer relationship will be created (step 1). This is followed by the interaction between the company and the customer (step 2), where the customer experiences the dimensions of the functional and technical quality of the services. Interaction and the sense of quality affect the customer experience. A new international traveler who has never been to the destination country before gets an idea of the destination country and its people through their experiences. If the experiences are positive, the customer will be happy to return to the country and continue the relationship with the company. (Grönroos 2010.)

The experience gained from companies (Step 3) has a great importance for the customer relationship. The customers are active to spread positive word-of-mouth communication and references on behalf of the company (Step 4). Thanks to a recommendation of a satisfied customer who has visited a fishing tourism company, new international customer who already has a positive attitude towards the company will purchase a trip. Positive word-of-mouth communication influences the formation of expectations and buying behavior. (Grönroos 2010.)

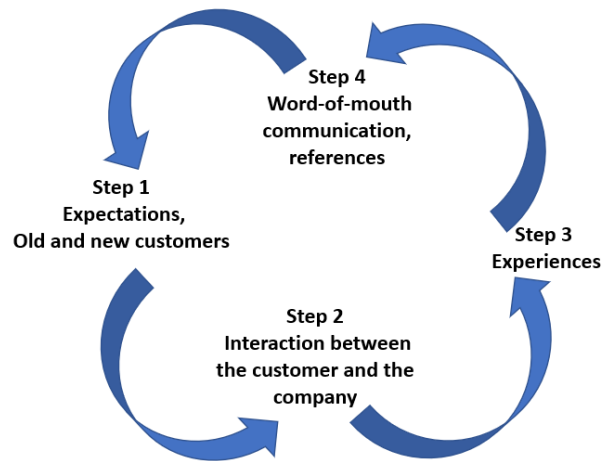


Figure 4. The communication circle (Adapted from Grönroos 2010)

3.3 National Fishing Tourism Portal

Myllylä (2016) points out that scattered information and the lack of available languages have been main challenges for reaching out to international markets. Therefore, in 2013, a fishing tourism portal (www.fishinginfinland.fi) was launched to gather fishing information in 10 different languages. The purpose of the website is to present Finland as a good and versatile fishing tourism destination for both international and domestic customers.

The site aims to promote Finnish fishing tourism by gathering information of all fishing tourism related businesses interested in international visibility. The portal approves businesses on their site only if the company's website is in English.

The most viewed pages in foreign languages are concerning the fishing licenses, regulations, and species. The most viewed pages in Finnish language consist of information of different water areas and destinations in Finland. Regarding the user data of the portal, one can arrive at a conclusion that international audience who is interested in fishing tourism, first looks for information about the permits, licenses, and possible catch. Finnish fishing tourist looks for physical locations because they already know the basics of the fishing regulations. The most used languages in the portal in the order of importance are Finnish, English, Russian and German. The figure 5 shows the sequence of website visit flows from 2014 to 2021. It is very clear that people look for more information during summer season than in winter season. When taking a closer look for the user data from the website, it is distinctly detected that the bounce rate, people leaving the site immediately, has become greater and greater throughout the years. (Google analytics 2021.)

The website is targeted to semipro fishing tourists who are interested in Finland as a fishing destination. It requires a lot of resources to keep the website continuously updated. Therefore, it is important that the fishing tourism companies create content and keep their websites up to date as fishinginfinland.fi serves as a channel connecting the potential customer to the company's website.

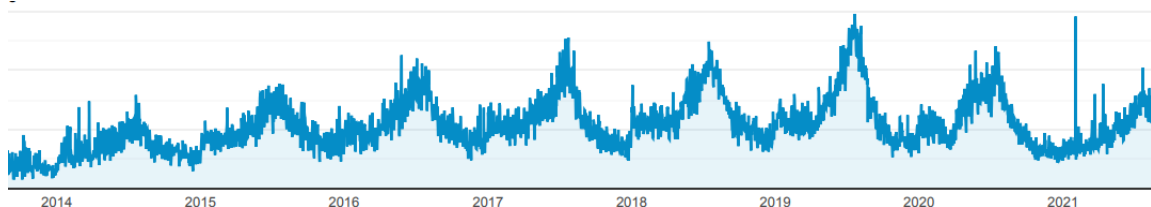


Figure 5. www.fishinginfinland.fi user flow 2014-2021 (Google Analytics 2021)

3.4 The Role of Visit Finland in Marketing

Visit Finland's mission is to help tourism companies and regions develop their internationalization. Visit Finland's goal is that Finland will be the most attractive tourist destination in the Nordic countries by 2025. Visit Finland's responsibility is country promoting and it works to develop and market Finland's travel image as well as help Finnish travel companies to internationalize, develop, sell, and market high-quality travel products.

Visit Finland's website reaches over 5 million unique visitors per year and the site's main aim is to inspire the visitor and showcase the best of Finland via interesting articles and other content. (Business Finland 2018.) Visit Finland has a significant role in helping Finnish fishing tourism companies by promoting Finland as a travel destination. Developing fishing tourism in Finland directly supports the mission of being the most attractive tourist destination in the Nordic countries by 2025.

4 Research Methods

In this chapter the reasons for choosing qualitative approach for the research will be explained. In addition, it will be explained how the interview is structured as well as how the received data will be analyzed. In the end, the reliability of the research will also be discussed.

Qualitative research method is sufficient when studying a subjective and versatile topic. The research question of this thesis is “How do the Finnish fishing tourism entrepreneurs see the current situation of international marketing?”, so the best way to find out the answer is by the qualitative method rather than quantitative. In Byrne’s words (2004): “Qualitative interviewing is particularly useful as a research method for accessing individual’s attitudes and values”. The main research question deal with interests and it is closely linked with attitudes and values. The thesis does not only focus on determining the current international marketing actions but also understanding attitudes behind the internationalization.

