

Developing cooperative sales guidelines for regional business tourism operators.

City of Imatra

LAB University of Applied Sciences

Master of Business Administration, International Tourism and Event Management

Panu Henrik Kärri

Abstract

Author(s) Kärri, Panu Henrik	Publication type Thesis, UAS	Completion year 2023
	Number of pages 49	
Title of the publication Developing cooperative sales guidelines for regional business tourism operators.		
Degree Master of Business Administration, International Tourism and Event Management		
Name, title and organisation of the client City of Imatra		
Abstract <p>This thesis research aims to answer the need for improving the business tourism sales in the Imatra region through cooperative regional sales guidelines. The region has a huge untapped potential for big events and meetings in the form of a large number of accommodation options, venues, and services. At the same time, there is no organized cooperation among the local operators to facilitate this potential. Theoretical understanding about business tourism, sales processes, b2b-cooperation, and public/private sector cooperation was used to understand what can be achieved through cooperation. Interviews of the local operators gave a situational view of the status of cooperation in the area and helped to understand what the needs and motivations are for cooperation among them. Practical understanding combined with the theory helps to create guidelines that are both based in researched facts and practical needs. As the business field of MICE is ever evolving, this research is meant to continue after this thesis, as a self-evolving development project. Overall, this thesis development project contributes to the field of sales development, specifically in business tourism sales and provides insight for how to develop regional cooperation between public and private sector.</p>		
Keywords MICE-industry, business to business sales, sales process, public and private sector collaboration, regional development.		

Contents

1	Introduction.....	1
1.1	Project organization and partners	2
1.2	Objective and focus	4
1.3	Thesis process	5
1.4	Structure of thesis.....	6
2	Tourism and business tourism	7
2.1	Business tourism	9
3	Sales process and products in MICE-industry.....	11
3.1	Sales process	11
3.2	Benefits of sales process	14
3.3	MICE-industry products	15
4	Collaboration within MICE-industry and between public and private sectors	17
4.1	Successful B2B-collaboration	17
4.2	Roles of public and private sectors in MICE –industry	19
4.3	Public sector in MICE-industry.....	19
4.4	Private sector in MICE-industry.....	20
4.5	Successful cooperation between public and private sector	22
5	Summary of literature and theoretical framework.....	24
6	Research methodology and development project	26
6.1	Quantitative research and qualitative research	26
6.2	Action research.....	27
6.3	Research process.....	28
6.4	Analysing the data	29
7	Result from the regional operator interviews and questionnaires	31
7.1	Products in MICE-sales	31
7.2	Challenges and development in MICE-sales.....	32
7.3	Roles of public and private sectors in the region in MICE-sales	33
7.4	Mapping out the b2b-sales process of the regional operators	34
7.5	Current state of regional co-operation in MICE-sales.....	35
8	Conclusion and discussion	38
8.1	Summary and conclusion from theory and interviews	38
8.2	Developing regional co-operation for MICE-sales	40
8.3	Regional sales guidelines for MICE-sales.....	41
8.4	Further research	43

8.5	Reliability and validity of the findings	44
9	References	46
10	Appendixes	53
10.1	Appendix 1. Product and service questionnaire and results	53
10.2	Appendix 2. Interview questions	55
10.3	Appendix 3. Relevant highlights of interview transcripts.....	55

1 Introduction

In the Imatra region, tourism is the second biggest business. In 2019 accommodation sales alone amassed to 11,4 million euros (TAK 2019). In MICE-industry of the region new business and services were rising steadily, and existing ones were developing new services to meet the increasing demand of customers. MICE stand for Meetings, Incentives, Conferences & Exhibition and the industry stands for all the companies that offer facilities and services in those areas. It is the highest revenue creator in the travel industry. (Allied Market Research 2021.)

In general, MICE is defined as activities that involve attendees who have a shared interest and gather in a place for business. The locations and facilities are essential to meet the needs of the participants of the events. The meeting –part refers to events that put people together under a common goal for sharing information, solving challenges or for simple conversation. Incentive is a tool for rewarding and motivating employees from meeting goals in their line of work. Conferences is close to meetings, except their scale is usually larger and attendees pay a fee to access all part of the conference. Exhibitions are events that area arranged to showcase new products, services, and information to interested audiences. Attendees will need an invitation or entry-ticket to participate to exhibitions. (Singh 2022, 2.)

In the area of Imatra there are multiple MICE-companies that were hit heavily by the Covid-19 crisis of 2020-2022. As tourism faded and events were prohibited, companies were forced to either adapt or perish. There were little the biggest operators in the area could do as the restrictions made most business options impossible. City of Imatra changed its strategy in facility sales from event venues to masses to remote working venues for individuals.

As the area has several operators in MICE-business, that are all looking for ways to improve their sales, one the first obvious options to do so is collaboration. Studies show that collaboration between the regional operators, business and public sector will increase the possibility of recovering from the business slump created by Covid-19 as it helps them to create quick responses in strategy, focus and alternative services or products. (Hoang 2023.)

To create successful cooperation projects among business who operate in the B2B-industry reason to for cooperation and trust among the partners are essential from the very beginning. (McCormack 2003). For these reasons full transparency about the goals of the project and means to achieve them. Without this transparency, partners will not understand the reason of the cooperation and trust cannot be achieved if matters are kept hidden among

partners. As sharing information have been shown to increase professional trust (Alexopoulos and Buckley 2013, 21.) information about the products and sales processes of the regional MICE-operators is required for the development of the sales guidelines. As all the partners products and business environments are similar, the use the sales processes both as the narrative in figuring out the weaknesses and strengths, and as a tool figure out where cooperation can help, is a valid choice.

Main MICE-operators in the Imatra area include both public and private companies. To create encompassing and useful cooperative sales guidelines for all of them, it is necessary to understand tourism as a business and MICE as a part of it. After that a clear definition of sales processes and products that are used within the area is required, so that developmental ideas can be created. Private and public sectors differ vastly in many ways, so looking into the ways they can cooperate and how to maximum the possibilities of success of that cooperation is also needed that the guidelines created are not lopsided towards either sector.

1.1 Project organization and partners

Partners in the development project are the city of Imatra and the most significant companies that offer meeting and conference services in the area or act in the marketing of said services, these are City of Imatra., Imatra Spa, Holiday Club Saimaa, Imatra State hotel and goSaimaa Oy. The development project does not exclude any company in the area, but aforementioned five companies were chosen based on their magnitude in business sales and shown interested to the project.

Employer of this thesis, city of Imatra has a long, colourful history as an event host. Among the crown jewels of Imatra's events are the legendary Imatra Big Band Festival and the recently reanimated Imatranajo. Imatra is also the first city in Finland that has done tourism marketing. Imatra's tourism history can boast with guests like Catherine the Great and the Emperor of Brazil. The economic effect of tourism and events for Imatra is undeniable. As the city of Imatra can boast being the birthplace of tourism marketing in Finland, the city has also invested in event tourism and it services. Imatra owned venues suitable for MICE-industry include the city theatre, summer theatre, and the culture house Virta. (Imatran Kaupunki 2023.)

Imatra Base Camp Oy is subsidiary of Imatra City. Its responsibilities are brand marketing, facility sales and marketing, theatre sales and marketing, travel information services, sales and marketing of culture house Virta, event management and support and development of travel services. IBC was founded in 2016. The goal was to unite the scattered marketing

and sales operations within the city organization. The funding was amassed combining different resources and no new funding for starting the company was acquired. IBC employs eight regular workers now. (Imatra Base Camp 2023.)

Imatra Spa was founded in 1985 and built into Ukonniemi area of Imatra, Imatran spa is the oldest accommodation and meeting operators in the area. It had 101 employees and 9,8 million euros in sales in the year 2021. Currently the spa offers 800 bedspaces ranging from luxury villas to regular hotel rooms. For meeting customers there is a variety of modern facilities ranging from rooms for ten to 100 people. Imatra spa can accommodate events for maximum of 400 participants. Services ranging from recreational services to outdoor activities to for companies are also available.

Holiday Club Saimaa was built into the Rauha area of Lappeenranta and opened in 2011. Remodelled some of the old buildings in the area and built new ones. Is the largest MICE-operator in the area. It has three different hotel wings, Pavillion, accommodation and event venue and hockey ring that is used as an event venue. Being a listed company, their financial records are not publicly available. Services ranging from recreational services to outdoor activities to for companies are also available.

Imatra State hotel was built in 1903 and has acted as a military base and hospital during the war times. After the wars it was refurbished later it was restored to its original design. In the year 1983 an additional event part was built adjacent to the old hotel. Now the hotel is part of the Scandic chain of hotels and has been voted as the most beautiful building in Finland multiple times. Being a listed company, their financial records are not available publicly. State hotel offers accommodation and event facilities with some complementary services to their business customers.

GoSaimaa Ltd was founded in 2009 founded by the local cities and travel companies in South Karelia and it operates as a regional sales and marketing company. City of Imatra is one the founding members and a major stake holder in the company. The company's main goal is to increase tourism in South Karelia by marketing the various product and service catalogue of the travel service producers of the region. goSaimaa Ltd is responsible for organizing joint marketing efforts for its members in the South Karelia region and updating goSaimaa.com internet portal. As a marketing company, goSaimaa does not offer any MICE-services by themselves but acts as mediator for its partners.

Information above was received from the interviews conducted by the regional operators. For protection of their anonymity, no referencing to the source were made above. All the details of the business tourism services and products offered by these partners offer can be found in the appendix 1.

1.2 Objective and focus

The main goal of the thesis was to find out how sales of the regional MICE-operators can be developed through collaboration. The goal of the research was the creation of a joint regional strategic guidelines for MICE-operators in the Imatra region. The strategic guidelines were created in collaboration with the operators based on the findings of the literary research and interviews of the operators.

In addition of creating the strategic guidelines, the goal of the thesis was to highlight the sales processes, tasks, and sales and marketing activities involving MICE-clients done in the region. The goal was to find how these activities differ between the operators, how much cooperation in these activities is currently done and how cooperation could make these processes more efficient. Research problems derived from these goals are:

Main problem:

- How can the cooperation in the region be developed to help the MICE-sales processes?

Secondary problems:

- What are the MICE-sales processes and weak spots in regional MICE-sales?
- How can MICE-sales processes or weaknesses be developed through regional cooperation?
- What forms of cooperation can be used to develop MICE-sales?
- How does the MICE-sales benefit from regional cooperation?

The focus for the research was the area of Imatra and its MICE-operators. This focus comes from the area that cooperation is possible within the governance of the city of Imatra. The chosen partners were chosen from this region by their available MICE-products, relevance to the MICE-business and motivation to participate to the development project.

There is no regional MICE-sales guidelines currently, not a product packet or even general guidelines, how this cooperation or sales should be managed with the city organization. The lone operators of the area are marketing and selling their services separately and often competing against each other. In the rare larger projects some cooperation may occur, but no long-lasting collaboration exists. With a better coordination of efforts and for example, marketing premade conference sales packets, there is a sure way to generate better revenue in for all participants.

Outcome for the project is strategic guidelines for cooperation in MICE-sales among the partners in Imatra region. These guidelines aim for significantly better market position for Imatra area in meeting and conference events. This can be measured a higher occupancy of city's facilities and in increase of profit in the partner companies' services and products that are related to meetings and conference events.

1.3 Thesis process

The thesis process is divided into three main phases that are literary study, gathering the empirical data through interviews and creating the strategic guidelines. The process began by defining the goals for the study, after which the research problems are defined. After the research problems were defined, the data gathering trough literature about the study subject began. In this phase thesis data was gathered about relevant topics depicted on figure 1 to create the theoretical framework. The goal of the literature research was to find the central themes that should be discussed in the interviews. The interview target organisations were contacted during the literature research phase. The theoretical framework ensures that the interviews focus on the correct topics and the results of the interviews can used as the basis for creating the outlines for regional collaboration.

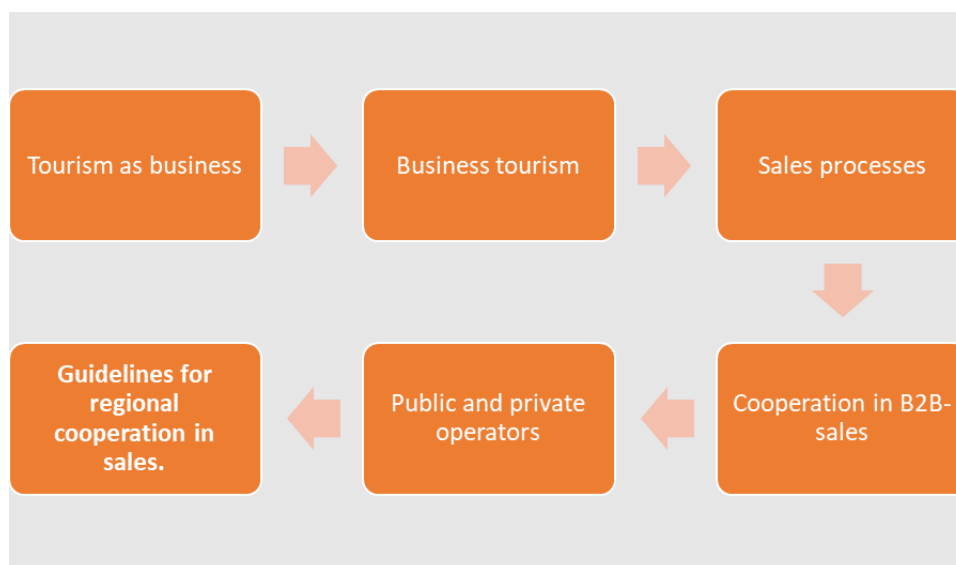


Figure 1. Topics of the theoretical framework.

The interviews aimed to map out a complete view the current sales processes in MICE-products by the regional operators. The interviews focused on the sales processes, tasks within the process, challenges in the process, development points and how cooperation should be implemented in the process from the perspective of the interviewees. From the results of the interviews, the existing data of the operators and the literature research were used to create the understanding about the product pool of the region, challenges in MICE-

sales, the roles of public and private sector in local collaboration, about the current sales processes and about the current state of collaboration. These findings were used as a base for creating regional guidelines for MICE-sales. These guidelines will act as a starting point for a continuous collaboration project with the partners that develops itself through feedback and results. After the completion of the thesis, all the unedited gathered data will be delivered to that operator that the material depicts, and only for them, but the thesis will be made available for all. The strategic guidelines for cooperation will be finalized with the partners and will not be public. The phases and the methods of the study are depicted in part 4.

1.4 Structure of thesis

This thesis is divided into seven parts. The first chapters include the introduction, where the backgrounds, objectives, focus, and thesis process are described. Parts two to four form the theoretical framework based on the literature research on the topics of tourism and business tourism, sales processes and products in MICE-industry and collaboration in MICE-industry and between public and private sector. Chapter five is a summary of the theoretical framework and literature. Chapter six describes the methodology of the research process and the development project. Chapter seven consists of the results of the research interviews conducted on the regional operators. The final chapter, eight, gives out the conclusions made by the research and outlines, the development and first version of the strategic guidelines for the regional MICE-sales. The final chapter also looks into the future studies on this matter and validity of this research.

2 Tourism and business tourism

Looking at the MICE-industry and the processes, it was necessary to define its place on a grander scale of business. As MICE-industry or business tourism as its also known, is an integral part of tourism industry, a definition of tourism and tourism business, are required.

A simple definition of tourism is difficult because tourism is defined from the context in which it is studied at. This can vary from social studies to psychology and from marketing to ecological studies. Recent studies have enriched the field of tourism study, but at the same time making it even harder to give to define it. In this light, the comment from Holloway et al. (2022,11) that presenting a definition of the concept of tourism is an almost impossible task, is well founded.

Looking at the context for the definition for the thesis, tourism in literature has been defined in multiple ways. According to Baleiro and Quinteiro (2018, 13-15) tourism can be defined as a human phenomenon involving voluntary and temporary movement for leisure, a complex system of relationships, curiosity-driven or necessary travel, a significant economic activity employing millions worldwide, and a practice that creates and transforms places. For this thesis, the most suitable designation for tourism is the fourth one, as the thesis focuses on the business side of tourism studies.

The most relevant matter in definition, is that tourism is universally acknowledged as of the biggest economic activities in the world. Before the Covid-19 crisis, in 2019, according to UNTWO International Tourism Highlights report, global tourism export was 1761 billion USD after a steady annual growth. In the 2020, this was more than halved by the Covid-19 crisis as seen in figure 1.

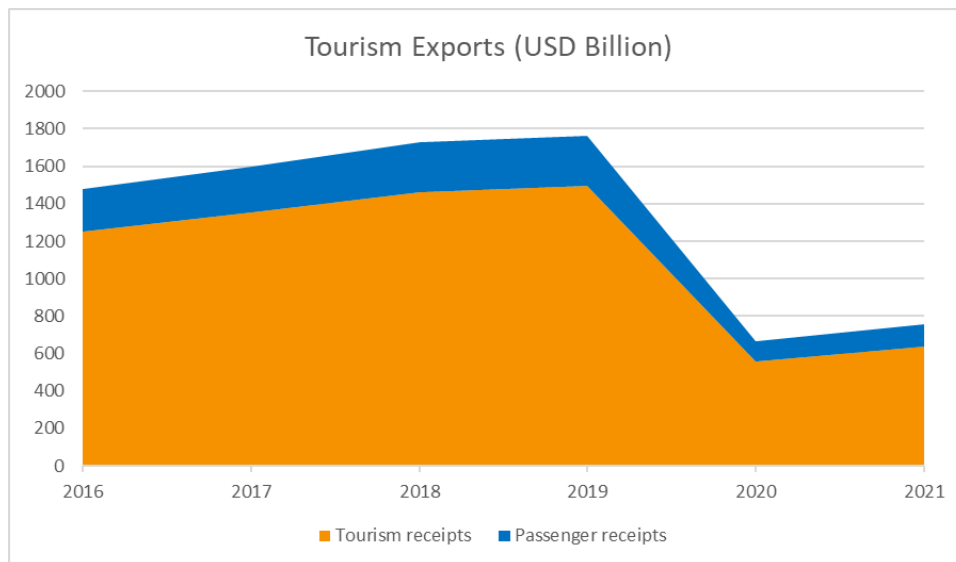


Figure 2. Global and regional tourism performance, tourism export. (UNTWO 2023.)

The tourism business industry is as hard to define as tourism itself. As tourism is not one industry, but more a measure of consumption across multiple different industries. An economic definition for tourism business is that it is an identifiable nationally meaningful business, that involves a wide selection of component activities and services, including transportation, accommodation, recreation, food, and related services. (Ma, Law 2009, 63-64). Within the industry, travellers use a variety of services such as accommodation and travel and buy a variety of good as meals and experiences. The industry is geographically spread out and includes branches to public sector as joint promoting and transportation systems. To make the industry even more complex, a consumer may purchase the same products whether he is a tourist or not. A Imatra retailer may sell a fishing rod to vacationing Helsinki family, but also sell the same product to a local fisherman. (Moore, Doherty 2011, 5-7)

As the tourism industry is complex, some parts of it can be seen as industries own their own and parts of it are distinctively not tourism businesses, for example tourism app creators or insurance companies. Also, compared to many other industries, there is no clear inputs, means of production, traditional chains of supply or inputs. It helps to look tourism industry from a standpoint of a production system, that changes its attributes depending on the context, country, market, or destination. (Sharpley 2006, 42.)

To help understand the complexity of the tourism industry, it helps to break it down into segments. This can be done in a variety of ways, but the most common ones are based on the nature of the providers of the products or by the products themselves. Regardless of the way the industry is broken into sectors, must be remembered that in tourism industry, each part is intertwined and reliant on one another. (Cooper, et al. 2004, 8.)

Division by the product or service is usually done into five categories. Attractions, accommodation, intermediaries, transportation, and public sector. Each category includes operators that offer services or products directly for tourists or for the companies that serve them. There is variance in the terms and what is included in each category, but the core idea remains. (Cooper, et al. 2004,8 ; Middleton, et al. 2009, 11.)

