

Gaigalova Varvara

**AIKUNE GYMNASTICS - A NEW WELLNESS TOURISM PRODUCT FOR EUROPEAN
MARKET**

Thesis

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Author(s) Gaigalova Varvara	
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<p>The history of health tourism in Europe has tended to be based around spas and seawater treatments. Nowadays, this business niche is quite diverse and includes wellness products such as yoga, massage, spa etc.</p> <p>This thesis is focusing on the development of a new wellness tourism product, for the European market – Aikune. The motivation to make the research on this topic arose from the desire of the author to open her own business.</p> <p>The theoretical part of the thesis is focusing on the concepts existing in the wellness industry: wellness structure and wellness core providers as well as product development concepts: the process of product development, the marketing mix.</p> <p>The research part was completed by organizing 4 workshops in 2 different places and by the survey required to understand the potential of Aikune in Europe. To be more precise, to choose the most appropriate product. The most suitable schedule; and the price. One of the additional aims of the research was to find the partner to organize, develop and advertise Aikune in Finland.</p> <p>To sum up, the research revealed that Aikune has quite large potential in Finland as a new wellness product. To be more specific, 36 people (82 %) out of 48 would like to continue exercising Aikune with instructor. The most appropriate type of lessons is Everyday classes (2 times per week) with the price 5-10 euro. The additional aim was also achieved. 4 potential partners were found.</p>	
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PREFACE

I would like to express my gratitude to Kajaani University of Applied Sciences for my exchange studies and for double degree program, in which I took part. It was such a great and helpful experience.

I would like to thank my supervisor Mikko Keränen for providing me the chance to commit the research on this exiting topic and help me throughout my thesis process. Additional thanks to Peter Stricker, for his support during the studies and to Kaisa Meri-lahti and Kirsi Sievers for their assistance.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CBI: Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries

CENTRO: Centro Español de Derechos Reprográficos

ETC: European Travel Commission

GSS: The Global Spa Summit

GWI: The Global Wellness Institute

PDMA: Product Development & Management Association

SRI: Stanford Research Institute International

UNWTO: World Tourism Organization

WHO: World Health Organization

WTW: Wellness Tourism Worldwide

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1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis focuses on the development of the wellness tourism product – Aikune for the European market. The idea of the subject was born in the author's mind while working as an Aikune gymnastics instructor in Russia. At the moment, there are several centres that sell Aikune classes. They are located in Russia, Kazakhstan and Belorussia, but there is no such kind of centre in European Union countries.

The research work consists of both theoretical and practical parts. The theoretical background of the project is researching Wellness tourism and tourism product development. It includes the topics such as Wellness tourism, service product development, and the development of new wellness tourism product - Aikune.

The practical part of the research is a market analysis of potential European customers. The empirical research is done by the analysis of customer feedback received after the participation in the classes.

The main author's motivation is to understand if there is a potential in Aikune gymnastics within Europe. If there is demand, the gymnastics will be adopted for EU countries as a new form of wellness product.

The main research task is to develop Aikiune gymnastics for the needs of Europeans. So as to achieve this aim, the smaller tasks should be created.

The former one is market analysis, which can be made by feedback collection from the customers. This leads us to the latter objective, which is the conduction of Aikune classes in EU countries such as Finland.

The key information that will be derived from the survey must shed light on the question of how to make Aikune attractive for European citizens. This can be done by finding out the best ways to perform the classes, which can be: wellness trips to exotic and mass tourism countries such as Greece, India; intensive Aikune course in European wellness /

lifestyle resort; everyday lessons in yoga/fitness centers located in the large cities and popular tourist destinations in Europe.

2 WHAT IS WELLNESS TOURISM?

This chapter outlines the basic aspects of Wellness tourism. The definition and main features of wellness, wellness tourism and tourists are reviewed. The other considerable topics are wellness tourism supply; wellness tourism demand in European Union; the worldwide tendency of wellness tourism.

2.1 Definition of Wellness

“Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”. (WHO, 1948.) Health consists of three constituent elements of well-being: physical, mental and social. If some of these competences are absent, it influences on the person’s health and well-being.

Morandi and Nambi (2013, 134.) identify the idea of well-being as a balance of body, mind and soul. Myers & Sweeney (2007) defines wellness as existence away from life aimed at the optimum health and well-being, where the body, mind and spirit are united by the individual to be more fully within the human and natural community.

Wellness is multidimensional: The key definitions of wellness comprise the model, which has from 2 to 14 and more dimensions, that often involve physical, mental, spiritual, and social aspects.

Wellness is holistic: It takes into account all aspects of the human body, mind and spirit – working in the harmony.

Wellness is self-responsibility: In case of some illness, people actively take part in protecting of their health, not leaving all this to the medicine.

Wellness is individual, but also depends on the environment: Wellness is a process pursued on the individual level through the healthy behaviors and practices that support personal well-being. Nevertheless, individual wellness affects on the status of the environment where he/she lives.

Wellness changes over time and along a continuum: Wellness is not a static condition or an end-point, but more like continuum levels of wellness that an individual attempts to achieve and maximize throughout his or her life. (Smith & Puczko' 2014, 27.)

Nowadays more and more attention is paid to the environmental, outside, cultural and worldwide sides of wellness. (Yeung 2010, 5-8.)

2.2 Wellness tourism and tourist

2.2.1 The definitions of Wellness tourism and tourist

Wellness tourism is a significant part of health tourism, which is one of the oldest kinds of tourism. Already ancient civilizations practiced several therapies provided by the modern spas. For instance, water treatments such as Turkish bath. Long history health tourism is connected deeply with Eastern and Central Europe, where essential natural healing environment can be found such as medial thermal and mineral water special muds, and caves, mountains and climate. (Smith & Puczko' 2009, 44-46.)

According to Voigt (2013, 26.), Wellness tourism comprises all phenomena coming from a travel by individuals whose motive is to fully or partly support and contribute to their health and wellbeing and whose residence lasts at least one night at a facility, which is especially designed to integrally enable and increase people's physical, psychological, spiritual and/or social well-being, and which ideally also takes into consideration environmental and community wellness in a sustainable way.

Bushell and Sheldon (2009, 11-15.) concluded that wellness tourism is a holistic way of traveling, which unites a quest for physical health, beauty, or life prolonging, and /or an increase of consciousness or spiritual knowledge, and a contact with community, nature or the divine mystery. It covers the diapason of tourism experiences in destinations including wellness products, corresponding infrastructures, facilities, and natural and wellness resources. Wellness tourism is separated into parts as the conceptual structures, which are wellness tourists, wellness destinations and experiences.

Voigt (2013, 28.) suggests that Wellness tourists are Individuals, who are traveling to different locations to actively engage in activities, that maintenance or improve their own health or well-being, and who are seeking for unique, genuine or based on location experience treatment inaccessible at home.

2.2.2 The main features of the wellness tourism

According to Smith and Puczko' (2009, 7.) Wellness tourism can be seen as holistic (spiritual, yoga and meditation, new age), leisure and recreation (beauty treatment, sport and fitness, pampering). Although, Wellness tourism can also be medical (therapeutic recreation, rehabilitation, occupational wellness) (Figure 1.)

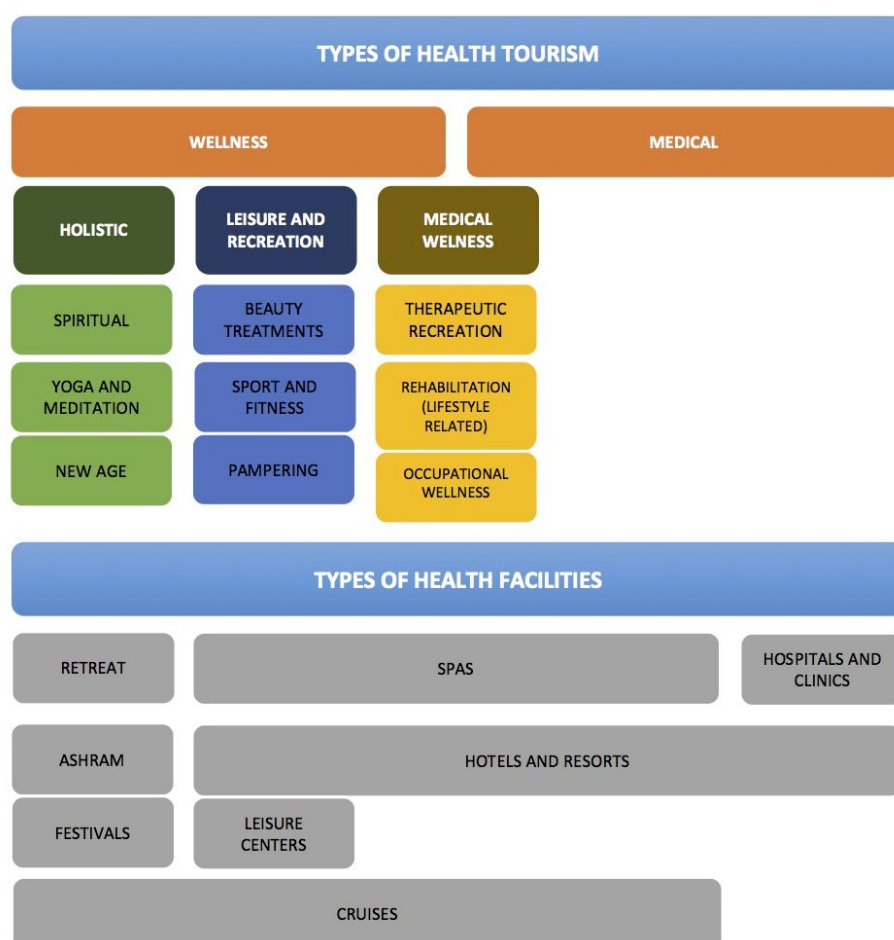


Figure 1. Spectrum of health tourism. (Smith & Puczko' 2009, 7.)

Tourist's motivation to travel is caused by the need to maintain or promote own health. It is more related to the change of lifestyle than healing of illness and can be both active and passive. Active tourism includes, for example, fitness tourism. Meanwhile, passive tourism consists of beauty programs. (Smith and Puczko' 2009, 83-87.)

According to Adam (2003, 65.) Wellness tourism notion comprises four principles:

1. Multi-dimensionality
2. Wellness research and practice refers towards wellness sources rather than illnesses
3. Balance
4. Relative, subjective, perceptual

The service in the wellness facilities might consist of healthy diet and weight management; supervised sport and fitness; massage, manicure and beauty treatments; relaxation and stress relief; meditation and yoga; health related education; health support after coming back home. (Smith & Puczko' 2009, 133-135.) Wellness tourism generally comprises community interactions, information distribution and volunteering opportunities. (Bushell & Sheldon 2009, 10.)

All Wellness tourism services are directed to prevent diseases, bad physical and mental conditions. The main aims are to rest, rejuvenate and update. (Erfurt-Cooper & Cooper 2009, 8.)

2.2.3 Wellness tourist (demand)

Wellness tourist is looking for wellness products that develop their health/quality of life. He/she is healthy or "well", concerned about food diet or improving health/healthy life style.

Wellness tourists have various needs and motivations; nonetheless there are some general features. In general, a wellness tourist is middle-aged, with adult children, with a higher than college education level and with higher than middle class level revenue. Moreover, wellness tourist has a big travel experience and demand high-quality prod-

ucts and services. They are aware of their own responsibility for the well being, place money in it and are ready to pay for the health-related goods and services. Wellness tourists wish to contribute to own well-being, participate in cultural activities and thoughtfully plan their active holidays. (Suontausta & Tyni 2005, 115-116.)