The research process planning requires getting familiar with the literature, specifying, and reflecting on the research problem, defining concepts, and choosing the best research method. Only after these steps have been completed can the actual preparation of the questions and the design of the interview form begin. The question form requires careful consideration because adding questions to the form afterwards is challenging. When designing the form, the researcher must make decisions related to 1. the content of the questions, 2. the wording of the questions, 3. the technicalities of the questions and 4. the order of the questions. In addition to these decisions, it must be thought how the form will be tested and how it may be corrected after the testing phase. It is important to consider what is being asked and specify what kind of problems the research intends to answer. The more clearly research problems are outlined, the easier it is to cut down on unnecessary questions. Often valid sub-problems arise only in the analysis phase, in which case the new suggestions for future research will arise. (Jyrinki 1974.)

The questions of standardized open-ended interview are structured in terms of the wording. Participants are asked the same questions, but the questions are worded so that responses are open-ended. Leaving questions open-ended allows the participants to contribute as much detailed information as they desire, and it also allows the researcher to ask probing questions as a means of follow-up. Standardized open-ended interviews are the most popular form of interviewing utilized in research studies because of the nature of the open-ended questions, allowing the participants to fully express their viewpoints and experiences.

(Turner 2010.) Open-ended questions determine how important the respondent perceives the topic discussed (Jyrinki 1974).

Qualitative data of this research will be collected by standardized interview. Question guidelines are prepared in advance to give the interview a smooth and comprehensive lead. Structure-wise, questions follow two different types: open and follow-up questions. Open-ended questions require more than one word answer, usually starting with “What” and “How”. Follow-up questions are used for deeper understanding of the interviewee’s answer. The two types of questions will be used in combination to achieve the most descriptive answer from the interviewees.

4.1 Data Collection Process and Analysis

Majority of the entrepreneurs will be selected from fishinginfinland.fi portal. The entrepreneurs will be chosen from all corners of Finland covering the whole country. A visit on company’s website will be made to ensure that the company is still operating and to collect the contact information. The aim is to conduct an interview with approximately 10 operating Finnish fishing tourism entrepreneurs from all around Finland. The interview language will be Finnish because it is every participant’s native language. The size and the customer volumes of the companies can vary significantly between the participants but unifying factor of all the companies will be that they all earn significant share of their income directly from fishing tourism. The participants will be chosen unbiasedly from different provinces of Finland. Wide geographical perspective ensures that fishing tourism is being considered in the whole country level and therefore the received data will be more reliable.

The interview’s logical structure and the questions will be tested a couple of times before starting the actual interviews. Test interviewees will be friends and family, and testing will be done face to face. In the testing phase, based on test interviewees’ opinion, some changes will be done. By testing the interview, the logical structure and a balanced transition between the questions can be ensured.

The topic of the research will be briefly explained when the companies are being first contacted to participate in the research. All interviews will be recorded on author’s phone or computer under the permission of the participants. After recording the interviews, they will be transcribed into words, gathered, and finally analyzed. The scheduled timeframe to conduct all interviews is November/December 2021.

There are several types of qualitative data analysis, each serving a different purpose. For this research, the most suitable one is thematic analysis. The thematic analysis is a method of analyzing the qualitative data and is typically used for collected texts, such as interview transcripts. The researcher examines the data closely to discover common and repeated themes, topics, ideas, and patterns. Thematic analysis process is developed by Braun and Clarke (2006) first for psychological research analysis but since it is very flexible it can be used for variety of research. Thematic analysis of this thesis includes following steps: familiarization, highlighting, structuring data under the research questions, and writing up.

In the process of familiarization, the researcher will listen to all the recordings. After listening to the recording, the researcher goes through the transcription and makes detailed notes. Next, the researcher highlights the most important sentences and phrases and structure them logically under the research questions. Writing up the results takes place when the deep and comprehensive understanding of the interview answers has been achieved.

A brief SWOT analysis will be used for describing the current situation of international marketing of Finnish fishing tourism. SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. SWOT Analysis is a tool that can help analyze what the company, and in this case the tourism industry, does best right now, and to devise a successful strategy for the future. A SWOT analysis examines both internal and external factors. (Mindtools 2021.)

4.2 Interview Questions

In semi structured interview, the questions are the same for every interviewee. The list of questions (appendix 2) includes only open-end questions, most of them starting with “How” and “What”. The questions are approved by the commissioning party, The Federation of Finnish Fisheries association. The questions are planned so that the interviewees cannot answer with simple “yes or “no” but with broad answers. Follow-up questions will be asked for deeper understanding of interviewee’s answers. Follow-up questions are not planned beforehand.

The questions are divided into 3 categories (initial data, customers, and marketing). This division is chosen for easier approach of analyzing and structuring the data afterwards. The questions 1-4 provide basic background information of the company and open the interview topic with a question of the future development of Finnish fishing tourism. The background information is important for the deep understanding of the subject and for making sure that the participants are relevant for the research.

The next questions, 5-10, focus on identifying the most important foreign customer segments and finding differences between domestic and foreign travelers. These questions aim to reveal the volume of foreign customers before the Covid-19 pandemic and the importance international customers will give for the businesses in the future. Besides asking about the differences between customer profiles, the entrepreneurs will be asked whether the product they offer is the same for both domestic and foreign customer.