Segmentation by the provider divides the industry into seven categories depending what organisation is main provider in that category. These categories are principals, intermediaries, private sector support, public sector support, sectoral organisations, tourism organisations and destination organisations. Principals means the transport, accommodation, and attraction operators. Intermediators are the tour operators and travel agencies, that literally act as intermediators in the industry. Private sector support refers to businesses that either directly or indirectly support tourism and travel. Sectoral organisations are the trade and professional representators of particular industries or sectors. Tourism organisations are the public or private operators that have and interest in travel and tourism as an entirety. Destination organisations are either public, private or partnership bodies that are involved one way or another in destination development or marketing. (Sharpley 2006, 43.)

2.1 Business tourism

In 2021, business travellers spent more than 740 billion U.S. dollars worldwide. In that same year business travel accounted for 20 percent of the whole global tourism expenditure (Statista 2023). In Finland business travel agencies created a turnover of 134 million euros in 2020. This was 80% less than in 2019. This is expected to return to pre-pandemic numbers in the coming years (Korhonen 2021.)

Business tourism covers a variety of sectors in the field of tourism. From the diplomatic meetings at a global level to business negotiations between two partners from different countries and from scientific research symposiums to sports and other events. The defining factor, that differentiates it from other forms of tourism, is that the main motivator for business tourism is always commercial, educational, or governmental. (Virgil, Popsa 2014, 703.)

According to Davidson and Cope (2003, 2) business tourism can be divided by its content in to five different categories. These categories include trips where people travel to locations outside their usual place of residence for a work function. Then there can be tourism for meeting where companies or similar operators arrange events to communicate with and between their workers, customers, partners, owners, or members. Trade fairs, exhibitions, and product presentations for audiences are their own category. As are stimulative trips for

employees, arranged by their employers. Lastly, there are corporate events arranged by businesses for their most valued or potential customers to develop relationships.

In addition to main reason for travelling, business travellers differ from regular tourist in various ways. Their stays are usually shorter as they return after they completed their professional function. They tend to spend more money as regular travellers as they prefer more high-end products and services on their travels. They are also more flexible on their schedules and travel dates as they can change their plans more easily. As corporations have become more ecologically responsible and advocate these values, the business travellers are also more responsible in their choices compared to regular travellers. Business travel is more meeting or event –focused than normal travel and it happens more in groups. Lastly, business travel requires more planning and organization and is almost never as impulsive as regular travel can be. (Davidson 1994, 3.)

3 Sales process and products in MICE-industry

Covid-19 had a big negative effect on the MICE-industry and many of the operators were left with less resources and in dire need for income. Restrictions for travel and events during the pandemic effectively paralyzed the industry as events and traveling abroad were prohibited. Just in Finland over 4000 planned events were cancelled or moved just from three-month period as illustrated in in figure 2. Some events for both rescheduled and moved online, creating a percentage error in figures. (Kauppila, Ridderstråle. 2020.)

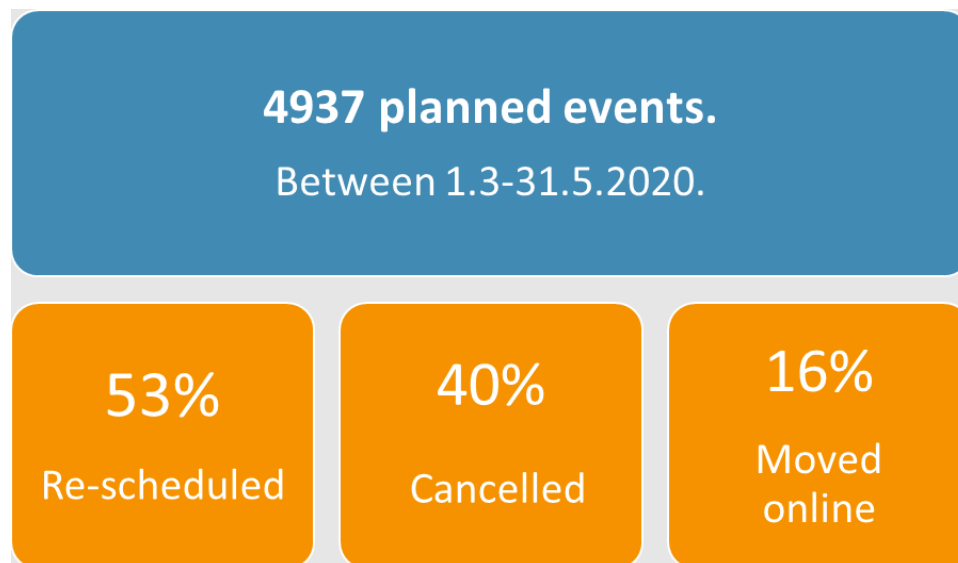


Figure 3. Effects of Covid-19 to event industry in Finland (Kauppila, Ridderstråle. 2020).

Companies within the MICE-industry need to re-evaluate their use of resources and adapt to changed landscape. Strengthening the collaboration between, and inside, the public and private sectors will help to companies to find solutions and survive with diminished resources. (WBG 2020.)

Benefits of collaboration among MICE-industry include greater product offerings, reduced costs and improved overall efficiency. Collaboration is done to better the regional competencies and so the business can work with their competitors to offer unified tourism regions. (Perkins, Khoo-Lattimore. 2019.)

3.1 Sales process

Sales process is a series of activities that and a created to turn a potential customer into a buying customer. This process usually defines the customer journey, from the first contact point to approach of the customer to finalizing the deal. (StudySmarter 2022.)

B2B-sales and the sales process have been studied extensively and a variety of different models for sales process have been developed, but they have mostly remained the same. One the more famous models of sales is the seven steps of selling is the Dubinsky (1980) model. The seven steps in this model are:

1. Prospecting
2. Pre-approach
3. Approach
4. Presentation
5. Overcoming objections
6. Close
7. Follow up.

The first step is prospecting. Some argue that this is the most vital part of the sales process, but this is usually also the most difficult part of the process as the salesperson are usually tasked to this by themselves (Dubinsky 1980). Of course, marketing, and other actions within the company can support prospecting, but in the end the salesperson handles the prospecting alone. At this phase the salesperson searches for new customers and potential customers. The goal is to generate valid leads out of the prospects. This is done to expand the volume of sales through new customers (Richmond 2010). There are numerous ways to conduct the search, such as networking, cold canvassing, referrals and so on. The more complex the product or the service that is being sold, the more important it is to define and search the customer in this phase. (Moncrief & Marshall 2005, 15.)

Second phase is pre-approach; everything what happens before approaching the customer (Dubinsky 1980). In this phase the seller gathers all the vital information about the prospect; their needs, their product, pre-existing data within the company and publicly available data that are relevant from a sales perspective. This information is used to evaluate the quality of the prospect and to create the most efficient way to approach the prospect (Richmond 2010). Activities in this phase can include research on an organisational or individual level, researching the public records customer base of the prospect and refining the approach and the presentation materials of the salesperson. This step is crucial in earning the trust of the prospect. (Moncrief & Marshall 2005, 15.)

Third phase is the approach. This phase is usually the shortest of the seven. In this phase the salesperson is open a sales dialogue with the customer and to gain and keep the attention so that the salesperson can deepen the connection and get more information out the

customer, so that he can define the needs more efficiently (Dubinsky 1980). This dialogue is created through pre-determined guidelines and tactics, that vary greatly between different business. The most deciding factor in this phase is the credibility of the salesperson. Without trust and credibility, the customer will be unwilling to share more information and the approach phase will fail (Richmond 2010). Activities like research, preparation, practice of communication skills and customization of approach can help to increase credibility. (Moncrief & Marshall 2005, 15.)

Fourth phase is the presentation. This phase is the crux of the selling process, and it should not be proceeded into until the salesperson has gathered all the necessary information and determined the needs of the customer (Dubinsky 1980). In this phase the salesperson is providing solutions by the means of his product or service, for the needs of the customer. Also, the salesperson must explain, what are the benefits of their product, and why it is better than the possible competition (Richmond 2010). To increase the success of this phase the salesperson must stay focussed on the prospect and their needs, but also be ready to adjust their approach if the prospect gives them new information. (Moncrief & Marshall 2005, 15.)

Fifth phase is overcoming objections. Objections are a part of every selling process. They can be customers hesitations or questions about the company or the service, but usually rise from matters of finance, trust, required need and time sensitivity (Dubinsky 1980). These objections should be viewed as an opportunity to learn more about the customers true needs. Salesperson must be prepared to answer these questions with valid answers, as this is opportunity to deepen the relationship with the customer. Preparing pre-approach-, approach-, and presentation –phases thoroughly is the key in succeeding in this phase (Richmond 2010). Additional activities to increase the success of this phase include anticipating objections by looking at the presentation and looking at the risks from the customers perspective. (Moncrief & Marshall 2005, 15.)

Sixth phase is closing or the close. This usually means a successful finish of the sales pitch ending in agreement to purchase the service or product (Dubinsky 1980). The goal of the sales process is this phase, to get the sale. As sales cannot be performed without closing, if this phase fails, not matter how successful previous phases have been, the whole process fails too. This phase requires active participation of the salesperson, once the objections have been removed, to ask for the close (Richmond 2010). Other activities that the salesperson can do to increase the success of this phase include using maintaining internal motivation, keeping the benefits of your presentation in the customers mind, and acting on the positive signals from the customer. (Moncrief & Marshall 2005, 15.)

Seventh phase is the follow up. As the name indicates, this phase includes the actions done after the purchase of the service or product (Dubinsky 1980). In this phase the salesperson asks from the customer about the delivery of the sold product or service and their satisfaction in it. These should be done more than once in a regular interwall to retain the customer trust. With these actions the salesperson can reduce the negative post-purchase objections and make future sales easier, as the previous customer turns into a selling tool trough referrals or testimonials. (Richmond 2010.)

Sales process in B2B industry, such as MICE, does not differ much from this aforementioned process. Selden (1998) suggests adding “securing leads” -phase before contacting and a “enter order” after closing. After that the process enters an “follow up” and “service” -phases. Other phases follow Dubinsky’s model with different terms.

3.2 Benefits of sales process

Having a well thought of and strategic sales process in use can be a make or break-factor multitude of business operating in various fields of industry. Company can affect the success of their sales with many factors, but studies show that the sales process must be well defined and implemented, so that full benefits of other factors like new technologies or products, can be achieved. (Rodriguez & Peterson 2016, 375.)

Organizations that have clearly defines sales processes achieve greater sales revenue when compared to other companies in their field that have undefined approaches to sales (Jordan & Kelly 2015). Good sales processes offer an easy guide for salesforce, making sure that their activities are consistent and efficient. This guide makes sure that the sales team aims and prioritizes relevant and valuable leads, manages sales pipelines, and helps the sales team to close deals within reasonable time. In addition, the sales process allows accurate forecasting in sales, allowing business to set realistic sales targets and allocate their resources accordingly. (Threlfall 2023.)

Sales processes contribute to improved customer satisfaction by providing a structured framework for engaging with prospects and clients. Customers are more satisfied when sales interactions follow a systematic process, ensuring consistent communication and addressing their needs effectively. Well-designed sales processes enable sales representatives to gather comprehensive information about customer requirements, tailor their offerings, and provide timely and relevant solutions This customer-centric approach fosters trust, strengthens relationships, and increases the likelihood of repeat business and positive referrals. (Agnihotri et al. 2012, 344-345.)

Efficient sales processes help to streamline the overall sales workflow, thus leading to increased operational efficiency. A well optimized sales processes reduce redundancies, minimize administrative tasks, and enhance collaboration among sales teams. By leveraging automation and process management technology tools, organizations can automate repetitive tasks, such as data entry and proposal generation, freeing up valuable time for sales professionals to focus on more important activities. Additionally, well-defined sales processes enable organizations to identify bottlenecks and areas for improvement, leading to streamlined operations, reduced costs, and improved resource allocation. (Guest 2017, 231.)

3.3 MICE-industry products

The products in MICE-industry are derived from services related to meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions. According to Swarbrooke and Horner (2001, 36-38) the industry is divided into demand, intermediaries, and supply. Sellable products can be found from the “supply” part. All the products fall under the four categories of MICE. Materials suggest taking apart the abbreviation, MICE, and looking those areas separately for greater understanding into the products.

Meetings can be any form of gathering within a professional setting, ranging from a board meeting of CEO’s or a sales training seminar. A general definition for meetings is a gathering of people with a joined purpose sharing information to solve problems. (Hahn 2021; Lau 2013, 3.)

Incentive travel means tools for rewarding individual staff members, teams, affiliates or customers. The incentive acts as morale boost and a retention additive for the staff. Usually, the incentive travel does not have any business-related activities included. It its fully paid trip for the workers with everything included. (Hahn 2021; Lau 2013, 5.)

Conventions or in some resources, conferences, are similar to meetings as it also means an organized gathering of people with common goals to share information and perspectives. The difference to meetings is the size and duration of the event. Usually, conferences host larger amount of people than meetings and last several days. Also, there is usually a professional company behind a conference. The company organizing the conference usually sets the goals or the premise for the event. These goals usually look into specific problems or challenges within an industry. (Hahn 2021; Lau 2013, 6.)

Exhibitions the biggest events in the MICE-industry that are built around new products, services and information and aimed to specific audiences interested these industries. It’s also the most business-driven event of all. Exhibitions can be exclusively B2C or B2B or a mix

of the two. Exhibitions are usually not free to all audiences, a participant either needs an invitation or a ticket to be allowed in. (Hahn,2021; Lau 2013, 8.)

According to CBI (2021) concrete products derived from these four aspects are accommodation products, transportation services on location, different event venues, various event technology solutions, catering services, entertainment services and products and business and leisure experiences.

After the Covid-19, a greater need for providing on-line solutions for events has risen. This created a new product and service focus in the MICE-sector. A combination of necessary skills for the staff and technical solutions for the venue are recommend for the best possible experience for the customer. (Tuazon 2020.)

4 Collaboration within MICE-industry and between public and private sectors

Collaboration can be defined as series of interactive actions, done by independent operators using shared rules, norms, and standards to influence or decide on matters related to their domain or as a singular process through which parties who have a different perspective to a problem can share and explore their information when looking for solutions that go beyond their own limited perspective of what is possible. (Wood & Gray 1991,4 .)

Multiple studies have proven the importance of collaboration in various business sections (Parent 2016; Werner et al. 2015; Bianchi, Mattia et al. 2010; Caputo, Mauro et al. 2016). In tourism sector the benefits of collaboration, according to studies, can be better promotional value, increased efficiency, reduced operation costs and increased product catalogue. (Naipaul et al. 2009, 476-479.)

4.1 Successful B2B-collaboration

As MICE-industry consists purely of B2B-sales, collaboration aspect must be looked from a B2B-aspect first and foremost. To ensure a successful collaboration between B2B partners, according to Kevin McCormack (2003), one requires a multitude of components and factors starting from the very beginning of the of the process and continuing through it as shown in figure 3. The basis of collaboration is all encompassing reason for the collaboration. From there a collaborative oriented process of means for collaboration must exists. Investment from all parties must be taken into the collaboration. This should form both in the mental and monetary side. The mental commitment must be done both in operational as in executive level. Means for successful communication must be implemented. This means common language and the means for that communication. All the risks involved in the collaboration must be shared among the collaborators.

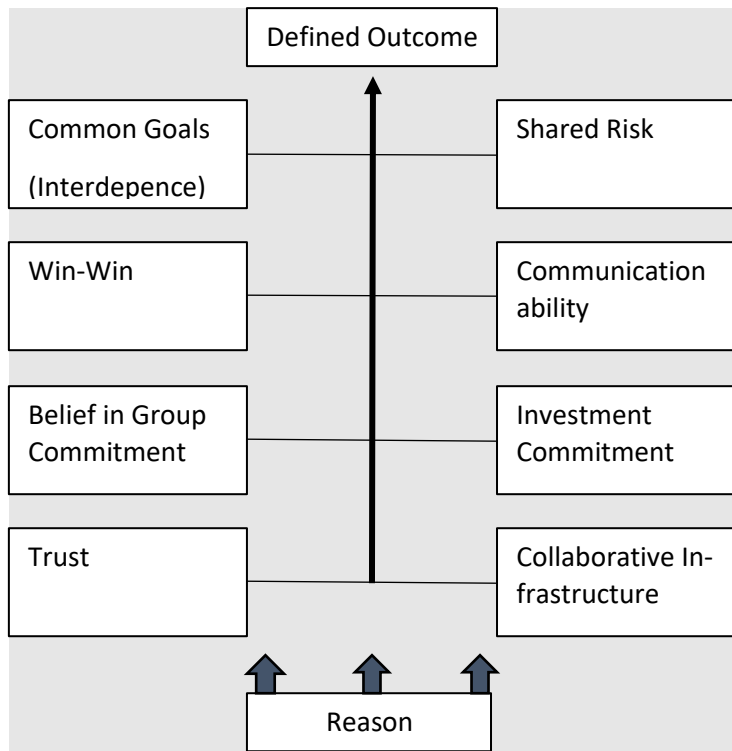


Figure. 4. Demands of a successful collaboration process. McCormack. (2003.)

Looking into defining different ways of collaboration in tourism B2B-environment, three types of collaboration emerge according to Fyall and Spyriadis (2003, 108-123). These types are vertical relationship, horizontal relationship, and diagonal relationship. This classification is done by the structure of collaboration. Vertical relationship is between a supplier and buyer, for example a travel agency and a hotel. Horizontal relationship is between competing companies that offer similar products or services, for example two hotels. This collaboration can be either inter-organizational as in franchising, licensing, subcontracting and so on or an alliance between various brands. However horizontal collaboration is done between companies they are always separated organizations by law. Diagonal relationship is when companies in different sectors work together, for example an online booking agency that collaborates with hotels, airports and car rental companies. Collaboration here is not just limited between supplier and buyer relationships or between competitors, but it goes beyond into other industries.

Studies show that a single theoretical perspective can serve as a foundation for general theory for collaboration in any circumstance, let alone in B2B-environment. Many theories tend to focus on single organizations, and they do not serve any insight into the processes or outcomes of collaboration. Thusly is better, from a theoretical viewpoint, to look into the prerequisites for a successful collaboration.

4.2 Roles of public and private sectors in MICE –industry

Public and private sector have vastly different roles while acting in the MICE-industry. The basic differences between these two sectors are differences of ownership and motive. The ownership in public sector is collective ownership, in the name of all citizens and in the private sector its individual ownership. The motive in public sector is for social purposes and in private sector it is for profit. (Bovaird and Löffler 2003, 4-5.)

In theory the public sector references usually the public operators or agencies that enact or implement the decisions of the politicians. I can also reference operators in public service, public administration, or government. In reality, public administration is complex web of decisions and relationships of which politics manage. (Pender & Sharpley 2004, 231-232.)

As cooperation between public and private sectors has become more prevalent, the accurate definition of private sector has become more difficult. Studies have shown that the clearest basis for the separating these two sectors is concept of ownership. In private sector the company or operator is owned by a private entity with the conditions of power and benefit in the company. Power here meaning majority voting interest or power to appoint or remove board members. Benefit here means the power to dissolve the entity or control of asset distribution. (Lienert 200, 5-7.)

4.3 Public sector in MICE-industry

Public sector's main role in MICE-industry is public policing. This can include tourism-policy creating and political activity. Economical-, social and cultural aspects of society as well the structure of the government and political system all affect the public policy. Hence, policies are the outcome of the political environment, values and ideologies, the distribution of political power and decision-making processes. (Hogwood and Gunn, 1984, 19-25.)

The literature about the public policies in tourism and MICE-industry have been shifting from the government perspective toward the governance perspective since the 1990. This reflects the changes in the bigger picture regarding political movements and political economy in the Western society and in the political philosophy about the role of government (Dredge, Jenkins, 2011, 13-24). Nevertheless, the studies have been more or less stuck in examining the traditional forms of governing and governance itself and have not moved forward towards looking into the implications of policies and the increasingly globalized tourism system and the parading of digitalized governance or the role of self-governance. There is also a need to increase the input of citizens voice in tourism policy studies as the interest for encouraging greater public participation from the people. (Lew. et al. 2014, 654-659.)

