Saimaa University of Applied Sciences
Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality, Imatra
Degree Programme in Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management

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New Tourism Product Development
Case: "Guided Tour to Savonlinna for Saimia International Students"

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Abstract

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New Tourism Product Development Case: "Guided tour to Savonlinna for
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Saimaa University of Applied Sciences
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The purpose of the thesis project was to develop a new tourism product and examine it by the planning and realization of a pilot trip with the focus group of five students. The product was a guided tour to Savonlinna for Saimia international students. The concept organized in the project was created to be non-commercial and was carried out as an individual project.

The theoretical part of the thesis was gathered from different sources including literature, the internet, lecture materials and articles. The empirical part includes development process and implementation of the project. The project was implemented as the event which was held on 17th March 2016 in Savonlinna.

The final result showed the positive feedback and opinions of the customers that allows further development of the product. The conclusion and suggestions could be helpful for continuous improvement of the product.

Keywords: guided tour, product development, project management, pilot trip

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1 Introduction

Tourism is a recognizable activity in a today's life that brings happiness and enjoyment for hundreds of millions of people every year. It is a progressive industry that is constantly developing. (Inkson and Minnaert 2012 pp.1,14.) Nowadays tourism is one of the most demanding and world's largest industries (World Travel &Tourism Council 2016). The result of statistical data shows that number of tourists is increasing every year and International tourist arrivals grew by 4.3 % in 2014 to 1.133 billion (World Tourism Organization 2015). People are ready to spend money on the tourism activities. Everyone has a different motivation and has a different type of purpose: personal or business. Demand and preferences of the tourists are growing and it is a good time to develop new products that will meet customers' requirements.

New product development allows gaining new markets, segments, increasing the competitiveness of the company and expanding the range of products or services. In hospitality and tourism industries, companies should be able to react to trends and continuously try new ideas. (Kotler, Bowen and Makens 2010. p.244.)

The guided tour has become a popular component of the mass and individual tourism. This phenomenon is the usual way of travelling for a group of tourists who has a purpose to receive knowledge of the tourism destination and prefer to travel accompanied by a professional person.

Young population, 15-24 years old, take third place on the list of travellers from the European Union in 2013 (Eurostat Statistics Explained 2015). In 2014 the author made a research at Saimaa University of Applied Science among the international students about their experience during a study period. There were 15 full-time students and 10 exchange students who agreed to participate in the research. The study shows that one of the decisive factors to go to study abroad is a desire to travel and discover new country and culture. Almost 80 % of respondents mentioned the reason for the choice of the university is a desire to discover new country. (Kozhevnikova 2014.) This result generated the idea for this thesis. Someone should provide the students a unique possibility to

discover this country and fulfil their study experience with new impressions by travelling around Finland.

The thesis consists of two main parts. The first one represents the theoretical framework for the new tourism product development process and planning project phases. The theory part describes the new product development process based on Kotler's approach (2010). Moreover, the theory part covers the basics of the cost structure for the guided tour.

The second part includes the description of the new product its components and goals, step-by-step explanation of an actual product development process. The guided tour development is based on understanding customers' needs and complete view of the tourism product from the business point of view. This part also describes phases during preparation for the implementation of the guided tour, analysis of the students' feedbacks and suggestions for improvement. To evaluate the success of the implementation part the author monitors the process and communicates with students during each phase of the project. In that case, the author identifies three major evaluation stages. The first stage is a student's reaction and opinions about the idea of the product. Second is the verbal discussion with particular participants after the trip. The last evaluation the author created by Google a questionnaire form that has 11 questions about perceptions, impressions and overall opinion about the trip.

The main goal of this project-based thesis is to develop new tourism product "new format of informal guided tour" and implement a pilot trip to Savonlinna, Finland on 17th March 2016 to see in practice how this idea works and how it is possible to improve. One of the aims of this work process is to provide an alternative way of time passing and create an informal way of interesting, easy to organize guided tour for international students of Saimaa University of Applied Sciences. The feedback of this non-profit sample trip will provide suggestions and ideas for potential tourism service. Organising this project creates a chance to gain real life experience, which in the end might be useful for the author's future career.

2 Development of the tourism product

For effective tourism product development, it is essential to understand the concept of the product in general. New product for the company is not always a new product for the consumer. Successful product development requires a clear understanding of customers' needs and preferences. In 1994, Smith published a paper where he described product development as an obligatory condition for satisfying consumers' growing demands and a guarantee for a long-term profitability.

The following chapter includes a definition of the tourism product, as well as a definition of the guided tour. As the format of the product is not just educational but also has entertainment characteristics the author presents the definition of edutainment approach. This section also considers a detailed explanation of the developing process and its features. Furthermore, this chapter covers cost structure for a guided tour.

2.1 Definition of the tourism product

To understand what tourism product is, it is necessary to clarify exactly what is meant by the product itself.

According to a definition provided by Kotler, Bowen and Makens (2010 p.230), *"A product is anything that can be offered to a customer's attention, purchase, or use, or something that can meet their needs and preferences. Therefore, a product can be a tangible good, a service, a person, an organisation, a destination or an idea".* To invert this term into tourism product Jefferson and Lickorish (1988) offer another version of the components model of the tourism product. Observing that the tourism product needs clear definition (1988,211), they demonstrate two views: the tourism product is a *"collection of physical and service features together with significant associations which are expected to satisfy the wants and needs of the customer"* (1988,59) and, more briefly, the tourism product "is a satisfying activity at the desired destination" (Jefferson and Lickorish 1988,211).

Middleton, Fyall, Morgan and Ranchhod (2009, p120) identify the tourism product as a complex of a variation of different components that may not be

related to each other and satisfy tourists' wishes and needs from the moment they leave their home to their destination until they come back to their countries of origin.

The studies presented thus far provide evidence that tourism product might be tangible or intangible goods or service that should meet the tourists' requirements and preferences during their travelling.

A product level is another important aspect of the product concept. Based on Surprenant's (1987) theory, figure 1 presents that a product is divided into 4 levels:
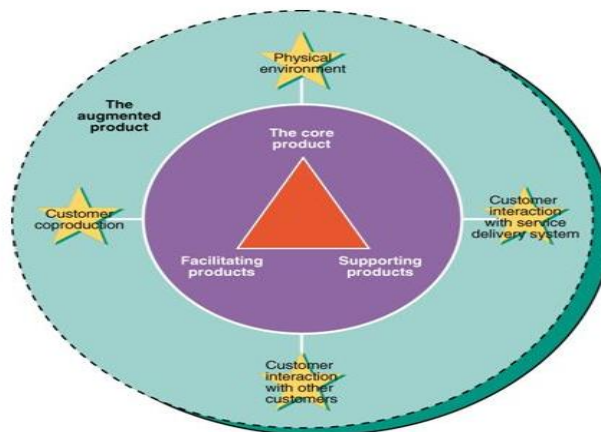
Figure 1. Product levels (Surprenant 1987)

- Core product: this level responds on the question what is the customer actually buying?
- Facilitating product: this level represents goods or services that allow the use of the core product;
- Supporting product: this level is not required by the core product but this is an extra product that is helping to add value to core product, also this level may provide differentiation features to support competitive advantage;
- Augmented product: it combines accessibility, atmosphere, customer interaction and customer participation.

Well developed and organized combination of these levels will provide complete and valuable product for consumers.

2.2 Definition of the guided tour

The term "guided tour" refers to a short journey to a building or place with a professional person who provides you interesting information and facts about what you are seeing (Macmillan Publishers Limited 2016). It is also called an excursion. Guided tour could include visiting of natural and cultural attractions as well as special types of attractions: theme parks, shops, events and others. Furthermore guided tour might consist of a complex of services: transportation, entrance ticket, meal and other tourists' facilities. This product could be offered by travel agencies, tour operator or independent organization. Guided tour is possible to prepare for a group of tourists or for an individual client. The essential point of implementation of the excursion is effective tour planning, well-prepared program and timing. (Inskeep 1991, p 435.)

According to Ap & Wong (2001, p. 551) tour guides take a role of interface between tourists and tourism destination. Tourist receives the final impression and attitude to the destination through the responsible work of the guides. The overall success of a tour depends on a guide´s performance (Geva & Goldman 1991, pp. 177-185).

However, nowadays one of the trends in the tourism industry is personalized service. Tourists are demanding more individual tours, excursions and services. They do not want to depend on time, date and other participants of the group. This trend increases the popularity of the individual tours. (Amadeus 2014.) On the other hand, it is not possible to apply this consuming habit for every segment, for example the target group of the product that was developed by the author is students. They move to Finland alone without their family and friends. One of the motivation drivers to participate in the tour is socializing and opportunity to meet new people. That is why it is not applicable to say that the trend of individual services could prevent or influence students' decision about travelling in the group.

2.3 Definition of the "edutainment"

"Edutainment" is a derived word that states a mixture of entertainment and educational values (Colace, De Santo and Pietrosanto 2006). According to Okan (2003), the main goal of this approach is to support education with entertainment. This concept presents that during the educational process it is possible to have a good time and create an experience. Combining education and entertainment increase learners' excitement and enthusiasm to explore and learn something new. The main purpose of edutainment is to attract students' attention and interest those. (Okan 2003.)