The following questions, 11-17, deal with the international marketing itself. The questions give an answer to what kind of actions the entrepreneurs are already taking, and willing to take in order to develop their international marketing. The questions investigate the best marketing channels and the significance of the fishinginfinland.fi from marketing point of view. All the questions fall under the main research question of "How do Finnish fishing tourism entrepreneurs see their current situation of international marketing?". The current situation stands for the interest, attitudes, and a realistic picture of what is already being done and how it could be improved

5 Interview Results

The participating companies were chosen to represent Finnish fishing tourism industry. All together 20 entrepreneurs were contacted via email asking about their interest in taking part in the interview. The cover letter (appendix 1) that was sent to the companies was designed to be short and pithy making it easy for entrepreneurs to react to the email. Altogether 8 out of 20 answered within few weeks and showed their interest in the research. 6 interviews were conducted in November and December 2021 through a phone call, 1 on a video call and 1 face to face. All entrepreneurs had the possibility to see the questions before the actual interview so that they could prepare themselves. The interviews took between 15 and 45 minutes.

Appendix 3 shows relevant background information about the participants' business model. The wide geographical distribution and existing pandemic made it impossible to meet everyone personally. Therefore, the interviews were conducted through three channels: on phone, on video call and face to face. Two companies operate their business part-time and the rest, six, operate full-time. The unifying factor for all companies is that fishing tourism plays a significant role in the business so that they are considered fishing tourism companies. All eight entrepreneurs were interested in the international marketing topic and therefore they were very responsive to the thesis interview.

The questions remained the same for all participants throughout the whole interview process. The number of follow-up questions varied based on how comprehensive answers the interviewees gave. Some questions such as the question number 4 "How do you feel about the development of international fishing tourism in Finland?" generated more discussion than others. Overall, all the entrepreneurs who took part in the research seemed very interested in the topic and came across very professional in their field of expertise.

The language used for all interviews was Finnish. Thus, the answers and quotes have been translated into English trying not to lose the original tones and attitudes.

After each interview, the record files were transcribed into words. Gathering the answers together helped analyzing the data and highlighting sentences in the transcriptions helped noticing several similarities as well as differences in the answers.

In order to give comprehensive answers to the research questions, the results have been divided into 5 categories: 1. Fishing tourism customers, 2. Entrepreneurs' interest in developing international marketing, 3. International marketing actions taken by Finnish

fishing tourism entrepreneurs, 4. The differences between domestic and foreign fishing tourists, and 5. Significance and development ideas for the national fishing tourism portal. The categories are based on the interview questions. Structuring data into different categories help noticing similarities and differences between the entrepreneurs' answers and therefore making analysis easier.

In the following chapter, the results of the interviews will be discussed and analyzed. For privacy reasons, all the companies will remain anonymous and will be referred to as a number from 1 to 8.

5.1 Fishing Tourism Customers

The interviews revealed that the companies have different customer segments based on their core and related services. According to the interviews, 4 out of 8 entrepreneurs aim to target fishing tourists (fishing as the main travel motivation) as their main customers. The entrepreneur (1) says that from the perspective of a fishing guide, tourist fishermen (fishing as secondary travel motivation) is not a very good target group in the long run because they may not be able to appreciate all the investment and therefore don't want to pay the high price. The (1) summarize the argument "*Sometimes it feels like some fishing tourism products are too good for tourist fishermen*". Still, most companies say that their customer segments include more tourist fishermen than fishing tourists especially during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The interviews show that the traditional customer segments changed after the outbreak of the pandemic as more tourist fishermen appeared. The entrepreneur (4) says that 60 % of the international customers are fishing tourists who travel to go fishing. The lack of international tourists during the pandemic can be the reason for the customer structure changes.

Two entrepreneurs mentioned that the share of Finnish customers will decline in near future and foreign customers will replace them. These two entrepreneurs mention that the whole business will soon be based on international market. The number of international fishing tourists vary between 10 and 90 %. The low percentages 0-10 % are due to the recently started businesses. These companies with low international customer percentage forecast the percentage to increase significantly in the near future.

According to the interviewee sample of this thesis, the percentage of international fishing tourism customers is roughly 45 % of all customers. It shows the clear importance of the international market. The most important nationalities that the interviewed entrepreneurs

mention are Russia, Lithuania, Latvia, Germany, France, Italy, USA, UK and the Nordic countries.

5.2 Entrepreneurs' Interest in Developing International Marketing

All interviewed companies have international customers. The interviews revealed that international customers are eager to spend significant amount of money on fishing tourism services and therefore they are very much appreciated among the entrepreneurs. The tremendous number of international fishermen around the world brings a huge potential to Finnish fishing tourism industry. *"The potential from abroad should not be underestimated"*, says the (8).

All interviewees are very interested in international marketing and admit the potential that international market has. However, the limited resources in small companies slow down the developing process in a company level. The importance of international country promoting stands out in the interviews as a few entrepreneurs mention that Finland needs to promote itself better as a fishing destination in a country level *"The effective marketing process needs to happen both in a country level and company level"*, says the (1).

5.3 International Marketing Actions Taken by Fishing Tourism Entrepreneurs

None of the entrepreneurs have a clear marketing plan or a budget targeted to international market. The (1) says: *"At first, I had big future plans for international marketing but now it is everchanging project, which is now on a break due to the pandemic. I don't have a budget, but I will. My interest in marketing is in correlation with my time- and stress management"*.

The time- and stress management is popular topic to discuss. Often the challenge in marketing is the lack of time. The entrepreneur (4) says the reason behind its poor marketing actions is the lack of skilled employees. The interviews revealed that since the companies are rather small, the entrepreneurs do not have enough resources to reach out international audience as much as they would want. *"International marketing is a long-term project and I believe that the entrepreneur needs to commit to it at least for 5 years"*, says the entrepreneur (1). Meanwhile the entrepreneur (3) says *"Covid 19 pandemic has taught that we should focus more on short term marketing instead of making long term marketing plans"*. A few entrepreneurs mention that they are completely on hold with regard to marketing because of the complicated Covid-19 situation.