Wellness tourists have the following travel motives: physical (such as health check-up, nutrition, fitness, body treatments, massage and bathing), mental (such as yoga and meditation), spiritual (such as volunteering, praying), emotional (such as retreats, stress reduction and life-coughing), environmental (such as hiking, nature visits, biking) or social needs. The purpose of the travel can be also linked to the mind-body, personal growth, ecology and adventure. (Yeung, & Johnston 2015, 10-12.)

Wellness tourists can be divided into different groups, depending on their motives and purpose of travel. The first group includes tourists, who use wellness services, which are simple additions to other activities. For example, hotel as an additional service can have a special offer: the room where the environment has been done in a very ecological and attractive way. The second group consists of travellers, who seek for journey, where the main objective is to improve physical or mental well-being. The example of this travel can be yoga and meditation holidays. The third group includes those, who want to “run away” from stressful daily routine to completely other environment and get wellness in that way. The forth group consists of people who prefer holidays, where wellness is more subordinate component than the main one, e.g. Family holidays when various generations may spend the holiday together in a hotel/spa/wellness resort. (Smith & Puczko’ 2009, 133-140.)

2.3 Wellness tourism market (supply)

Tourism supply is a complex phenomenon because of both the nature of the product and the process of delivery. It is perishable, intangible and requires traveling to consume it. Environment, either natural or constructed, is key component of tourism supply. It usually consists of several components, which can be bought as a package or separately. For instance, transport, accommodation, catering, attractions and activities, en-

ertainment, travel agents and additional services such as banks and shops. (Page & Connell 2006, 89-92.)

Wellness tourism supply comprises service providers of extensive range - substantially all the tourism services, which are targeting for the wellness tourists along with the lodging, food, shopping and other services.

In Wellness tourism, the main component is the activities while other elements adds and extra value. For instance, there are three main types of Wellness tourism providers: beauty spas, lifestyle resorts and spiritual retreats. (Figure 2.)

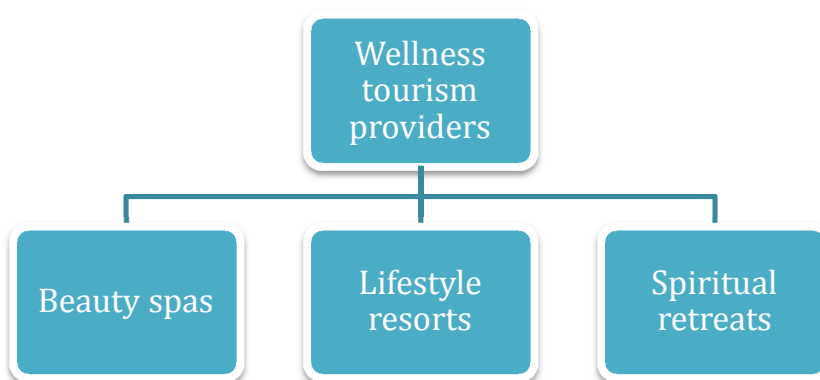


Figure 2. 3 types of core wellness providers (Voigt 2013, 7.)

Beauty Spa hotels/resorts concentrate on body and non-medical methods of treatments like massage, body wraps and facials. Some beauty spas have special geographical position, so that they based on their own mineral or thermal pools. Beauty spas, which do not have these features, may frequently propose based on the water treatment, at least in a way of steam rooms, saunas, whirl-pools, hot tubs and wet treatments rooms.

In comparison to beauty spa guests who inactively receive the treatment, the physician lifestyle resorts' visitors are actively taking part in extensive programs that concentrate on health-promotion in such spheres like food, trainings and fitness, individual aims and stress control. Many lifestyle resorts propose wide amount of alternative medicine treatments. The catering in the lifestyle resorts is usually useful for the well-being. (Voigt & Pforr 2014, 69.)

The ascent of the spiritual retreats is on visitor's spiritual development. Spiritual retreats can be both religious and not connected to religion. In any case, they comprise meditation in different shapes. Lots of spiritual retreats are based on concrete teachings or philosophy or/and focusing on the learning of certain mind/body technique such as yoga, T'ai Chi, Reiki or some special forms of meditation, and accommodation and services are usually basic and strict. (Voigt & Pforr 2014, 70.)

Besides those core three wellness tourism providers, there are other ones, such as leisure centers, festivals, cruises, health sanatoria, yoga studios, wildlife sanctuaries, nature preserves, organic and natural restaurants, healthy food stores, integrative health centers. (Yeung & Johnston 2015, 12.) Wellness facilities include such equipment like sauna, solarium, sport/fitness, steam bath, swimming pool, whirlpool and medical centers. (Erfurt-Cooper & Cooper 2009, 9.)

2.4 Wellness tourism demand in European Union

Nowadays wellness tourism is recognizable niche market in at least 30 countries. Twenty countries have 85% of the world wellness tourism expenditures in 2013. The top five of them (United States, Germany, Japan, France, Austria) possess more than half of the market (59% of expenditures) (Yeung & Johnston 2015, 96.)

Europe (after US) owns the second place in the world wellness tourism market, with \$158.4 billion yearly, joint international and domestic expenditures. The area ranks the first in number of wellness trips with 216.2 million, in contrast to North America's 171.7 million in 2013 (Yeung & Johnston 2015, 101-102.)

European travellers are increasingly seeking for the ways to relax because of the high stress rate in the both working and private lives. They are more and more using Wellness trips, as the means to update and improve their well-being. Moreover, Europe has a long history of using health products such as sauna, mineral baths, thalassotherapy and other natives and water-based treatments. Thermal hotels and resorts in Turkey and Hungary are very popular between wellness travelers. The majority of them are financed by home countries like Norway or Denmark wishing to reduce expenses for

treatments of patients who are hopelessly ill. The citizens of Germany and Austria are very interested in wellness and are willing to travel abroad for wellness activities. (Nagel 2013, 1-4.)

With reference to Statista (2015) Germany was the leading consumer of Wellness tourism spending 42.2 Billion U.S. dollars in 2012. The second country, which also spends much on wellness, is France (24.1), followed by Austria (14). The above - mentioned numbers indicate both domestic and international trips. (chart 1)

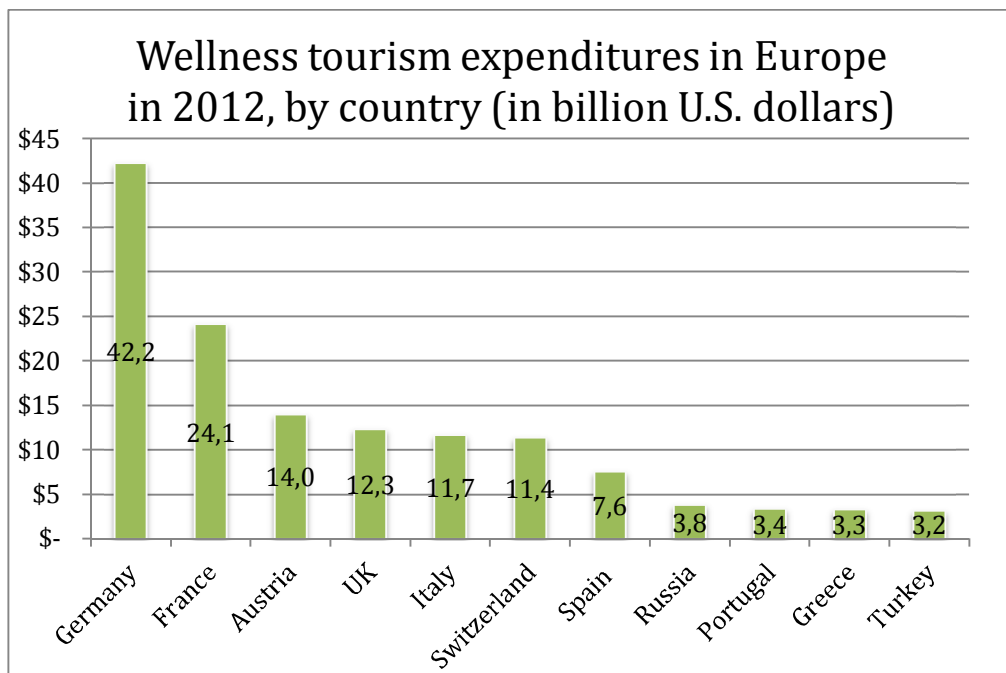


Chart 1. Wellness tourism expenditures in Europe in 2012 (in billion U.S. dollars) (Statista 2015.)

However, it is expected that the wellness tourism consumption will increase in Russia by 13 %, Turkey 12.6% and Poland 12.4% from 2013 to 2017 year. (Chart 2.)

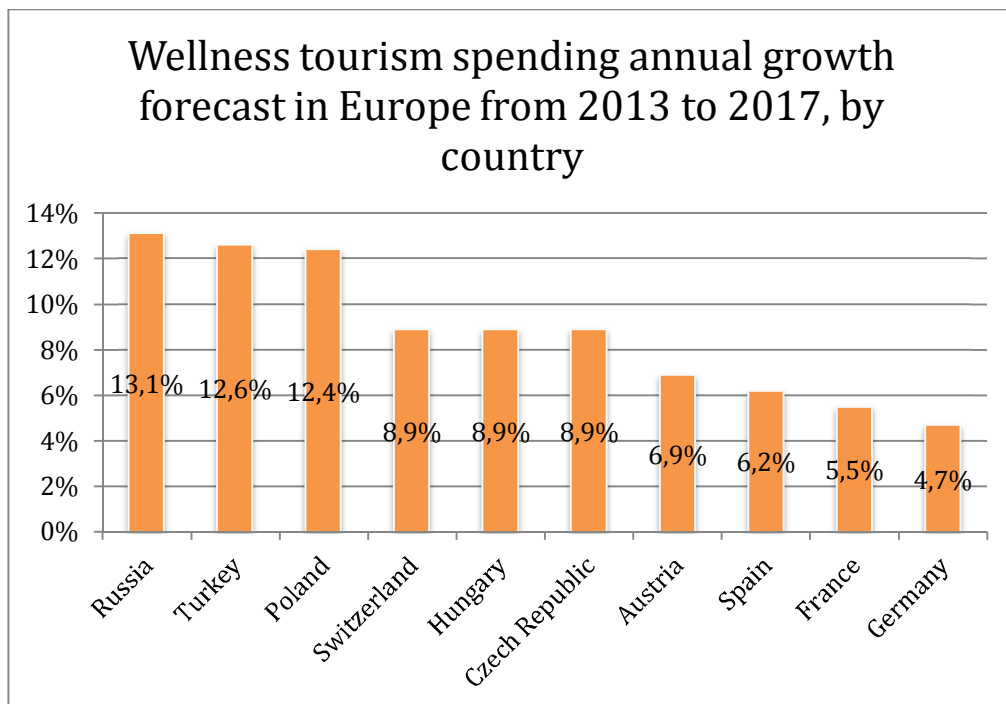


Chart 2. Wellness tourism spending annual growth forecast in Europe from 2013 to 2017 (Statista 2015.)

2.5 Worldwide tendency of Wellness tourism

There are many factors, which affect on the future of Wellness Tourism. The most significant of them are: the modifications in the economic, social, political, and physical environment; globalization (attitudes, markets, manufactures, financial), networking (businesses, administration, general public), the growth of sustainability, the increasing of the life expectancy, the control under the process of technical evolution, the asset rise and polarizing. (Puhakka 2011, 4.)

The supply for wellness tourism and population age is growing. Moreover, the demand for wellness tourism increases, when tourists search for significant and single-minded experience instead of adventure. Originative and slow tourism, health and sustainability lifestyle are rising everyday. (Op. cit., 4-5.)

In accordance with Yeung and Johnston (2015, 18.) the future of wellness tourism is behind Europe, North America and Asia-Pacific. (Figure 3.)