There is a universal agreement by governments everywhere, regardless of background or ideologies, that tourism is a good thing. Thus, most policies regarding tourism, aim to the grow the tourism industry as whole. Government operators on many levels, regardless of the sizes, have taken an active role in using tourism as a developmental tool to help economically depressed areas. This is done by shaping the economic environment for industry, help in providing the infrastructure and educational resources for tourism, set the regulatory framework in which companies can operate and take a role in promoting and marketing. (Smith 1989; Wanhill 1987.)

Public sector most helpful role for the MICE-industry is the coordination and balancing the various tourism development processes. The reason for this is that the success of every other action of public governing in tourism is dependent on co-ordination. The need for co-ordinated tourism strategy has been, and still is, one of the central ideas of tourism marketing, policies, planning, and after covid-19, recovery, and re-design. (Pender & Sharpley 2004; Disimulacion 2020.)

In Finland the tourism sector is governed by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment. They are responsible setting the priorities for the tourism policy and developing the sector co-operation with other ministries and sectoral operators. A section of a company called Business Finland, Visit Finland, is responsible for the international promotion of all the sectors of Finnish tourism. (TEM 2023.)

4.4 Private sector in MICE-industry

Private sector in MICE-industry refers to privately owned companies that produce services and goods to consumers within the MICE-industry. The owners can be private entrepreneurs or shareholders and there is no participation of official government. Their main goal is to make a profit for their business. Most operators in MICE-industry operate in the private sector. (Kim 2020.)

The goal of the private sector also defines their role when operating in development with other sectors of the tourism business. While their role might seem to be singular in this aspect, the benefits of having the public sector engaged, are not.

According to Stainton (2023) the private sector in tourism offers benefits including providing a forum for addressing shared problems, making coordinated recommendations to the government, offering expert representation in governmental organizations, conducting research, marketing, and education initiatives, sponsoring special events, and acting as a bridge between society and the local public sector.

Private sector offers funding and resources to tourism industry, without taking them away from other services that a public sector needs to offer. Public sectors act as a supervisor to make sure that all the laws and regulations are followed and that the business serves the public interest. (Beresecka, Papcunova 2020, 1-4.)

4.5 Successful cooperation between public and private sector

Co-operations or collaborations between public organizations and private companies created for a common goal where risks and profits are shared are called public-private partnerships (PPPS). They are created on a contractual agreement between the public operator and a profit-targeted businesses. This kind of collaboration can be mostly found in development, infrastructure, and financing projects. PPPS are not a form of privatization as the public partner retains a high level of power over the resources and processes in these contracts (Weiermair, Peters and Frehse 2008, 1-3). The main focus of a PPP is to make sure that the private sector partner reaches their contractual goals and obligations effectively and as agreed, while the public sector partner aims to gain value for their investment in services provided. (Grimsey and Levis, 2002,5-7.)

In the PPPS the public sector's goal is to gain services for the most cost-effective way, rather than own or operate resources themselves. This can be achieved from benefiting the private sectors innovations, by centralizing the totality of a project to the same private operator and optimizing their asset use by sharing them with their PPP-partner. The private sector aims to provide a wider range of services for an expanded contract period than usual and getting more business opportunities. (Kim, Kim, Lee 2005, 9-16.)

As PPPS are complex and can have multiple partners from a variety of backgrounds, creating an environment for their success is not a simple task. Stella and Menassa (2020) offer a four-point engagement plan that tackles the most common challenges that PPPS face. First point stresses the need for effective governance to minimize bottlenecks and paralyzing factors in the decision making around the PPPS. Second point looks into having a strong project pipeline. This pipeline should be created on a rolling basis and must take in consideration the timeline of the PPPS. All partners should also do a thorough needs assessment analysis to ensure that the right number of resources is spent on the right project and that the project is viable resource wise. Third part talks about the financial risks and guides to give the risks created by the project to participants that are most eligible to manage those risks with the least cost. Also, duty of care should be implemented to encourage accountable behaviour from advisors attached to the project and protect the public party against abuse from consultants or similar agents. Finally, monitoring the PPPS implementation, operation and success is necessary. Performance data of this should be made available for all sectors to ensure quality control and contractual performance compensations, if required. Following the success and implementing clauses against failure to do so, protects the public partner against poor private sector performance.

Another way of looking at successful PPPS, is the critical success factors within them. Critical success factors or CSF are those basic issues inherent in a project that must be maintained so the project team can work in an efficient and effective manner. These factors require constant attention and are present throughout the whole span of the project. (Rowlingson, 1999, 210-215.)

The list of what are the CFS in PPPS depends on the project itself. Different authors have identified different factors that they state to be critical to the success of PPPS or similar projects. These factors include an advanced legal and economic structure, positive inflation, exchange and interest rates, financial capacity and support, technical innovation, suitable risk allocation, avoiding delays and cost exceeds, doing a comprehensive viability research, utilizing existing infrastructure, political stability and support, a concise environmental impact statement, expertise, local partner(s), shared authority, transparency, commitment, a strong private alliance, and developing an environment of partnership. It is also important to remember that the definition of success and how it is measured within the context of a public-private sectors collaborations may differ among various stakeholders as their business interests and metrics may vary from each other. (Jefferies, 2006- 451–462.)

5 Summary of literature and theoretical framework

Based on the theoretical framework and definitions examined, the development of regional cooperative sales guidelines for MICE-operators should incorporate a comprehensive sales process guide that is collaboratively established among all operators operating within the region. This process requires the initiation of a shared, unambiguous goal that is collectively accepted by all participants involved. While maintaining equality among partners throughout the process, the final guidelines should recognize the distinctive roles and product offerings that each participant contributes. To accomplish the creation of such guidelines, it is imperative to possess a comprehensive understanding of sales processes, products of the participants, and the MICE-business domain. This understanding should be derived from a theoretical standpoint as well as practical insights gained from the local participants engaged in the project through interviews.

The guidelines should consist of description of a process that details all the touchpoints where the cooperation aspect between the partners can be used to help improve turning the potential lead into customer. The standard seven-point sales process should be used as a baseline that will be expanded and focused by the selling processes currently in use of the participants. When this process is fully cultivated and has all the information from all the participants through interviews, then the theoretical framework will be used to look deeper into the problem points and strengths of it. This data will be used to create first version of the guidelines. These guidelines will be presented to the operators for feedback on a later date to further define them. This whole process is depicted in figure 5.

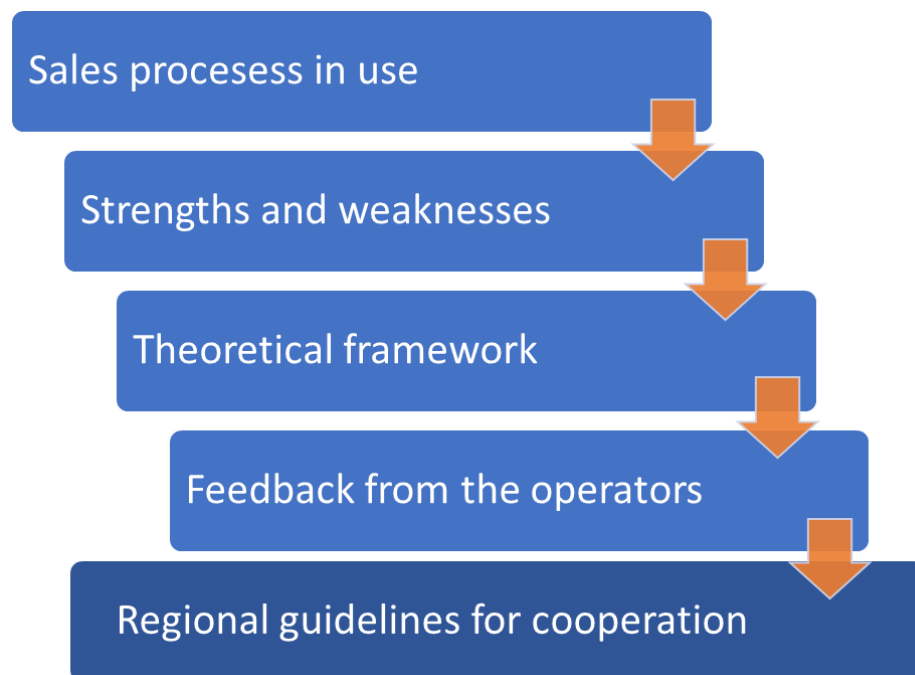


Figure 5. The creation of the regional guidelines for cooperation.

6 Research methodology and development project

Research part of this thesis was divided into three phases. First phase was creating the theoretical framework to get a comprehensive look of business tourism, sales processes collaboration in b2b-business and collaboration between public and private operators. This framework was used to create the basis for the interviews with the partners of the thesis. Second phase was conducting the interviews with the key salespersons of the partner companies to gain knowledge of their MICE-sales processes, MICE-products and –services and possible strengths and weaknesses, that can be utilized by cooperation. Third and final phase was to use the theoretical framework and the gathered information to develop a strategic sales guideline to effectively use cooperation to enhance regional MICE-sales.

The second phase of research used both qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data was about sales processes and possible existing cooperative sales strategies on the thesis partners. Quantitative data was about the products that are sold and target audiences. This data was needed to create an understanding about the products and their selling points to be used as a comprehensive base for the cooperation guidelines.

As both qualitative and quantitative methods of research were required, and the researcher is a part of the entity that the research aims to develop and get the other partners to participate in developing, action research would be the most suitable method to conduct the research. (McNiff & Whitehead 2011, 9-21.)

6.1 Quantitative research and qualitative research

Quantitative research produces figures and numbers derived from chosen phenomena so that observations can reflect on them. This method uses empirical statements as way to describe the meaning of cases in reality and not about the reasons or methods of them. It also uses empirical evaluations to determine to how a standard or a norm is fulfilled in a certain program or policy. All of this data is finally analysed through mathematical methods. Quantitative research looks to determine the researched phenomenon by collecting numerical information to answer questions like what percentage, how many and what is the frequency, and it can be also used to gather numerical data from non-numerical data using means specifically created for that purpose. (Taherdoost 2022, 54-57.)

For this thesis, quantitative data will be gathered about the MICE-products via a questionnaire form that will be filled out by the partner organizations. This form will gather up the relevant numerical data about the venues and services that the partner companies have for sale. This data includes occupancy, size, technical services, and other relevant information

about the products that are relevant to sales. A questionnaire form is the most used form of data gathering in quantitative research and its suitable for gathering information in various occasions. (Kananen 2011, 12.)

Qualitative research is a research method used for studying human behaviour, opinions, themes, and motivations. Quantitative research produces qualitative data that looks at features, attributes of a phenomenon that can be observed thematically. Means to produce this data are often interviews, surveys, focus group research and individual case studies. Quantitative research is very flexible regarding techniques, methods, and design as there is no standardized structure for it, but it still needs to be meticulously designed and devised. Researcher must be especially mindful to be bias-free when conducting qualitative research (Shuttleworth, Wilson 2008) For this thesis qualitative research was used to gather information through open themed interviews with the chosen operators oh the region about the MICE-sales processes of the operators in the area, their weaknesses and strengths and experiences on regional cooperation with the private and public sector.

6.2 Action research

There is variety of definitions for action research and how it should be conducted and by who. To simplify, action research is way to conduct research that enables the study and evaluation of one's own work regardless of their field of work or function. Themes of action research revolve around development, content, and reasons of one's own work. Action research aims to solve practical problems in different organizations, that can be either private or public. Action research is a continuous work for betterment of operation. Thusly, action research often becomes are learning- and growth processes that lasts a lifetime for the members of the organization, instead of short-term projects. (Kananen 2012)

Action research divides into multiple factions that are technical action research, participatory action research and emancipatory or critical action research (Heikkinen, Kontinen & Häkkinen 2008 39-46). Technical action research aims to improve control over expected outcomes. In it, the participation researcher is looking to improve the ways to achieve the wanted goals. In it, the researcher works in a one-way method with others participating or affected by the research. Technical action research is especially useful when coming up with new processes or tools that need to be tested in practical situations to gauge their effectiveness (Nicolas, 2023). Participatory action research aims to teach or inform participants so they can improve their actions in the long run. Although the researcher decides what is being researched and what changes may occur, the researcher still takes in consideration the viewpoints, answers and experiences of others involved in the research. All the

stakeholders and parties effected by the research are interested about the research topic in participatory action research (Morales, 2016, 158-159). Critical action research derives its name as it aims to make critical analysis of the surroundings and consequences of the explored practice, of how the people affected see what is happening in the practice and about the situation how the practice is carried out. Here the relationship between the researcher and others affected by the research is intensified above other forms of action research. The research and its responsibilities are carried out collectively by the group of individuals participating in the research. Thusly, decisions about the target of the research and the changes made, are made as a group. Critical action research attempts to give power to those less fortunate and those who do not have power to begin with. This gives base to critical action research's other name: emancipatory action research. (Zuber-Skerritt, & Wood 2019, 179-182.)

Despite of the chosen exact faction, action research follows the same four steps in practice every time. These steps are planning, acting, developing, and reflecting. In the planning step the researcher identifies and narrows down the topic of the research and starts gathering information on the topic. This is done by reviewing the related literature and other possible material. At the same time a research plan is being devised. Acting step consist of implementing the research plan by collecting and analysing data. This can be done by observing, interviewing, or analysing existing documents or records. Developing step is about developing an action plan, the actual goal of any action research. The action plan is basically the proposed strategy for implementing the findings of the whole research. Finally, the reflecting stage is about sharing the results publicly, if possible and with others involved in the research. In this phase, at the end of the research, as action research is a cyclical process, the researcher must also do systematic reflection of the whole process to determine the effectiveness of it and give information towards future revisions. (Mertler, 2019, 255-257.)

As this thesis is ordered by the city of Imatra, its justifiable that participatory action research will be the chosen method for data gathering, as the researcher will have to take in consideration the views and insights of the participants of the research when creating the final guidelines and aims to develop the MICE-sales of the region in the future.

6.3 Research process

Data was collected by conducting interviews with the five key personnel of the areas event facility operators or similar organisations, gathering information about the products via questionnaire and by studying the available data about facilities and other products. Interview is selected as data gathering method as some of the relevant data is not publicly available.

Companies might also be hesitant to give away some of their data regarding to marketing and sales as their perceived competitors are part of the project. Interview gives an opportunity to open the meaning of the project to the interviewees more, so that any misinformation and mistrusts can be avoided.

The chosen method for the interviews was an open themed interview, where questions are predetermined around the themes of sales processes, MICE-products, public and private sector and regional cooperations. These questions can be found in appendix 2.

Five local operators from different organizations were interviewed for the thesis. One was from the public sector and the rest from the private sector. All interviewed persons represented the MICE-sales force of their organisation. Four of the interviews were conducted online via Microsoft Teams and two were done face to face. All the interviews were recorded in Microsoft teams. The following table represents the interviewees with pseudonyms (O1, O2, etc.), for anonymity, their operating sector, the date of the interview, type of interview and the total duration of the interview. The selected, relevant transcripts of these interviews can be read from appendix 3.

Interviewee	Operating sector	Date	Method	Duration
O1	Public	10.8.2023	Online	18 min 24 sec
O2	Private	10.8.2023	In person	27 min 8 sec
O3	Private	16.8.2023	Online	20 min 43 sec
O4	Private	18.8.2023	Online	46 min 57 sec
O5	Private	31.8.2023	Online	38 min 46 sec

Table 1. Information about the research interviews.

Information about the available MICE-products was gathered by a questionnaire form that was sent to the operators and from publicly available sources. Questionnaire as the chosen method for data gathering is justifiable as the information will be listings of facilities, capabilities, and services. The data about products was used to create and understanding of the bigger picture of the regional MICE-sales and scale of events that can be served by cooperation in the region. This questionnaire and the results can read from appendix 1.

6.4 Analysing the data

Qualitative data was analysed through narrative analysis method as an understanding of the sales processes of the operators is needed for creating the guidelines. Quantitative data was analysed by content analysis method, as the data of the facilities needs to in the same format, so all facilities and their features are comparable. The gathered data was used to create the first version of the regional sales guidelines for the area.

Permission to conduct the interviews and use the data in the research was asked from the operators taking part in the interviews. As an employee of the city of Imatra, access and permissions to all the data about the event facilities of the City of Imatra as well as all the marketing data and processes of these facilities was available. Other data came from publicly available sources, so there is no need for permissions on that part.

7 Result from the regional operator interviews and questionnaires

After conducting the interviews and looking into the research questions through narrative analysis, themes that related to the theoretical framework were challenges and development of MICE-sales, differences in the roles of public and private sectors, B2B-sales process, and co-operation in the area. Questionnaires gave details about the products offered by the operators. These themes and details were chosen to create data from the interviews for closer inspection and to be used in conjunction with the theoretical framework for the premise of co-operation guidelines for MICE-sales.

7.1 Products in MICE-sales

The questionnaires and interviews reveal that the Imatra region has a wide variety of products in MICE-sales compared to its moderate size. The biggest sales category being accommodation in which the region has over 4000 bedspaces, varying from simple hostel lodging to high-end suites in spas. After accommodation, meeting and event facilities were observed to offer the most options for customers. In total there are 54 different options for facilities that can host meetings and events fitting audiences ranging from ten people to 1500 at a time indoors. Biggest outdoor venue can fit over 5000 people at a time.

Beyond accommodation and facilities, other services are not offered equally among the operators. Three out of five operators offer a variety of business and leisure products to cater their MICE-client. Out of the remaining two, the other offer some business products for their clients and the other offers none. Catering services are offered by all operators, but some offer it through a contractor. Same goes for event technology services and personnel, beyond basic audio-visual equipment, transportation services and entertainment services. Only one operator offers event technology services and personnel included in the basic price when selling event facilities.

All operators offered event planning services to their customers where they helped plan and map out the requirements for the event. This was not a separate sellable product, but more of a basis of customer service and a part of the sales process.

The sheer amount of products and services, among the operators prove that the capacity of the region can service a variety of customers and events even bigger the region has seen so far, if these resources are pooled together and used in a collaborative way. The complete listing of all the products and capabilities are in the appendix 1.

7.2 Challenges and development in MICE-sales

Discussing challenges in sales among the operators brought to attention problems about the location, lack of trust and misinformation, lack of automation in sales information and contract creation, marketing, billing, and follow-up –procedures.

The location problems related to the geographical location of Imatra and the difficulties in public transportation in regards of getting to Imatra and Imatra's being relatively unknown compared to bigger cities. Also, it was said that big clients prefer more central locations. This message was related from marketing and salespersons that worked elsewhere with the franchise.

"Me and many other salespersons say that not many customers ask for Imatra. I believe it's transportation; you need to specifically come here. We are not en route of anything. Most companies try to look for more central locations." (O3)

Lack of trust was mentioned when offering services that were not produced by the operators themselves, but by contractors. As there had been several cases where services or products that were sold were carried out poorly, not handled at all or did not deliver what was promised, mistrust towards contractors and partners has grown.

"Trust ensures control. It is better to promise nothing if you are not sure you can deliver on your promise. You may have sold the idea that everything will be taken care of here and then process gets interrupted or you are not involved, and something goes wrong, it affects everybody's reputation". (O4)

Lack of automation was mentioned in several instances during the interviews. The general feel was that automation could help on many parts of sales, either on billing, customer service or in marketing, both pre- and after sales. One operator mentioned that automation could be used in contract creating to speed up the sales process, as they had some web-store capabilities in their system, but the contracts were still made in the old-fashioned way.

Most of the challenges in sales were out the operator's own hands as they are only part of the sales chain, so they do not have direct control in the parts of the process that they felt the problems lied. These same challenges also related to things that cannot be solved by co-operation among the regional operators.

When discussing developing their MICE-sales increased amount of cooperation and increase of shared knowledge was mentioned several times. This would help by creating bigger pool of products to sell and save time from gathering information from multiple sources every time.

“I would like to invite everyone to sit at the same table to see what they want, and they see the for the development of the region. As no one can succeed here all by themselves, so we would need to start building some form of co-operation”. (O2)

Another theme that was discussed multiple times was focusing or creating a single seller for the region regarding MICE-products. Most interviewees looked that this could be done by and public sector operator, so that the private sector operators would not need to spend too many resources nor would have to worry about accountability or trade secrets.