All companies have their website at least in two languages and are using some social media channels, most often Facebook and/or Instagram. Half of the interviewed companies

mention affiliate marketing as a beneficial method. A few have taken part in YouTube videos, and they find it very effective. All the websites are built to serve international customers. Some companies share international content on social media more than others and it has a clear correlation with the share of the company's international customers.

Only two companies mention traditional marketing channels. One mention that they take part in international fairs to promote their business and to find co-operative partners as well as customers. Another company mentions billboards along the roads as an affective channel as well.

Based on entrepreneurs' opinions and experiences, the most successful and important digital marketing channels to reach out new international customers are providing international content both on website and on Instagram as well as ranking well on Google with SEO and SEM tools.

5.4 The Differences Between Domestic and Foreign Fishing Tourists

Most of the interviewed fishing tourism entrepreneurs recognize that there are some clear differences between foreign and Finnish fishing tourist profiles. The entrepreneur (2) points out that foreign customers spend their own money whereas Finnish customers' fishing trips are often paid mostly by their companies. All entrepreneurs agree that foreign customers are more willing to pay fair prices for services while Finnish customers rarely accept the offer request without bargaining. Also, foreign customers often give tips on top of the fishing trip's price. The Finns use less fishing guide services because they are in general more independent travelers. As a result, sales and service are often more straightforward to the foreign tourist, and in addition, the foreign tourist also acquires additional services that are efficient for the fishing entrepreneur to provide. Because of this, a foreign tourist is often an attractive customer for a business, and it makes foreign customers a desired target group.

Foreign fishing tourists appreciate more comprehensive packages whereas the Finns are interested in the simplest package to serve the specific need they have. Both the entrepreneur (4) and (8) mention that catering services are the first services that the Finns want to remove from the package since they often want to bring their own snacks.

Finnish customers often have a set goal for the trip. This goal can be, for example, catching specific fish species or a record fish or trying a new fishing method. International customers come to enjoy the whole nature experience. Also, the appreciation and the respect of

Finnish nature is much higher among international tourists. The Finnish nature is present in most of the Finns' daily lives, so the nature experience is not so unusual for the Finns.

Two companies mention that most of their domestic customers are business customers on their away day "*Finnish away days can be rather wild and careless while foreign customers enjoy the fishing experience in nature more holistically*", says the entrepreneur (2). The entrepreneur (3) points out that many of the foreign customers have seen the world and experienced a lot but the fishing trip in Finland can be the first contact with fishing. The (3) says "*One example of the differences is the appreciation of pike, which is considerably higher among foreigners.*"

All entrepreneurs say that the products and services in the market are the same for all nationalities. However, the packages are always customized based on customers' needs. In general, foreign customers buy more comprehensive and longer experiences. The entrepreneur (1) would describe the package for foreign tourist as a "*turnkey service*". Turnkey stands for a ready-to-operate package where customer just must turn a key and start using the product or service. The package often includes all the elements that support the fishing activity. "*If the entrepreneur itself does not offer all the services, helping the customer finding accommodation, transportation etc. is crucial*", says the (1). The Finns are more independent and seldom require ready-made packages. "*When Finnish customers start to bargain, I just try to trim the package accordingly*", says the (8).

5.5 Significancy and Development Ideas for The National Fishing Tourism Portal

A fishing tourism company may find such a large website with a hundred other companies useless compared to, for example, a local village's promotion website where the fishing tourism company in question is the only one to be presented. Today, fishing activities are promoted online much more comprehensively from all over Finland than at the time when the nationwide fishinginfinland.fi site was built with MEK in 2013. Therefore, the website designs and tools are very advanced compared the situation from 8 years ago. Most of fishing tourism companies' pages are now stylish and there are plenty of language versions. Nowadays, when a foreign tourist searches for fishing services in Finland, he or she most likely ends up with the right keywords directly on the fishing tourism company's own website or in the language version of the nearby town or tourist area, which tells about fishing and fishing services.

All the interviewed entrepreneurs know the fishinginfinland.fi site and say that it does not bring significant extra value for their business. The responses are rather negative from most

of the entrepreneurs. Most entrepreneurs know the significant amount of money invested in the creation of the website and it is described as a “*waste of money and resources*”. Some entrepreneurs say it might give some visibility for the company but based on the sample of this thesis no customer has mentioned that the company was found through that channel.

According to the Federation of Finnish Fisheries Association, fishinginfinland.fi portal, has also received plenty of gratefulness for promoting Finnish fishing tourism throughout its years of operating. In a way, time has gone a little past for a nationwide portal, but it does not automatically mean that it is no longer needed. Not all regions have their own regional pages, and few regions or companies have many language versions, unlike fishinginfinland.fi, which has 10.

The most important comments received through the interviews concerning the website:

“It does not have direct significancy in my business. I dare to point out that many fishing tourist have high standards and they do not find information they want from old fashioned website”

“The website could look more reliable”

“Visuals leave a lot to be desired”

“I had to make effort to find my own contact information”

Development ideas gathered from the interviews:

1. Making the site look fresh and updated
2. More focus on fishing experience providers: contact information and backup links
3. Increasing the reliability
4. Mobile optimization
5. Clearing out both the layout and the content
6. Adding a lot of quality visual material and replacing loads of pictures

All in all, updating fishinginfinland.fi is highly recommended. Paying attention to user experience and focusing on entrepreneurs' needs in the developing process will serve both the company and the country promotion.

6 Discussion

This thesis succeeded to give answers to all research questions. The main research question that this thesis aimed to answer was how Finnish fishing tourism entrepreneurs see the current situation of their international marketing. There were four sub questions supporting the main question: 1. How interested the entrepreneurs are in international marketing? 2. What actions are the entrepreneurs already taking for international marketing? 3. What are the most efficient channels to promote fishing tourism services based on entrepreneurs' opinion? and 4. How domestic and international fishing tourist differ from each other?" In the following paragraphs these questions will be answered based on the research results.