As it was mentioned earlier, the format of the guided tour plans to be informal with the mostly interactive way of performing. Due to the features of the main target group which are students, the author considers edutainment approach is relevant in this case. Moreover, nowadays customers are demanding entertainment of any activity (Inkson and Minnaert 2012). Therefore, the concept of the guided tour belongs to edutainment.

This phenomenon is suitable for the concept of the tour for international students because one of the goals of this product is to familiarize students with Finland and Finnish culture. Students gain knowledge about the country during the tour in friendly, easy-going atmosphere.

2.4 New product development process

As it was already mentioned Smith (1994) claims that product development is a required activity of the company. Purposes of this process are essential: insuring the future, creating a new competitive advantage, increasing profitability, expanding an assortment of the products, supporting loyalty and other reasons (Dolores 2014).

There are two types of development of new product (Dolores 2014):

- Development of an absolutely new product for the company;
- Modification of the already existent product in the company's range.

Kotler and Armstrong (2012) demonstrated that the new product development process consists of eight stages. Figure 2 illustrates the process:

- Idea generation;
- Idea screening;
- Concept development and testing;
- Marketing strategy;
- Business analysis;
- Product development;
- Test marketing;
- Commercialization
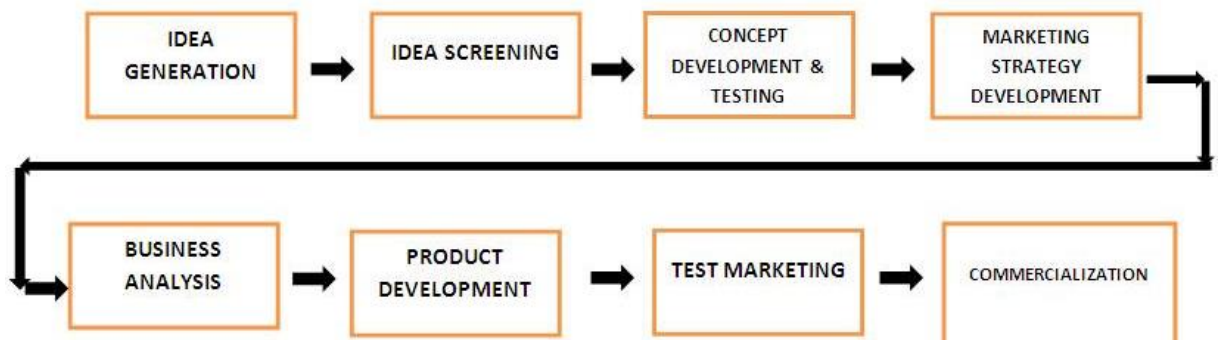
Figure 2. Stages in new product development (Kotler & Armstrong 2012)

Each stage of the process has its own objectives and understanding of them is a key factor for effective result. Below is a detailed description of each stage based on Kotler and Armstrong's (2012) study:

- New product development begins with idea generation. The aim of this stage is to present a large number of ideas for the future analysis. To create ideas it is necessary to use internal and external sources. For example customers, competitors, suppliers, environmental changes, trends, marketing research and other sources. At this stage, it is important to clarify what the objective of this new product is.

- Idea screening requires an elimination of poor ideas. After that, surviving ideas should be modified into a product concept. Also, at this phase the product needs to be determined with the features, and potential benefits for customers should be identified.

- During testing, the concept is presented for the target group by the oral explanation or it could be a preliminary picture of the future product. The presentation could show the first impression of the potential consumers and their attitude to the idea.

- Next step is developing a marketing strategy for the product, to introduce it to the market. Kotler et al. (2010 p.252) consider that marketing strategy includes three parts - the first part defines target market, goals of the product and its share on the market; the second part concentrates on the marketing budget for the first year, price that is planned and distribution; the last, third part includes profit goals and marketing mix

- Business analysis stage should evaluate the product from business and financial point of view. The forecast of the sales volume is considered during this phase. Moreover, the business analysis determines the estimation of the variable and fixed costs, profit projections. It is an important part of the whole process because it shows the business attractiveness of the product that could be evaluated by means of sales history of the similar products.

- The product concept that has a good result on the previous stage transfers into a real product development. Creation of physical version of the product has a limitation in presenting intangible aspects.

- Next stage is market testing. This step allows evaluation of advertising, packaging, distribution, pricing and product positioning in real market situations. The nature of the testing requires many costs but it helps to predict possible problems and understand which aspects should be improved before the launching of the final version. This stage is essential in order to prevent unnecessary expenses in the future.

- The last stage of the new product development process is commercialization that is literally launching of the product to the market. A company should make four decisions: when is the best time to introduce the product, where they present it, which is the main segment and how they are planning to introduce the product to consumers. (Studer and Ordonez 2000.)

2.5 Cost structure of guided tours

Every service and product had its costs. Osterwalder and Pigneur (2013) mentioned that cost structure is used as a tool to establish price, as well as to find out areas in which costs may potentially be decreased or at least subjected to more effective monitoring. Clear and accurate cost structure could facilitate the budgeting calculations and business analysis during the development process (Osterwalder and Pigneur 2013). To estimate cost structure of a guided tour it is essential to understand two types of costs:

Fixed costs – do not depend on the amount of production. Increasing production does not affect the number of fixed costs. These costs are permanent all the time (land, rent, insurance payment, salaries, PR). (Black 2009.)

Variable costs – are directly dependent on volume of production. When production increases, the variable costs also increase in a certain proportionate degree. (Black 2009.)

The phenomenon of a guided tour could be considered as a package tour, the difference is that the guided tour does not include all components that are existing in a package tour. In other words, a concept of a package tour is broader. Table 1 presents the model of components of package tour costs by Dr. Swain.

Type of Cost	Components	(%)
Direct Costs	Accommodation & Food (Room, Breakfast & Meals)	25
	Airlines ticket (Scheduled and Charter Flights)	20
	Transfer, Sightseeing and Excursion (Coach, Car & Van)	15
	Agent commission	10
Total		70
Indirect Costs	Administrative (salary, perks, recruitment, selection, allowances, employee insurance, etc and Maintenance (rent, electricity & telephone bill, software, etc)	09
	Marketing and Sales Promotion	05
	Miscellaneous (Medical, Incentive Travel, Get together, etc)	01
Total		15
Net Income/ Profit		15
Grand Total		100

Table 1. Component of tour costs (Swain 2015)

For the realization of guided tour, it is not always necessary to calculate all the components from the table 1. To determine a cost structure, it is necessary to define every cost incurred in relation to a cost object. The cost structure of a guided tour developed by the author consists of following variable and fixed costs.

Fixed costs	Variable costs
Salaries for the guide and driver	Printed materials for tourists (maps)
Rent of the bus and petrol	Snacks
Marketing costs (promotion)	Entrance tickets

Table 2. Cost structure for guided tour

From the table 2, it is apparent that the amount of participants of the guided tour affects objects from variable costs column. If there are more tourists variable costs will increase. And objects in the column fixed costs do not depend on the amount of sold services.

3 Project planning

Due to the fact that this thesis is project based the author describes the stages of the implementation of the sample tour in the empirical part. It is essential to define the process of the project planning. In this chapter, the life cycle of the project is presented step by step. In addition, in this section of the thesis are presented key factors of the successful project. Accurate work at every stage helps to reach successful result at the end of the project. To plan and execute a project, a 5-phase model serves as a method to this thesis. Figure 3 illustrates these phases and steps. This model was chosen due to the reason that each stage is clear and definition of the activities provide an accurate understanding of what should be considered during the process. Moreover, many successful project managers structure their work performace especially to this model.
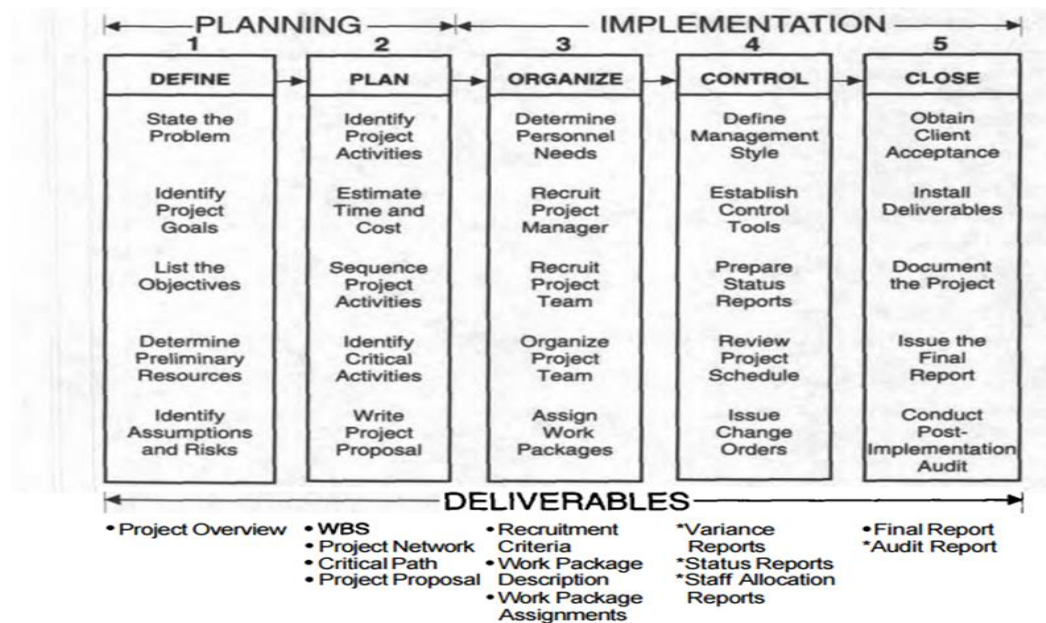
Figure 3. Five - Phase Project Management: A Practical Planning & Implementation guide (Weiss, Wysocki 1992)