“For example, we could focus our sales operations specifically to MICE-products. Also, increasing regional collective sales efforts could be a step forward”. (O1)

One operator took this idea further by mentioning that there should be only one organization that would focus on the regional sales and marketing and within would have a singular resource to handle the regional MICE-sales and marketing as whole. The operator did realize that this kind of model is not viable in reality.

Even though the discussions made it clear that most of the problems felt out of the reach of the interviewed individuals, they did also see ways how they can go around the problems or to effectively do something else to decrease the negative effects of these problems. Regional co-operation in sales and marketing in some form, was recognised as one the ways these problems can be alleviated.

7.3 Roles of public and private sectors in the region in MICE-sales

Most of the operators saw the role of the public sector as a regional developer or a funding source for development. Development here means creating new opportunities for new companies that operate in the MICE-industry, supporting the existing ones to create, keeping its own services and product in order, and creating a customer friendly environment to create attraction for potential clients or big events. Also, acting as a general selling agent for the region was mentioned several times. These answers discussed options about the public operator working as gathering force for potential customer by either doing direct marketing or arranging sales events. One operator mentioned that public sector should communicate about their events and development-projects more efficiently, so that the private sector can utilize this info in their business.

“It would be good that the city would have a person that would meet up with the bigger event organizers and parties that are planning bigger events to be held in this area. This would help both the event producers and us in communication and information sharing. A single corporation cannot do this kind of personal communication”. (O5)

Private sector's role was almost unanimously seen as a seller and marketer of their own products. Several discussions mentioned that their products must meet the customers need and the private sectors must maintain high level of customer satisfaction, so that collaboration can succeed. Better collaboration among each other and between private sector, was also discussed. Beyond selling and collaboration, the need to utilize own private networks among the private sector operators to enhance the reputation and desirability of the region that came up during the interviews.

"It is money that guides the actions of private sector. This may not sound fancy, but that is the truth". (O4)

"In my opinion, the private sector should collaborate more with the city. Instead of focusing on their own matters, do more with the city. In total, the private sector should learn to work together for the common goal more". (O1)

Discussions gave the role of active coordinator for the co-operation and development to the public sector and left the responsibility of filling the customers need and doing business in a such way that enables growth and fruitful cooperation.

7.4 Mapping out the b2b-sales process of the regional operators

The topic of sales process was discussed with the operators, through the topics of sales process, challenges in said process and regional cooperation. The sales processes among the operator did not vary greatly and they all followed the 9-step model by Dubinsky (1980) to some extent. Only one of the operators followed the whole model from start to finish internally, without separate departments or contractors. Among the rest, the process was cut short after sales event or started after the pre-sale –steps.

The two biggest operators who both are a part of bigger franchise, did not do the pre-steps of sales by themselves, this was done by a separate department in their company that processed the marketing and sales. The regional operators stepped in when the client was ready to accept an offer and then they handled the process from then on till the follow up – step. The follow up step was partially handled by these operators, all the feedback about the event or sale that related directly to them, was sent by them, but after marketing and actions after that, were handled by their chains marketing departments.

"We have sales directors and sellers that contact the customers. We try to create interests and needs to arrange events. In the offering-phase the sales director or our sales teams creates the offer, our whole group sales -team works with the offers. After the offer is locked, the event coordinator takes over and during the event, the works

with the customer. After the event we do too little after marketing, it should be in a greater role.” (O2)

“Our sales usually start from a direct offer request from the customer to me. Bigger events come through sales service or the directly to me. After that, we make the offer thing practical through the whole thing. Bigger events may take longer to arrange, but they usually end receiving the final participant list few days before the event.” (O5)

One operator did not do sales by themselves, as their role is to act as international marketing agency for regional operators who are their members. Their process focuses on all the other steps in sales process than closing. They mostly use sales conventions, influencers, tour operators and direct contacts to create demand in the region. It was mentioned that MICE is not on their top priority list, at this moment. In their marketing process, they scout out events, operators and direct contacts that are valid and could be interested in the region. After that, they create an offering selection based on the customers interest and help them to find the best option and give them the appropriate contact info.

“Generally speaking, we bring out the whole sales case to the table, but if we know exactly that his person is interested, let’s say, about facilities where they can arrange a caucus, then we lock into that and tell what kind of facilities we have to offer.” (O4)

All the operators seemed to have their sales process clearly mapped out, but had problems in the pre- or after sales, as those aspects were not under their direct control. These problems related either feeling that some areas were done in the best possible way or that when the process left their control, information flow to all participants was not adequate. One operator that had whole control of the process, mostly had problems streamlining it, due to limited resources.

7.5 Current state of regional co-operation in MICE-sales

The current state of co-operation was discussed through a direct question about the state of regional co-operation now and by the themes of attributes of a good cooperation, factors that may hinder co-operation and experiences of successful collaboration projects. This was the topic that had the most varied opinions among the interviewees.

Few operators said that at the moment the co-operation is non-existent or low. At the most there are some shared marketing ventures, but beyond that there is no joined efforts. Others mentioned that there is some co-operation and there is good foundation and networks for co-operation, but there is still lot of work to be done to get into actual and beneficial collaboration in the area. It’s noteworthy to mention that these operators talked about big events

that brought customers to everyone without any input as a form of co-operation. Lastly, some of the operators saw that they had no problems in collaboration, that it has always been a good communication and the collaboration projects they had done, have always been mutually beneficial. They went on to list separate cases on companies that they do projects with regularly. Some of these cases were more contractor –like deals to offer services instead of actual co-operations.

“The co-operation is pretty low. We have some with the local company X in the form of professional sales fairs and different seminars. And then there may have been some joint seminars, but it’s not that much. I could be more active.” (O1)

“In the beginning, only few companies did collaborations. We had to guide them towards each other and encourage them to co-operate. This has been determined work. Now the entrepreneurs understand that collaboration may create new tourism products through shared costs and risks. It must be also noted that there still some amount “playing in your own sandbox”. Some still don’t realize that different target groups and age groups need different services”. (O4)

On the theme of what makes a good co-operation, comments about commitment to the collaboration and clearly defined responsibilities were seen in all interviews. Some talked about creating commitment by making the interests of all participants clear in the beginning and by making sure that the collaborative event is big enough to create value to for everyone. Collaborative attitudes and good motivations towards it were also mentioned as pre-requisites for success.

“How do you usually ensure that everybody is committed to the process? By identifying their own interests. In practice, if you want to involve a company in the process that does not necessarily benefit from it, it will not be committed to it at all”. (O4)

“It is important that there is no imbalance. The roles and responsibilities must be clear, everybody knows what is going on and the schedules are kept systematically. Open communication and spreading the responsibilities are central”. (O3)

On the opposite side of the spectrum, things that may hinder or prevent the collaboration the major theme that rose from the conversations was lack of essential information sharing. This could be as simple as operators simply not getting information about an event that would require action from them, giving realistic timetables and profit calculations to operators or products sold by a third party not meeting the expectations of the customer. All these factors sum up to that no trust between collaborators is created thusly preventing a real collaboration from being born.

“For example, if a company asks for an offering for event that will be held in two years or in one year and their intention is to see the rapids show. If we cannot tell them if it’s possible or not, they might go to somewhere else”. (O5)

“Interaction and sharing information. There are too many organizations and information is not shared well enough. I have preached about this for seven years. The right hand does not know what the left is doing, and this creates big risk regarding third parties.” (O4)

Discussions about examples of successful collaboration in the past, brought up similar matters that the operators mentioned in the prerequisites of a good collaboration, totally open co-operation and communication and clear benefits for all parties. Other factors mentioned were professional partners that knew what they were doing and one singular project manager.

“Even though feeds came from various sources, controls were in a single place. So, the totality was hold in a single place in single hands”. (O4)

“In this case, there were excellent workers, even though they were changed often, at their end there were able workers taking care of things. They clearly had experience arranging big events, which helped in succeeding”. (O5)

Based on the interviews, the views on regional collaboration vary. To sum it up, it seems that there was no actual co-operation in the region. There were events that fill up almost all the accommodation capacity in the region and this is seen as a co-operation, but this is more an organic outcome of a successful regional event, rather than actual collaboration. All the operators do seem to be open to the idea of greater amount of co-operation. It seemed that sub-contracts are abundant to offer more services in MICE-sales, but actual collaboration to achieve bigger events or clients was not being actively done, in any sector. To do actual, beneficial co-operation, a single body would be needed to organize the projects and share the information required in advance to all parties. This helps to share the responsibilities evenly and keep the relevant information flowing centralized, thus increasing the motivation of the parties to be engaged in the collaborative process. Now, there are no guidelines or operators that guide the regional co-operations.

8 Conclusion and discussion

To summarize the data gathered in the research, it was looked through the set research problems and after that the summary was used to create the guidelines for the regional co-operation. The regional guidelines are a first draft version, that will be discussed with the partners of the thesis. These guidelines will then be taken into use in the first regional co-operation project when the resources for it are located. The guidelines will continue to be developed through the results of the project and feedback gathered from the participants.

8.1 Summary and conclusion from theory and interviews

This research looked to solve the following research problems:

Main problem:

- How can the co-operation in the region be developed to help the MICE-sales processes?

Secondary problems:

- What are the MICE-sales processes and weak spots in regional MICE-sales?
- How can MICE-sales processes or weaknesses be developed through regional co-operation?
- What forms of cooperation can be used to develop MICE-sales?
- How does the MICE-sales benefit from regional cooperation?

The goals set for the research were mostly met as planned and there was plenty of information gathered to solve the set problems. The research was successful in gathering a comprehensive listing of the regional MICE-products, understanding, and mapping out the sales processes of the regional operators and understanding the current state of collaboration among the regional operators. The only topic that was found lacking in interviews was the benefits of co-operation, as the interviewees saw collaboration more in a sub-contract-relationships or the as non-existent.

The mapping of the sales process showed that the sales processes follow the standard pre-sale, offering, closing and after-sales –model and the weaknesses were mostly in parts that were not in the hands of the operators or in parts that the operators felt that they alone cannot affect, such as Imatra's geographical location.

Research aimed to investigate possible ways that private sector and public sector can co-operate in b2b-sales in MICE-industry. The research managed to show that there are multiple ways that the public and private sectors can do collaborative work in b2b-sales, most prominent to be PPPS, and that the regional operators are willing to do more collaboration as long as certain requirements about benefits, responsibilities and information sharing are met. Research showed that the public sector should operate as a driving force starting and guiding the collaborations.

Research showed that the collaboration might enhance the sales by creating a larger service pool and cutting cost by joint marketing- and sales ventures. Information sharing regarding big clients and event can help to streamline processes in collaborative events and finally, the operators could get more promotional value and visibility working together. Shared information among the operators could help to understand the developmental points for the region and help to attract bigger customers, as no operator alone can service them. Regional sales efforts could also help the problems the operators have in their pre-sale steps by increasing the regional recognizability.

Looking at the research material, PPPS seemed to be the method for regional collaboration, but the interviews showed, that this might be too rigid form for it, at least in the beginning. It seems that a diagonal relationship, would be a way to start this process as it aims for a common goal, in the form of betterment in MICE-sales on a regional level. The public sector could be the key to lead this co-operation as it's natural role is to develop and coordinate processes. This way the private sector can focus on sales and improving their products, while the public sector creates more demand through collaborative ventures. It must be noted that it seems that the COVID-19 crisis shifted the course of the study of public and private sectors and more recent studies that did not have this emphasis were difficult to come by.

Benefits of the regional cooperation for the MICE-sales based on the research are creating a larger product library, cut in costs, and streamlining processes and increased visibility, although though this topic was not discussed in the interviews with the local operators as their views of current regional co-operations were varied. Some did not see that there is any co-operation and other saw that buying services from others is collaboration and some thought that events that occur in the region are collaborative. Based on the literature, these examples are horizontal co-operation at best, with no continuation or deeper investment.

8.2 Developing regional co-operation for MICE-sales

The strategic guidelines for regional MICE-sales, based on the research would acknowledge the current situation of collaboration as being non-existent, there being motivation for collaboration, there being products and services to be utilized by collaboration and that there is pressure for the public sector to take the lead in collaborative projects. The previous assumption that the 7-point sales process should be used as premise for this, was deemed an impossibility as the interviews showed that most of the operators do not have control to all the steps of their sales process.

The strongpoints on which the guidelines should be focused on, is the amount of accommodation facilities, the small distances between the event venues and accommodation, the variety of services available through sub-contractors and the main operators and the ease of the whole sales process. Of these strongpoints, only the last one needs to be worked out with the participants, as there is no leading resource currently. All the other strong points exist. To make the last strongpoint reality, the public sector would need to organize within itself so, that there would be a resource that would lead and create a process for regional MICE marketing and sales.

To ensure a successful collaboration among the regional operators, there needs to be a trust between the operators and to motivation to participate in the collaboration. As all operators are all-ready open for the collaboration, only the trust issue needs to be addressed. Trust can be created by transparent communication through the whole co-operation. This means laying out the goals for the process, the needs for input from every participant and having regular and open communication. Through common goals and open discourse, motivation will increase.

The joint marketing and sales effort should be done in collaboration, but lead by the public sectors resources, as the research indicates that the local operators see the governance of development in regional tourism as natural role for the public sector and literature confirms this. Also, it easier for the public sector to ensure external project funding for these kinds of regional development projects than it is for the private sector.

The research shows that the measurement of successful co-operation is increase in sales and increase in use of MICE-products. This should be also the measure of success for the strategic guidelines. This information will be gathered from the participants and the current level of sales will be used as the baseline when measuring the success of these guidelines. In addition, regular feedback should be gathered regarding the collaboration to ensure that

all the participants feel that they are heard in the process. This feedback should be used to develop future collaboration projects and to fine-tune the ongoing ones.

8.3 Regional sales guidelines for MICE-sales

Based on the previous sections, the strategic guidelines can be condensed into five action points.

- 1. Public sector takes the lead in regional MICE-sales collaboration.
- 2. Creation of collaboration project with the regional operators.
- 3. All the regional MICE-sales strongpoints and products are used to create a collaborative marketing material and marketing plan.
- 4. Public sector begins collaborative marketing efforts for the region in project form.
- 5. Creation of cyclical feedback, measurement and development of collaboration is created for the project.

These steps, their priority, goals and timeline can be seen in the figure 6 below.

Step:	Goal:	Priority:	Timeline:
1. Public sector organizes	Organization of the operators and partners.	High	First quarter of 2024
2. Collaboration project	Marketing- and project plan.	Medium	Second quarter of 2024
3. Marketing materials	Multichannel marketing campaign and materials.	High	Second quarter of 2024
4. Marketing efforts	Increase in regional MICE-sales.	Medium	Third quarter of 2024
5. Continuous development	New, improved collaboration project.	Low	After completion and beyond.

Figure 6. Regional sales guidelines.

The first point would mean that the public sector will task a resource to gather up the local operators to discuss on begin a collaborative project in regional MICE-sales and marketing. Public sectors role as a lead in the project is backed up by the theoretical framework and the interviews conducted. This would include using the finding of this research as a starting point, so that every participant understands what is meant by collaboration and what are the goals of the project. The public sectors resource would act as a project lead that ensures funding and other requirements for starting this project. These requirements should be adjusted as the project moves forward. The end result of this step should be an active operator from the public sector, who has the means and resources to guide a regional collaboration project from start to finish with a group of well- informed project participants from the private sector.

After this, as the second point states, a project for collaboration with the operators will be created with the participants. This means choosing the target audiences, goals, resources, and methods for a joint collaborative marketing project. At this point, methods for communication and project management, the intervals of meetings relating to the project and the means of reporting the progress of the project shall be also decided. Even though the participants will have a saying on all these matters, the public sectors resource will have the final say regarding the project management. This is done because, the research showed that collaboration is more likely to succeed as everyone shares the risks, a common goal and when the process is led by a single entity. As the result, all these matters will be compiled into a well-defined project plan that includes a collaborative marketing plan, based on the input from the project participants should be the created.

Third point would use the data gathered in this research to create a sales material and a marketing plan for the regional MICE-sales project. The material would focus on the strengths and attraction factors of the region. The material will be both digital and print. The details of the content regarding pricing, visuals and customer path will be negotiated with the partners, so that it can be used by everyone equally. These materials will be then used to create a multimedia marketing plan, that takes account the input from previous steps. Having all the partners input included in the practical marketing plan creates a greater investment in the project based on the research by increasing trust and motivation for the project.

Using the created material, the public sector resource will begin marketing efforts according to the marketing plan created in the previous step. Methods that are all-ready in use for

collaborative marketing will be included in this plan. All the partners will be equally incorporated for the steps that require effort beyond the public sectors resource. All the steps include a measurement of the marketing ROI. As the research shows pre-existing interest in collaborative marketing and all the regional operators do marketing in their own channels all-ready, an external campaign that includes input and resources ensures that no-one over-exerts themselves and everyone keeps up to date in the marketing efforts, thus increasing the potential of successful collaboration.

Depending on the chosen platform in the second step, the measurement of success of the collaboration is incorporated either to the platform or included otherwise in the information that is shared among the partners, after the first marketing efforts have been concluded. Based on the data from the campaigns and their success and feedback of the collaboration project, development ideas for the future of the marketing and collaboration will be gathered and discussed among the partners. These ideas will be taken to use in the future projects, creating an ever-improving cycle of collaborative marketing of MICE-industry for the region. This step cannot be performed without the success of previous steps, as it requires data and feedback from a completed project.

As in any action research, this thesis is not the end for this development project. It should be continued with the operators to find new ways to collaborate more efficiently in the future. The strategic guidelines should be refined and checked during the process. The results so far show that there is potential and motivation for regional collaboration and that it can improve sales in MICE-industry, but only if it is done in open and clearly coordinated way now and in the future.

8.4 Further research

To ensure that the regional co-operation develops and remains profitable, the public sector should ensure that the motivation of the private sector is kept high. Otherwise, the private sector will not participate in future collaboration ventures and previous actions become redundant. As the private sector is primarily interest in profits, future research should focus in making sure that the collaboration projects ensure the maximum amount of profits with the input that the private sector gives into the project. Research can help here by looking into the target audiences that the regional operators cater for. Understanding the customer needs helps to develop the products and services for them, which in turn increases the closed offers.

On the public sector side of the development project, further research should be aimed towards public sectors role as a regional tourism developer with dwindling resources. Many

cities in the border region of Finland are struggling to find alternative tourism flows for the now missing Russian tourists. As the role of the developer falls on the shoulders of the public sector and the resources are being cut at the same time as the economic situation for the border cities is not looking well, research could help to find options on how to operate in this challenging environment.

The research showed the regions potential is not efficiently facilitated and that the regional operators don't necessarily understand what is meant by B2B-collaboration. These matters may not be helped with more research, but some form of education or training for the operators on these topics should be done, that the potential may be tapped into, and operators understand what true collaboration means.

8.5 Reliability and validity of the findings

This research and all the data collection was done according to LAB University's thesis guidelines (2022). To protect the identity of the interviewees their names were substituted with abbreviations and all info that could be used to identify them was removed along with all the names of companies and locations, and using only quotes that cannot be traced back to any single interviewee. The interviews were translated from Finnish to English as they were conducted in Finnish. It was paramount during the translations, that the subject matter does not change. In the beginning of all the interviews, the interviewees were informed about the recording, the anonymity steps, and the use of the recorded material. The recorded interviews and their transcriptions were saved only in digital format. These files were stored on the researcher own computer and on LAB's Microsoft Office 365 platform service under the researcher's account. Both the device and the platform are protected by a two-part authentication process. All the gathered data will be deleted permanently after the publication of this thesis. The interviewees can ask for a copy of the data of their own interviews, both the recording and the transcription.

As the researcher was part of the same organization as some of the interviewees and has operated in projects with the others, the relationship between the researcher and interviewees can be seen as validity challenge. The researcher maintained an objective stance during the whole research process and the relationship was made clear to all the participants in the research. This was highlighted during interviews and the interviewer remind the interviewees at the beginning of the interviews, that this thesis has been requested by the Imatra Base Camp, where the interviewer currently works. Focus on the research was only on the research topic interviews were focused on the pre-set themes. If the interview drifted off topic, it was guided back on track with another themed question. The researcher focused

on the researched data and comments from the interviews to draw conclusions. This created an objective view on the matter without the hinderance of personal opinions of the research topics.