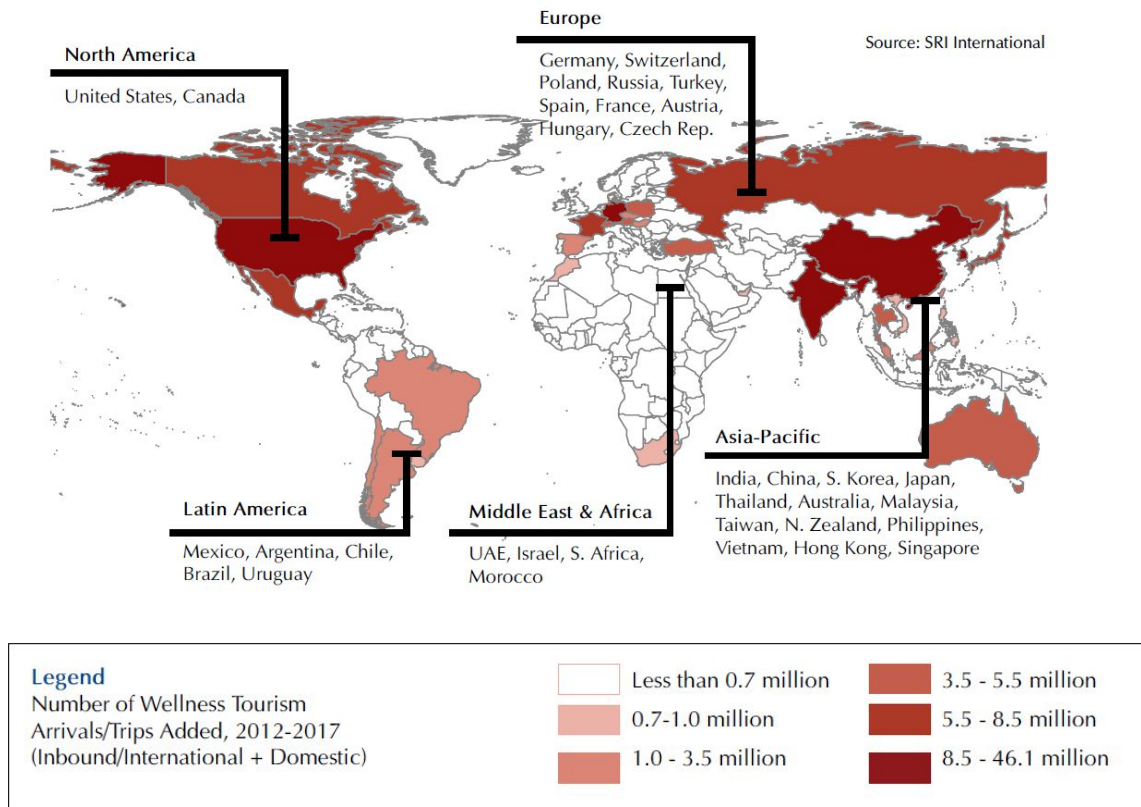


Figure 3. Top countries for growth in inbound/international and domestic wellness trips, 2012-2017 (Yeung & Johnston 2015, 18.)

Wellness tourism has a huge potential and receive even more interest in the future. It is estimated that European wellness market will grow by 2017 by about 9.1 per cent every year. The growth rate is nearly 50% higher than that of overall global tourism. (Yeung & Johnston 2015, 18)

3 PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

The second part of the theoretical framework includes the following topics: the service product in tourism, and the product development.

There are many definitions of a new product, but the most generally it could be defined as a product (good or service), new to the company marketing it. Excluding the products, which are only changed in the promotion. (Kahn 2013, 488.)

There are a few various types on revealing product development. In tourism sphere, the foundation of the product development is customer's needs and motives. The services provider should realize both, the fundamental and social requirements of the customer. (UNWTO & ETC 2011, 1-2.)

Product development is frequently related with the elaboration of the events, programs and actions of the tourist place of destination. Nevertheless, the final product composed of the whole services of the tour comprising travelling. The meaning of the product development is that the varied capabilities of destinations creating into products, which are having determinative core valuation and cost. (Op. cit., 2-4.)

3.1 Service product in Tourism

Tourism is consumption. In order to consume tourism, it must be done into product, which is possible to purchase. (Borg et al. 2002, 122-123.) In tourism hospitality and leisure, people are dealing with a service product that differs from the common goods sold in the markets. There are three main features of service product: intangibility, perishability and inseparability. Intangibility indicates that the service product cannot be experienced before the consumption. There exist some tools, which enhance intangibility of the product before buying, for example printed literature, videos and branding. Perishability suggests that service product may not be stored to be sold in the future. This feature of the product forms the high-risk nature of tourism industry. Inseparabil-

ity basically indicates that consumption and production of the service product take place at the same time. Both, the service provider and consumer is present when the factual service happens. (Cooper et al. 2005, 574-575.) In order to understand the customer's position, one must take into consideration their motivation and needs. Nowadays customers have become more and more picky due to rivalry in the market. (Borg et al. 2002, 123.)

3.2 The process of product development

With reference to Kahn (2013, 489.) new product development process is a disciplined and defined set of tasks and stages that characterize the standard ways through which the company repetitively converts ideas into marketable products (goods or services).

The stages of tourism product development are the same as in any product development process. Nevertheless, customer's involvement in the various segments of product development makes this process unique in the tourism sphere. Each stage of the product development process has a certain value and concrete results. This is the key to successful planning and organization of the work, and the ability to control the whole process of product development. (Komppula & Boxberg 2002, 99-100.) (Figure 4.)

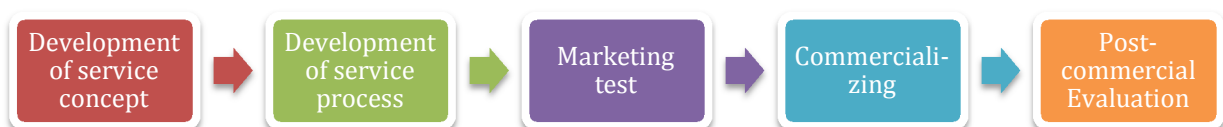


Figure 4. The process of product development (Komppula & Boxberg 2002, 99-100)

3.2.1 Service concept development

As Kahn (2013, 489.) states, the new product idea is a preliminary plan or destination of act for developing new products or services. The product concept is distinctly written

and possibly visual description of the new product idea, which comprises its basic characteristics and customer benefits joint with the extensive understanding of technology required.

The conception of service is the main idea of the tourism product. In other words, it is a value anticipated by the consumer and how the service provider fulfills his expectation. Therefore, the service provider should clearly identify the wants and expectations of the consumer. Moreover, each new product must be created for the specific target group and particular destination. (Komppula & Boxberg 2002, 99-100.)

The value of customer's readiness and capacity to take part in the service act must be estimated. The customer's participation depends on resources such as time, money, and emotional and physical state. (Op. cit., 101.)

When the customer's value, needs and participation rate are clear, it is necessary to assess the provider's resources. The resources can both tangible and intangible, such as equipment, the know-how of the staff, place and partnership companies and people. (Woy & Wang 2007, 7-15.)

The last step of the service concept is creation of various activities. Such activities build concept of the main idea; they are based on the customer's value, needs and participation level, and provider's sources. Such activities and ideas may be after collected into other products. The management of these activities will be given in the next section.

3.2.2 Service process development

The service process involves the real service product. When the product is presented to the customer, in a brochure or offer, it incorporates factors only apparent to the customers. For the provider, it involves all the actions required to bring the supposed value to the customer. It could be accommodation, transportation, food and activities. The service provider must represent these elements as connected together units, composing the service system, which satisfies customers' quality expectations. (Komppula & Boxberg 2002, 103.)

In order to control the units of the service system, the service provider can use blue-printing / planning. The entire service process is characterized in the chart, which comprises the customer's actions, which can be visible (such as customer service) and invisible (such as background work), production of services. It is particularly useful when various providing companies make units of the service system. The product must be tested, analyzed and described, and only after that it can be sold. Each unit of the service system should be tested in advance, particularly if it involves settled activities. It helps to avoid safety, schedules or other risk factors. To check a new product, companies are using both own staff and their friends or relatives. (Op. cit., 104-105.)

One more significant stage before marketing is financial analysis. Tourism product must be profitable, easy to sell and have a long lifespan. The price must cover expenses and be competitive among other providers. Kahn (2013, 495.) describes the life cycle as four phases, through which a new product must go from its birth to death: introduction, growth, maturity, and decline. It is very important since the creation of the product takes time and money. Kahn (2013, 490.) refers to product payback time as the time, starting from the certain moment in the development process until the commercialized product has restored its expenses of development and marketing. It must be determined in order to know when the product is recouped. Financial analysis must also cover issues regarding the tourist group's size, security, service quality and the buying potential of the target group. (Komppula & Boxberg 2002, 110-111.)

3.2.3 Marketing test

Marketing test is the step of product development, when the product and its marketing plan are tested together. It is the starting of the new product into one or more limited geographical places in a very controllable way and measurement customer responses to the product and its launch. When several geographical places are used in the test, it is possible to apply various advertising and pricing strategies and compare the results. (Kahn 2013, 487.)

The process of marketing test can be divided into two parts: the attainment of the potential customer's testing and the actual testing. The object of the testing can be both potential customers and probationary group (such as tour operator staff or managers from future customers organizations). The main goal of the marketing test is to ascertain the probable proposals for the product enhancement before its finite start. It is essential that the product should be already good prepared, because in case of the fail service, provider can lose its reputation on the market. On the other hand, if the developmental proposals are taken into account and modifications are done, the probability of selling the product is sharply growing. (Woy & Wang 2007, 10-18.)

The service provider must be sure that the testing group is motivated to use this specific type of services; this way the feedback will be thought-minded and informatory. (Komppula & Boxberg 2002, 113-114.)

In order to make marketing test, the developer needs good theoretical tools. One of them is The Marketing Mix. It represents the core elements of any product (goods or service). Therefore it should be applied to advertise wellness tourism service.

Marketing mix or traditional 4Ps model comprise four features: Product, Price, Place and Promotion. They are the variables which marketing managers can control in order to best satisfy customers in the target market. Below, a short description of each marketing mix element is given. (Figure 5.)



Figure 5. Marketing Mix (Kumar 2010, 46.)

Product. It is physical product or service proposed to the consumer. If the product is physical, it also applies to any services or facilities included into the offer. The product comprises aspects such as functionality, brand, packaging, services and other. (Blythe 2008, 52-54.)

Price. Pricing decisions must take into consideration profit margins and the probable pricing response of competitors. Pricing comprises not only the list price, but also discounts, budgeting and other opportunities such as credit terms.

Place. It is space where exchange of product and payment takes place. Frequently there are some intermediate comprised such as retailers, franchises or selling and purchasing by phone or Internet. Place also includes components like channel, inventory, logistics and distribution. (Blythe 2008, 66-79.)

Promotion. How marketers are transmitting the offering to the customers. It is divided into promotional mix, and its core elements are advertising, sales promotion, public relations and personal selling. Marketers need to choose which media to use (radio, TV, magazines, internet etc.) in order to send the correct image of the product to the customer. (Kotler & Armstrong 2012, 52.)

3.2.4 Commercialization and evaluation

Kahn (2013, 471.) suggests that the commercialization of the product is the final point of the product development process. This stage incorporates the marketing strategies and program development; the launch of the production and it's pricing; the development of the supply chain; training, service and support systems development.

During the commercialization process, the marketing costs are concerning big, since all the possible clients require a written proposal or booklet. Moreover, another promotion stuff such as web site, presentations, video or other marketing expenses establishes costs too.

If the product failed, it is important for its producer's to figure out, why it happens. In such way, the ideas from the product development act can be used for another task or in different form. (Komppula & Boxberg 2002, 114-115.)