3.1 Definition of a project

"All of the mankind's greatest accomplishments—from building the great pyramids to discovering a cure for polio to putting a man on the moon—began as a project" (Larson & Gray 2011). To obtain a successful result at the end of a project, first of all, it is obligatory to have an understanding of this complex process. The Project Management Institute (2010) suggests the following definition of a project: *"A project is a temporary endeavour undertaken to create a unique product, service, or result"*.

Nowadays in business life projects have become a new method of attaining and managing business processes. Larson and Gray (2011, p.6) consider that projects must have clear, accurate, identifiable and achievable objectives. This phenomenon driven by the specific needs of the business involves numerous activities, which produce quantifiable and qualifiable deliverables that when added together, help to reach the overall goal. A project team does not exist anymore once the objectives are met. Weiss and Wysocki (1992, p.3) suggested the list of following project's attributes:

- Complicated and various activities;
- A unique one-time set of events;

- Has a beginning and an end, so its extent is defined;
- Narrow resources and budget;
- Many people involved, usually across several departments in the organizations;
- Should combine a clear, definitive goal or objective;
- End product or service must result.

3.2 Project management

Successful projects require careful detailed planning. The basis of modern project management techniques are methods of structuring operations and network planning, developed in the 1950s in the United States (The Free Encyclopaedia 2016). According to Herbert (1996), project management is a discipline that includes a set of processes for planning, coordination and supervision of activities for implementation of the project's objectives within the constraints of resources, budget, and quality requirements. In a broader sense, project management refers to using knowledge, experience, tools and methods to meet the needs of the project stakeholders. Participants of the project – are individuals and organizations that are directly involved in the project or whose interests may be affected by the project (Larson & Gray 2011).

Narayana and Khasim (2012) proposed that project management consists of several specific types of activities following:

- Planning the work;
- Estimating resources;
- Organizing the work;
- Acquiring human and material resources;
- Assigning tasks;
- Directing activities;
- Controlling project execution;
- Report progress;
- Analysing the results based on the facts achieved.

In recent years, the project management has been applied in event organization, marketing and human resource departments. (Narayana & Khasim 2012.)

There are different formulations of the stages presented by a variety of competent persons. Figure 4 illustrated project planning process that was offered by Allen, O'Toole, and Harris & McDonnell in their book "Festival and Special Event Management" (2011). Based on this approach further is presented a detailed explanation of each step.
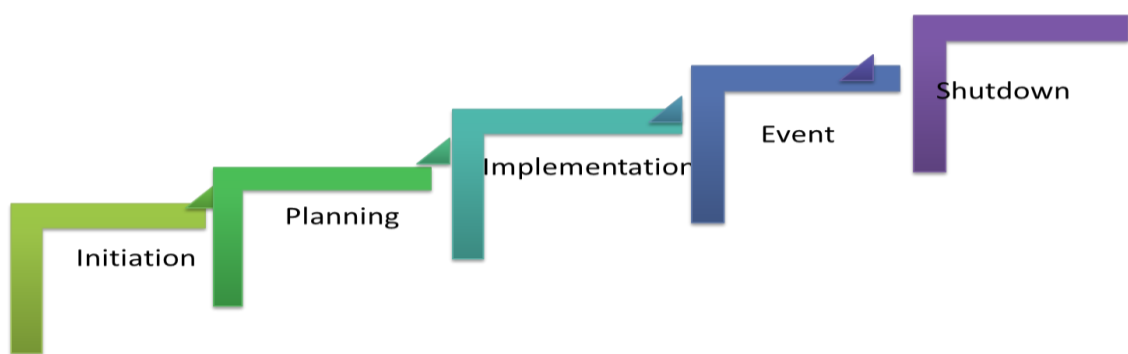
Figure 4. The Phases of Project Management. (Allen, O'Toole, Harris & McDonnell 2011)

3.2.1 Initiation

This is the start of the project. Weiss & Wysocki's (1992) 5- phase model assumes that the main aim of this stage is to define project objectives and project scope. And to prepare preliminary time schedule and determine fundamental resources for the future. Initiation phase is described by the idea of the project being developed and determined at a broad level. As well the phase contains feasibility study in order to evaluate expediency of the certain project (Allen, O'Toole, Harris & McDonnell 2011). What is more, during initiation step it is necessary to identify risks and assumptions. These findings suggest that in general after the first stage the manager of the project should have answers to the question what is going to be in the end of the project, how to reach a goal and when it should be done. (Allen et al. 2011.)

3.2.2 Planning

Generally, projects involve developing or organizing something new for the customers or environment; in tourism field for tourists. The next phase is project planning. After a project overview is completed it is the right time to formulate objectives. Each objective has a number of activities that should be done beneficial to these objectives. The primary task is to integrate all of these separate activities and to complete the extensive plan for the whole project. (Allen et al. 2011.) As can be expected, a formulation of objectives should be clear and understandable for the right choice of appropriate activities. One study by Weiss & Wysocki (1992) offered the S.M.A.R.T method which is often used in project management to facilitate the establishment of the objectives.

One of the first mentions of the S.M.A.R.T. goals was by Drucker (1954) – this method provides the confidence that the goals have been thoroughly inspected. It also helps to identify reasonable goals and avoid needless effort and time wasting.

- Specific – To set specific goals, answer the following questions: who, what, where, when, which, and why;
- Measurable – Create grades or evaluation criteria that will measure the success of reaching a goal;
- Attainable – Define the most important goals and what is needed to do to achieve them;
- Realistic – The goals should be possible to reach;
- Timely – Determine a time frame and deadlines to achieve the goal.

Not only the list of planned activities is important at this phase but also schedule needs to be done, analysis of the risk should be developed. Also, the planning involves identifying the resource needs and costs for them. (Larson & Gray 2011.)

3.2.3 Implementation

The implementation or also known as execution phase is described by the applying of all plans which were developed during previous phase,

communicating roles and responsibilities, formulation of time frames, and making decisions on project realization (Allen et al. 2011).

Pathak (2014) notes that at the implementation phase the project deliverables are developed and achieved, in the designated time, using indicated resources as they were created in the planning phase. The project implementation and project monitoring (event phase) are two phases that usually occur at the same time (Weiss and Wysocki 1992).

The project manager should be ensured that all the plans are done correctly and follow deadlines and if something is still not implemented it would be done as soon as possible. He or she is responsible for scope management as well as for prediction of risk management plan. Manager needs to be sure that this risk does not influence the final result. (City of Chandler, Arizona 2013.)

To summarise this phase it is a real performance of the activities and tasks that were generated during the previous phase. Afterwards, the manager needs to evaluate overall the performance to ensure that quality standards are being met. At this stage, one important issue is a detection of the problems in order to react quickly and find an appropriate solution. To develop changes for correction of those challenges, however, it is necessary to satisfy preliminary required objectives.

3.2.4 Event

The event phase combines evaluation and measuring the project progression with respect to the project management plan and monitoring the project performance. To achieve a successful result at this stage it is required constant monitoring and reporting of issues, coordination of change control across the entire project, and to control project risk. Key performance indicators (KPI) may help to indicate if the project is on track. (Pathak 2014.) Each manager may choose different KPIs even though there are usual indicators; Esposito (2015) offers the most valuable of them:

- Project Objectives: Measuring if a project is on timeframe and budget, also if the project meets stakeholder objectives;

- Cost tracking - how much resources have been spent and to ensure that costs do not exceed the limit;
- Operation indicators - performance of business processes (to evaluate compliance with the required algorithm process of its implementation);
- Project performance - derived indicators characterizing the relationship between the results and the time spent on its preparation, this monitors changes in the project;
- Indicators of efficiency - derivative indices, characterizing the ratio of the result to the resource costs.

Control and monitor are the processes of evaluation and comparing real performance with a plan that was developed to define and reveal deflections and errors, suggest alternative actions and make right corrective decisions (Larson & Gray2011, p. 454).