Table 2. SWOT analysis of international marketing of Finnish fishing tourism

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <p>Reputation: Land of Thousands of Lakes Unique nature Finland is growing popularity as a destination among international tourists Nature tourism is booming trend Entrepreneurs are interested in internationalization</p>	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <p>Limited resources (money, time, and skills) in small companies, Strict regulations and licenses Weather conditions Expensive operational costs</p>
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <p>Variety of marketing channels Updating the fishinginfinland.fi site Cooperation between all stakeholders to help building the country image</p>	<p>THREATS</p> <p>Changing and unsure circumstances such as Covid-19 and climate change Overfishing</p>

Fishing tourism businesses are often small companies with limited resources. This makes it necessary to innovate new tools and to improve cooperation between all stakeholders to help these companies reach out to international market. Digital marketing is inevitably the best way of getting visibility for the business based on the entrepreneurs' opinion. The power of social media is tremendous, and all companies need to pay attention in quality content creation in social media. Ranking high on search engines with search engine optimization and search engine marketing tools is crucial. There are already some existing fishing tourism websites and portals such as fishinginfinland.fi and these websites play a role in country promoting. Finland is the Land of Thousand Lakes, and it is such an excellent competitive advantage around the world. Changing circumstances, such as the Covid-19,

have driven companies to focus on short-term marketing rather than long-term marketing, as uncertainty affects the travel industry. Entrepreneurs should therefore have the capacity to manage both short-term and long-term marketing together in order to develop long-term visibility and success.

The significance of word-of-mouth communication was mentioned a few times during the interviews. The positive customer experiences result in lasting customer relationships. Especially in small tourism companies the word-of-mouth communication is inevitably important. The entrepreneurs admit that the word-of-mouth marketing based on customers' positive experiences works well especially in the fishing tourism industry. This proves the communication circle- theory by Grönroos (2010).

All interviewed companies have international customers. The average percentage of foreign fishing tourism customers is 45 % based on the sample of this thesis. In the research of Toivonen (2008), foreigners formed about a quarter of all customers, while in the study (Pohja-Mykrä et al.) conducted in 2018, foreign customers accounted for 31% of all fishing tourism customers in Finland. The results of this thesis show that the percentage has continued increasing. Therefore, it is undeniable that there is a huge potential in international market. This potential can be put into service by efficient marketing both in a company and in a country level. Finland, the Land of Thousand lakes, is unique and incredible fishing tourism destination and it deserves to be promoted better for international audience.

The entrepreneurs think that the international fishing tourism will significantly increase in Finland with the help of a tight cooperation between all stakeholders. Other Nordic countries are clearly leading in terms of the number of fishing tourists and the revenue generated. However, there is no reason why Finland would not achieve a better position in the fishing tourism market than now.

International marketing is not only a responsibility of a one company but a large-scale mission in a country level. The fishing tourism companies are rather small with limited resources. None of the interviewed companies has a set marketing plan or a budget for international marketing. However, all entrepreneurs say that they are very much interested in internationalization and receiving more international customers. Marketing is a challenge for many due to the lack of employees, money, and time. However, the attitudes towards international fishing tourists are very positive and they are seen as an attractive target group among the entrepreneurs. Fishing tourism entrepreneurs are clearly interested in developing international marketing, but their current marketing actions do not go in

accordance with the goals they want to achieve. The importance of marketing plan is explained in 3.1. Marketing plan plays a significant role in business plan. However, none of the interviewed companies have a clear plan. Successful marketing requires planning and careful implementation. The purpose of a marketing plan in the tourism industry is to ensure that marketing aligns with the strategy.

The main difference between a domestic and foreign customer is the willingness to pay for additional services to support the fishing activity. Based on the interviews, foreign customers enjoy more comprehensive packages, stay longer, and generate more revenue than Finnish customers. Also, the respect towards Finnish nature and for example catching pikes is more appreciated among international tourists. A Finnish fishing tourist often has a specific goal for the trip and wants to trim the package to serve this goal. For foreign tourists, fishing in Finland is not only an activity but an experience. Based on the fishing tourism entrepreneurs, the foreign customers see fishing as comprehensive nature experience. Therefore, fishing tourism is clearly a significant part of Finnish experience economy and nature tourism. Fishing experience consist of several elements that support the fishing activity. It is often a package that includes relating services like accommodation, catering, and other activities.

The appreciation of pike among is high among international tourists. From international point of view, pike is considered one of the most important fish specie supporting the Finnish fishing tourism. The presence of pike, big size and the high probability of the catch make it possible to build experiential products with pike fishing. Pike fishing can be seen as a niche product in special interest tourism sector. As Borch & Aas (2008) outline, foreign recreational fishermen are highly specialized, and they have high expectations about the catch and the environment. Modern fishing tourism strongly focuses on some types of fishing, some fish species, and some tourist destinations which are more central for fishing tourism than the others.

A very important detail to consider in relation to all guided fishing tourism products is that different nationalities have different attitudes towards fishing and fish as a catch. The catch and release policy is the only option for certain audiences while some want to keep a few and let go the rest. The cultural practices and attitudes of customer segments must be known in advance and differences taken into consideration when designing and implementing fishing activities in order to provide unforgettable and positive experiences for international audiences.

The most significant nationalities for the interviewed companies are Russia, Lithuania, Latvia, Germany, France, Italy, USA, United Kingdom, and the Nordic countries. Russian-speaking customers are already being taken into account in a few companies' websites by providing the material also in Russian language. The most important nationalities match with the results of Toivonen (2008) research so they have remained the same.