The scientific references that were selected for the thesis were chosen with scrutiny. Peer-reviewed scientific materials and the likes of them were preferred. The newest available publications were favoured when possible. Some of the sales process and public- private sector –collaboration sources were more dated than others, as the topic matter has not been extensively researched lately, or the findings have not changed drastically in these matters.

The number of participants in this study seemed small in the beginning, but the data gathered, motivation for collaboration and the size of the chosen participants was sufficient to create guidelines that can improve the regional MICE-sales. As the data also showed differing opinions on multiple matters, it supports the statement that the number of participants was adequate. Getting all the major operators in the Imatra region to participate gives validity for gathered data. Information from both the public and private sector was crucial and one operator acting a bit on both sectors, even they are a public sector operator on paper, helped to fill this goal as there was one operator in addition that operated purely on the public sector.

The need for this research was further solidified by the comments gathered outside the actual interviews with the participants, where they stated, that kind of project has been long overdue in the region. Also, during the process of the research, when it was discussed by similar operators of other regions, they all showed great interest in the project and especially in the results what this kind of collaboration can create.

9 References

Agnihotri, R., Kothandaraman, P., Kashyap, R., & Singh, R. 2012. Bringing “social” into sales: the impact of salespeople's social media use on service behaviors and value creation. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260178184_Bringing_Social_Into_Sales_The_Impact_of_Salespeople'S_Social_Media_Use_on_Service_Behaviors_and_Value_Creation Accessed 4 June 2023.

Alexopoulos, A.N. and Buckley, F. 2013. What trust matters when: the temporal value of professional and personal trust for effective knowledge transfer, *Group & Organization Management*, Vol. 38 No. 3, pp. 361-391. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/236946342_What_Trust_Matters_When_The_Temporal_Value_of_Professional_and_Personal_Trust_for_Effective_Knowledge_Transfer Accessed 15 February 2023.

Allied Market Research. 2021. Market Research Report: MICE Industry by Event Type (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions): Global Opportunity Analysis and Industry Forecast, 2017–2028. Available at <https://www.alliedmarketresearch.com/MICE-industry-market> Accessed 4 June 2023.

Alonso, A. D., Yi L. 2012. Visitor Centers, Collaboration, and the Role of Local Food and Beverage as Regional Tourism Development Tools: The Case of the Blackwood River Valley in Western Australia. *Journal of hospitality & tourism research* Available at: <https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.saimia.fi/doi/full/10.1177/1096348011413594#bibr34-10963480114135942> Accessed 12 February 2023.

Baleiro, R., Quinteiro, S. 2018. Key concepts in literature and tourism studies. Universidade de Lisboa. Faculdade de Letras. Centro de Estudos Comparatistas. Faculdade de Letras, Alameda da Universidade. Available at https://www.pasosonline.org/Publica-dos/pasos_difunde/K_CONCEPTS_LIT TOUR ENG.pdf Accessed 22 March 2023.

Beresecka, J., and Papcunova, V. 2020. Cooperation Between Municipalities and the Private Sector in the Field of Tourism (Case Study). *Scientific Papers of the University of Pardubice. Series D. Faculty of Economics and Administration*. Available at <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2622451395?accountid=202350&parentSessionId=Nm7nKiukTG%2BGjQDRf0adtL5e89tGxmQZqmCwjV%2FRp8s%3D&pq-origsite=primo> Accessed 22 March 2023.

Bianchi, Mattia et al. 2010. Enabling Open Innovation in Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises: How to Find Alternative Applications for Your Technologies: Enabling Open Innovation in SMEs. *R & D management* 40.4. Available at: <https://web-s-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.saimia.fi/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=3591ced5-2a98-4c53-b2bb-b5841f068e73%40redis> Accessed 15 February 2023.

Blount, J., 2020. *Inked: The Ultimate Guide to Powerful Closing and Sales Negotiation Tactics That Unlock Yes and Seal the Deal*. 1st edition. Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley, Print.

Bovaird, A. G., Elke Löffler. 2003. *Public Management and Governance*. Routledge. Modern Language Assoc. MLA 9th Edition. Print.

Caputo, Mauro et al. 2016. Exploring the Impact of Open Innovation on Firm Performances. *Management decision* 54.7. Available at: <https://www-emerald-com.ezproxy.saimia.fi/insight/content/doi/10.1108/MD-02-2015-0052/full/html> Accessed 15 February 2023.

Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries (CBI), 2021. Entering the European market for MICE tourism products. Available at: <https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/tourism/mice-tourism/market-entry> Accessed 9 February 2023.

Cooper, C. et al. 2004. *Tourism: Principles and Practice*. Pearson Education UK. Print.

Davidson, R., Cope, B. *Business Travel, Conferences, Incentive Travel, Exhibitions, Corporate Hospitality and Corporate Travel*. Harlow: Prentice Hall, 2003. Print.

Davidson, R. 1994. *Business travel*. Pitman Publishing Limited. Print.

Disimulacion, M., A., T. L. 2020. Mice Tourism During Covid-19 and Future Directions For The New Normal. *Asia Pacific International Events Management Journal*. Available at <https://ejournal-medan.uph.edu/index.php/apiemi/article/view/397> Accessed 12 March 2023.

Dubinsky, Alan J. 1980, A Factor Analytic Study of the Personal Selling Process, *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, (Fall/Winter), 26-33. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261680727_A_Factor_Analytic_Study_of_the_Personal_Selling_Process Accessed 8 December 2021.

Dredge, D., Jenkins, J. 2011. *Stories of Practice: Tourism Policy and Planning*. Farnham, Ashgate. Print.

Fyall, A. & Spyriadis, A. (2003). Collaborating for Growth: the International Hotel Industry. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/289637903_Collaborating_for_Growth_The_international_hotel_industry Accessed 17 February 2022.

Getz, D., Page S. J. 2016: Progress and prospects for event tourism research. *Tourism Management*. Available at: <https://reader.elsevier.com/reader/sd/pii/S0261517715000679?to-ken=AAF36953A80839180E9560077CBC6D502FCBDD58EDF77062F4023722D434A2188527502605F891B324BEF737859B20DA&originRegion=eu-west-1&originCreation=20211210133206> Accessed 10 December 2021.

Grimsey, D. and Lewis, M.K. 2002. Evaluating the risks of public private partnerships for infrastructure projects, *International Journal of Project Management*, Vol. 20. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/222563158_Evaluating_the_Risks_of_Public_Private_Partnerships_for_Infrastructure_Projects Accessed 22 March 2023.

Guest, R. 2017. *Great by design: how to deliver accelerated and sustained business growth* (1st edition). John Wiley & Sons. Print.

Gursoy, Dogan, M. Saayman, and Marios Sotiriadis. 2015. *Collaboration in Tourism Businesses and Destinations: a Handbook*. Ed. Dogan Gursoy, M. Saayman, and Marios Sotiriadis. First edition. Bingley, England: Emerald. Print.

Hahn, J. 2021. What Is MICE? Your Guide to Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions. Cvent. Available at: <https://www.cvent.com/uk/blog/hospitality/what-is-mice> Accessed 7 February 2023.

Heaslip, E. 2015. B2b vs B2C: What's the difference? U.S Chamber of Commerce. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0167811609000913?via%3Dihub> Accessed 27 January 2023.

Heikkinen, H., Konttinen T. & Häkkinen P. 2008. Toiminnan tutkimisen suuntaukset. Teoksessa Heikkinen, H., Rovio, E. & Syrjälä L. (toim.) Toiminnasta 52 tietoon. Toimintatutkimuksen menetelmät ja lähestymistavat. Helsinki: Kansanvalistusseura. Print.

Hirn, S. 1978. Imatran tarina. Matkailuhistoriamme valtaväylältä. Kanta Imatraseuran julkaisu N:o 3. Print.

Hogwood B., Gunn L. 1986. Policy Analysis for the Real World. Oxford University Press, Oxford. Journal of Social Policy, 15(1), 132-133. Available at DOI:10.1017/S0047279400023205 Accessed. 16.10.2022.

Holloway, J. Christopher, and Claire Humphreys. The Business of Tourism. 12th edition. Los Angeles: SAGE, 2022. Print.

Hoang, T. G., et al. 2023. Current Obstacles, Contemporary Practices, and Potential Solutions for Recovery in Vietnam Tourism after the COVID-19 Pandemic: Tour Operators' Perspectives. Tourism and hospitality research. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/14673584231151897> Accessed 7 February 2023.

Imatra Base Camp Oy. 2022. Tilat. Available at: <https://imatrabasecamp.fi/fi/tilat> Accessed 16 October 2022.

Imatran Kaupunki. 2022. Imatra on Suomen Kansallisihme. Available at: <https://kansallisihme.fi/fi/miksi-kansallisihme>. Accessed 19 October 2022.

Jefferies, M. 2006. Critical success factors of public private sector partnerships: A case study of the Sydney SuperDome. Engineering, Construction, and Architectural Management, 13(5), 451–462. Available at DOI: org/10.1108/09699980610690738 Accessed 29 March 2023.

Jordan, J., Kelly, R. 2015. Companies with a Formal Sales Process Generate More Revenue. Harvard Business Review. Available at <https://hbr.org/2015/01/companies-with-a-formal-sales-process-generate-more-revenue> Accessed 4 June 2023.

Kananen, J. 2011. Kvantti : kvantitatiivisen opinnäytetyön kirjoittamisen käytännön opas. Jyväskylän ammattikorkeakoulu. Print.

Kananen, J. 2012. Kehittämistutkimus opinnäytetyönä. Kehittämistutkimuksen kirjoittamisen käytännön opas. Tampere: Tampereen Yliopistopaino. Juvenes. Print.

Kaplan, R. S. Norton, D. P. Barrows, E.A. 2008.: Developing the Strategy: Vision, Value Gaps, and Analysis. Balanced Scorecard Report. Boston: Harvard Business School <https://vuthedudotorg.files.wordpress.com/2015/04/bsc-report-jane-feb-2008.pdf> Accessed 18 November 2021.

Kauppila, A., Ridderstråle, A. Lyyti RY. 2020. Tapahtumien tila 2020. Available at: <https://www.lyyti.com/hubfs/State%20of%20Events/The%20State%20of%20Events%20FI.pdf?hsCtaTracking=788e71f5-a06a-4bcf-8558-a70dce5cd8bd%7C36b01a68-2b3b-4840-b9c8-d61852915793> Accessed 27 January 2023.

Kim, D., Kim, C., Lee, T. 2005. Public and private partnership for facilitating tourism investment in the Apec Region. APEC Tourism Working Group (TWG) & Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Republic of Korea, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation. Available at

<https://www.cpppc.org/opt/pmo/nfs/images/www/201711/30162729estl.pdf> Accessed 29 March 2023.

Korhonen, R. 2021. Liikematkailun uusi normaali koronan jälkeen: Varautumista kaikkeen mahdolliseen, mikä voi mennä pieleen. Talouselämä. Available at: <https://www.talouselama.fi/uutiset/liikematkailun-uusi-normaali-koronan-jalkeen-varautumista-kaikkeen-mahdolliseen-mika-voi-menna-pieleen/e76f11f7-2f6a-450e-b90c-c1a39e91d0d3> Accessed 24 March 2023.

Kim, J. 2020. Public and Private Sector in Tourism and Hospitality Management. Available at: <https://onstarplus.com/archives/1348> Accessed 12 March 2023.

Lau, C., 2013. Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE). Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. Available at: https://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/curriculum-development/kla/pshe/references-and-resources/tourism/MICE_English_2016.pdf Accessed 7 February 2023.

Lew, A. A., Hall, C. M., Williams, A. M. 2014. The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Tourism. John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated. Available at: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/lab-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1666473> Accessed 4 March 2023.

Lienert, I. 2009. IMF Working Paper No. 09/122 Where Does the Public Sector End and the Private Sector Begin? Available at: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1415179> Accessed 4 March 2023 .

M.M. Parent. 2016. The governance of the Olympic Games in Canada Sport in Society. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17430437.2015.1108652> Accessed 12 February 2023.

Ma, J. & Law, R. 2009. Components of Tourism Research: Evidence from Annals of Tourism Research. Anatolia: an International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13032917.2009.10518895> Accessed 20 March 2023.

Markets & Technology Global Tourism Team. World Bank Group. 2020.Rebuilding tourism competitiveness. Available at: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/34348/Rebuilding-Tourism-Competitiveness-Tourism-response-recovery-and-resilience-to-the-COVID-19-crisis.pdf?sequence=5> Accessed 27 January 2023.

McCormack, K. 2003. B2B collaboration: what is it? Supply Chain Practice. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350637497_Collaboration_overview Accessed 15 February 2023.

McNiff, J. & Whitehead, J. 2011. All you need to know about action research (2nd ed.). SAGE. Print.

Middleton, V. T. C, Fyall A. and Morgan, M. 2010. Marketing in Travel and Tourism. Amsterdam: Butterworth-Heinemann. Print.

Mertler, C.A. 2019. The Wiley Handbook of Action Research in Education. John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated. Print.

Moncrief, W. & Marshall, G. 2005. The evolution of the Seven Steps of Selling. Industrial Marketing Management. Available at: <https://studylib.net/doc/8139941/the-evolution-of-the-seven-steps-of-selling> Accessed 27 January 2023.

Moore, Danielle P., and Allison G. Doherty. 2011. United States Travel and Tourism Industry. Hauppauge, N.Y: Nova Science Publishers, Inc. Print.

Morales, M.P.E. 2016. Participatory Action Research (PAR) cum Action Research (AR) in teacher professional development: A literature review. *International Journal of Research in Education and Science (IJRES)*, 2(1). Available at: <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1105165> Accessed 31 July 2023.

Naipaul, S., Wang, Y., Okumus, F. 2009. Regional destination marketing: A collaborative approach. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*. Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/240235863_Regional_destination_marketing_A_collaborative_approach Accessed 12 March 2023.

Nicolas, A. 2023. Differences Between Technical, Participatory and Critical Action Research. *Essays UK*. Available at: <https://essays.uk/differences-between-technical-participatory-and-critical-action-research/> Accessed 30 July 2023.

Panagopoulos, N., Avlonitis G. J. 2021. Performance implications of sales strategy: The moderating effects of leadership and environment. (November - December 2021). Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0167811609000913?via%3Dihub> Accessed 28 November 2021.

Pender, L. & Sharpley, R. 2004. *The Management of Tourism*, SAGE Publications, Limited, London. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446214961> Accessed 5 March 2023.

Perkins, R., Khoo-Lattimore, C. 2019. *Tourism and Hospitality Research. Friend or foe: Challenges to collaboration success at different lifecycle stages for regional small tourism firms in Australia* Available at: <https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.saimia.fi/doi/full/10.1177/1467358419836719> Accessed 27 January 2023.

Richmond, K., 2010. *The Power of Selling*. Minnesota: Flat World Knowledge, Inc. Available at: https://saylordotorg.github.io/text_the-power-of-selling/ Accessed 28 January 2023.

Rodriguez, A., H., & Peterson, R. M. 2016. Social Media in Large Sales Forces: An Empirical Study of the Impact of Sales Process Capability and Relationship Performance. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10696679.2016.1170538> Accessed 4 June 2023.

Rowlingson, S. and McDermott, P. 1999. *Procurement Systems: A Guide to Best Practice*, E. and F.N. Spon, London. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/302947834_Procurement_Systems_A_Guide_to_Best_Practice_in_Construction Accessed 29 March 2023.

Singh, S. 2022. National Strategy for MICE industry. Government of India. Ministry of Tourism, Niche Tourism Division. Available at: <https://tourism.gov.in/sites/default/files/2022-09/National%20Strategy%20for%20MICE%20Industry%202022.pdf> Accessed 7 February 2023.

Sharpley, R. 2006. *Travel and Tourism*, SAGE Publications, Limited. ProQuest Ebook Central. Available at: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/lab-ebooks/detail.action?docID=334599> Accessed 26 March 2023.

Stainton, H. 2023. *The Role of the Private Sector in Tourism Planning and Development*. Tourism teacher. Available at: <https://tourismteacher.com/private-sector-tourism-planning-development> Accessed 22 March 2023.

Shuttleworth, M., Wilson, L.T. 2008. *Qualitative Research Design*. Available at: <https://explorable.com/qualitative-research-design> Accessed 20 July 2023.

- Selden, P. H. 1998. Sales process engineering: An emerging quality application. Quality Progress. Available at: <https://www.proquest.com/docview/214754194/fulltextPDF/21B00F59A0924596PQ/1?accountid=202350> Accessed 27 January 2023.
- Smith, S. L. J. 1989. Tourism analysis: a handbook. Longman Scientific & Technical; Wiley, Harlow, Essex, England, New York. Print.
- Statista. Available at: <https://www.statista.com> Accessed 22 March 2023.
- Stella, C., Menassa, S. 2020. Succesfull public-private partnerships. Arthur D. Little Luxembourg S.A. Available at: <https://www.adlittle.com/en/insights/viewpoints/successful-public-private-partnerships> Accessed 29 March 2023.
- StudySmarter 2023 Available at: <https://www.studysmarter.us/explanations/business-studies/business-operations/sales-process> Accessed 27 January 2023..
- Swarbrooke, J., Horner, S. 2001 Business Travel and Tourism. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann. Print.
- Taherdoost, H. 2022. What are Different Research Approaches? Comprehensive Review of Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Research, Their Applications, Types, and Limitations. IDEAS Working Paper Series from RePEc. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.30564/jmser.v5i1.4538> Accessed 20 July 2023.
- TAK Research 2019. Visitory Dashboard. Annual report 2019. Available at: <https://visitory.io/fi/imatra-region/2019-01/2019-12/> Accessed 29 September 2022.
- Threlfall, D. 2023. The Ultimate Guide to Creating an Effective Sales Process. Business 2 community. Available at <https://www.business2community.com/sales-management/the-ultimate-guide-to-creating-an-effective-sales-process-02360780> Accessed 4 June 2023.
- Tuazon, M., A. 2020. MICE tourism during covid-19 and future directions for the new normal. Asia Pacific International Events Management Journal. Available at: <https://ejournal-medan.uph.edu/index.php/apiemj/article/view/397> Accessed 7 February 2023.
- Työ- ja Elinkeinoministeriö. 2023. Tourism. Available at: <https://tem.fi/en/tourism> Accessed 12 March 2023.
- Virgil, N., Popsa, R. E. 2014. Business Tourism Market Developments, Procedia Economics and Finance, Volume 16. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2212567114008582> Accessed 21 March 2023.
- Wanhill, S. 1987. U. K.—Politics and Tourism. Tourism Management, vol. 8, no. 1, March 1987, pp. 54-58. Butterworths, 80 Montvale Avenue, Stoneham, Massachusetts. Journal of Travel Research. Available at <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/0261517787900409> Accessed 11 March 2023.
- Weiermair, Peters, M., & Frehse, J. 2008. Success factors for public private partnership: cases in alpine tourism development. Journal of Services Research, 8(S1), S7–. Available at <https://www.proquest.com/docview/195558895?accountid=202350&parentSessionId=nCzEL%2BqNJvojl5QKidx8A3CAiOkwWh%2Bb9iQ7bCaVyQ%3D&pq-origsite=primo> Accessed 22 March 2023.
- Werner K., Dickson, G., Hyde, K.F. 2015 The impact of a mega-event on inter-organisational relationships and tie strength: Perceptions from the 2011 Rugby World Cup. Sport

Management Review. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1441352314000941> Accessed 15 February 2023.

Wonae, C., Schmelzer C. D., and McMahon, P. S. 2002. Preparing Hospitality Managers for the 21st Century: The Merging of Just-in-Time Education, Critical thinking, and Collaborative Learning. Journal of hospitality & tourism research: the professional journal of the Council on Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Education. Available at: https://lut.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/view/action/uresolver.do?operation=resolveService&package_service_id=2791066990006254&institutionId=6254&custom-erId=6245&VE=true Accessed 15 February 2023.

Wood, D., Gray, B. 1991. Toward a Comprehensive Theory of Collaboration. The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science. 27. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/250959455_Toward_a_Comprehensive_Theory_of_Collaboration Accessed 4 March 2023.