During this phase is already possible to predict the result of the project, and if it is not satisfactory, the manager should take a risk for cardinal changes in order to receive desirable last phase of the whole project.

3.2.5 Closure

After the project has been planned and implemented there are still several fundamental processes to be carried out. Shutdown or closure phase requires as careful managing as other phases of the project. Larson and Gray (2011) provide the idea of three major deliverables for project closure, description below:

1. *Wrapping up the project.* The main task of wrap-up section is to ensure and guarantee that a project was successful. Customer appreciated, favoured and accepted it. Furthermore, during wrap-up step, all the costs are checking and bills are paying. Valuable team members are recognized. The important issue is that final report is written at the wrapping phase.

2. *Evaluation of performance and management of the project.* This deliverable includes individual and team evaluation. One of the ways of summarising the

result is collecting of feedbacks and through questionnaire for the participants. Based on this data the project manager sums up the evaluation.

3. *Retrospectives.* This is the last stage of the closure phase where based on analysis and evaluation the manager is responsible for presenting conclusions and suggestions for the further improvement. The experience that is gained during the project and comments may generate new ideas. Hence, it is principally helpful to understand mistakes and learn from them so that improvements can be done for future projects.
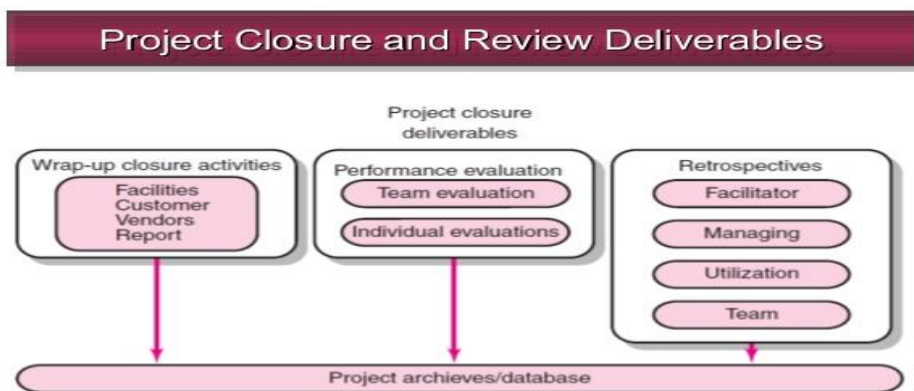
Figure 5. Project Closure and Review Deliverables. (Larson & Gray 2011)

3.3 Key factors of successful project

There are many different conditions and factors that influence the success of the project. On the other side, success is a critical phenomenon because every project creates various goals and just project manager can evaluate and measure success of the final result. The real numbers are that only 34% of projects are completed on time and on a budget (Bauer 2007). However based on the project management experience of the last decade it has become obvious that some key factors could apply for any project. The American author Alfred Sheinwold wrote *"Learn all you can from the mistakes of others. You won't have time to make them all yourself."* (Singer 2011.) This phrase perfectly pertains to the project management.

There is no single activity or characteristic that makes a project successful, it is a combination of features and factors. Baccarini (1999) distinguished two elements of project success:

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<u>Project management success</u> - This concentrates upon the project process and, in particular, the successful progress of cost, time, and quality objectives. It also regards the way in which the project management process was guided.

<u>Product success</u> - This refers to the results of the project's final product.

Pinto & Slevin (1988) sampled more than 650 project managers after the researchers established a conclusion that "project success" is more complicated than merely meeting cost, timelines, and performance. As a matter of fact, customer satisfaction with the finite result has a great deal to do with the perceived success or failure of projects.

Clarke (1999) argues that by targeting the major problems and issues using the key success factors as a centre could make an essential difference to the effectiveness of project management. In order to ensure that a project is accomplished successfully, project plans require being updated properly and regularly. He also claims that the measurement of the success will be facilitated when the objectives are clearly formulated at the beginning of the project.

To summarize previous thoughts it is necessary to highlight that project success is a complicated phenomenon that requires specific factors. To achieve it, team and project management should work hard and with honest responsibility. Haughey (2014) identified 8 factors for the successful projects:

1) Business Case: The project should have a strong concept. In other words, the project should have a sense and demand from the clients. It is not enough to have a good idea; a manager needs to ensure that customers share this attitude towards the project case.

2) Critical Success Factors: Prabhakar (2008) points out that it is fundamental to establish specific critical success criteria that are used to evaluate and measure the progress of the project. These factors should be reliable, explicit and valuable. The project requires these factors that may be designed together with the customers or only at the corporate level with the team or even individually by a project manager. The meaning of these factors is directly related to the formulation of the main goals of the project.

3) Planning: The planning is a cornerstone of the project, every point should be clear and available for every participant of the team. The correct and realistic plan may save undesirable costs and time. When a project has a list of actions that should be done in a particular time with using specific resources this is almost a half of the successful result. Besides that, it is valuable and helpful if contingencies will be considered during the planning.

4) Team Motivation: The project that is held by numerous participants should work as one organism. To obtain this, every person needs to be motivated in order to achieve the high result. A manager has to have strong leadership skills and know how to involve the team in effective performance.

5) Saying No: One of the key factors is a capacity not to promise something that is impossible to deliver. A project has frames of costs, time, and resources. It is obligatory to follow the plan and work breakdown structure. Doing more than was required will transform in future obstacles.

6) Avoiding Scope Creep: Haughey (2014) mentioned that sometimes it is difficult to be in scope. However, incontinence of the planned scope could mainly bring a problem with over budget and also time delay.

7) Risk Management: This aspect highlighted by many scientists and professors, for instance, Larson and Gray (2011) consider that risk management could recognize and prevent potential risks and decrease their damage for the implementation. No one would like to think about troubles that might occur; nevertheless, it is better to have a plan "B" for unexpected episodes.

8) Project Closure: The project should be closed, that is why it has a time schedule. Extension of the performance requires more costs and investments. Consequently right after the project is done, it is pertinent to provide a survey for the customers to evaluate the level of satisfaction.

To conclude it is important to mention that project is a complex and at the same time exciting activity that unfortunately is not everlasting. Based on the

theoretical knowledge that was described in this chapter the author is responsible for implementing her project to obtain the successful result.

4 Guided tour around Finland for Saimia international students

This is the first chapter of the empirical part. The author presents the background of the project and defines the idea of the product with current goals and valuable features. Also based on the theoretical part the following chapter includes a detailed description of product development stages for specific product Guided tour to Savonlinna.

4.1 Idea of the product

The idea of generating this product came to the author after she had made a research among international students of Saimaa University of Applied Sciences, Linnala campus about their experience during a study process in Finland. As it was mentioned above, 25 students from more than 12 different nationalities and from three faculties: tourism management, fine arts and chemical engineering were participating in this research. Almost 90 % of the respondents mentioned the fact, that when they moved from their own countries to Finland they did not receive an opportunity to explore this country. (Kozhevnikova 2014.) During the first week of the arrival, students have a presentation about cultural difference; however, they do not have any lecture about Finland, the behavior of the population. International students do not integrate into the environment of the country. Figure 6 illustrates the number of students who mentioned that they did not explore Finland as they were expected and also it demonstrates two main reasons for this result. As is clear from the figure 6, the numbers from full-time students are lower than exchange students. This gap could be justified by the time reason. Full – time students have three and a half years or, even more time to discover Finland, when exchange students have the average six months. International students do not have the opportunity to travel and see other cities because there is no offer of this kind of product; also, it is relatively complicated and expensive to organize trip around Finland independently.
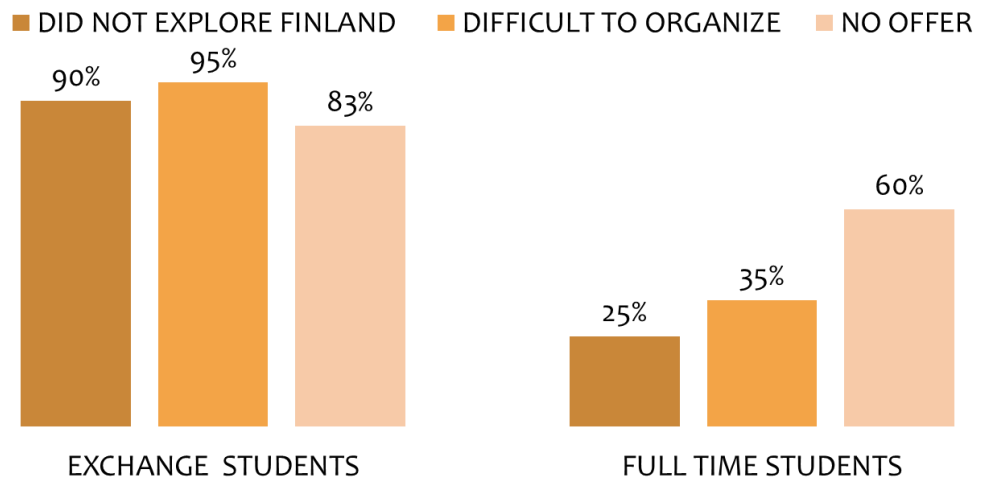
Figure 6.   Results of the research among international students about their experience in Saimaa UAS (Kozhevnikova 2014)

Finland is one of the northeast countries in Europe, with amazing natural heritage and with a big variety of destinations and interesting places (Finland Promotion Board 2015) that might be attractive for international students, who are coming to study tourism and fine arts in Saimaa University of Applied Sciences. Also, authentic culture of this country could be a great asset to develop activities that provide knowledge and familiarization about Finland for the students.