Visit Finland's research (2018) shows that 18 % of the tourists were interested in fishing activities during their trip but only 4 % took it into action in 2018. This supports the results of this thesis. The significant potential in nature-based activities among international tourists should be utilized. The entrepreneurs are interested in developing their international marketing and receiving more international customers, but external help is obviously needed and appreciated. Some ways of utilizing the potential of the international fishing tourists' interest in fishing in Finland must be implemented. These ways could be for example coming up with a marketing plan for promoting Finland as a fishing destination country, helping the fishing tourism entrepreneurs promote better their services, enhancing cooperation between stakeholders and updating the fishinginfinland.fi to serve international audience better and more comprehensively. Entrepreneurs should consider new social media channels such as TikTok. Social media is everchanging.

6.1 Key Findings

The fishing tourism industry in Finland will be based on international market. The share of international customers has been continuously increasing and the entrepreneurs estimate the percentage still to be increased. It is estimated that the international customers will take over the industry. The fishing tourists who travel to go fishing are seen an attractive customer segment because they appreciate the investment made in the business such as high-quality fishing vessels and other equipment. A tourist fisherman might not have such high standards and the high price of the fishing trip can be too much for them. Therefore, international fishing tourists is an attractive customer segment for businesses.

International marketing plays an important role in the internationalization. The companies have limited resources to implement effective marketing plans. There is a clear interest in the marketing and entrepreneurs are motivated to boost the marketing actions. However, the time, money and skills hold them back on the process. The companies have language versions, at least Finnish and English, on their website and most of them use social media. Yet, the use of social media is not often effective or made for marketing purposes. The frequency of updating can be several months or even years for some companies who mentioned that they use social media for marketing. The positive attitude towards

international marketing is an excellent start. Some external help is needed and wanted to help small businesses succeed in marketing. Marketing fishing tourism while building the Finnish country image will benefit both the country and the fishing tourism entrepreneurs.

The professional skills of the fishing guides are often acquired through their own hobbies. Knowledge and skills related to catching fish and handling catches are the strongest areas of expertise for the average entrepreneur. The basic precondition for the successful operation in the tourism sector is that the personnel can interact and communicate with foreign customers and understand the specificities of their cultural background. The market knowledge of local operators is not yet generally at the level where it is possible to carry out dynamic internationalization without the support of a specialized sales organization. In this situation, creating marketing and sales channels is wise to do in cooperation. There is a need for determined measures and joint efforts by the various development organizations to increase fishing tourism from a side industry to a leading activity in export-based tourism.

6.2 Validity and Reliability of The Research

Assessing a research's credibility requires analyzing the reliability and validity of that research, which is often more challenging for qualitative research compared with quantitative one. The qualitative research is considered less credible due to the lack of measurability of the variables and replicability of the results. When research involves human behavior and opinions, it becomes challenging to evaluate how valid the results of the research are, because the qualitative research results are often impossible to generalize towards a wider group. The validity of qualitative research can also be described as the truth of the research. The truth of the research concerns the accuracy and honesty of results (Noble & Smith, 2015.) To establish reliability, the source of the data needs to be clearly identified, whether it comes from an interviewee or from the author themselves. A qualitative study's validity and reliability depends on carefully prepared interview questions that are not suggestive. Interviewees should be free to respond according to their own opinion. Furthermore, it is important that the questions are clear and precise to collect relevant data (Brink 1993.)

When preparing the questions, the reliability and validity were taken into consideration. The results collected are based on truth and fishing tourism provider's own experiences. All the interviewees who desired to participate in the interview were interested in answering the questions and considered the topic to be of significant personal interest. No one was forced to take part in the research. The interviewed companies have been operating over very different time periods from months to decades. Thus, the entrepreneurs' expertise and the

number of observations vary between each other even though everyone is considered a professional in fishing tourism industry.

All entrepreneurs had the possibility to see the questions beforehand and prepare their answers. Some had thought about the answers more than others and it could be seen in the accuracy of the answers. Some entrepreneurs provided very accurate and detailed information whereas some gave more vague answers.

The sample of fishing tourism companies (8) is not large enough to make big groundbreaking conclusions. Instead, it serves for providing an overall vision of the topic. The interviews were conducted over the phone call, on a video call and face to face. The geographical distribution made it impossible to meet all the entrepreneurs personally. The geographical distribution among the companies covered Finland as a whole.

The respondents showed an interest to know the results of the research, which will be summarized and shared with the entrepreneurs once the thesis process is fully complete. An article about the results of the thesis is published in Finnish language in the Finnish Fishing Magazine in January 2022 (appendix 4).

6.3 Suggestions for Future Development

The interviews showed that Finnish fishing tourism is strongly seasonal emphasizing in summer season. One idea for future development is trying to increase the volume during offseason. The freezing of waters and consequently ice fishing opportunities cannot be promised due to the uncertainty of weather conditions, but some additional and creative fishing related experiences can still be provided for tourists.

In addition to focusing on entrepreneurs' expectations and needs, also the customer feedback and the interviews and surveys of fishing tourists are needed to form an overall picture. More research focusing on fishing tourism in Finland is needed and the fishing tourism should be considered independently and not always as a small part of nature- and outdoor tourism. Individual fishing tourism companies should independently collect customer feedback, and the visitor structure of the sites maintained by stakeholders such as the ministry of forestry shall be monitored with the help of visitor surveys.

Other future development idea is to create an effective channel where to promote Finnish fishing tourism and help small companies earn more visibility. Cooperation between small

tourism companies should not be seen as a competition but as an advantage. Small tourism companies need support in marketing.