4 PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT FOR AIKUNE

Firstly, Aikune gymnastics features are described. Secondly, this chapter describes the product development process applied to Aikune.

The features of the Aikune

Aikune gymnastics was developed in 1998 in Kazakhstan. The gymnastics is the complex of exercises designed for treatment and prophylaxis of diseases related with spine and joints. In total, there are about 1000 exercises. Basic Aikune exercises are primary directed towards the deep muscles and ligaments that are supporting the spine. There are also exercises directed at strengthening of the internal muscles and ligaments of the spine and torso, and of the hands and legs joints. Regular performance of the exercises allows to get rid of the back and neck aches as well as to form and correct the posture. The system is easy to master, it does not require any additional devices and is suitable for people of different age categories. It is recommended to start practicing Aikune with the instructor, but after taking the course participants are able to continue exercising independently at home.

During the performance of the Aikune gymnastics:

- The internal muscles of the back and its ligaments are strengthening.
- The correct posture and gait is forming.
- The back and joints pain disappear.
- Flexibility and endurance is developing.
- The metabolism improves, and the weight reduces.
- The energy level increases, the sleeping state and general mood improve.

4.1 Aikune target group

According to Kahn (2013, 503.) target market is the group of users or potential clients chosen for marketing. This is the target section, which will most likely buy the certain

product. There are many different ways, on how to define market segments: demographics (men vs. women, young vs. old, wealthy vs. poor), behavioral (phone purchases vs. internet, cash vs. cards), attitudinal (belief in international brands vs. national brands) (Kahn 2013, 487.)

In case with Aikune, the gymnastics is suitable for people from 6 years to the elderly age. During the classes, participants are able to control the load on their own, depending on their capability, health condition and the age. One of the requirements is that practicing must be able to exercise the gymnastics independently; person's activity is very important.

Based on the author's personal work experience as an Aikune gymnastics instructor, the main target market is 30-50 years woman with back and joints problems. They have an average income and a large experience of application different techniques such as yoga and fitness and different treatments such as massage or manual therapy. The target group wants to experience something new and effective. If the target audience likes the product, they recommend it to their relatives and friends what happens frequently and serves as a good marketing tool.

So as to understand the target market in a better way, the analysis of existing social network Aikune groups in V Kontakte (an analogy of Facebook) was made.

There are 4316 people in general. 3335 from them are women (77,3%), and 981 are men (22,7%). The age groups were the following:

- Less than 20: 141 people (3,3%)
- From 21 till 30 years: 1440 people (33,3%)
- From 31 till 40 years: 1196 people (27,7%)
- From 41 till 50 years: 828 (19,2 %)
- From 51 years: 711 people (16,5%)

According to this statistics, the main target group is 21 – 40 years women. Analyzing this statistics, it is necessary to take into consideration, that one person can consist in several groups. It is also important, that old people often are not using social networks.

To better understand the target market, the practical part was completed.

4.2 The development of Aikune product

4.2.1 Aikune concept development

The main idea of the product concept is to improve customer's health and physical condition by exercising Aikune.

To satisfy the needs of different customers, three main variations of the Aikune concept are to be created:

- Wellness trips. The duration: 1-2 weeks; the location: exotic and mass tourism countries such as Greece, India; the target group: European middle age women.
- Intensive Aikune course. The duration: 3 hours per day/7 days; the location: European wellness/lifestyle resort; the target group: middle age women.
- Everyday lessons. The duration: 60 min/lesson; the location: yoga/fitness centers located in the large cities in the European Union countries; the target group: middle age women.

Everyday lessons will be organized to test the product and to select the most potential variant. Moreover, customers' opinion about the product details will be received via Feedback form.

4.2.2 Aikune service process development

The product must be described, analyzed and tested before it can be sold. In our case, the product has three variations: wellness trip, intensive course and everyday lessons. The most potential product will be chosen after the testing. To develop the above-mentioned services, it is vital to pay attention to the target group, financial analysis, product lifespan, security and service quality.

As an example, to create one of the Aikune product – a wellness trip, the next information should be identified: what countries the potential customers would like to travel to; by which transport; what kind of accommodation; how much money they are ready to spend; the length of the trips; time of the year. In addition, psychological, sociological and physiological states of specific customers should be estimated before the marketing campaign. Finally, current tourism trends must be clearly identified. In the below text, the service description of three products is given.

Everyday lessons

The product is concentrating on the citizens of large cities in the European Union countries. According to the statistics, it is expected that the main target group will be a middle age women.

To organize everyday lessons, it is essential to find good location. It should be easy to reach the place by public transport. The city center could be the best option; the place itself should attract people. It must be high-quality gym with space enough for 10 people. There should be windows or good ventilation to have fresh air. To do Aikune, the certain equipment is required: the chairs, fitness mats and music source. Everything should look new and nice. The logotype of the company can be put on it. The sound of music should be high quality and must meet the taste of people. The cold water and even some snacks can be provided. Since, it is the place, which is visited by loads of people, the cleaning should be done from time to time.

Before the beginning of the course, all people must get info via e-mail with information regarding the rules of success such as: comfortable clothes, no food before the lesson, timetable, and the system of payment, missing the lessons, info regarding location. As the main target group is middle age people, all the information provided should be clear, easy to read and the design must meet their tastes. Pictures can be made during the lessons to engage people into conversation via social media and create some pleasant memories as well as real life marketing. The photos can be used on the website, posters, brochures. People could write feedback on the company's web site, which must be created before anything else. The price of the product will depend on many factors such as demand; country; individual/group lesson; place; minimum income; customer group. If

the demand for Aikune is rising, the price could go down or up. The price in rich countries will be higher than in poor. If the place is good, the price can be higher. The income should be enough to cover the expenses and get revenue. Depending on the customer group, there can be discounts. Customers can also buy time-subscriptions. The product lifespan depends on several factors; it will exist until there is a demand and instructor continues working. It is quite easy to find a place to hold Aikune because it does not require any specialties. It can be even someone's flat (private lesson).

Intensive Aikune course

To organize the intensive courses, the same aspects as in every day lessons should be taken into account. However, the main difference is the location and the target group. The intensive course is mainly organized in wellness/lifestyle resorts and the most typical customer is a middle age people with a higher than college education level and with higher than middle class level revenue. The price for the intensive course is usually higher due to longer time period of the lessons and can change depending on the amount of people (personal/group lessons). The product's lifespan depends on the same factors as everyday lessons. Besides, wellness tourism demand in European Union countries and the worldwide tendency of wellness tourism must be taken into account. With reference to Yeung and Johnston (2015, 18.) the worldwide wellness tourism will grow by 9.1 % by the year 2017. Germany, Switzerland and Poland supposed to become Wellness tourism leaders in Europe.

Wellness trip

Wellness trips incorporate the concept of everyday lessons but the action takes place in foreign countries and includes various activities besides Aikune.

The motivations of tourists are various. Aikune can be both an addition to other activities of the destination and the primary travel goal. The main characteristics of people who will buy Wellness trips include escapism, willingness to improve physical health and appearance, to update, wish to re-establish self-esteem, to try novelty in active way.

The service of the wellness trip includes organization of visa issues, insurance, transportation, accommodation, catering, Aikune lessons, and additional services (activities,

excursions). To ensure the quality of the service, everything should be done in time and clear information should be provided via e-mail and in brochures. To provide security system, all the participants will get insurance, detailed instructions before the trip and support during the journey. The price will depend on the distance of the flight, duration of the trip, hotel/resort, and other elements of package. The package can be sold only to exact amount of people, for 5 or 10 persons, for instance. As an example, the price for the 10 days Wellness trip from Finland to Thailand in December with accommodation in Lanta Paradise Beach Resort*** is approximately 900 euro.

The product presented to the customers by using guidebook, poster, brochure or written proposal.

Guidebook

The idea of the Aikune guidebook is to show the gymnastics to the owners of potential places for the workshops as well as to form the program of the lesson. The goal is to make the guidebook clear, good looking, enjoyable to read and easy to understand. The guidebook consists of the sets of basic exercises with illustrations (photos) and expected results. The author has the experience of graphic design and that made the decor part easier. Two sport students from KAMK helped the author by being a models and showing different exercises.

Posters

The idea of the posters is to make an advertisement for the workshops by spreading it in different places. The materials from the guidebook can be used.

Aikune Marketing test

Before the product can be sold, it should be tested in the market. The test consists of two parts: the testing organization and actual testing. In our case, the first part is the creation of the Aikune classes. To commit this, the following steps must be completed:

1. Aikune guidebook
2. Cooperation letter

3. Discussion of the details with those who are interested to define the place, the date and the duration of the Aikune classes.
4. Promotion and advertising: posters and flyers must be created, printed and distributed to different places and people. Facebook group and event can be created.

The second part of the product test is the actual testing. To commit this, certain number of Aikune classes must be held. The desired number of clients is 50 people. By using feedback form, customer's opinion of the product will be recorded.

4.2.3 Aikune Commercializing

After the marketing testing, author is going to choose one the most prospective product, and start offering it to the different companies. The first time Author is going to work for someone and estimate the market situation.

During Aikune commercializing the marketing expenses can be relatively big, because promotional staff such as web site, brochures, business cards and other is needed. Moreover, it is essential to create a good marketing strategy and pricing system. Customer support system should be developed.

In case with Wellness trips, the supply chain must be developed (accommodation, transportation, food and other services). The training system of the staff (Aikune instructors, guides, service staff) also must be created.

Below, the draft list of the marketing expenses is compiled:

The logotype: 200 euro.

The brochure: the design – 50 euro, printing of 1000 copies – 35 euro.

The business card: the design – 30 euro, printing of 500 copies – 20 euro.

Web site with needed information, pictures, online registration, forum, feedback form, contacts, and mailbox – 400 euro. Web site maintenance: 40 euro per month.

Total: 735 euro plus 40 euro per month.

The prices are taken from the Russian market, because they are lower than in Finland. Moreover, the Author has some connection with Russian web and design market, which makes it easier to find the right service provider and to be sure with the quality of the order. The company should be officially registered when the demand becomes obvious, and there is good enough profit to cover promotional, renting, taxation, accounting expenses etc. Many promotional tools already exist (logotype, web site, business cards and brochures), but to develop company's brand, the following tools can be needed:

Corporate identity: 200 euro (include branding clothing; decoration of the place; company's logotype on the fitness mats, cups, pens, key chain, calendar).

Video-presentation: 200 euro (to present the company to its partners and customers).

In addition, the web site can require some renewal or changes (150 euro) and some more copies of the brochures and business cards can be needed (50 euro).

Total: 600 euro plus 40 euro per month for the web site maintenance.

All together the promotional costs: about 1335 euro plus 40 euro per month.

All the prices are taken from the Russian market.

The brand helps to express and highlight the company's values, to identify its reputation and emotional component, to make the company recognizable. The brand has two components: design and communication (the connection between staff and customer). In order to develop the brand, the service quality must be on the high level. Company's internal environment, social factors, attitude must also please the customers. Therefore, after the service, each customer has a chance to fill the feedback form.

When the company becomes more developed and vast, it makes sense to use more advertising channels such as Internet, radio, television, press, cinema and outdoors com-

mercial. It is also important to represent the company on the different conferences and business meetings.

4.2.4 Aikune Post commercial Evaluation

The actual success can be measured after some time. It is useful to evaluate each step of the product development process and make an output. The financial accounting should be completed properly in order to estimate product's profitability. If the revenue is higher than expenses or it promises to be higher after some time, the business can be considered as profitable. If the new advertising campaign is entered, the amount of customers and the profit must rise. Otherwise, the advertising is ineffective.

Depending on the situation, the product can be significantly reduced or even removed from the market. In case of failure, it is important for the entrepreneur to understand why it happened. The development plan should be updated. For example, the market can change or another type of the product can be created.