Moreover, Linnala campus is located in the town of Imatra where students are not offered various activities. Almost 85 % of the international students noticed that they have good and interesting time during a study process, however, the free time is mostly boring and unsatisfactory compared to their expectations (Kozhevnikova 2014). The author asked them to clarify what their expectations were and almost 75% of respondents mentioned that they were expected more involvement in the cultural atmosphere (events, holidays, traditions) and possibility to travel and experience the nature of Finland.

All these facts inspired the author to generate the concept of "low – cost informal guided trips around Finland for international students". The main characteristics are fun + knowledge + affordable price. This concept is not limited to one destination. It could be any interesting place in Finland from the

tourism perspective. Therefore, it might be a trip that includes activities related to understanding and discovering the culture of Finland.

In addition, one more advantage is an absence of high competition pressures for the development of this product. There are a few organizations that offer similar services, however with different objectives but the activity of those organizations is annually decreasing: SAIKO (Saimaa University of Applied Sciences' Student Union) that decreases their activity in Linnala campus and ESN (Erasmus Student Network) that focuses only on Erasmus exchange students.

For analyzing this idea the author developed and tested a concrete product with a specific destination and program. In this case, it was s one day trip to the town of Savonlinna.

4.2 Product goals

From the definition of the tourism product, it is clear that the product should satisfy customers' needs and preferences. In 1983 Beard and Ragheb modified Maslow's model of needs to tourism and leisure needs. They proposed four components of motivation to identify people's willingness to participate in tourist activities:

Intellectual component – in this case, people are motivated to use tourism to create mental activities, some of them discovering, studying, thinking and others;

Social component – this motivates people to participate in tourism activities to support social reasons: to build relationship, to make friends and other reasons;

Competence-mastery component – this component is related with physical activities, people want to challenge themselves and compete with each other, to develop new skills;

Stimulus-avoidance component – these motivators refer to people's need to escape from stress, change environment and forget their problems. People use tourism to relax and get rid of stress.

However, the product might have different goals. After analysing the results of the research (2014) the author defined the main goals of the future product:

- Provide an alternative way of time passing: students will have one more activity that is offered to them. They will have an opportunity to spend their free time somewhere else than in a small city. New interesting experience with friends.
- Familiarize international students with Finland and Finnish culture: students will discover this country, after their study period here they will come to their home country with knowledge and understanding of Finland.
- Improve students' impression: this product creates positive reminiscence that builds students' attitude to their experience in general. If the lapse in free time activity was fulfil with good propose of some entertainment the final feedback will be improved.
- Support and develop an image of tourism destination: during the trips, students are creating their opinion about the country. When customers will share their experience by different ways: sharing in social media, orally, they will unconsciously construct advertisement and attract new potential tourists. Moreover, this service may help to develop domestic tourism, local residents probably are not interested in participation in English guided tour, however, they might be motivated by the same advertisement to make a trip somewhere in Finland by themselves.

4.3 Product levels

As it was mentioned earlier, the product has four levels (p.8). In this section of the thesis, the author identifies what is included in each level of the future product.

Core product - when customers decide to buy this product, they receive a voucher for one day guided tour at specific date and time.

Facilitating product - at this level the product includes: transfer in a comfortable bus to the tour destination and back, English speaking guide who accompanies

during the whole tour, approximate program of the tour, nevertheless it is not obligatory to follow the group and program;

Supporting product – snacks that create a good mood from the beginning of the trip, colourfully designed maps with an interesting route in a destination, memorable souvenirs;

Augmented product – friendly, informal and international atmosphere that is a fundament of the concept. Naturally, because this service is provided by a young person and offered to young segment it is not a traditional way of guide organizing. All the students come from different countries which might be a good point for interacting with all of them, comparing differences and similarities of cultures. The success of this level directly depends on the guide's performance. One more issue that is also based on interaction with customers is feedback form; the idea is that these forms will be sent to students after their trip. This form provides necessary information for the improvements as well as it keeps contact with students.

4.4 Competition analysis

To analyse market of competitors it is essential to identify which organizations are in contact with students and what they offer. The key aspect of this competition is that it does not actually exist in Imatra region. The most likely cause for this situation is that the main competitors do not operate in Imatra.

For example ESN organization (Erasmus Student Network) has their office in Lappeenranta, they contact with Erasmus students from Linnala campus by social networks, but all provided activities locate in Lappeenranta or they have a starting point there. The main weakness of their concept is that they are targeted mostly to Erasmus students which means that full - time students probably do not know about their offer. Moreover, for participating in ESN's activities students should buy a card or they have to pay more for events. However, ESN offers trips, during the last year 2015-2016 they organized tours to Tallinn, Saint-Petersburg and Lapland. They do not offer tours around Finland. (ESN Lappeenranta 2016.)

One more student union that might be considered as a competitor is SAIKO (Saimaa University of Applied Sciences' Student Union). In contrast to the previous example this organization operates in Imatra, too. Nevertheless, they do not provide offers about trips. Another competitor for this service is self-travelling. In Imatra, there is bus and railway station. The author compares offers and prices in table 3 to summarize the market situation.

Competitors	Destinations	Price €	Includes
ESN	Tallinn, Lapland, Saint-Petersburg	99 – 350	2-4 days trip, transport, guide accommodation, etc.
SAIKO	No trips	-	-
Self-travelling	any, eg Savonlinna	25 – 37	train tickets both ways

Table 3. Tour offers

Moreover, one more competitive threat could be any alternative way of time spending and it is important to not forget about this. Staying at home or sitting in the café are also competitors of the guided tour service.

4.5 Components of the product

Besides the levels, each product has components. Tourism product can not survive without attractions which interest tourists, facilities and services which help for tourists to spend their time and accessibility that provides infrastructure for tourists.

4.5.1 Destination attractions

One of the main criteria for choosing a destination for the tour is a presence of cultural, natural or historical attractions. In the case of Savonlinna city, there are Olavinlinna castle, old city centre, Riihisaari museum and Cathedral, Lake Saimaa. The environment and history of Savonlinna allow developing an attractive guided tour.

4.5.2 Destination facilities and services

Considering the fact that it is a one-day trip, customers do not need many services. The main need is food and shops where they can spend free time. Savonlinna has both of them with a varied selection and prices.

4.5.3 Accessibility of the destination

The guided tour includes transportation to the destination. Due to the fact that usually Finnish towns are not very big, customers do not need to use transport for exploring a destination.

4.6 Product development process: case guided tour to Savonlinna

In this section of the thesis, the author develops a new product "guided tour to Savonlinna" based on the Kotler's new-product development theory. During the process, the benefits for the customers and university are identified as well as risk evaluation. In addition, this part presents marketing issues such as target market and marketing mix.

4.6.1 Idea generation and screening

The main source of potential ideas is experience and knowledge of the author. At the beginning, there were six different destinations such as Tampere, Turku, Joensuu, Mikkeli, Helsinki and Savonlinna. First of all these destinations were chosen because they have large cultural heritage that might be a good basis for guided tour. Second reason for particular destinations is that they are big and do not look like Imatra or Lappeenranra. Moreover, during the generation idea stage, it was possible that the tour could be more thematic for example a trip to Myllymäki resort or to Särkänniemi adventure park. Table 4 illustrates the main attractions of places and distance from Imatra to the destination (VisitHelsinki, VisitMikkeli, VisitKarelia, VisitSavonlinna, VisitTampere, Turku. 2016). Afterward, a detailed analysis was made the author focus on Savonlinna destination especially because of the distance advantage and cultural heritage of the town. The idea of a one-day trip to Savonlinna was considered more attractive from tourism point of view, less costly and easy to organize from project management point of view.

At the stage idea screening is necessary to highlight what is new and innovative in the idea. As a matter of fact, providing a tour service is not something original, however, this product targets for exact segment – international students. Considering this aspect, the program of the tour is prepared with taking into account the interests and preferences of this segment. The fact is that this is not ordinary excursion with a lot of educational information, the concept required a creative approach of performing this tour. A guided tour is not an innovative product although for international students of Saimaa University of Applied Sciences this unique offer provides comfortable, safe and low - cost service.

Destination	Distance from Imatra (km)	Main attractions
Mikkeli	140	Cathedral, WHD Gård, etc.
Savonlinna	147	Olavinlinna Castle, Riihisaari Museum, Cathedral, etc.
Joensuu	200	North Karelian Museum, Botanical garden, Art museum Onni, etc.
Helsinki	258	Suomenlinna fortress, Cathedral, Kiasma museum, Esplanadi, Uspenski Cathedral, etc
Tampere	310	Sara Hilden Art Museum, Vapriikin Museum, The Finnish Labour Museum Werstas,Tampere Art museum,etc.
Turku	418	Turku Castle, The Biological Museum, Wäinö Aaltonen Museum of Art, etc.