World Tourism Organization. 2019. International Tourism Highlights, 2019 Edition, UN-WTO, Madrid. Available at: <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/epdf/10.18111/9789284421152> Accessed 29 March 2023.

Zuber-Skerritt, & Wood, L. 2019. Action learning and action research: genres and approaches (Zuber-Skerritt & L. Wood, Eds.; First edition. Emerald Publishing. Print.

10 Appendixes

10.1 Appendix 1. Product and service questionnaire and results

MICE-PRODUCTS – CITY OF IMATRA:

1. **Majoituskapasiteettinne petipaikkoina:**

0. Emme tarjoa majoitusta.

2. **Kokoustilojenne/tapahtumatilojenne määrä ja niiden henkilökapasiteetti, sekä yhteensä että pienin ja suurin kapasiteetti.**

17 eri tilaa. Kokonaiskapasiteetti 10 000. Pienin tila 10 henkilöä, isoin 2500 henkilöä (ulkotila) ja 1980 henkilöä(sisätila).

3. **Listaus kokouspalveluista, joita tarjoatte asiakkaalle itse (ohjelma, ruoka, tekniikka, viihde, jne).**

Tiloissa rajattu tekninen valmius ja osassa tekninen henkilökunta kuuluu vuokrahintaan. Catering alihankintana.

MICE-PRODUCTS – IMATRAN KYLPYLÄ:

1. **Majoituskapasiteettinne petipaikkoina:**

1200

2. **Kokoustilojenne/tapahtumatilojenne määrä ja niiden henkilökapasiteetti, sekä yhteensä että pienin ja suurin kapasiteetti.**

8 eri tilaa. Kokonaiskapasiteetti 724. Pienin tila 32 henkilöä, isoin 400 henkilöä.

3. **Listaus kokouspalveluista, joita tarjoatte asiakkaalle itse (ohjelma, ruoka, tekniikka, viihde, jne).**

Kokoustarjoilut, ateriat, kokoustilat ja ryhmätyötilat ja tekniikka, majoitus, iltaohjelma, kylpylä, kuntosali, oheisohjelma kuten erilaiset aktiviteetit ja luennot osittain alihankintana.

MICE-PRODUCTS – HCS

1. Majoituskapasiteettinne petipaikkoina:

905 + 1100. Kaikki petipaikat eivät irroitettavissa tapahtumamyyntiin.

2. Kokoustilojenne/tapahtumatilojenne määrä ja niiden henkilökapasiteetti, sekä yhteensä että pienin ja suurin kapasiteetti.

23 eri tilaa. Kokonaiskapasiteetti 3650. Pienin tila 10 henkilöä, isoin 1750 henkilöä.

3. Listaus kokouspalveluista, joita tarjoatte asiakkaalle itse (ohjelma, ruoka, tekniikka, viihde, jne).

Kaikki kokoustarjoilut: kahvitorit, lounaat, illalliset. Osa tekniikasta, loput alihankintana. Omia aktiviteetteja: kylpylä, keilaus, kuntosali, golf, padel, tennis, pingis, Angry Birds puisto, sähköpyörät, Harmony Spa, yms.

MICE-PRODUCTS – VALTIONHOTELLI

1. Majoituskapasiteettinne petipaikkoina:

200 + 23 lisäpaikkaa.

2. Kokoustilojenne/tapahtumatilojenne määrä ja niiden henkilökapasiteetti, sekä yhteensä että pienin ja suurin kapasiteetti.

6 eri tilaa. Kokonaiskapasiteetti 200. Pienin tila 10 henkilöä, isoin 150 henkilöä.

3. Listaus kokouspalveluista, joita tarjoatte asiakkaalle itse (ohjelma, ruoka, tekniikka, viihde, jne).

Kokoustilat, ruoka- ja ravintolapalvelut, tiloissa olemassa olevan tekniikan (netti, äänentoisto isoimmissa tiloissa, videotykki/näyttötaulu). Aktiviteetit ja tekniikan lisäpalvelut alihankintana.

MICE PRODUCTS – GOSAIMAA

goSaimaalla ei ole mitään kokous- ja kongressimatkailun tuotteita myynnissä.

10.2 Appendix 2. Interview questions

Kuvaile mitä tuotteita teillä on myynnissä kongressi- ja kokousmyynnin saralla?

Kuvaile nykyistä b2b-myynti prosessianne näiden tuotteiden osalta?

Mitkä ovat suurimmat haasteet tässä myyntiprosessissa?

Miten kuvailisit yhtistyön tilaa alueen toimijoiden kanssa?

Miten näet julkisen sektorin roolin kongressi- ja kokousmatkailun myynnissä tai sen kehittämisessä?

Miten näet yksityisen sektorin roolin kongressi- ja kokousmatkailun myynnissä tai sen kehittämisessä??

Voitko kertoa esimerkin menestyksekkästä alueellisesta yhteistyöprojektista kongressi- ja kokousmyynnin tiimoilta?

Mikä oli mielestäsi ratkaiseva tekijä tämän projektin onnistumisessa?

Mitä tulee ottaa mielestäsi huomioon, jos halutaan varmistaa kaikkien osapuolten sitoutuminen yhteistyöprojektiin alueellisesti?

Mitkä ovat suurimmat riskit tai haasteet, jos halutaan luoda alueellista yhteistyötä kongressi- ja kokousmyyntiin?

Mitkä ovat ne mittarit millä mitataan em. yhteistyöprojektien onnistumista?

Miten sinä kehittäisit alueellista yhteistyötä?

Loppupohdinnat ja kommentit?

10.3 Appendix 3. Relevant highlights of interview transcripts

Below are relevant highlights of the conducted research interviews. These highlights are picked to back up the conclusions made on this thesis and they are presented at their original language to preserve the context and subject matter. In the text “henkilö A” is the interviewer and “henkilö B” is the interviewee. The explanations for the abbreviations O1,O2 etc. can be found on the part 6.3 of the thesis.

THESIS INTERVIEW HIGHLIGHTS – O1

Henkilö A:

Hyvä juttu. Voisitko kuvailla, millainen myyntiprosessi teillä on, kun lähdetään esimerkiksi myymään tuota suurinta salia, jonka mainitsit? Miten myyntiprosessi etenee?

Henkilö B:

No, käytännössä meillä on verkkopalvelu, jossa ovat tilan tiedot ja hinnat kirjoitettu auki. Lisäksi teemme digitaalisia markkinointikampanjoita, jotka osittain voivat myydä tilaa itseään. Lisäksi olemme tehneet myyntikirjeitä ja lähettäneet niitä suoraan sähköpostitse asiakkaille aika ajoin.

Henkilö A:

Jes, ja sitten kun saadaan ensimmäinen kontakti asiakkaaseen, miten tilanne etenee siitä?

Henkilö B:

No sitten alkaa keskusteluja asiakkaan kanssa. Tietenkin asiakas tiedustelee tarkempia hintatietoja ja sitten päästään jonkinlaiseen sopimukseen sen osalta. Päästään tarkemmin varaamaan tilaa, ajan kellonajat ja muut speksit, mitä sinne sitten halutaan myydä sisään.

Henkilö A:

Kyllä, sitten lyödään varmaan varausta kiinni.

Henkilö B:

Kyllä.

Henkilö A:

Asiat etenevät. Kun tilaisuus tapahtuu ja mitä sen jälkeen, kun tilaisuus on pidetty?

Henkilö B:

No sitten lähtee tilavuokralasku asiakkaalle. Ja myös jossain tilanteessa lähetän palautekyselyn asiakkaalle.

Henkilö A:

Hyvä. Ja siihen kun tämä prosessi on vähän tietysti jatkuvaa koko ajan, tulee uusia asiakkaita. Mutta tämä on yhden asiakkaan koko kaaren mukainen prosessi?

Henkilö B:

Kyllä, joo, kyllä periaatteessa.

Henkilö A:

Miten, jos katsot tätä prosessia tällä hetkellä, missä koet, että on eniten petrattavaa? Onko joku kohta erityisen tärkeä, johon voisi panostaa enemmän? Vai onko siinä jotain heikkouksia?

Henkilö B:

Ehkä voisi olla selkeämpi, tavallaan tuo varausvahvistusprosessi. Se voisi olla jollain tavalla automatisoidumpi, sillä se vie tällä hetkellä paljon aikaa ja käsityötä. Jos siinä olisi jonkinlainen järjestelmä, se voisi olla parempi. Myös laskutustoimissa voisi olla vähän parantamisen varaa omasta näkökulmastani. Ja sitten tuo jälkikontakti asiakkaaseen voisi olla aktiivisempaa.

Henkilö A:

Jes, kiitoksia. Entä miten sitten kun mennään tähän alueelliseen yhteistyöhön? Alueella on useampi kokous- ja kongressialan toimija, ja jos puhutaan nimenomaan sinun kaltaisistasi tilamyijistä, niin minkälaista yhteistyötä heidän kauttaan tällä hetkellä tehdään? Miten sinä näet tilanteen tällä hetkellä?

Henkilö B:

Aika vähäistä on se yhteistyö, että meillä on. Paikallisen toimijan kanssa on ollut yhteistyötä. Ammatilaisen messujen ja erilaisten seminaarien muodossa. Sitten on jotain yhdistettyjä seminaareja saattanut olla, mutta aika vähäiseksi se on jäänyt. Voisi olla aktiivisempaa. Henkilökohtaisesti olen yrittänyt heittää palloa ja kyselyä sinne suuntaan, mutta kommunikaatio on ollut aika vaitonaisia.

Henkilö A:

Millainen kaupungin rooli olisi kongressi- ja matkailumarkkinoinnissa? Mitä kaupunki voisi tehdä tai pitäisi tehdä, jotta saataisiin paremmat edellytykset tällaiselle toiminnalle?

Henkilö B:

No kyllähän se voisi ehkä vaatia jonkinlaista julkista rahoitusta, jotta saataisiin kasvatettua koko kaupungin kongressi- ja matkailumatkailua. Tämä lisäisi alueen elinvoimaisuutta ja voisi vaatia jonkinlaista budjettivarausta tähän tarkoitukseen.

Henkilö A:

Joo.

Henkilö B:

Tosi, niin kyllä. Kaupungissa pitäisi olla jonkinlainen instanssi tai resurssi, joka kokonaisvaltaisesti kehittää tätä. Pienissä kaupungeissa Suomessa toiminta on aktiivisempaa etenkin Etelä-Suomessa ja Länsirannikolla, mutta maantieteellinen sijainti on haaste. Voisi ajatella, että tämä toiminta on vieläkin tärkeämpää täällä.

Henkilö A:

Aivan, aivan.

Henkilö B:

Satsaus tähän olisi tarpeen.

Henkilö A:

Joo. Hyvä. Miten sitten toiselta puolelta, eli jos kaupunki voi tehdä niitä asioita, mitä äsken mainitsit ja omasta näkökulmastasi, miten näet yksityisen sektorin roolin? Mitä yksityinen sektori voisi tehdä omalta osaltaan, jotta tämä homma toimisi?

Henkilö B:

No minun mielestäni yksityisen sektorin pitäisi tehdä enemmän yhteistyötä kaupungin kanssa. Ei olla niin omassa olossa, vaan tehdä yhteistyötä kaupungin kanssa. Yksityisen sektorin tulisi enemmän puhaltamaan yhteen hiileen näiden asioiden kanssa.

Henkilö A:

Juuri niin, ennakointi on avain. Jos saisit vapaat kädet, miten kehittäisit alueellista yhteistyötä? Mikä olisi ensimmäinen askel, jos tietäisit, että kaikki onnistuu?

Henkilö B:

Ensinnäkin myynnin suhteen voisi kehittää yhteistyötä kaupungin sisällä. Esimerkiksi keskittymällä myyntipuolella erityisesti kokous- ja kongressihommiin. Myös alueellisen yhteisen myynnin kehittäminen voisi olla askel eteenpäin. En tiedä mitä muuta.

THESIS INTERVIEW HIGHLIGHTS – O2

Henkilö A:

Mikä on kokousjärjestäjän ostettavissa teiltä?

Henkilö B:

Tarjoamme avaimet käteen -palveluita kokous- ja tapahtumapalveluissa kokonaisvaltaisesti.

Henkilö A:

Kuvailisitko nykyistä liiketoimintaa ja bisnesmyynnin prosessia, erityisesti edellä mainittujen tuotteiden osalta? Kuinka prosessi etenee alusta loppuun?

Henkilö B:

Meillä on myyntipäälliköjä ja myyjiä, jotka kontaktoivat asiakkaita. Yritämme herättää tarpeita ja järjestää tilaisuuksia. Tarjousvaiheessa myyntipäällikkö tai myyntitiimimme tekee tarjouksen. Ryhmämyyntitiimimme työskentelee tarjousten parissa. Vahvistettua tarjousta koordinoi tapahtumakoordinaattori, ja tapahtuman aikana hän toimii asiakkaan kanssa yhteistyössä.

Henkilö A:

Eli mitä tapahtuu tapahtuman jälkeen?

Henkilö B:

Tämä riippuu tapahtuman luonteesta ja koosta. Voimme ottaa yhteyttä tapahtumajärjestäjiin, pitää palaverieita ja käydä läpi palautetta. Vaihtoehtoja on monia.

Henkilö A:

Palautetta siis?

Henkilö B:

Kyllä, palautepalvelu tai sitten voitaisiin harkita jo myös seuraavia tilaisuuksia.

Henkilö A:

Aivan, ja jälkimarkkinointi? Millaista se on?

Henkilö B:

Jälkimarkkinointi on tällä hetkellä liian vähäistä. Sillä pitäisi olla suurempi rooli.

Henkilö A:

Nyt siirrytään konkreettisempiin asioihin. Mitkä ovat suurimmat haasteet tässä prosessissa tällä hetkellä?

Henkilö B:

Suurimmat haasteet liittyvät automaation puutteeseen, tarvittavaan manuaaliseen työhön ja aikaisempaan yhteistyöhön. Myös markkinoinnin rooli alkupäässä on tärkeää.

Henkilö A:

Siirrytään pois prosessista. Puhutaan alueista. Meillä on isoja toimijoita. Kuvaila yhteistyön tilaa alueen toimijoiden kesken.

Henkilö B:

Mielestäni yhteistyötä ei juurikaan ole.

Henkilö B:

Hyvä kysymys. Matkailusta puhutaan paljon ja myös niistä. Täällähän on. Jos puhutaan erityisesti tässä talossa, niin täällä on upeat maisemat ja luonto, mikä yllättäen tarjoaa hyvää saavutettavuutta. Mutta voisiko tätä saavutettavuutta tuoda esiin myös tapahtumajärjestäjille? Koska nyt on paljon keskusteltu esimerkiksi matkailun hakupalveluista. Kaupunki lanseerasi tämän paluumuuttajajunan, mikä on maitojuna tai vastaava? Muistelen junia niin, miksei tätä voitaisi soveltaa myös tapahtumajärjestäjille? Miksei vastaavaa palvelua voisi tarjota heille, että voisivat kerätä osallistujat yhteen ja tuoda heidät tänne esimerkiksi

päiväksi aamujunalla ja palauttaa iltapäiväjunalla. Tämä voisi olla kaupungin tarjoama. Se voisi olla.

Henkilö A:

Sitten, jos siirrymme pois julkiselta sektorilta, miten näet yksityisen sektorin roolin kongressi- ja kokousmatkailun myynnin kehittämisessä? Entä jos puhumme siitä, mikä oli aiemmin mainittu julkisen sektorin roolista, niin mikä on mielestäsi yksityisen sektorin rooli? Jos julkinen sektori voi tarjota liidejä ja tuoda esille aluetta sekä tarjota tietoa, niin mitä muuta yksityinen sektori voisi tehdä?

Henkilö B:

Tietenkin he voivat myydä näitä palveluita ja tehdä konkreettista työtä, jotta asiakkaat todella tulisivat tänne alueelle. Eihän nämä palvelut pyöri itsestään täällä. Raha on se, mikä ohjaa yksityisen sektorin toimintaa. Ei se ehkä kuulosta hienolta, mutta se on totuus.

Henkilö A:

Entä jos pyrittäisiin ratkaisemaan haasteet ja varmistamaan ylipäättään yhteistyön toimivuus? Jos kaikki sitoutuisivat ja yhteistyö sujuisi saumattomasti, mitä olisi tehtävä? Tämä kynnys on varmasti yksi merkittävä tekijä. Useimmilla ei ole ollut helppoa, ja oma liiketoiminta on lähellä sydäntä. Mikä olisi mielestäsi ensimmäinen askel yhteistyön luomisessa, jotta voitaisiin poistaa se este, joka saattaa olla omassa mielessä? Mikä olisi ensimmäinen askel?

Henkilö B:

No, meidän pitäisi itse asiassa saada tänne niin suuri tapahtuma, että lähtisimme hakemaan sitä tälle alueelle. Mikä olisi semmoinen tapahtuma, joka sopisi tälle alueelle ja jonka kaikki toimijat voisivat tuoda yhteiseen pöytään? Olisi hyvä, jos kaikki toimijat voisivat istua alas ja miettiä, miten saamme tämän tapahtuman tänne. Tarvitaan konkreettisia ideoita. Ehkä tämä ei ole niin yksinkertaista, mutta mietin esimerkiksi talviuintikisoja. Ne olisi voitu saada tänne, mutta koronavirus sotki suunnitelmia. Mahdollisesti olisimme voineet toteuttaa sen

edelleen, mutta nyt on vaikeuksia löytää talkoolaisia. Tämä on yksi haaste, mutta olisi hienoa, jos meillä olisi iso tapahtuma, jossa kaikki näkisivät konkreettisen palkkion ja motivoituisivat osallistumaan. Meidän pitäisi ylittää henkilökohtainen intressi ja ymmärtää, että yhteistyöllä on paljon hyötyä. Ehkä voisimme miettiä jotain samanlaista, kuten Imatranajoja. Esimerkiksi Saimaan Cycling Tour, joo sen pienempi kun Imatranajot, mutta se voisi silti täyttää kaikki vaatimukset alueella. Kuitenkin yhteistyötä ei ole vielä syntynyt, koska jokainen ajattelee omasta näkökulmastaan, eikä yhteistyötä synny ilman kohteita. Lisäksi tarvitaan enemmän kuin pelkkiä pelipaikkoja. Joten olisiko mahdollista, että tapahtuma tarjoaa jotain, mitä kaikki tarvitsevat? En osaa heti keksiä sellaista tapahtumaa.

Henkilö A:

Hyvä huomio. Tämä osoittaa, että yhteistyö vaatii enemmän kuin vain passiivisen palvelun tarjoamista. Tarvitaan muitakin tekijöitä, jotta yhteistyö voi syntyä.

Henkilö A:

Joo joo, no sitten, aletaan lähestyä loppua kohden. Jos täältä sitten löytyisi sitä yhteistä tahtotilaa ja kaikilla olisi halua yhteistyöhön. Ei niin, että kaikilla olisi rahaa kuin roskaa, mutta jos kaikki olisivat sitoutuneita ja toimisivat yhdessä, niin miten kehittäisit alueellista yhteistyötä eteenpäin?

Henkilö B:

Tietysti, jos kaikki toteuttaisivat tasavallan säädöksiä ja kaikki noudattaisivat ohjeita. No, minä ehkä istuttaisin alueen asukkaita, päättäjiä ja toimijoita saman pöydän ääreen. Kysyisin, mitä he haluaisivat, miten he näkisivät alueen kehittämisen. Koska täällä ei yksinään kukaan oikeastaan menesty, niin alkaisimme rakentaa yhteistyötä. Ei kukaan yksinään pysty hoitamaan mitään tapahtumaa, oli se sitten kuinka pieni tahansa. ”Anna sen myynnin olla minun vastuullani”. Loppujen lopuksi kaikkein pienimmät yksityiskohdat hoituvat itse talon henkilökunnalta ja muilta toimijoilta. Heidän panoksensa on olennainen tapahtuman onnistumiselle. Osallistujille merkityksellistä on itse tapahtuma, ei niinkään se, kuka sen on järjestänyt. Tärkeää on, miten tapahtuma sujuu ja millainen kokemus osallistujille jää. Itse tapahtuma ratkaisee ja sen tarjoama kokonaisuus. Toimijoiden tulee selvittää, mitä osallistajat haluavat ja miten heitä voitaisiin parhaiten tukea ja auttaa. Yhteistyöllä voimme saavuttaa enemmän kuin yksin. Todennäköisesti toimin näin itsekini.