5 METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the choice of the research methods; the reliability and validity issues; and finally, the implementation of the research is disclosed.

5.1 Research methods

As stated by Veal (2006, 3-5.) research methods can be separated into three different types: descriptive, explanatory and evaluative. The main idea of the descriptive research is to understand and introduce the description of people, events and circumstances, where they are. The explanatory research tries to explain the phenomenon, what kind of problems there are and why, and to forecast the future development. The main goal of the evaluative research is to evaluate programs and policies and to find the way of its success and effectiveness.

Moreover, research methods can be qualitative and quantitative. The idea of the qualitative research is to understand the depth and breadth of the research area. The size of the sample is smaller than in quantitative research; the selection of the responders, the collection and analysis of the data is different. The results of the research are frequently expressed descriptively. (Sharma & Altinay 2012, 821.) The main idea of the quantitative research is to hold the numerical statistics analysis or to test the hypotheses and to make the conclusions. It collects, analyzes and presents the statistical information. The number of responses must be large enough to be sure in the research reliability; to analyze the data, computers are used. (Veal 2006, 40.)

In Aikune case, evaluative and quantitative research methods are the most suitable. The evaluative research method can be applied to Aikune workshops. Its aim is to familiarize potential customers with the product. The quantitative research method can be applied to analyze quantitative survey. Its objective is to understand, if there is a potential in Aikune and to choose the most demanded product form. The data is collected from feedback forms in a way that allows to analyze and to present it as the statistics.

The workshop is a regular Aikune lessons. The main aim of workshop is to introduce the gymnastics for the European Union citizens. The duration of one workshop is from one to three days, 60 minutes per day. The expected nationalities Finns and other European Counties citizens; the language of teaching is English. The places of the workshops are fitness/spa centers, yoga centers and hotels, since they are connected to wellness tourism. Moreover, in the future, if there is a potential in the product, it is possible to continue the cooperation with the companies. The location of the workshops is Helsinki city and its surroundings. The decision was made because Helsinki is the most touristic city in Finland, which has the largest number of fitness/spa centers, yoga centers in Finland. The examples of the workshops places are Yoga Nordic (Helsinki), LadyLine Fitness Centers (Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa).

The quantitative survey is the list of 18 questions. Its aim is to find out if the participants are interested in the product; to understand which variations of the product are more attractive (intensive courses, everyday lessons or wellness trips); to get to know how much customers are ready to pay for the product, and which advertising channels must be used. The quantitative survey has both multiple choice and open questions. Feedback forms are collected after the workshops. They are in English language. The expected number of participants is 50 in total.

5.2 Research reliability and validity

It is important to make a reliable and valid research. According to Veal (2006, 41.) reliability is the extent to which the research results could stay the same if the survey is repeated at a later time and with other sample group. The same research findings can be received in the natural science, where the experimental conditions are rightly guided, but it happens rarely in social sciences, since social conditions are changing all the time. The large number of dissimilar participants can enhance research reliability.

As Veal (2006, 42.) identify, validity is the stage where the information assembled by the researchers truly reverberates the phenomenon being studied. It is difficult to make a valid research in the tourism sphere, since empirical research is connected to the peo-

ple's attitudes and behavior and carried out in a form of interviews or questionnaires. If the same research could be repeated in other social situation and time, the results would not be similar.

In case with Aikune, 50 responses must be obtained to have reliable information. Since the customers experience the product, the feedback will be realistic and informative.

5.3 Marketing test

During the implementation of the marketing test, author faced with a hardship to cooperate with fitness/yoga centers, hotels since they did not show the interest in the new product or because of the policy that does not allow the owners to change the programme of the company.

That is why the first place of the Aikune workshops was "Cohesion" (the address: Bulevardi 14, 5th floor, 00120 Helsinki). The classes were organized on the 25th and 26th of November from 18 to 19. The place was chosen for several reasons: it is located in the city center of Helsinki (easy to reach); there is enough space for 10-15 people; required equipment (chairs); kitchen, two toilets and nice design; there was no rental fee since it is a new place and it was agreed that the author would help with its marketing. "Cohesion" is a 776 sq. unique co-working space on the top of the Building. It is a place for corporates, artists, freelancers and companies as well as different events and socializing activities are held there. The official web site can be accessed at: <http://cohesion.fi/>. The time of the workshops was chosen so as to people could come after work.

Before the workshop, the following steps had been completed:

The cooperation letter and Aikune guidebook had been sent to the owner of the "Cohesion". After, it was agreed to have the meeting to discuss the details.

During the meeting, the exact place, date and time were determined. Since there are many rooms and spaces "Cohesion", the best one for the Aikune workshop was chosen. The owner of "Cohesion" got a short Aikune lesson to have a better understanding of what it is. Moreover, promotional tools to advertise the events were discussed.

After that, the event was advertised. First of all, Aikune group and event page were created in Facebook. Then, some direct marketing was made in Facebook to people who like wellness activities like yoga, massage etc. Several Facebook groups were used: "Free events in Helsinki", "FINLAND IESAF" as well as "Cohesion" official Facebook page. Second of all, the advertising posters were made and put to the different places such as Yoga shop/Nordic yoga studio, several fitness centers and public places such as Helsinki University library, time café "Hauskafé" in the city center. One poster was put to the "Cohesion" place. In addition, event flyers were created, and given to the friends and some random people. There was no registration system, but author's e-mail and phone number were given in the advertising, which allowed participants to ask questions. Some people were asking about location (how to reach the place? Is there a door code?), the program (is it more or less the same on both days?). There was also a question if it was possible to come with a small baby.

On the first day of the workshop author came to the place in advance to prepare the area and to meet the guests. Nine people joined the event. The lesson lasted more than one and a half hour, since the participants were very passionate and there were many discussions. At the beginning of the lesson the Author told the participants about Aikune gymnastics. Then the basic Aikune exercises, focused on the back and joints problems, started. At the end, the participants were sharing opinions about the lesson and filled in the feedback forms. All the participants liked the workshop, four of them decided to join the event on the second day (two of them brought along their friends). After the event, author was invited by people working in the "Cohesion" to familiarize them with Aikune. It took about half an hour to hold one more workshop for five new participants.

On the second day of the workshop, there were eight participants. The program was almost the same but a bit shorter, in order to be in time and keep within one hour. After the workshop author was asked to teach Aikune to the "Cohesion" workers. One shorter workshop for six persons was held.

After two first days of Aikune classes, 24 feedback forms were collected. Moreover, author was invited to hold Aikune workshop on the 3d of December at the same place, since there would be a large event called "Cohesion's Epic Launch Party".

The second place of the workshop was “HUB13” (the address: Kaisaniemenkatu 13 A, 2nd floor 00100 Helsinki, Finland). The class was held on the 2d of December from 14 to 15. The place was chosen for the following reasons: it is located in the city center of Helsinki; There is a spacious hall with the necessary equipment; there was no rental fee since the workshop was held for the company “GO International” – one of the companies working there. “HUB13” is international co-working space. Currently, it is more popular place than “Cohesion”. This place is for companies, meetings, events etc. The official web site can be accessed via: <http://www.hub13.fi/>. The workshop took place during the working day. There were 8 participants in total.

The latest Aikune workshop took place in the Cohesion. It was a part of “Cohesion’s Epic Launch Party” event. One of its specialties was Health Clinic (Shiatsu Massage and Sports Massage). The event was held on the 3d of December from 18 to 21. Author helped with the organization of the event both before and after it. There were about 70 guests. During the “Cohesion’s Epic Launch Party” author held Aikune gymnastics non-stop. There were all the time newcomers. After the event, author got 16 more feedbacks, since not all participants filled it in.

After giving 4 workshops in different places, the author was proposed to cooperate by several companies. The first was “Cohesion”, and the second was “HUB13”. There were also two more companies, which were interested in Aikune gymnastics. One of them was wellness center, which would be opened in the middle of January in Helsinki; the other one was wellness tourism center, which would be open in Espoo next year. The author already had the meeting with the owner of the company and discussed the potential future.

6 RESULTS

In the below text, the main results of the workshops and quantitative survey are described.

6.1 Workshops

The organization of workshop shows that it can be difficult to cooperate with yoga/spa/wellness centers and hotels. The practice shows that it is more productive to come to the owners of these places to discuss the details directly than to write e-mails, since many of them do not answer.

Aikune guidebook was a good too to introduce the gymnastics to the owners of the places since there is no information available in English.

The optimal group is 10 people. The most convenient time is in the evening, after work. One hour is enough to introduce Aikune and go through the basic exercises.

The marketing of the event should be done at least one month before the event. When organizing event, it is very important to use as many various marketing channels as possible. The reservations system should be created to know how many people come.

6.2 Quantitative survey

The conduction of the survey can be considered successful. The total number of responses during 2 weeks is 48, which makes the questionnaire valid. The total number of questions is 18. The results are the following:

The age, gender and education level.

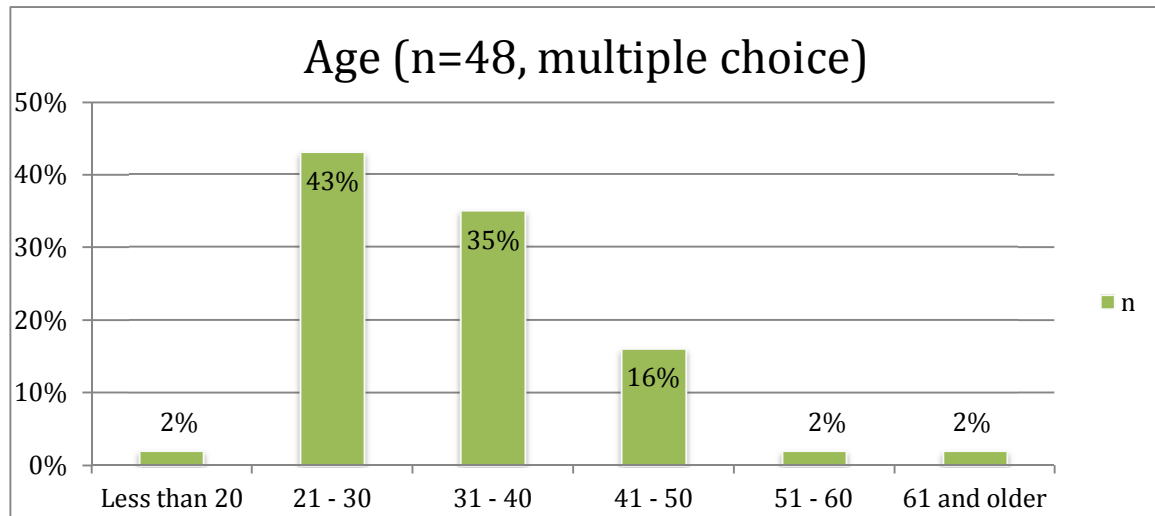


Chart 3. Age

As shown in the Chart 3, less than half of respondents are from 21 to 30 years old (43%). Only one person is younger than 20, older than 51 – 60, or 61 years old or older (2%).

The survey shows that the gender is almost equally distributed with female group accounted for 54% and male for 46%.