Table 4. Destination comparison.

Another main objective of the idea screening phase is an estimation of size and growth forecasts of the target market. Every year approximately 20-30 full-time international students are coming to study to Linnala campus. During the whole academic year about 20-40 exchange students are coming for both faculties: tourism and art.

4.6.2 Concept development and testing

During this stage, the major aim was to present the concept to the potential market to test the idea. After the preliminary program of the tour was confirmed by the author, this program and the idea were presented to 10 international students with a purpose to evaluate their interest and opinion. The result is 10/10 students noticed that the idea is interesting for them; they would like to participate but the final decision depends on the date of the tour. According to the classification of Inkson and Minnaert (2012 p.36) the new product belongs to heritage and cultural tourism type.

Heritage Tourism	Focused on sites of cultural, historical or ecological importance in destination-monuments, buildings, geographical features.
Cultural Tourism	Based specifically on the cultural resources of a destination for instance museums, architecture, religion, local lifestyle and cultural events.

Table 5. Types of tourism by activity (Inkson & Minnaert 2012)

Table 5 presents description of these two types. In this part of the thesis, the author focuses on features of the product, benefits which product provides for the customer and not only for them.

4.6.2.1 Product features

As is was already mentioned the new product almost does not have real competitors has specific features which are listed below

- Full package – tour includes transfer, guide service, snack, and route with a map. Students do not need to worry about those issues;
- International atmosphere that may help to meet new friends and allows to feel comfortable;
- Edutainment characteristics – customers receive knowledge about the country and its culture in an interactive way by a person of the same age that makes this educational aspect not boring. (The definition of the edutainment on the page 9);

- No membership needed – any person may buy this product for the same price;
- Cheap service – due to the fact that main target is young generation, they do not have a lot of money and cheap products are more affordable for them;
- Seasonality – considering the climate in Finland the date of the tour needs to be chosen carefully taking into account short daytime during the period from November – March and strong rainfall during autumn time.

The new product combines all these features and they make it attractive to the customers.

It has been suggested that a product in the case of guided tour, is a service that has a list of specific characteristics – intangibility, inseparability, perishability and heterogeneity (Inkson, Minnaert 2012 p.124). The following explanation is based on Inkson's and Minnaert's (2012) definitions:

- Intangibility that means without physical existence, the service cannot be experienced or touched before or after consuming, this characteristic facilitates promotion and presenting the product;
- Inseparability means that product is produced and consumed at the same time. This characteristic requires customer's involvement and interactions with service provider;
- Perishability defines that product has a specific time of consumption and after this deadline the product is no more available for consumers;
- Heterogeneity means that each customer has different relationship and experience with the same product. It is unique for each consumer. That is why it is impossible to promise for the customer specific emotions and result after consuming the product.

4.6.2.2 Benefits of the product

The important purpose of concept development is emphasizing the benefits that product delivers to the customers. At this point, the author considers that this

product has positive benefits not only for customers – students but also for the university. Figure 7 illustrates benefits of the product for both sides.
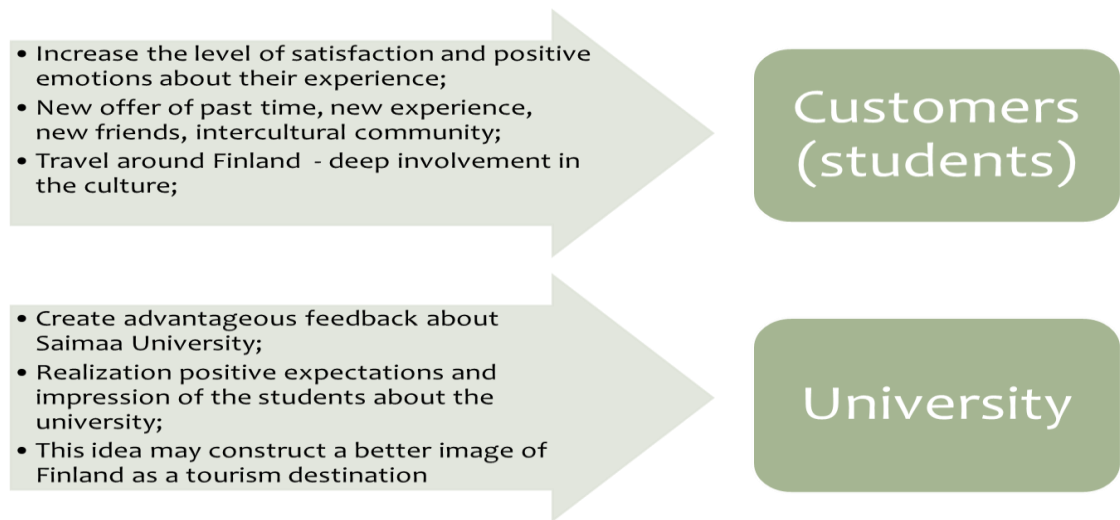

- Increase the level of satisfaction and positive emotions about their experience;
- New offer of past time, new experience, new friends, intercultural community;
- Travel around Finland - deep involvement in the culture;

Customers (students)

- Create advantageous feedback about Saimaa University;
- Realization positive expectations and impression of the students about the university;
- This idea may construct a better image of Finland as a tourism destination

University

Figure 7. Benefits of the product to customers and university

4.6.2.3 Risk evaluation

A likely explanation for reducing a risk is a timely evaluation and understanding of it. During development process the author identified five major risks of the future product:

- Depending on bus company: the costs for renting bus is high, moreover there might be a problem with availability for specific date;
- Not enough demand: even if this idea sounds attractive students might consider it expensive or not so interesting comparing with trip to Russia;
- Threat of new competitors: tourism sector is growing and organizations like Kehy, Base Camp, Saimaa adventures may decide to launch new project for young segment;
- Not enough profit: the product is positioned as a cheap service, however, the expenses for organizing are not so low;
- Other limitations: due to the fact that the product targets on students there might be reasons which do not allow students to participate, for instance study process, other activities. Another point is weather conditions that may affect the result of the tour.

4.6.3 Marketing

Marketing is a complicated, powerful, productive and modern process that is aimed at motivation and influencing customers' behaviour (Inkson & Minnaert 2012). The tourism industry is a part of service sector where is required and essential to pay attention to marketing approach. In this section of the thesis, the author defines the main target for the product; applies marketing mix approach to guided tour, and presents examples for owned, earned and paid media.

4.6.3.1 Target market

The target market is young, dynamic, international students seeking a new experience. First of all, they are travel oriented with a desire to discover a new country and its culture.

Clear segmentation provides an opportunity to define the proper and appropriate distribution channels. Market consists of customers with different needs, wants, resources, buying behaviour and buying attitude.

4.6.3.2 The marketing mix

McCarthy (1981) described this mix and identified four variables – product, price, promotion and place. The marketing mix is a blend of different actions made by marketers to develop and increase demand for their products. Managers can control these variables to create a competitive advantage (Inkson & Minnaert 2012). This tool is one of the most important ones in the development of marketing strategy (Holloway 2004).

- Product: English guided one day tour to Savonlinna. Prepared program with a schedule.
- Price: to meet customers' expectations and cover all the costs the price is € 20-25.
- Place: Facebook page was created by the author where customers could find information about the product and ask questions. The author met with potential customers in the university to describe in more detail and sell the tickets to the people who were interested.

35

- Promotion: to promote this product the author considered only non-paid promotions such as personal selling, digital direct marketing using the database of the students' public community and social networks (Facebook). Printed advertisement also may be a part of promotion mix depending on the university's decision on permission to distribute brochures.

To present the best idea to promote this product, author chose owned, earned and paid media and presents examples of how they may apply to guided tour.

4.6.3.3 Owned, earned, and paid media

Nowadays terms owned, earned and paid media have become common in the marketing industry. They express three different types.

There is a summary of how Forrester Research defined these media presented in the article of Corcoran (2009).

Media type	Definition	Examples	The role	Benefits	Challenges
Owned media	Channel a brand controls	• Web site • Mobile site • Blog • Twitter account	Build for longer-term relationships with existing potential customers and earn media	• Control • Cost efficiency • Longevity • Versatility • Niche audiences	• No guarantees • Company communication not trusted • Takes time to scale
Paid media	Brand pays to leverage a channel	• Display ads • Paid search • Sponsorships	Shift from foundation to a catalyst that feeds owned and creates earned media	• In demand • Immediacy • Scale • Control	• Clutter • Declining response rates • Poor credibility
Earned media	When customers become the channel	• WOM • Buzz • "Viral"	Listen and respond — earned media is often the result of well-executed and well-coordinated owned and paid media	• Most credible • Key role in most sales • Transparent and lives on	• No control • Can be negative • Scale • Hard to measure

54869   Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

Figure 8. Defining Earned, Owned and Paid Media (Corcoran 2009)

The author presents a short definition according to CISION (2011) which was applied to the guided tour.