THESIS INTERVIEW HIGHLIGHTS – O3

Henkilö A:

Tästä vielä tämän haastattelun lisäksi laitan pari sellaista niin sanottua NS-kylmää kysymystä, joissa olisi niin kuin puhtaasti sitä, että mikä on teidän kokoustilojen kapasiteetti ja tällaiset, jotta me saamme sitten kerättyä semmoista alueellista kuvaa siitä, että paljonko kaupungissa ja alueella on niin kuin kokoustiloja ja palveluita. Tarjolla, just mutta en lähde sitä kysymää nyt, koska siitä on tylsää puhua, että meillä on neljä kokoushuonetta ja niin edelleen. Mutta, minkälainen teidän myyntiprosessi on, jos puhutaan yritysmyynnistä? Minkälainen prosessi teillä näiden edellä mainittujen pakettien osalta sitten on? Se on sitä vähän mainitsit aikaisemmin, että miten se kulkee teillä, mutta jos avaat sen vielä kokonaan alusta loppuun.

Henkilö B:

Yleensä asiakas on yhteydessä ja meidän myyntiorganisaatio hoitaa tätä. Meillä Jyväskylän alue koordinoi tätä Kaakkois-Suomen ja Itä-Suomen vai Keskisuomen kanssa, aika laaja alue siis. Ja he tekevät sitten tarjouksen asiakkaalle, ja siellä voi olla kysyttävää. Koska ohjelmassanne on kaiken näköisiä haasteita, kysymyksiä tulee matkalla. Monesti sitten vielä saattavat kysellä meiltäkin jotakin, jotta voimme tarkemmin kertoa. Siitä he tekevät tarjouksen, ja sitten he huolehtivat siitä, että saavatko kontaktin asiakkaaseen noin viikon sisällä, jotta voimme saada tietoa siitä, vahvistetaanko se vai tarvitaanko lisätietoa tai jotain muuta.

Henkilö A:

Eli teidän työprosessinne alkaa siis kontaktista ja markkinoinnista, ja se kulkee teillä sitten ketjun kautta ylemmältä. Ja miten sitten, kun tapahtuma on tehty ja hoidettu, lähteekö teiltä vai ketjulta jotain jälkimarkkinointiin tai palautetta?

Henkilö B:

Kyllä, se lähtee paikallisesti meiltä.

Henkilö A:

Joo, ja no, tässä, jos tämä prosessi on tällainen, niin mikä on teillä tällä hetkellä suurin haaste siinä ketjussa tai prosessissa?

Henkilö B:

No, se prosessi niin mun mielestä menee aika hyvin tällä erää. Tota, mitä me eniten koen, niin mä oikeastaan menen sitten niin kuin tähän alueeseen, johon me sijoitumme. Mie ja monta kertaa tulee muualtakin myyjiltä tietoa, että Imatraa kysytään ihan hirveän vähän.

Henkilö A:

Mistä tämä nyt johtuu? Ei ollut tässä kysymyksessä näin. Mistä sä luulet, että se johtuu?

Henkilö B:

Kulkuyhteydet, että meidän täytyy erikseen tulla tänne. Ei ole niin kuin minkään matkan varrella. Se on semmoinen haaste, että monet yritykset yrittävät etsiä vähän keskeisempiä paikkoja.

Henkilö A:

Olemme suhteellisen pieni alue, mutta meillä on harvinaisen paljon toimijoita tässä. Miten kuvailisit tai miten näet yhteistyön tilanteen tällä hetkellä alueen toimijoiden kesken sekä kaupungin kanssa?

Henkilö B:

Ihan hyvällä mallilla, että, mitä yhteyksiä tarvitaan, niin aina saamme vastauksia. Monesti saamme myös palvelua, joten kyllä siellä on molemminpuolista yhteistyötä.

Henkilö A:

Löytyy, jes. Sitten täällä, meillä on tuotteita sekä julkisella että yksityisellä sektorilla. Itse edustan julkista sektoria, niin miten näet julkisen sektorin roolin kongressi- ja kokousmatkailun myynnissä tai sen kehittämisessä alueellisesti? Mitä kaupungin mielestä pitäisi tehdä tässä hommassa?

Henkilö B:

No kyllähän se aina kun mitä kaupungissa järjestää isompia tapahtumia, niin kyllähän se niin kun satelee hyvää kaikille alueen toimijoille, ei pelkästään hotelleille ravintoloille vaan myös sitten näille erilaisille. Jotka antavat sitten muuta oheistuotteiden palveluja niin. Kyse on siitä, että meillä on muutamia hyviä tapahtumia, jotka niinkuin täyttävät aina hyvin koko kaupungin. Sitten kun se tapahtuma on päällä. Mutta tietysti jos niitä vielä vähän enemmän saisi. Eli kaupunki voisi houkutella lisää tapahtumia mieleensä, se olisi hyvä.

Henkilö A:

No mikäs se sitten se yksityisen sektorin rooli samassa hommassa on, että jos kaupungin tehtävänä olisi houkutella isoja tapahtumia ja mahdollistaa niiden toiminta, ne mitä yksityisen sektorin pitäisi tehdä? Joko myynnillisesti tai kehityksellisesti.

Henkilö B:

Se ehkä se oli toinen, mikä oli mitä en osaa sanoa kyllä suoraan, mutta. kai se semmoinen kaiken kaikkiaan niin kun. Ihmiset ovat kuitenkin verkostoituneet eri eri tavoin niin että niinkuin kun saataisiin sitä että niinkuin kaikki vähän niin kuin riittäisi vetämään niin kuin kotiin päin eli sitten saataisiin tänne meille niitä tapahtumia ja kokouksia ja niin että saataisiin tänne että kaikki se on kaikkien tehtävä, ei pelkästään tehdä mutta se on hyvä toi.

Henkilö A:

Niinku omien verkostojen hyödyntäminen siihen ja sen positiivisen mielikuvan ylläpito ja sen viestin levittäminen. Joo se on tosi hyvä. Ja ihan totta. No sitten täällähän on ollut nämä isot tapahtumat, ne ovat tietysti yksi esimerkki noista yhteistyöprojekteista, mutta osaatko kertoa esimerkin jostain toisesta alueellisesta yhteistyöprojektista, mikä olisi mennyt hyvin.

Henkilö B:

Tältä. Tota niin. Tapahtuma, kokous- ja kongressimatkailun tiimoilta. On ollut viime kesänäkin oli yksi isompi semmoinen tota kongressi, mikä täytti useamman eri hotellin, niin olivat siinä oli matkanjärjestäjä vielä sitten siinä välissä, joka sitten koordinoi ne että että kun mitkä kokoontuivat missäkin että meillä oli joku myyntipuoli siitä isosta kansainvälisestä yrityksestä niin. Tällaiset ovat tosi hienoja, kun meillä voidaan saada että siellä toisalla taisi olla se pääpaikka, mutta että siitä tuli sitten matka muualle ja meillekin jotakin meiltä. Viime kesänä oli yksi isompi kongressi, joka täytti useamman eri hotellin. Siinä oli matkanjärjestäjä välissä, koordinoimassa, kun kokoontumiset tapahtuivat eri paikoissa. Meillä oli myös myyntipuoli mukana, ison kansainvälisen yrityksen edustaja. Tällaiset tapahtumat ovat tosi hienoja, kun voimme tarjota jonkun muun kautta pääpaikan tapahtumalle. Lisäksi mukana oli useampi toimija ja meiltäkin jotain tarjottavaa. Semmoiset ovat ihan kivoja juttuja. Siinä oli erityisesti se, että oli yksi ulkopuolinen järjestäjä mukana. Kyllä, se on hyvä lisä. Myös kaikki muu, mitä täällä kaupungissa tapahtuu, kuten golfin ja teatterin kanssa tekeminen, on ollut hyvin hedelmällistä.

Henkilö A:

Jos pitäisi tiivistää, mitkä niistä ovat olleet hyviä esimerkkejä, mikä on tehnyt ne hyviksi? Mikä on ollut ratkaiseva tekijä niiden onnistumisessa?

Henkilö B:

Se on ehdottomasti aito yhteistyö molemmiin puolin. Sen täytyy olla avointa yhteistyötä, ei vain yksisuuntaista ohjaamista. Aito avoimuus on avainasia.

Henkilö A:

Jos lähdetään nyt sinulla on kokemusta sekä onnistuneista että myös vähän eri tavalla menneistä yhteistyöprojekteista, mitkä asiat pitää ottaa huomioon hyvissä ajoin, että varmistetaan onnistunut yhteistyö, varsinkin kun mukana on isoja toimijoita omien liiketoimintojensa kanssa?

Henkilö B:

Tärkeää on, ettei synny epätasapainoa. Roolit ja vastuut on selkeät, tiedetään missä mennään, ja aikataulut pitää. Järjestelmällinen aikatauluissa pysyminen, avoin viestintä ja vastuutuksen jakaminen ovat keskeistä.

Henkilö A:

Mitkä ovat ne riskit ja haasteet, joihin yhteistyöprojekteissa voi kompastua?

Henkilö B:

Tulee mieleen, että joskus suurten tapahtumien potti pitää jakaa monen tahon kesken, ja jos jokin ei toteudukaan, joku saattaa jäädä tappiolle. Lisäksi aikataulut voivat olla epärealistisia tai luvatut tuotot voivat jäädä saavuttamatta. Toisaalta myös epäselvät aikataulut voivat aiheuttaa ongelmia.

THESIS INTERVIEW HIGHLIGHTS – O4

Henkilö A:

Eli teillä ei suoranaisesti varmaan ole omia tuotteita myynnissä kongresseja tai kokousmyyntiä varten. Työnne liittyy kuitenkin käytännössä enemmän markkinointiin ja näiden tuotteiden markkinoimiseen. Voisitteko kertoa, millaisia tuotteita teillä on tarjolla tai miten näette alueen päätuotteet tässä liiketoiminnassa?

Henkilö B:

No, tällä hetkellä suoranainen kongressimatkailu ja ylipäättään tämä kokousmatkailu eivät ole meidän ykkösasioitamme. Me keskitymme enemmän matkanjärjestäjäyhteistyöhön ja sitä kautta ryhmämatkailuun. Vaikka meillä on loistavia tuotteita tarjolla Etelä-Karjalan alueella, niin kongressi- ja kokousmyynti eivät ole meidän päätavoitteitamme. Alueellamme on kuitenkin hyviä paikkoja, joissa voi järjestää erilaisia kongresseja ja tapahtumia. Suurimmat yhteistyökumppanimme tässä olisivat, jos järjestys olisi mainittava, Yritykset x ja y molemmat toimipisteet sekä Imatralla että Lappeenrannassa. Luonnollisesti Yritys z on meille erittäin tärkeä yhteistyökumppani, mutta molemmilla kaupungeilla on myös omia ainutlaatuisia ideoita ja tiloja. Käytännössä meidän salkussa on kaikenlaista tarjolla, mutta emme edistä kongressi- ja kokousmyyntiä yhtä aktiivisesti kuin olisimme voineet tehdä. Olemme aikaisemmin hoitanut täällä Karjalassa kongressi- ja kokousmyyntiä ja markkinointia. Tämä vastuu oli vuosina 2014–2017, jos muistan oikein. Päivittäin tätä osa-aluetta on aktiivisesti edistetty. Tällä hetkellä teemme tiivistä yhteistyötä myös näiden ostajien ja varaajien kanssa. Tavoitteenamme on lisätä tietoisuutta siitä, mitä kaikkea meillä on tarjolla, ja olla vahvasti mukana kaikissa ryhmämyyntitapahtumissa ja -tilaisuuksissa. Lisäksi olemme mukana kehitysprosessissa, jossa maisema- ja ulkomaanmatkailu ovat painopisteinä. Suomalainen matkailukomponentti puuttuu vielä tästä prosessista.

Henkilö A:

Kyllä, sehän oli vahdittu nokkelasti tuonne seuraavaan kysymykseen. Eli tähän B-osaan myyntiprosessin teidän osalta ja mainitsit näitä. Tiivistätte yhteistyötä tilaajien ja matkanjärjestäjien kanssa. Mutta jos sen pilkkoo sen prosessin ihan palasiksi, niin minkälainen se teillä on tämä?

Henkilö B:

No, jos lähdetään koko prosessi niin kuin alkumetreiltä. Ensin tulee kehote tai tieto, että on jonkinlainen tapahtuma, esimerkiksi mihin voitaisiin osallistua. Sitten mietimme, onko se meidän strategian mukainen tapahtuma ja jos on, niin analysoiden kohderyhmä siellä, tutustumme osallistujiin ja aletaan ostaa. Näillä on yksi yksi lailla tota. Samantyyppinen alkuprosessi kuin prosessien kanssa, mutta joka tapauksessa niin tuossa tai että tehdään niin kuin taustatyö selvitetään, ketä kaikki siellä on, minkälaiset tuotteet heitä kiinnostavat.

Sitten sen jälkeen luodaan meidän myyntisalku sen mukaan, mitä ollaan edellisessä vaiheessa löydetty. Eli katsotaan, onko esimerkiksi ostaja, joka on kiinnostunut erityisesti ma-

joituskapasiteetista tai tiloista tai vaikka aktiviteeteista ja ohjelmapalveluista. Yleisesti ottaen tuomme koko salkun tietoisuuteen, mutta jos tiedämme tarkkaan, että juuri tämä henkilö on kiinnostunut vaikkapa tiloista, joissa voisi järjestää puoluekokouksen, niin tartumme siihen ja kerromme, millaisia tiloja meillä on tarjolla.

Keskustelun kautta autamme heitä löytämään parhaan vaihtoehdon. Käytännössä yhteistyö katkeaa, kun meidän rooli päättyy ja ohjaamme heidät eteenpäin. Esimerkiksi hintatiedot tai muut tiedot, joita tarvitaan, tulevat esille. Kokonaisvaltaisen asiakaskokemuksen muodos-
tamisen kannalta tämä on erittäin tärkeää ja vaatii panostusta ja kehittämistä.

Asiakkaan polku voi muodostaa ongelmia ja riskejä, jos sitä ei hoideta mallikkaasti ja kun-
nolla. Asiakas saattaa jäädä väliin, jos prosessi ei toimi, ja tämä voi vaikuttaa kielteisesti
maineeseen. Meidän vastuumme päättyy siihen, kun olemme antaneet yhteystiedot. Toisi-
naan kysymme, onko asia edennyt, mutta jos vastaus on negatiivinen, emme voi juurikaan
vaikuttaa tilanteeseen. Tässä on suurin ongelma. Me emme voi päättää asiakaspolkua,
vaan prosessi siirtyy eteenpäin meidän kohdaltamme. En pysty varmistamaan, miten asi-
akkaan polku päättyy ja mitä tapahtuu sen jälkeen.

Henkilö A:

Ymmärrän täysin, koska tilanteemme on samankaltainen. Meillä ei ole mahdollisuutta tehdä
myyntiä vaan luotamme, että kun asiakas siirtyy eteenpäin varsinaisiin operaattoreiden
myyntiprosesseihin, asiat hoituvat. Meillä ei ole tietoa siitä, mitä siellä tapahtuu.

Henkilö B:

Kyllä, itse asiassa tässä on niin, että tässä on iso ongelma. Luottamus on hyvä kontrolli. On
parempi, ettet lupaa mitään, jos et tiedä varmasti, että voit lunastaa lupauksen. Olet voinut
myydä ajatuksen siitä, että asiat hoidetaan kuntoon täällä. Jos esimerkiksi kävisi niin, että
prosessi keskeytyy tai joku ei ole mukana, se vaikuttaa meidän ja myös sinun organisaation
maineeseen. Riskienhallinnan näkökulmasta tämä prosessi on ongelmallinen ja riskialtis, ja
vaatii huolellisuutta.

Henkilö B:

Valitettavasti tilanne voi olla ikävä. Totta puhuen tämä on erittäin ongelmallista. Me olemme julkisia ja tietyllä tavalla rajoitettuja tekemään työtä puolestasi. Jos jotain tapahtuu, syyllinen unohdetaan usein. Me tuomme kysyntää, heidän vastuullaan on tehdä myyntiä. Elävä esimerkki: olemme tuoneet potentiaalisia asiakkaita, mutta palveluntarjoajien vastaukset ovat vaihdelleet. Jotkut lupaavat tulla, mutta eivät ilmesty. Miten voimme kehittää matkailumyyntiä ammattimaista puolta, jos yritykset, jotka ovat asiakasrajapinnassa, eivät hoida tehtäväänsä? Anteeksi, olen ärtyisä, mutta on perjantai.

Henkilö A:

Kyllä, mutta nyt siirrytään takaisin aiheeseen. Puhuimme suurimmista myyntiprosessien haasteista, ja olemme myös käyneet sen läpi. Istut käytännössä suurimman yhteistyön päällä, mitä tällä alueella tehdään. Ehkä tässä ilmenee joitain ongelmia, mutta miten näet yleisesti alueen yhteistyön, erityisesti tapahtumayhteistyön toimijoiden kesken?

Henkilö B:

Kyllä, totta. Alueellamme on todella paljon kongressi- ja kokousmatkailua. Tämä ei kuitenkaan aina kulje kokonaisuudessaan meidän kauttamme, joten otin etäisyyttä tuohon kokonaisuuteen. Palatakseni sinun kysymykseesi.

Henkilö A:

Niin, juu, tietenkin.

Henkilö B:

Mun mielestä erittäin hyvä pohja ja suunta meillä on tällä hetkellä hyvä. Kuten mainitsit, meillä on suuri yhteistyöverkosto. Meitä on 70 aktiivista matkailualan yrittäjää. Nämä yrittäjät ovat tärkeitä yhteistyökumppaneita. Näen, että olemme lähteneet pitkälle tielle heidän kanssaan. Työskentelemme yhdessä tuotekehityksessä, verkostoitumisessa ja yhteistyön edistämisessä. Alussa tilanne oli toinen. Vain muutama yrittäjä teki yhteistyötä. Meidän täytyi ohjata heitä toistensa luo ja kannustaa yhteistyöhön. Tämä on ollut määrätietoista työtä.

Nyt yrittäjät ymmärtävät, että yhteistyö voi synnyttää uusia matkailutuotteita jaettujen kustannusten ja riskien kautta.

On kuitenkin huomattavaa, että alueella on vielä jonkin verran "omassa hiekkalaatikossa leikkimistä". Jotkut eivät vielä ymmärrä, että erilaiset kohderyhmät ja ikäryhmät tarvitsevat erilaisia palveluita, ja tämä pitäisi ottaa huomioon. Lappeenrannan ja Imatran välillä on eroja. Imatralla yhteistyö yrittäjien ja aluetoimijoiden välillä on sujuvampaa, koska siellä on innostunutta ja yhteistyöhaluista porukkaa. Tavoitteenamme on tiivistää yhteistyötä entisestään ja toimia yhteistyöalustana.

Henkilö A:

Puhuit myös julkisen ja yksityisen sektorin rooleista. Koska meillä alueella on aktiivisia toimijoita molemmissa sektoreissa, ja itse edustan julkista sektoria, miten näet julkisen sektorin roolit kongressi- ja kokousmatkailun kehittämisessä ja myynnissä? Mitä julkisen sektorin tulisi tehdä tällaisessa tilanteessa?

Henkilö B:

Jos lähdetään purkamaan kunnallisen organisaation velvoitteita ja kunnan toimintaa, niin kuntalain mukaan julkisen sektorin tehtävänä on varmistaa kuntalaisten palvelut. Vaikka kunnalla ei ole pakko osallistua kongressi- ja kokousmatkailun kehittämiseen ja myyntiin, sen on kuitenkin pidettävä alue elinvoimaisena ja houkuttelevana. Erityisen tärkeää on huolehtia pitovoimasta, sillä alueelta lähtevät ihmiset vähentävät verotuloja, mikä voi aiheuttaa haasteita.