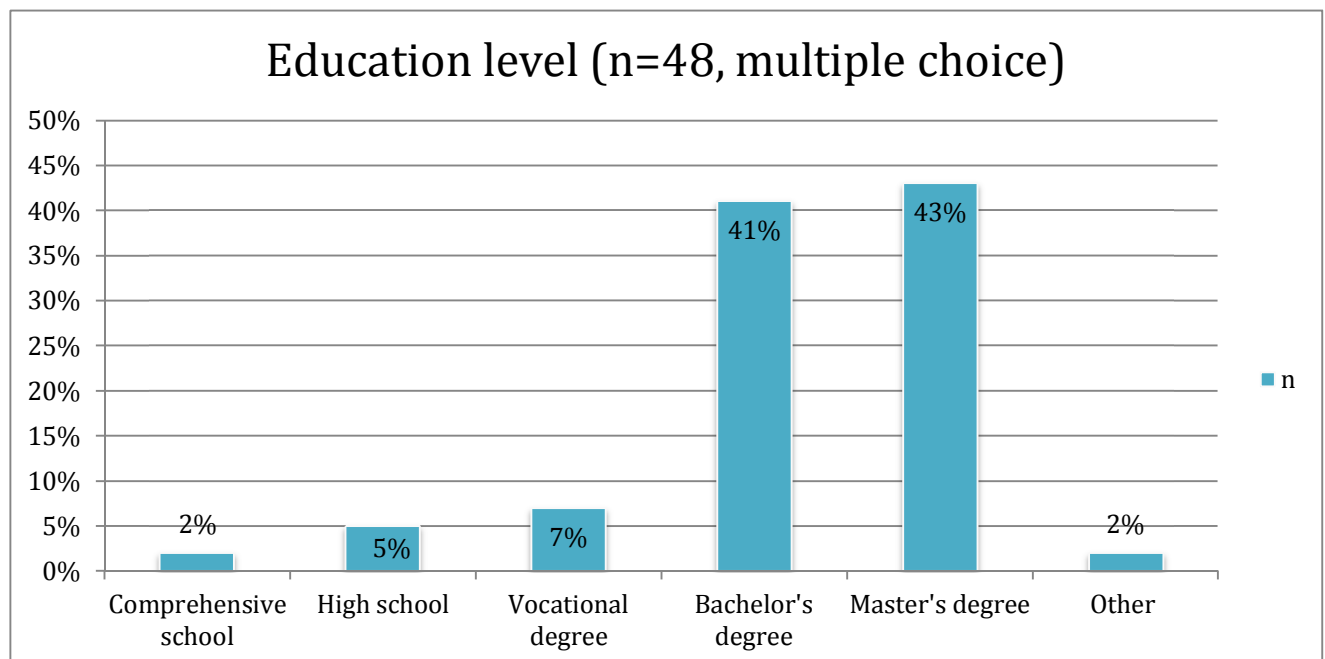


Chart 4. Education level

Most of the participants (84%) have higher education. More specifically, Bachelor's degree (41%) and Master's degree (43%). Some of the respondents have Vocational degree (7%), and only 1 person (2%) has completed comprehensive school.

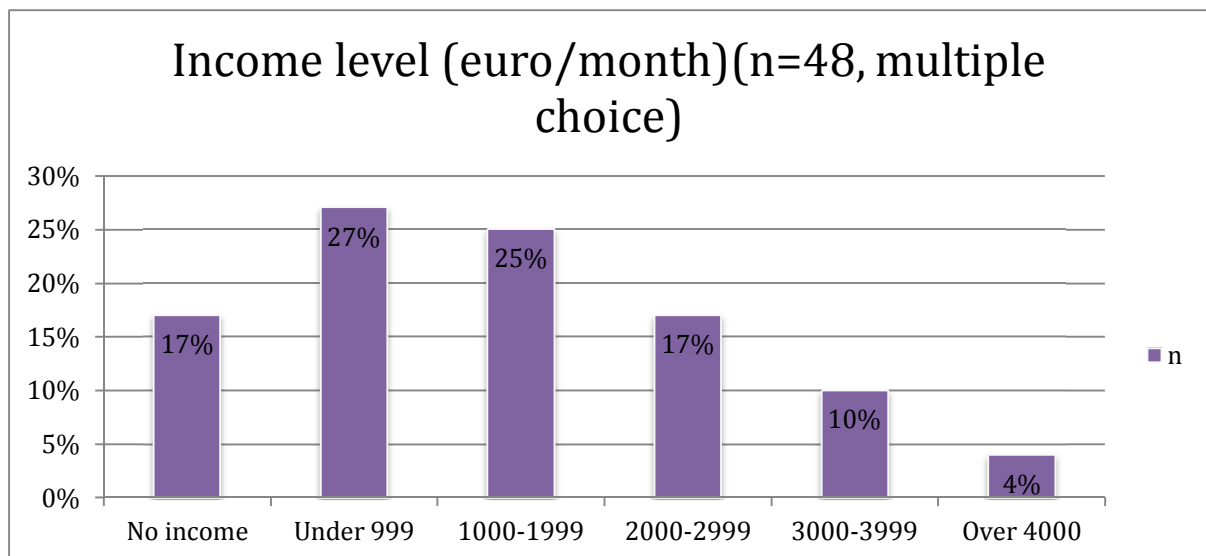


Chart 5. Income level

The considerable majority of the responders (83%) have some income. As shown in the Chart 5, the average salary ranges under 2000 euro per month (52%).

The location (open question)

All participants answered that they live in Finland. The majority of them (70%) live in Helsinki, 11% live in Espoo and only 4,5% in Vantaa. The potential reason for this distribution is the location of Aikune workshop – Helsinki city center. Six people answered that they live in Finland without specifying the place. Nonetheless, responders have different nationalities. Beside Finns, people attended the workshops were from England, Brazil, Australia, Nepal, Bangladesh, Japan, Russia and other countries.

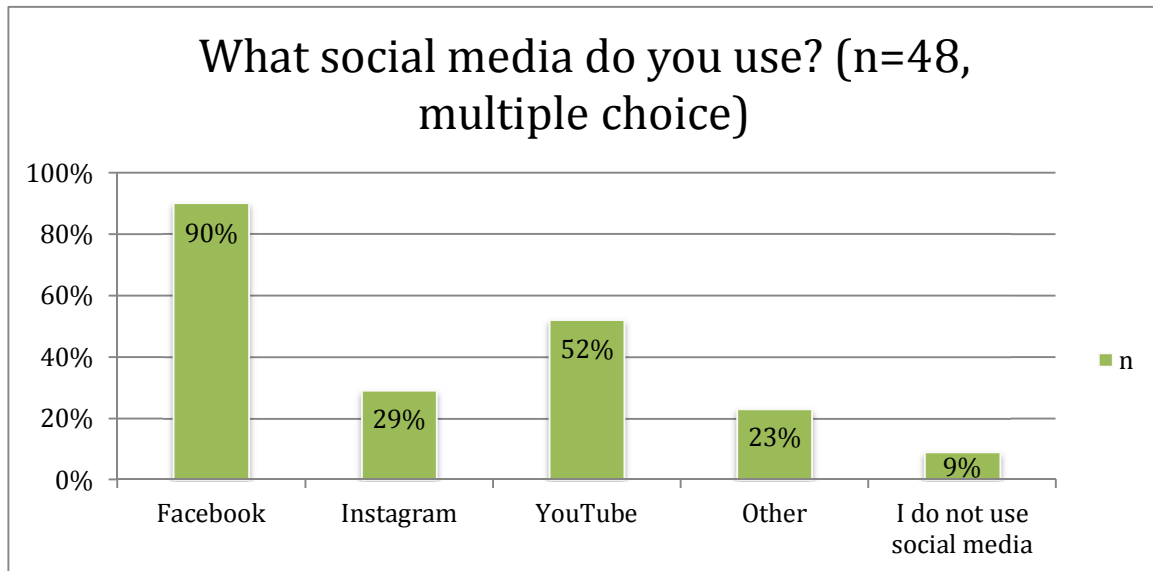


Chart 6. What social media do you use?

Over half of the respondents use Facebook (90%), and YouTube (52%). 29% use Instagram. 23% uses other social media such as Google search, Twitter, Vkontakte, LinkedIn, snapshot. Only 9% of responders do not use social media. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that today the majority of people are switching to the Internet technologies and social media that can be the best channel to contact the target market.

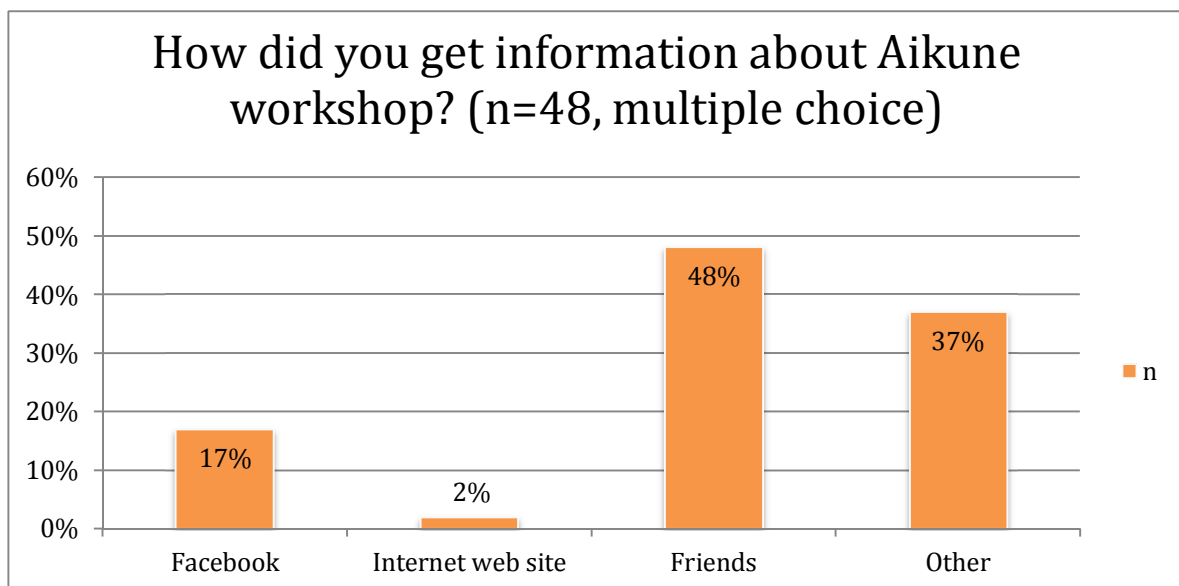


Chart 7. How did you get information about Aikune?

The highest number of the responders (48%) has learned about event through their friends. 17% found out about it via Facebook. The rest of participants (37%) found out about the workshop the other way:

- *University Notice Board (there was an advertising poster)*
- *University of Helsinki, an advertisement on the Bulletin board*
- *Happened to be in the right place at the right time*
- *At work (one workshop was hold for the company team)*

Other answers:

- *Colleague*
- *Company*
- *Visit to the company where I work*
- *Job workshop*
- *Cohesion*
- *Cohesion launch*
- *Cohesion event*
- *Event (4 times)*
- *Party (2 times)*

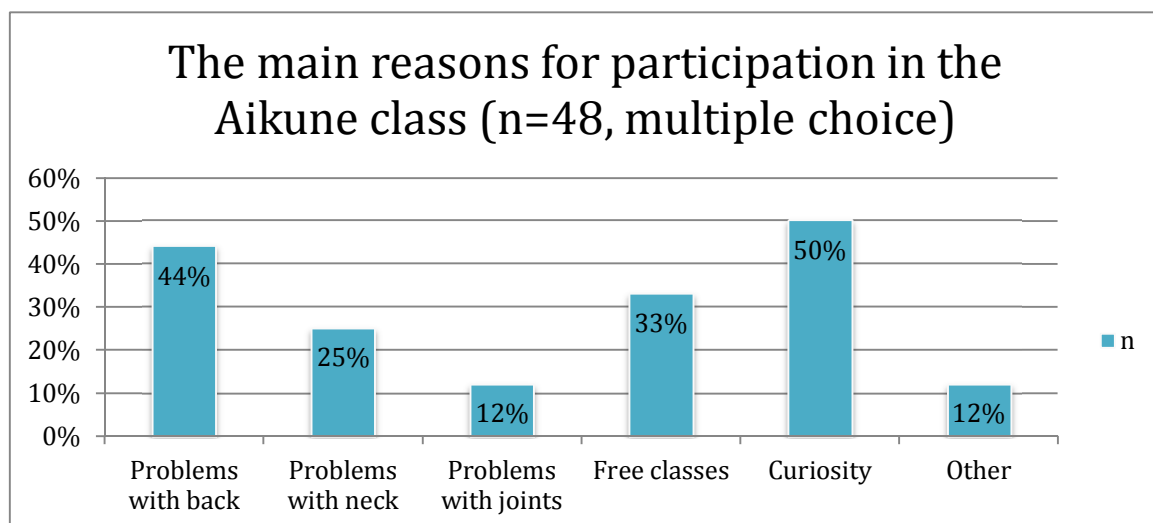


Chart 6. The main reasons for participation in the Aikune class.