6.4 Reflection on Learning

My learning experience of this thesis process has been highly educational and interesting for me. Conducting this research gave me an opportunity to explore an area of interest, which is nature tourism involved with international marketing and experience economy. Fishing tourism for me was a new topic and it is not yet highly researched in Finland. The research process was exciting as I could talk to real entrepreneurs and make interesting contacts within the tourism industry. The main challenge I faced during the process of writing my thesis was scheduling because I found myself busy and overloaded with work, studies, and personal life. The most pleasant phase was the actual interviewing when I got to talk to the entrepreneurs, especially face to face. The favorable reception from the entrepreneurs kept me motivated and made me feel that my thesis is important and relevant. This thesis taught me to step out of my comfort zone and helped widening my network. I was not very familiar with fishing tourism before starting my thesis process, but very soon I learned to like the topic and this feeling helped me remain motivated throughout the process. Very soon after starting I felt that I became an expert in researching Finnish fishing tourism.

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Appendices

1 Appendix – Email Cover Letter

Subject: Kalastusmatkailu opinnäytetyö

Hei,

Olen Haaga-Helian matkailualan restonomiopiskelija ja olen parhaillani tekemässä opinnäytetyötä Suomen kalastusmatkailun kansainvälisen markkinoinnin tilanteen kartoittamiseksi. Teen työn tilauksesta Kalatalouden Keskusliitolle. Etsin kalastusmatkailuyrityksiä, joita voisin haastatella opinnäytetyötäni varten. Olisitko kiinnostunut osallistumaan?

Haastatteluun olisi hyvä varata aikaa noin 30 minuuttia. Saat kysymykset toki ennakoon luettavaksi, jotta saat miettiä vastauksia myös etukäteen. Tulen äänittämään haastattelun myöhempää vastausten litterointia varten. Yrityksesi pysyy työssäni täysin anonyyminä ja tietoja käsitellään erittäin luottamuksellisesti. Haastattelu voidaan suorittaa esimerkiksi puhelimitse.

Haastattelussa tulen kysymään muun muassa yrityksenne asiakaskunnasta, ulkomaalaisten matkailijoiden osuudesta liiketoiminnassanne ja markkinointitoimenpiteistänne.

Opinnäytetyöni pyrkii vastaamaan tutkimuskysymykseen ”Miten kalastusmatkailuyritykset kokevat tämänhetkisen kansainvälisen markkinoinnin tilanteen?”

Vastaamalla tähän viestiin tai soittamalla minulle voimme sopia sinulle parhaimman ajan haastattelulle.

Kiitos paljon ajastanne!

Ystävällisin terveisin,

Ida Karttunen

2 Appendix – Interview Questions

Taustatiedot

1. Mistä liiketoimintanne rakentuu?
2. Kuinka suuri osa liiketoiminnasta on kalastusmatkailua?
3. Minkälaisia oheispalveluita tarjoatte?
4. Miten koet kansainvälisen kalastusmatkailun kehittyvän Suomessa lähitulevaisuudessa?

Asiakkaat

5. Kohdistuuko liiketoiminta enemmän matkailijakalastajiin vai kalastusmatkailijoihin?
6. Mikä oli ulkomaalaisten osuus kaikista asiakkaista ennen Covid-19 pandemiaa?
7. Mitkä ovat tärkeimmät kansalaisuudet?
8. Kuinka tärkeäksi koette jatkossa ulkomaalaiset matkailijat omalle liiketoiminnalle?
9. Miten ulkomaalainen ja suomalainen kalastusmatkailijaprofiili eroavat toisistaan?
10. Miten kotimaiselle ja kansainväliselle matkailijalle tarjotut kalastusmatkailutuotteet eroavat toisistaan?

Markkinointi

11. Minkälaista ulkomaan markkinointia teette tällä hetkellä?
12. Minkälainen markkinointisuunnitelma ja/tai budjetti teillä on?
13. Mitä markkinointikanavia käytätte?
14. Mikä on teille tärkein kanava?
15. Miten paljon olisitte halukkaita kehittämään ulkomaan markkinointia?
16. Minkälainen merkitys fishinginfinland.fi sivulla on yrityksenne toiminnassa?
17. Millaisia ideoita teillä on fishinginfinland.fi sivuston kehittämiseksi?

3 Appendix – Interviewed Companies

Company	Full-time/Part-time Fishing tourism entrepreneur	Related services	Share of international customers before Covid-19	How is Finnish fishing tourism developing in the future?	The most important foreign customer nationalities	The most important marketing channel
1	Just started operating (full-time)	Accommodation cooperation partner	0%, target in the future 50%	There is a huge demand from abroad and tourists' willingness to pay for services is high	Germany, Nordic Countries	Website, Word of mouth
2	Full-time	Accommodation, Sauna, Catering, customizable services	35%	It will develop but expensive operation costs compared with other countries makes it difficult	Russia	Word of mouth
3	Part-time	Several cooperation partners	80%	It must develop, there is no other option	Russian-speaking countries	Facebook
4	Full-time	Selection of trips, activities, and catering service	90%	Development lacks behind. The demand will increase significantly if all stakeholders work together for common goal	Russia, France, Italy, and Germany	All social media channels
5	Full-time	Accommodation, transportation	10%	There is repressed desire for fishing tourism in the world due to Covid-19 pandemic	Russia, Latvia, Lithuania, France	Google search
6	Full-time	Catering, consultation	15%	The development has been very slow over years. There is a huge potential, and I am expecting to see big leaps in the future.	France, Ukraine, Russia, China	Facebook, Instagram
7.	Part-time	Sailing	30%	It should be developed more. It requires cooperation between all stakeholders.	Italy, Lithuania, Latvia	Instagram
8.	full-time	catering, transportation	50%	Without doubt it will develop, but how much and how fast depend on the cooperation of all stakeholders	USA, Germany, UK	Billboards, Google Maps

4 Appendix – Published article in the Finnish Fishing magazine 01/2022

Kalastusmatkailun markkinointi

Ida Karttunen, Haaga-Helia AMK

Suomen matkailukalastuselinkeino on vielä pienimuotoista ja kehityksensä alkuvaiheessa verrattuna muihin Pohjoismaihin. Tuhansien järvien maamme tarjoaa hienot puitteet unohtumattomille kalastuselämyksille, mutta tätä ei ole hyödynnetty vielä optimaalisesti.