- Paid media – this kind of media allows promoting the product for wide audience. Various web pages offer paid advertisement service. Also "pay

per click" in google browser is also considered as a part of paid media. To conclude this media pays to a third company (television, printed promotion, web advertisement) for promoting the product. In the case of guided tour to Savonlinna, this media is not a useful and profitable method of promotion.

- Owned media – in this case, the company constructs their own channels of distributing information and this web property is controlled by the company. It might be its own websites, blog or social network account. This media is the best way of promoting the guided tour for students. Examples of owned media are web site of the company that might sell this service or Facebook page with the event and important information.

- Earned media - is an uncontrolled tool which could help customers to find channels of owned media. Earned media is "web's word of mouth" sharing, tweets, reposts and mentions. Customers may share or like information on Facebook about the guided tour to Savonlinna, hence, create an earned media.

4.6.4 Business analysis, cost and profit calculations

To organize this non-commercial sample trip the author presents cost profit calculations with low expenses conditions and also the second table of costs for the real product. The main difference in these two estimations is the number of potential customers. From the table 7, it is evident that to make this product profitable the average number of consumers should be no less than 40. The author considers this number achievable if the students from Skinnarila campus also participate. To organize the pilot trip to Savonlinna, the author found an individual entrepreneur that provides bus on the non-profit conditions. The bus permits five passengers + guide and driver.

Expenses	Price
Rent bus	€ 0
Driver service	€ 0
Petrol	€ 50

Expenses	Price
Promotion: Facebook page	€ 0
Olovinlinna entrance fee	6*7 = € 42
Printed maps	€ 0
Snacks	6*2 = € 12
Gifts	€ 0
Guide service	€ 0
Total	**€ 104**

Table 6. Expenses of non-commercial trip

Based on the calculation from table 6 it is possible to establish the price for the tour. Considering the fact that there are five students and guide, the formula (1) illustrates that for covering all costs the price should be € 20.

$$\frac{104}{6} = 17.3 \approx € 20 \quad (1)$$

Expenses	Price
Rent bus incl. driver and petrol	€ 800
Facebook page	€ 0
Printed ads	€ 30
Olovinlinna entrance fee	40*7 = € 280
Printed maps	€ 30
Snacks	40*2 = € 80
Gifts	€ 0
Guide service	€ 0
Total	**€ 1220**

Table 7. Expenses of real trip

According to real estimation table 7 the total amount of costs is bigger, however, the number of participants also is higher. In this case, the price is more than in the first version that could negatively affect the demand. For

decreasing costs one possible suggestion is to exclude expenses of entrance ticket, hence customers may buy it by themselves in Olovinlinna depending on their desire to visit this castle. Moreover to make this product profitable one more helpful investment is to acquire one's own bus. Excluding entrance fee costs decrease the total amount of expenses to € 940 that allows decreasing the price to € 30 which is still cheaper than travelling to Savonlinna independently. (2)

$$\frac{1220}{40} = 30.5 \approx € 31 \text{ (2)}$$

4.6.5 Commercialization

Even though that this product is developed by the author without any partnership with a travel company, the launching is not obliged. Although, if the analysis of evaluation shows positive results. The author considers this product as a component of a potential business idea for self-entrepreneurship. The pilot trip schedules on the 17th of March 2016.

5 Pilot guided tour to Savonlinna

In this chapter, the author describes all the processes of organizing the pilot trip, its actions and challenges. Also the program of the tour is presented and short summary of the implementation. After the tour was implemented answers of students were evaluated and conclusion and suggestions were generated.

5.1 Preparations for the trip

At the beginning, it was important to highlight the objectives and plans for its solving. The period of preparation until the implementation in total was almost 1. 5 month.

First of all the program of the trip was planned. Different web sources provide information about the most interesting attractions in Savonlinna and its neighbourhood. Based on TripAdvisor and Visit Savonlinna pages the preliminary program was approved. Moreover, the author communicated with

local residents of the town to know their favourite places from inside point of view. Later the author travelled to Savonlinna by herself to identify advantageous places and be ensured about the program´s content. Before confirming the last version of the program the author contacted with the administration of the museums to check the opening hours and prices.

Next step was searching the company which could provide a bus and driver or, at least, the bus. This was the most challenging task because prices of Finnish companies are not affordable without a specific budget. The author tried to rent a big car and consulted with companies in Russia but in this case, there are legislation issues that do not permit utilizing a bus from Russia. At this stage, one individual entrepreneur and friend of the author proposed the service almost without payment. One time trip to Savonlinna was confirmed. The company obliged to provide a bus for a day with a driver, the only cost was gasoline, it was purchased in Russia, and hence, the price was lower than in Finland. The contract was signed in free form between the author and the owner of the transport.

After the program was approved and the agreement signed it became possible to identify price. The following action was informing students. The author created the event with this tour in Facebook and published all necessary information there. Students started to address questions and expressed their desire to participate. At the same time, the author described the project idea to the exchange students of Linnala campus and to some full-time international students personally. The main aim was to attract students from different countries to compare their impressions and opinions after the trip. When the date of the tour was chosen, the students who wanted to participate bought tickets and received vouchers with the date, time and signature of the author.

Next the author needed to prepare herself for guiding. The searching for information about Savonlinna and its attractions was not complicated. One positive point is that the author had work experience of guiding a big group as well as individual tours. It is useful a skill, however, the most important is being prepared.

When everything was a questionnaire for evaluation the product was created. These forms planned to be distributed to the students via e-mail right after the tour. The questionnaire consists of 11 questions which help to evaluate satisfaction and opinion about the product.

The last step was buying of snacks for tourists with the rate of two euros per person. Moreover, the author wanted to develop a logo of the tour and prepare memorable souvenirs.

One day before the tour, participants were informed one more time and double check of the bus provider was done.

5.2 Promotion

To promote this guided tour an event on the Facebook was created where all important information was put and more than 40 students were invited. At the same date first students started to write and express their wish to participate. This tool is an appropriate way of promoting, first of all, it is free and this channel allows reaching a big amount of customers without any efforts. Therefore, a printed advertisement was designed which was possible to use as a post or brochures however it was not necessary to utilize them because the number of people who would like to participate was already sufficient. Also, one good tool was the word-of-mouth, students' community is not big in Linnala campus hence it is easy to distribute suggested tour among everyone quickly.

5.3 Registration and communication to clients

During the period when the tour was being prepared the author communicated with the students through personal meetings in Linnala campus or by the Facebook and via e-mail. As it was mentioned before, the bus is for five students; consequently when students decide to participate the author informed them about the limited number of places. When a customer was ready to buy the ticket he or she received the voucher with specific information about the date, time, and place of departure. Also, in the voucher there is an important section about the cancelation, a student may cancel this tour no later than 72 hours before the departure, in this case the price is refundable. Of course, if a customer has an emerging situation or respectful reason for renouncement the

amount is also returned back. One copy of the voucher the customer keeps until the date of the tour and second copy is saved by the author.

5.4 Implementing the trip

The tour was organized on 17th of March. The date was chosen because of several reasons: weather conditions, availability of the students, author's need to implement the trip as soon as possible. One day before the tour, a representative person of the bus company and the author went to Svetogorsk to fill the car with petrol.

On the date of the tour, everyone arrived at 9:00 am to parking lot of Masku center. This place and time were the meeting point. Due to the fact that group is not big; there was no problem with delays and waiting. The bus left at 9:15. It took 1. 5 hours and almost at 11:00 the group arrived at Savonlinna. During this time, there was a discussion about the organizational details (timetable, program) and the guide provided interesting information about the town Savonlinna. Moreover, printed maps and programs were given to the students as well as small snacks. Students were already familiar with each other; they were positive and in a good mood, that allows creating of friendly and informal atmosphere.

The students (five persons) decided to follow the program and explore the destination in a group. According to the program, the first attraction was Olavinlinna, the price of the entrance fee was included in the price of the trip. The guide accompanied the group and highlighted the most interesting historical facts but without deep knowledge, dates, and too much information. In Olavinlinna the group spent almost one hour plus time for walking around and taking pictures. Because the weather was bright and it was warm, the collective decision was to see Riihisaari museum but not visit.

During the whole excursion guide was talking with the students about their experience in Finland and asking to compare their home countries with Finland to identify positive and negative aspects. Students asked some questions about lifestyle and traditions of Finns, based on the author's experience she tried to

provide honest information. When the question was accurate and if the author do not know the answer she did not imagine anything.

Following the timetable of the program, the group visited the Cathedral and they also had enough time to have lunch and go shopping. As it was the pilot trip the program was not so strict and the guide considered the students' preferences, at 15:30 the bus departed to Patsaspuisto. At the beginning of creating the program the author was not sure about including this place, however, everyone from the group wanted to visit this authentic place.

There was a risk that when the bus arrives at Patsaspuisto it could be already dark, but it was approximately 16:45 and it was still sunny and everything was visible. Students were impressed by this unique and little but scary place.