The reasons for taking part in Aikune workshop were different. Half of the respondents (50%) took part in the Aikune lesson because of the curiosity. Less than half (44%) took part in the workshop due to back problems. 33% of people visited workshops since they were for free. Other answers were:

- *Incident*
- *Try it out*
- *Learning*
- *Company*
- *Recommendation from my boss*
- *Being in the event*

Almost all participants desire to continue exercise Aikune with instructor (82%), while 18% are not interested.

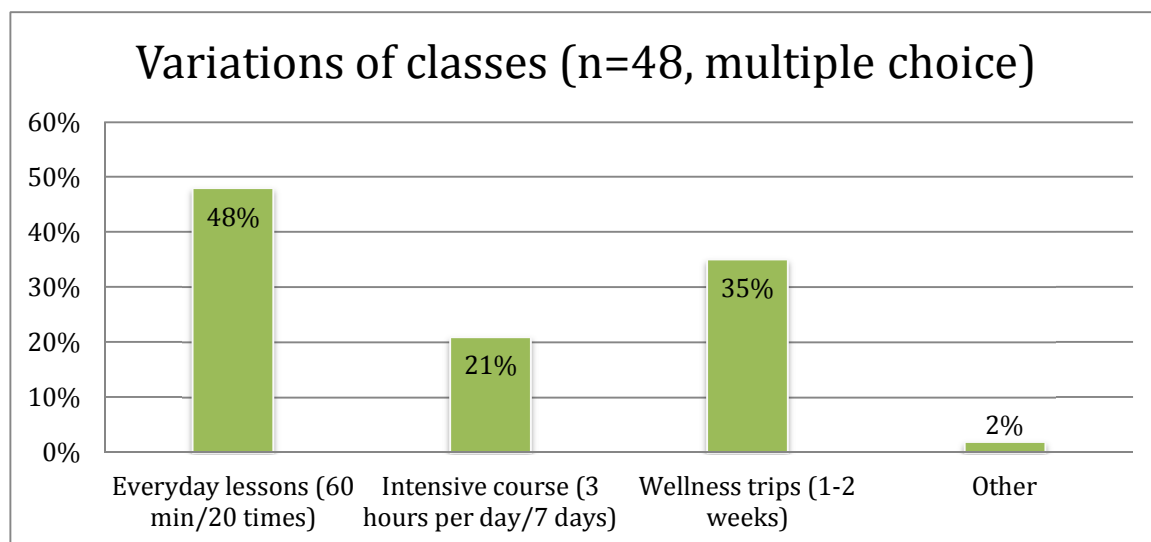


Chart 9. Variations of Aikune classes

According to the statistics, the most appropriate type of classes is everyday Aikune lessons (48%). 35% of the responders wish to go to the Wellness trip, and 21% would like to have intensive Aikune course. Other answer is: *Not sure*

The majority of people prefer everyday Aikune lessons. One of the reasons can be that almost half of respondents are quite young (21-30, 43%). These people might be students or they work long hours. It can even be that they combine studies and work. That is why they do not have time for intensive courses and their income does not allow to have private lessons or to go to wellness trips. Moreover, the most of them do not have serious health problems and they would be happy to visit Aikune classes several times per week as regular classes to maintain tone and posture.

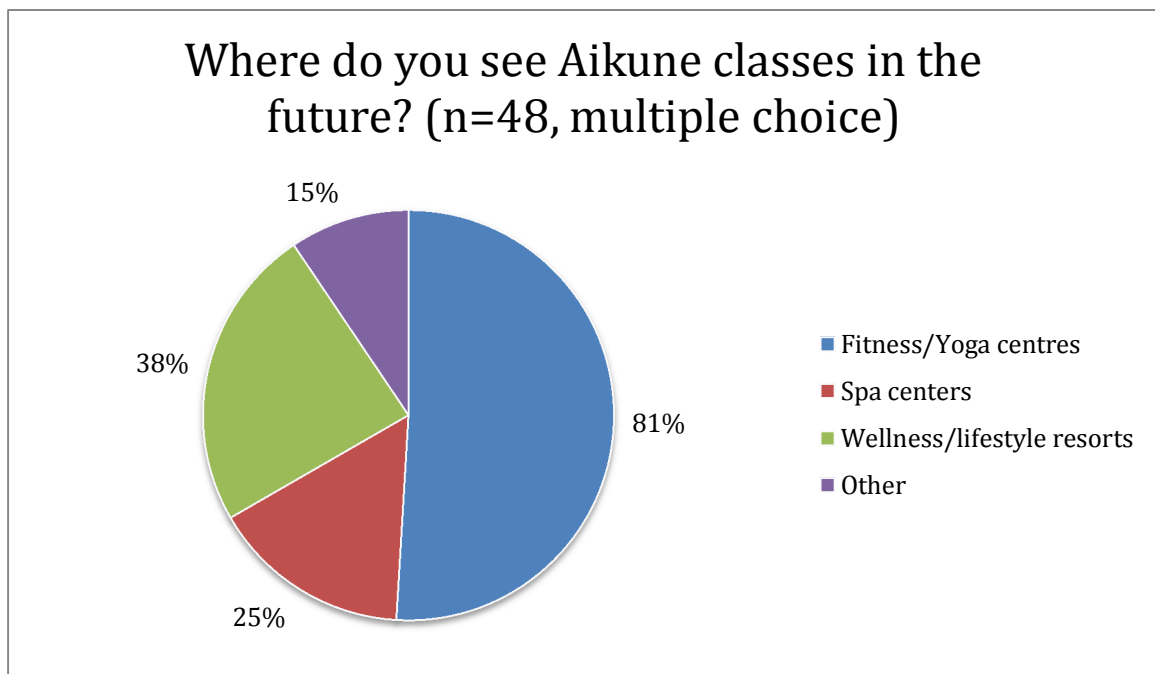


Chart 7. Where do you see Aikune classes in the future?

More than half of the respondents (81%) see the future of Aikune classes in fitness and yoga centers. 38% see Aikune in the Wellness/lifestyle resorts. 25% think that Aikune classes can be provided in spa centers in the future.

Other answers are:

Workplaces/offices

Offices

Places for people with spine problems

I do not know

Offices, home, café, anywhere

In Author's opinion, it is interesting idea to hold Aikune in the workplaces or offices, since almost all the workers always have to sit and this issue leads to back problems. Moreover, there will be no need to form the group (the team is already working together), and their boss could pay for the classes in order to increase collective's performance.

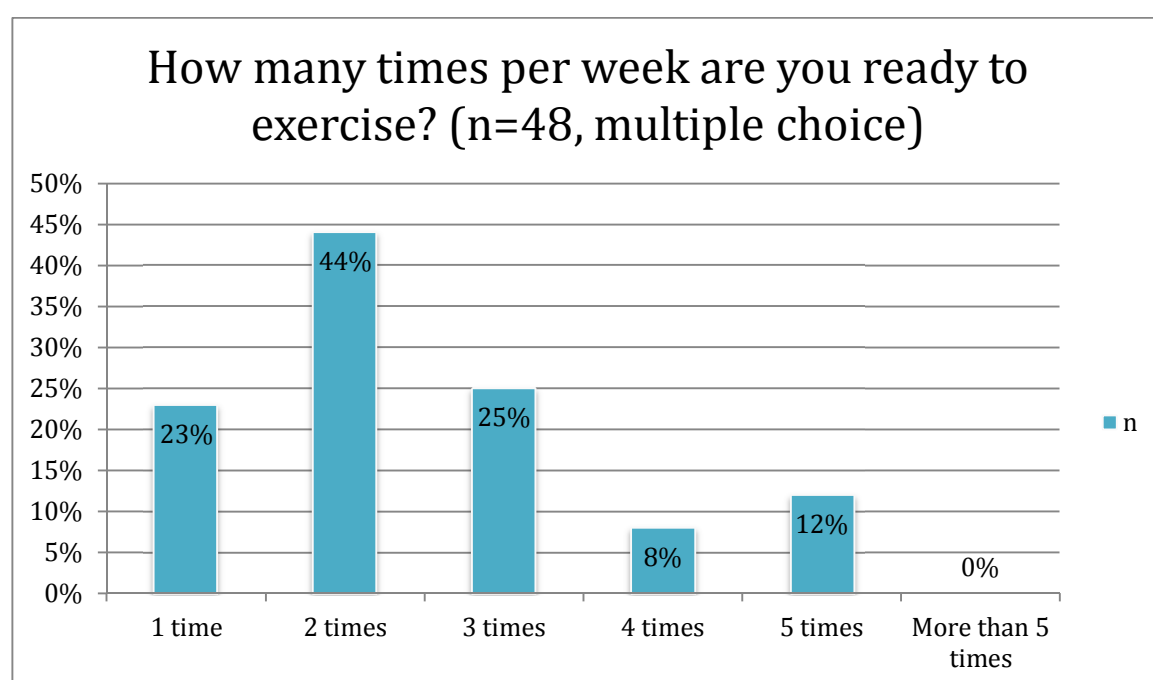


Chart 8. How many times per week are you ready to exercise?

In the opinion of almost half of respondents (44%), two times per week is the optimum training schedule. It can be the best choice for those who are working or studying, and don't have much time. This kind of classes must be held in the evening time. The second biggest group of respondents (25%) would like to have classes 3 times per week. 12% of people desire to exercise Aikune 5 times per week. This group can consist of people with serious back or joints problems wishing to get rid of it as fast as possible. This group can also include those who are busy and want to take intensive course of Aikune gymnastics (20 lessons) in one month. There is no one who would like to exercise more than 5 times per week.

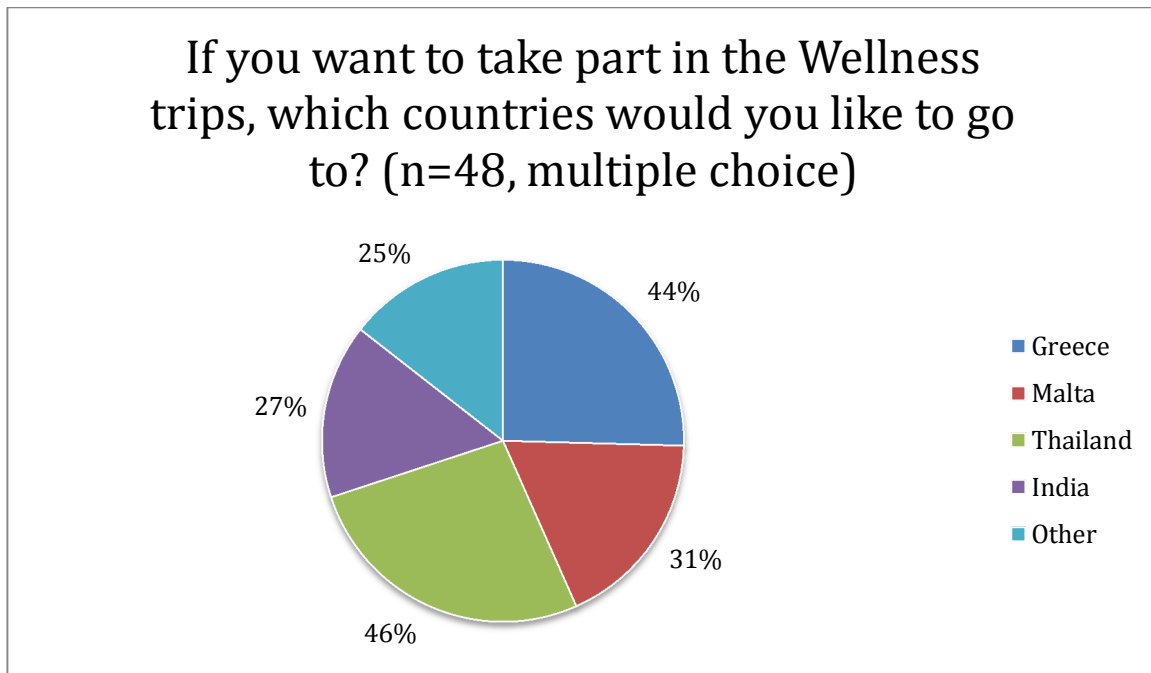


Chart 9. If you want to take part in the Wellness trips, which countries would you like to go to?