Loppuvuonna 2021 opinnäytetyönä toteutettu haastattelututkimus pyrki selvittämään kalastusmatkailuyrittäjien asenteet ja tekemät toimenpiteet kansainvälisessä markkinoinnissa. Lisäksi kysyttiin mitä eroa on ulkomaalaisella ja suomalaisella kalastusmatkailijalla ja eroavatko matkailutuotteet ja -palvelut kohderyhmästä riippuen. Tutkimukseen osallistui kahdeksan yrittäjää ympäri Suomea. Haastattelut toteutettiin marras-joulukuun 2021 aikana. Haastatellut kalastusmatkailuyrittäjät olivat kiinnostuneita opinnäytetyön aiheesta ja pitivät sitä ajankohtaisena ja tärkeänä. Kaikkien yrittäjien asiakaskuntaan kuului olennaisena osana ulkomaalaiset matkailijat ja keskiarvo ulkomaalaisten osuudesta kaikista asiakkaista oli 45 % ennen Covid-19 pandemiaa. Pandemian vuoksi kansainvälinen matkailu on luonnollisesti väliaikaisesti keskeytynyt. Useampi yrittäjä uskoo, että patoutunut kalastusmatkailu tulee johtamaan siihen, että kansainvälisten matkailijoiden osuus tulee kasvamaan entisestään tulevaisuudessa.

Markkinoinnissa tarvitaan ulkoista apua

Markkinoinnilla on suuri rooli mielikuvien luomisessa. Kalastusmatkailuyrittäjillä on halua ja kiinnostusta kehittää ulkomaille kohdennettua markkinointia, mutta heiltä selvästi puuttuu tarvittavia resursseja. Tehokas ja tulokellinen markkinointi tarvitsee aikaa, rahaa ja osaamista. Kenelläkään haastatelluista yrittäjistä ei ollut markkinointisuunnitelmaa vaan he toteuttivat markkinointia enemmän "fiiliksen mukaan". Kalastusoppaiden ammattitaito pohjautuu heidän omiin kiinnostuksen kohteisiinsa ja niinpä osaaminen pitkälti keskittyy kalastusaktiviteetin ympärille. Vaikka kiinnostusta ja halua kehittää markkinoinnin saralla on, ulkoista markkinointiapua silti tarvitaan.

Kalatalouden Keskusliitto on ylläpitänyt vanhaa Matkailun edistämiskeskuksen tuottamaa kalastuksen maaportaalien aineistoa nettisivulla Fishinginfinland.fi. Yrittäjien mielestä tämä sivusto ei enää sellaisenaan vastaa kalastusmatkailijoiden tai yrittäjien tarpeita. Jos sivustosta aiotaan pitää kiinni, se tulisi laadukkaasti päivittää vastaamaan vuotta 2022.

Ulkomainen matkailija hakee elämyksiä

Ulkomaalainen matkailija kokee kalastuksen enemmän kokonaisvaltaisena luontoelämyksenä, kun taas suomalaiset ovat selvästi itsenäisempiä kalastajia ja heillä on kalastusoppaalle usein määritellympi tarve, kuten oma ennätyskala tai hyvä kalapaikka. Ulkomaalaiset käyttävät enemmän rahaa ja ostavat usein lisäpalveluita, kun taas suomalaisille myydään riisutumpia paketteja. Haastattelussa kävi ilmi, että hauen kalastus ja ylipäättään suomalaiset järvikalat ovat ulkomaalaiselle elämyksellisiä. Kotimaisille kalastusmatkailijoille nämä kalalajit ovat usein arkipäivää, eivätkä ne toimi motivaationa kalastusmatkan ostopäätöstä tehdessä. Yrittäjät suhtautuvat kansainvälisiin asiakkaisiin myönteisesti ja kokevat heidän muodostavan liiketoiminnalleen tavoittelemisen arvoisia kohderyhmiä.

Sosiaalinen media tärkeässä roolissa

Tärkeimmiksi markkinointikanaviksi koetaan hakukoneoptimointi, sosiaalisen median kanavat (Instagram ja Facebook) ja suusanallinen viestintä. Varsinkin puskaradion merkitystä painotettiin. Kun matkailija on kokenut miellyttävän elämyksen, siitä kerrotaan mielellään eteenpäin varsinkin yritysmaailmassa. Suomen kalastusmatkailusta tulisi tuottaa mielikuvia muokkaavia aineistoja kohdemaiden valtamedioille. Kalastusmatkailun markkinoinnissa tulisi hyödyntää kohdemarkkinoiden sosiaalisia medioita ja markkinoinnissa pyrkiä toimivaan yhteistyöhön. Myös kalastusmatkailun parissa työskentelevien tulisi nykyistä paremmin seurata alan uusia trendejä ja löytää uusia sosiaalisen median markkinointikanavia kuten TikTok.

Kalastusmatkailussa on valtava potentiaali

Suomella on valtava potentiaali kasvattaa asemaansa kalastusmatkailun kohdemaana. Yrittäjät eivät pysty siihen yksin, vaan se vaatii yhteistyötä niin yrittäjien kuin valtion tasolla. Kysyntä kansainväliselle kalastusmatkailulle tulee kasvamaan, mutta kehitys riippuu paljon siitä, miten Suomessa pystytään vastaamaan kysyntään tuottamalla tarpeeksi laadukasta tarjontaa ja markkinointia.

Kalastusmatkailun kehittämistavoite sisältyykin Suomen nykyiseen hallitusohjelmaan ja kehittämisohjelma valtion budjettiin vuodelle 2022.