During the road to Imatra the guide asked students about their impression and feedbacks, moreover the questionnaires were delivered to the e-mails of the participants. Overall the tour was great; there were no technical problems or delays. One thing is that the program was quite long and by the end of the day everyone was a little bit tired. The entire day the guide was controlling and monitoring the tour to identify weaknesses and shortcomings.

5.5 Evaluation of clients' feedbacks and comments

To evaluate the implementation of the tour the author constructed a questionnaire in Google forms with 11 questions (appendix 3). The form covers questions about their impression, price, about willingness in future participation. Answers help to identify main factors of motivation for participation in this tour and identify strengths and weaknesses of the idea. All the five students answered after the tour was held. The evaluation is based on those answers and also on the face to face discussion that was had during the way back to Imatra where students shared their opinions.

All five students mentioned that they would like to participate in such kind of trips again. The question about the most interesting aspect of this tour was open and students noticed friendly and nice atmosphere also town tour with new sights and guided program.

Next section is about features of the tour: four students mentioned an opportunity to know new things about the places, country and the offer to travel and leave Imatra as the most important feature. Three students pointed out that low price is attractive.

It is difficult to evaluate the preference of the price with only five answers but approximately the most suitable number is € 20-25. Due to the fact that all five students were Russians, this question is not really fair because Russian students have different economic situation than for example students from Asia or Europe. That is why the result of price expectation might be different if there were students from other nationalities. However, the overall impression unlikely changes a lot if there were not only Russians.

No one mentioned negative points; one comment was about the length of the tour. Sometimes one day is not enough to explore big city, but for Savonlinna the time was sufficient. The question about frequency of the trips collected 100% for the answer once a month. Students told that usually they are not too busy with study process that is why they are available to travel more than one time per month if the price is not high. However, for question about reasons that could prevent to participate in the tour five students have chosen study process. This result provides a clear understanding that it is important to check university's timetable before organizing a tour. Other reasons for not participating are high price and weather conditions. This aspect creates seasonality obstacle; considering the climate in Finland it is not easy to find a sunny day.

All students mentioned that this type of activity creates better experience during their staying in Finland, it gives them a great opportunity to know the culture better and to fulfil the life in Finland with something more than just living in the small city. Moreover, all respondents highlight that these tours will help to discover Finland.

One more question is about the interest and preferences of the students, students mentioned that it would be interesting to participate in theme tours to try something authentic for instance ice fishing, skiing or real Finnish sauna in a

forest with cooking on open fire. Also, students are interested in cultural events such as concerts, different types of museums and natural parks.

The overall impression about the idea is positive; students are interested in participation in such kind of tours. They figure out the same benefits as were described by the author.

6 Conclusions and suggestions

The main goal was to test this product and analyse students' impression towards the tour. Already during the preparation phase, it was clear that students have an interest in this type of activity. After the first announcement about this project was published, more than 15 students expressed their willingness to participate. It is necessary to highlight that at the beginning of the project there were students from different countries who wanted to participate. But in the end, the obstacle that changed their plans was an event organised by the university which is obligatory to attend. One more time this fact shows that it is really important to be in contact with the university to predict and arrange this kind of coincidence. In addition, after the sample tour was held all students were satisfied and provided only positive feedbacks. They appreciate this new activity that was developed especially for them. The product is valuable and relevant for such target group.

The main challenge was to find a transport and as that this type of fixed cost is the most expensive it is important to find a permanent partner for further development of the product. For the future of this tourism product, it is essential to understand and implement marketing orientation instead of product orientation. Communication with potential customers, in this case with international students, might bring a new vision to the planning of these tours. The main idea of any product is meeting and satisfying consumers' needs and wants; hence it will be valuable to ask students what they would like to see. Of course it does not mean that the product will be designed by the consumers, however, cooperation with them could reach a better result.

To make this product profitable it is required to attract more students and the number of available places for one tour should be no less than 40. The students from focus group also mentioned that it would be more fun if the bus was bigger. During their life here they make friends and subsequently, they would like to travel with them. That is why this product needs a big bus that allows a big group of tourists.

The preliminary idea of the project was to familiarize students with country as well as with the culture. For further actions, the author has a suggestion to develop products with cultural background. Finland has a variety of unique features, some of them more popular and some of them less. Winter sports, gastronomic culture, sauna spirit and others parts of Finnish culture. One of the obstacles to the realization of some of these "thematic tours" might be seasonality; that is why the development process should consider the schedule for the implementation. Moreover, the main activity of students is studying and due to this fact organizing of tours should be agreed with the schedule of the university. It is important to identify exams' period or other events that plans by the university do not coincide with the dates.

This project was developed for highlighting the potential market segment that is not covered yet. Nowadays when our region - Imatra and Lappeenranta - have an economic crisis because of the decline of Russian tourists, hotels are empty and shops are closing all the time, it is a good time to develop a new permanent market. Students came, come and will come to these two towns because of the universities. They still spend money and crisis with Russian market does not affect them. Everyone knows that Finnish education is considered as one of the best in Europe and many students come to Saimaa University of applied sciences because of the positive feedbacks about the study process. The new product focuses on increasing positive comments also about the experience in Finland.

The positive result of the project reveals the need and necessity to develop such kind of product. The thing is that actually this "low-cost product" required higher expenses than it was expected. When the author was generating the service she considered prices and costs of Russian market but the situation in

Finland is totally different. That is why it would be difficult to start the development of this product from nothing. The suggestion of the author is that university might cooperate with some student union to organize this service and networking connection of both partners could be helpful and useful.

Figures

Tables

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Program of the sample trip

17th of March: Trip to Savonlinna

9:00	departure from Imatra
10:30	arrival at Savonlinna
11:30	visiting Olavinlinna (price included)
12:30	Riihisaari € 3 entrance fee
13:15	Cathedral
13:30	free time walking, shopping, lunch
15:00-16:00	departure to Imatra
17:00	Patsaspuisto
18:30	arrival at Imatra

Appendix 2 Promotion for the tour (printed advertisement, facebook page)

Varvara
Kozhevnikova
Edit Profile

MY EVENTS

Upcoming
Calendar
Subscribed
Past
Create

MAR 24 Trip to Savonlinna

Private · Hosted by Varvara Kozhevnikova

Hosting ▾ | ◼ Invite | ✎ Edit | •••

🕐 24 March at 10:00

📍 Savonlinna   Show Map

Do not miss this!!!!!!

Dear students of Saimaa University of Applied Sciences!!!
I am forth year student of tourism faculty and now I am working on my thesis.
The main idea of this project is implementation of the sample trip in format of informal excursion for international students to Savonlinna city.
I am looking for 6-8 students (exchange and full time) to participate in my project.
The trip includes transfer, guided tour in Savonlinna in English, visiting of Veijo Rönkkösen patsaspuisto, friendly atmosphere and good mood, small gift.
Surely it is better than just sit at home!!!
Preliminary date of this trip is the end of March – beginning of April.
I will appreciate your interest, for further information please contact me.
The final price of the participation is not confirmed yet, however it would be no more than 20-25 euros, the fee is depending on the amount of the

Katja, Elana and Ivan are going

6   6   37
going   maybe   invited

🗨 Message Guests

RECENT EVENT PHOTOS   See all

INVITE FRIENDS

YourTrip
Savonlinna
2016

Appendix 3 Questionnaire form

1. Would you like to participate in such kind of trips?

- o Yes
- o No
- o Other

2. What was the most interesting thing during this trip?

3. What is the most attractive, important feature for you in these tours?

- o The program of the tour
- o The destination (e.g. Savonlinna)
- o Opportunity to know new things about the town, country.
- o Price
- o Informal format of the tour (atmosphere)
- o Possibility to meet new people
- o Offer to travel and leave Imatra
- o Other:

4. How much are you willing to pay for this type of trip?

- o 15 - 20 euro
- o 20 - 25 euro
- o 25 - 30 euro
- o 30 - 35 euro
- o Other:

5. What did you not like?

6. What would be the most interesting for you: sport/cultural/theme tours?

7. What could prevent you to participate in this trip?

- o Study process
- o High price
- o Weather conditions
- o Language of the tours
- o Other:

8. How often would you like to participate?

- o 2-4 times per month
- o 1-2 times per month
- o 1-2 times per half a year
- o Other:

9. Do you think that this type of activity will make your experience here more interesting? Why?

10. Do you think these tours will help you to discover Finland and to learn more?

- o Yes
- o No
- o I don't know

11. Your overall impression and opinion on the idea?

Appendix 4 Voucher for the tour

Voucher / Maksutodistus	
Service / Palvelut	**Savonlinna Trip**
Date & Time / Päivämäärä &Aika	**17.03.2016 9:00 am**
Name / Nimi	
Price	**€ 20**
Client's Signature	
Agent's Signature	
Date of payment/ Maksu	
Pickup Place & Time / Noutopaikka & -aika	**Masku Parking lot 9:00**
cancellation could be done free of charge maximum 72 h. prior start of activity	

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