Kunnan ja kaupungin rooli tässä tilanteessa on siis nousemassa merkittäväksi. Julkisen sektorin tehtävänä on luoda vireä ja kiinnostava ympäristö, joka houkuttelee ihmisiä ja pitää alueen elinvoimaisena. Vaikka kunnan ei ole lakisääteisesti pakko osallistua, sen tulisi silti panostaa toimintaan, joka ylläpitää alueen vetovoimaa.

Julkisen sektorin rooli kongressi- ja kokousmatkailun kehittämisessä ja myynnissä on toimia alustana ja mahdollistajana yksityiselle sektorille. Kunnan tehtävänä voi olla esimerkiksi tilojen tarjoaminen ja ylläpito sekä verkoston ylläpitäminen ja vuoropuhelun edistäminen. Julkisen sektorin tulee myös huolehtia omista tiloistaan ja palveluistaan sekä varmistaa, että alueella on toimiva verkosto ja asiakaslähtöiset palvelut.

Yhteenvedona, julkisen sektorin rooli on mahdollistaa ja ylläpitää yhteistyötä ja kehittämistä sekä varmistaa alueen houkuttelevuus ja elinvoima. Yksityisen sektorin rooli tulee sitten astumaan esiin kehittämällä ja myymällä matkailutuotteita ja kongressipalveluita.

Henkilö A:

Kiitos selventävästä vastauksesta. Jatketaan sitten toiselta puolelta eli yksityisen sektorin roolista.

Henkilö B:

Yksityisen sektorin rooli on erittäin tärkeä tässä prosessissa. Yritysten on katsottava peiliin ja otettava vastuu omista tehtävistään ja toimistaan. Yksityisen ja julkisen sektorin välinen symbioosi on ratkaisevan tärkeä. Esimerkiksi Oulussa Eden-hotelli jäätiin rannan varrelle seisomaan tyhjiillään, koska se ei saavuttanut tarvittavaa tasoa palveluiden tarjoamisessa ja asiakastyytyväisyydessä. Tässä on kyse siitä, että yksityisen sektorin on hoidettava omat tehtävänsä hyvin, jotta yhteistyö julkisen sektorin kanssa voi toimia.

Yhteistyössä on siis varmistettava, että palvelut ovat oikealla tasolla ja vastaavat asiakkaiden tarpeisiin. Yksityisten toimijoiden on myös työskenneltävä yhdessä julkisen sektorin kanssa, jotta voimme tarjota oikeanlaista palvelutarjontaa ja myydä sitä tehokkaasti. Onnistunut yhteistyö edellyttää siis molempien sektorien aktiivista osallistumista ja vastuunkantoa.

Henkilö A:

Nuo oli hyviä hyviä, sitten jälleen kerran taas, olit vähän edellä, mutta tämä ei ollut kysymyksissä. Mikä yhdistää noita onnistuneita projekteja, niin mikä yhteinen piirre niissä on ollut? Pystytkö tunnistamaan sellaista?

Henkilö B:

Nyt kun kysyt, tajusin itsekin. Vaikka syötteitä tuli eri paikoista, ohjaimet olivat yhdessä paikassa. Eli kokonaisuutta pidettiin yhdessä paikassa yhdessä käsissä.

Henkilö A:

Ja sitten eteenpäin, että jos olet tuossa positiossa missä olet, niin varmasti olet havainnut. Tai uskon, että sinulla on tähän ehkä selkeä vastaus, kun lähdetään tekemään tällaista isoa yhteistyöprojektia, joka menee yli rajojen ja organisaatioiden, niin mikä siinä on tärkeintä ottaa huomioon, että saadaan nämä kaikki osapuolet sitoutumaan tällaiseen yhteistyöhön?

Henkilö B:

Jokainen yleensä. Minä myös usein ikävä kyllä ajattelee omasta näkövinkkelistä asioita ja kulkee omat laput silmillä. Miten siellä saat yleensä kaikki sitoutumaan prosessiin? Tunnistamalla heidän omat intressit ja varmistamalla, että se on myös heidän kanssaan. Eli käytännössä, jos haluat kytkeä johonkin prosessiin organisaation, joka ei välttämättä hyödy siitä, niin se tulee sitoutumaan millään lailla. Kun organisaatio tulee Etelä-Karjalassa liian monimutkaiseksi. Se on henkilökohtainen mielipiteeni, ja olemme edelleen sitä mieltä ja tulen jatkossakin olemaan. Meitä on liikaa, jokainen haara omassa sfäärissään, jokainen tekee omia strategioitaan mukaisesti, organisaatio katsoo omaa strategiaansa, omaa budjettiaan ja omia toimenpiteitään ja omia tehtäviään ja jos se tehtävälistaus. Budjetti ei vastaa sitä, mitä sinulla oli mielessä tehdä isompana kokonaisuutena yli organisaatorajojen. Siihen, miten saa sitoutumaan muita organisaatioita mukaan.

Henkilö A:

Kyllä hyvin vastattu, ja vasta sitten myös seuraavaan kysymykseen. Tämä on hyvä perinne sinulla, koska seuraava kysymys olisi kysynyt siitä, että mitkä ovat suurimmat riskit näissä yhteistyöprojekteissa. Mutta se on käytännössä ja vasta sitten siihen, että juuri se, että jos ihmiset eivät koe siitä hyötyä, niin he eivät sitoudu siihen, ja se riski on, että haasteita on siitä, että on liikaa organisaatioita, jotka jokainen tuijottavat omia rajoitteitaan ja eivät näe yhteistyön hyötyä, ellei se osu heidän papereihinsa.

Henkilö B:

Ja vielä yksi lisättävä kokonaisuus: vuorovaikutus ja tiedonvälitys. Jälleen kerran palatakseeni siihen, että organisaatioita on liikaa. Tieto ei kulje riittävän hyvin. Siis edelleen tieto ei kulje riittävän hyvin, vaikka olen saarnannut tätä jo kohta varmaan seitsemän vuotta. Mutta ihan oikeasti oikea käsi ei tiedä, mitä vasen tekee, joten se aiheuttaa myös isoja riskejä kolmansien osapuolten suhteen. Ei kauempaa kuin eilen kuuntelin erään kansainvälisen matkanjärjestäjän puheenvuoroa, kun edistämme ryhmämatkailua. Meillä on yhteistyökumppaneita Saksassa nyt, ja tämä matkanjärjestäjä kertoi esimerkin: 30 huoneen ryhmä

eli bussilastillinen saksalaisia matkailijoita saapui Suomeen pohjoiseen. Sitten he ilmestyvät siihen hotelliin, joka oli heidän yhteistyökumppaninsa, ja sen piti olla kaikki kunnossa ja asiat mallillaan. Mutta kun ryhmä saapui, kävi ilmi, että koko hotelli oli remontissa. Kaikki oli auki, ikkunoita ei pystynyt avaamaan, ja sitten asiakkaat pettyneinä soittavat matkanjärjestäjälle ja sanovat, että mikä tämä on. Tämä sankari ei ole meille sanonut mitään, kun meillä ei ollut tietoa siitä, että meidät oli pistetty tähän. Tällaiset riskit ovat olemassa ja suuret. Jos emme tiedä, mitä toiset tekevät.

Henkilö A:

Hyvä. Jos taivaalta sataisi mannaa ja resurssit olisivat rajattomat ja kukaan ei koskaan sanoisi sinulle ei, niin miten kehittäisit alueellista yhteistyötä?

Henkilö B:

Joo no. No sitten siinä tapauksessa, jos minä olisin päässyt pelastamaan Etelä-Karjalan, niin olisin purkanut ylimääräiset organisaatiot. Olisin rakentanut yhden vahvan organisaation, joka olisi pystynyt toimimaan yli toiminta-alueen. Olisin antanut sille resursseja tehdä konkreettisia markkinointi- ja myyntitoimenpiteitä. Pistänyt ihmisiä laukkaamaan ympäri matkanjärjestäjien toimistoja. Aidosti hankkinut myyntihenkilön, ei yksi vaan monta, jokaisella oma vastuualue. Jos halutaan olla ammattimaisia, aikuisia, tarvitaan vahva asiakashallintaprosessi. Meillä on c-järjestelmä, mihin kirjataan keskustelut, jotta tiedetään, kun ihminen vaihtuu, missä jäädään. Jos resurssit olisivat rajattomat, olisin tehnyt yhden myyjän, joka hoitaisi kongressia ja kokousmatkailua. Yksi hoitaisi sviittejä, keskittyisi matkanjärjestäjäyhteistyöhön. Sitten ryhmämyynnistä vastaava henkilö, kullakin omat kohdemaat. Mikä edistäisi? Puhutaan matkailusta. Vahva yritysten yhteistyön rakentaminen. Lähtenyt yrityksiä vetämään hihasta oikeaan suuntaan. Jos on pohjaton resurssi, jaettu rahaa, investoitu omiin tuotteisiin. Vahvistettu yhteistyötä Visit Finlandin ja muiden toimijoiden kanssa. Monet tasot. En näe Lappeenrantaa ja Imatraa erillisinä. Lappeenranta ja Imatra ovat yksi, Lappeenranta, Imatra, pienet kunnat, kaikki. Olemme osa yhtä kokonaisuutta. Olemme vahvasti osa Saimaan verkostoa ja Lake Landia. Meidän pitää löytää isosti. Jos Kiinasta katsotaan, Lappeenranta on pisara meressä. Imatra on pisara meressä. Yksinään ei tule olemaan riittävän mielenkiintoinen, että tulisivat sen perässä.

THESIS INTERVIEW HIGHLIGHTS – O5

Henkilö A:

Koska sinun tekemä myynti kohdistuu erityisesti yrityksiin eikä kuluttajiin, voitko kertoa myyntiprosessistanne alusta loppuun?

Henkilö B:

Yleensä kaupat syntyvät niin, että asiakas lähettää tarjouspyynnön meille. Suuremmat tapahtumat tulevat usein suoraan minulle tai myyntipalvelun kautta. Sen jälkeen teemme tarjouksen asiakkaalle, ja useimmiten tarjous hyväksytään. Isompien tapahtumien osalta olen yhteyshenkilönä ja hoidan kaiken käytännön aina loppuun saakka. Pienemmissä tapahtumissa myyntipalvelu hoitaa enemmän. Tämä tarkoittaa, että heidän kanssaan ei välttämättä ole omaa yhteyshenkilöä asiakkaalle, erityisesti viikonloppuisin. Isompien tapahtumien suunnittelu voi kestää pidempään, ja se päättyy yleensä nimilistojen vastaanottamiseen muutama päivä ennen tapahtumaa. Uusiasiakashankinnassa käytämme erilaisia mainoskeinoja, kuten kokousten markkinointia ja uutiskirjeitä sekä puhelinsoittoja.

Henkilö A:

Kyllä, hyvin kattavasti kerroit siitä. Sitten kun tapahtuma on suunniteltu ja toteutettu onko teillä myynnin jälkeen jotain jatkotoimenpiteitä, kuten jälkimarkkinointia?

Henkilö B:

Kyllä, toki. Erityisesti isompien tapahtumien osalta ja melkein pä pienempienkin tapahtumien jälkeen meillä on mahdollisuuksia parantaa asiakaspalvelua. Monet tapahtumat toistuvat vuosittain, joten tämä tarjoaa mahdollisuuden pitää yhteyttä asiakkaisiin. Erityisesti keskustelemme yritysten ja yhdistysten kanssa, kuinka palvelumme sujui ja kuuntelemme palautetta. Yritämme luoda tervetullutta ilmapiiriä ja varmistaa, että palvelumme vastaa odotuksia. Jos on ollut ongelmia, yritämme ratkaista ne ja otamme myös positiivista palautetta vastaan.

Henkilö A:

Ymmärrän, jälkimarkkinoinnin merkitys on selvä. Onko teillä prosessissa erityisiä haasteita, joihin haluaisitte panostaa tai parantaa?

Henkilö B:

Kyllä, ehkäpä juuri niiden pienempien tapahtumien osalta, joita meillä on runsaasti. Olisi tärkeää saada jokaiselta asiakkaalta palautetta siitä, miten tapahtuma sujui, ja osoittaa kiinnostusta heidän tarpeisiinsa myös jälkikäteen. Erityisesti pienissä kokouskaupoissa tarvitaan enemmän jälkihoitoa ja jälkimarkkinointia.

Henkilö A:

Siirrytäänpä seuraavaan aiheeseen, eli yhteistyöhön muiden toimijoiden kanssa alueellanne. Voisitko kuvailla nykyistä yhteistyötänne muiden toimijoiden, kuten meidän kaltaisten yritysten, vertaistoimijoiden tai alihankkijoiden kanssa? Voit lähteä kertomaan tästä aiheesta vapaasti.

Henkilö B:

Kyllä, toki. Me teemme yhteistyötä monenlaisten toimijoiden kanssa. Esimerkiksi teattereiden kanssa meillä on teatteripaketteja. Golfkenttien kanssa puolestaan tarjoamme golfpaketteja. Kokouspalveluiden osalta teemme yhteistyötä esimerkiksi yritys B:n kanssa, joka hoitaa tekniikkaa suurempiin tapahtumiin. Meillä on myös alihankkijoita, kuten Imatran matkailuoppaat, jotka tarjoavat opastettuja kierroksia. Myös Yritys X on yhteistyökumppanimme. Teemme myös yhteistyötä teattereiden ja golfkenttien kanssa, esimerkiksi tarjoamalla yhdistettyjä paketteja, joissa asiakkaat voivat valita erilaisia palveluita. Tämä kaikki on tietysti säädelty prosenttiperiaatteella, ja monet asiakkaat voivat keskustella suoraan näiden toimijoiden kanssa. Laskutus ja maksut hoidetaan erikseen.

Henkilö A:

Selvä, teette siis paljon alihankinnassa yhteistyötä erilaisten paikallisten toimijoiden kanssa.

Henkilö A:

Niin, niin semmoista se on.

Henkilö A:

Totta, ja yhteistyötä syntyy luonnostaan isojen tapahtumien kautta.

Henkilö B:

Kyllä, tarkalleen.

Henkilö A:

No, mennäänpäs eteenpäin. Puhuinkin meidän toimialastamme, joten puhutaan hieman yleisemmin. Miten näet kaupungin tai julkisen sektorin roolin kokous- ja kongressimatkojen kehittämisessä? Mitä heidän pitäisi tehdä tai keskittyä?

Henkilö B:

Kaupungilla voisi olla hyvä olla henkilö, joka käy tapaamassa erilaisia tapahtumajärjestäjiä, kuten puolueita, jotka suunnittelevat isompia tapahtumia alueelle. Tämä auttaisi yhteydenpidossa ja tiedonvälityksessä suurista tapahtumista, joita suunnitellaan vuosia etukäteen. Näin kaupunki voisi tarjota majoituskapasiteettia ja muita palveluita tarpeen mukaan. Yksittäisen yrityksen on vaikeampi tehdä tällaista henkilökohtaista yhteydenpitoa. Toki voimme pyytää asiakkaitamme olemaan yhteydessä, mutta kaupunki voisi tehdä sen systemaattisemmin ja suunnitella tätä kokonaisuutta. Mainonta ei varmasti tällaisista tavoista, mutta henkilökohtaiset tapaamiset ja kontaktit olisi varmasti hyviä.

Henkilö A:

Kun mainittiin nämä kaksi hyvää yhteistyöprojektia, niin osaatko sanoa mikä on semmonen tekijä oli niissä mikä teki niistä hyvän projektin?

Henkilö B:

No, vaikea sanoa yhtä selvää tekijää, mutta erityisesti puoluekokouksen tapauksessa, siellä oli erinomaiset työntekijät, vaikka he vaihtuvat usein, niin keskustan päässä oli osaavia ihmisiä hoitamassa asioita. Heillä oli selvästi kokemusta suurten tapahtumien järjestämisestä, mikä auttoi onnistumaan. Kokemus on osoittanut, että on eri asia tehdä yhteistyötä sellaisen henkilön kanssa, joka on aiemmin järjestänyt vastaavia tapahtumia. Samaten jälkipuinti sujui paremmin, koska tällaisen henkilön kanssa on helpompi käydä läpi sekä positiivista että negatiivista palautetta, koska isoissa tapahtumissa aina tulee valitusta.

Henkilö A:

Kyllä, jos lähtökohtaisesti teistä lähtee liikkeelle sellainen tilanne, että majoitusta tarvitaan tuolta, tuolta ja tuolta, ja tarvitaan myös alihankkijoilta tätä, tätä ja tätä. Jotta varmistetaan homman sujuminen ja kaikkien osallistuminen siihen, mikä on mielestäsi se tärkein toimenpide siinä?

Henkilö B:

No ainakin siinä pitäisi olla joku, jolla on vetovastuu. Ja olisi hyvä olla sellainen tiimi. Esimerkiksi, kun teimme niitä keissejä Henkilön x kautta, ne olivat usein seniorisporttien leirejä. Niistä oli Teams-palaveri, jossa näki kaikki osapuolet. Kuka meillä oli mukana ja kuka mistäkin oli mukana, ja lisäksi oli vielä järjestävä osapuoli.

Henkilö A:

Ymmärrän.

Henkilö B:

Niin, se on niin. Kun tapaamme toisemme. Ja sitten on tietysti, jos on jokin isompi tilanne, kuten tuossa senioriurheilussa, kun meillä oli se tiimi. Sen jälkeen järjestävä osapuoli laittoivat yhteenvedon siitä, missä homma nyt oli, mitä sovittiin ja kuka tekee mitäkin jatkossa. Näin meillä kaikilla on paljon asioita yhtä aikaa, joten kun siirrymme seuraavaan vaiheeseen, tarvitaan jonkinlaista selkeyttä.

Henkilö A:

Kyllä, eli selkeät roolit ja vastuut, hyvä tiedonvaihto ja tiedon tallentaminen automaattisesti, jotta kaikki tietävät, missä mennään.

Henkilö B:

Juuri niin.

Henkilö A:

Tai ehkä ei välttämättä aiheuttaa ongelmia, mutta mitkä voisivat olla ongelmakohtia? Onko sinulla kokemusta? Puhuttiin hyvistä onnistumisista ja siitä, mitkä tekijät ovat edistäneet onnistumista. Mietin, vastapuolelta katsottuna, mikä voisi tehdä yhteistyöstä vaikeaa. Onko olemassa sellaisia tekijöitä?

Henkilö B:

Viime aikoina ei oikeastaan. Joskus saattaa esiintyä yksittäisiä asioita, kuten vaikkapa tapahtuma, joka on kaukana tulevaisuudessa. Olisi suotavaa, että kaupunki olisi tehnyt päätöksiä, esimerkiksi koskinäytöksistä, koska se voi olla merkittävä asia. Ehkä ei tällaisissa liittokokouksissa, mutta jos esimerkiksi jonkun liiton seniorit pyytävät tarjousta tapahtumasta, joka on 2 vuoden tai jopa vuoden päässä, ja heidän tarkoituksenaan on nähdä koskinäytös. Jos emme pysty kertomaan, onko sellainen mahdollista vai ei, he saattavat hakeutua muualle. Tämä tapahtui kerran, kun keskusteltiin yhdessä infossa. He olivat jo pidemmällä suunnittelussa tänä kesänä huomattavasti aikaisemmin.

Henkilö A:

Mutta joo, tuo oli hyviä pointteja. No jos sitten tämmöistä yhteistyötä tehdään tai on yhteistyöprojekteja tai olkoon sitten vaikka isompi tapahtuma, tai mikä vaan, niin mitkä ne ovat ne onnistumisen mittarit? Millä teidän puoleltanne mitataan onnistumisia siinä, että miten tällainen yhteistyöhanke on onnistunut?

Henkilö B:

No, tietysti mittareita ovat asiakastyytyväisyys ja taloudellinen tulos, mitä jää viivan alle. Joten, jos sitten. Työn osalta, ja kohtuullisesti on jäänyt myös rahaa viivan alle, ja asiakas on tyytyväinen, niin ja sitten hyvä yhteistyö, jos siinä on ollut mukana näitä yhteistyökumppaneita, niin mistä on jäänyt sellainen hyvä mieli yhteistyöstä, niin sekin on plussaa. Siinä ne oikeastaan olivat.