The survey shows that people have different opinions regarding countries where they would like to go to the Wellness trip. From the offered countries, Thailand and Greece are the most demanding (46% and 44%). The third place belongs to Malta (31%), and then India and other countries (25%). The participants are very international; therefore they have various experiences and interests. Moreover, they have different capabilities (some of them are unemployed, some of them have a salary more than 4000 euro per month).

Other countries, where responders would like to go to the Wellness trip, are: *Spain, Finland, Greenland, Galapagos Islands, Nepal, Russia, and Baltic region.*

For two members it is not important, where to go for the Wellness trip: *Does not matter, anything goes.*

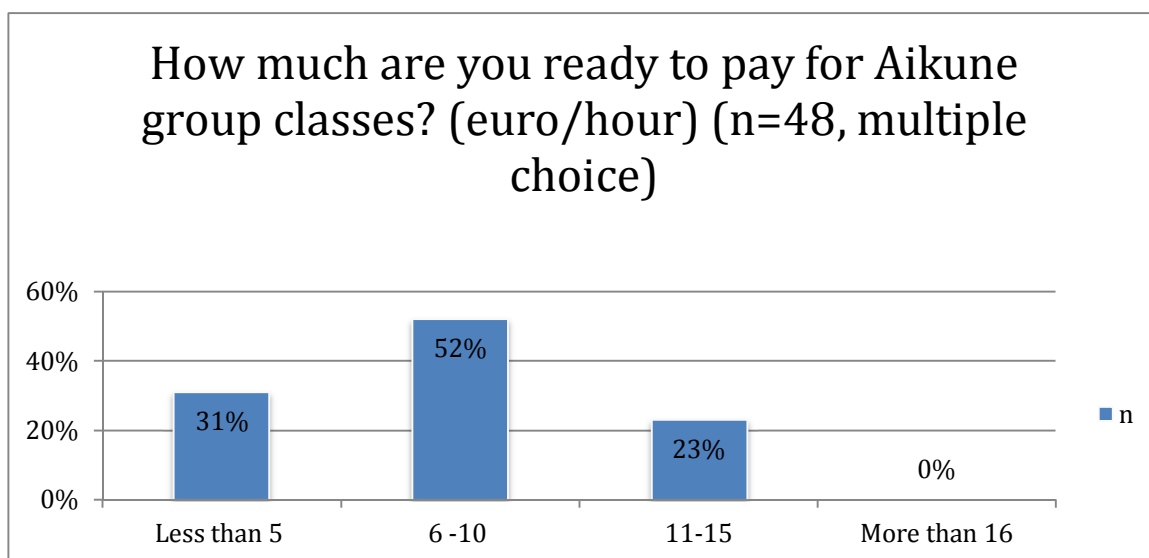


Chart 10. How much are you ready to pay for Aikune group classes?

In accordance with respondent's choice (52%), the price for Aikune group lessons must be around 5-10 euro. This price is an average for the wellness practices. 31% of respondents would like to pay less than 5 euro for one group lesson. It might be students and the unemployed. It is possible to hold free Aikune classes, or lessons with very low price if the city or some organization could sponsor it. One option could be to create a discount system for students and elderly. Nobody wishes to pay more than 16 euros for one group lesson.

40% of the respondents want to have individual classes while 60% are not interested in this.

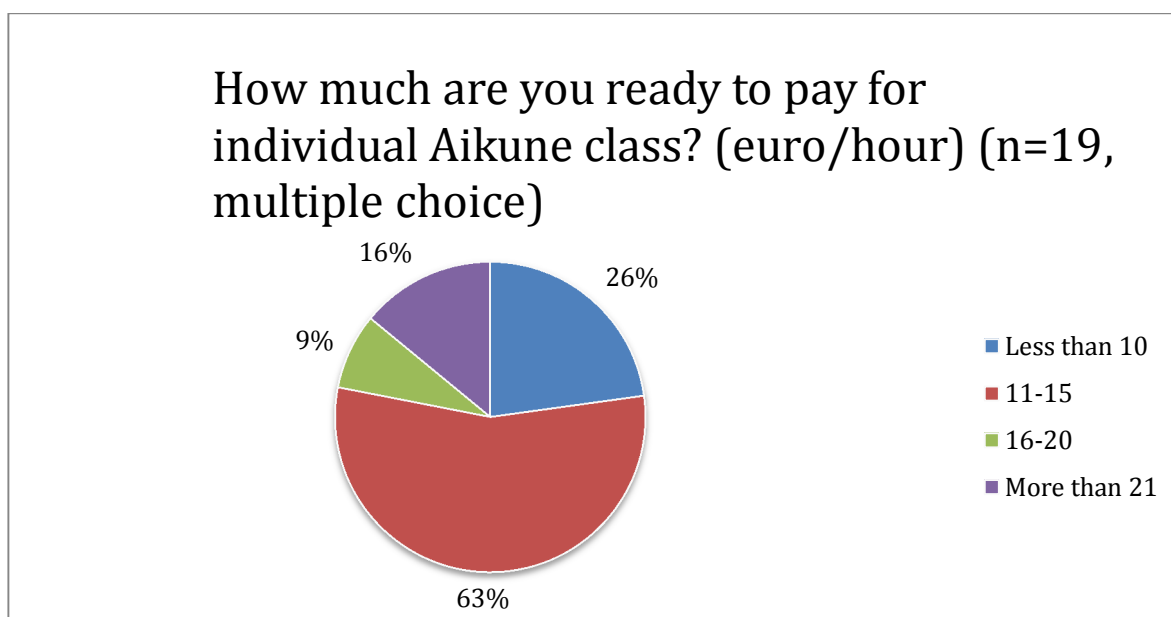


Chart 11. How much are you ready to pay for individual Aikune class?

According to the feedbacks, the most suitable price for the individual Aikune classes is 11-15 euro/hour (63%). 26% of people would like to pay less than 10 euros for it. 16%

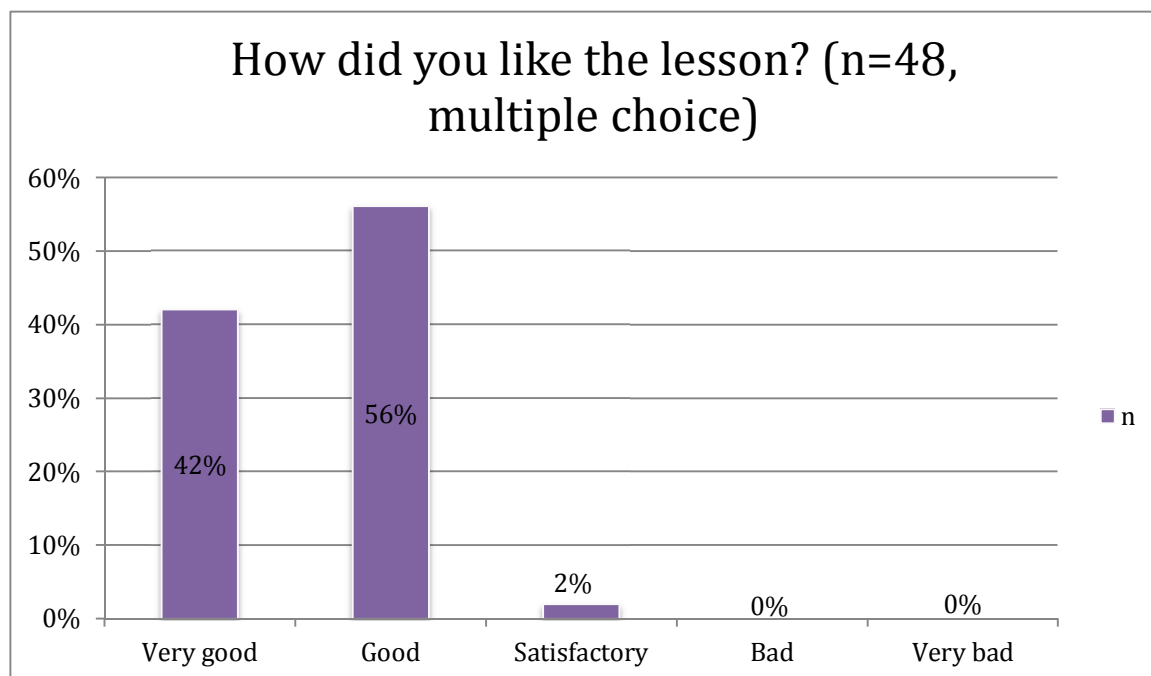


Chart 12. How did you like the lesson?

Almost all participants (98%) found Aikune workshop either very good or good. 2% found the workshop satisfactory. Some of them say that they would like to continue exercise Aikune with an instructor.

Several respondents answered the open question concerning the improvements of the programme, and what can be added to it. The answers are the following:

1. *One hour was very brief and I could not find anything about Aikune on the Internet, so it is difficult to say. But I am curious to learn more.*
2. *Explain something about Aikune. (This person was late for the beginning of the workshop where there was an explanation)*
3. *Classes for businesses*
4. *If possible more break and entertainment between items*
5. *Less surprising start (this person was not going to take part on the workshop)*

6. *It was excellent*
7. *Better speakers to listen to the music better*
8. *More clarity on voices and more pre information*
9. *Guided stretching in the opposite direction (bending-stretching) would be nice*
10. *No live music*

Concerning the timing, one hour is just enough in Authors' opinion. During this time it is possible to introduce Aikune to participants by discussion, basic exercises and opinion sharing. There is no need to try to catch too much.

7 CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This chapter concludes the study outcomes and gives suggestions for the further development. Furthermore, the success of the research and its findings as well as the reliability and validity of the study are presented.

The research has shed the light on the potential of Aikune in Europe. 40 surveyed people (82%) out of 48 showed their interest towards Aikune and decided that they would like to continue practicing it with the instructor. In accordance with the survey, 23 people (48%) prefer the everyday lessons, 2 times per week (44%) with the price 5-10 euro per hour (52%).

Wellness trips are not very popular at the moment. The reason for this is that people are not deeply interested in this type of product yet. It requires some time to create the value for the customers. Everyday Aikune lessons are a good tool for that. Perhaps, wellness trips require more description and more various wellness practices like yoga/massage etc. However, the most desired countries for wellness trips are Thailand (46%) and Greece (44%).

People see Aikune mostly in fitness and yoga centers (81%). The majority of people came to the workshop just because of curiosity (48%) and 44% came because they have problems with spine. The best marketing channel is friends (48%), Facebook (17%), different cultural events and posters in large places like Helsinki University library. Almost all participants have either Bachelor (41%) or Master (43%) degree. The average income ranges to 2000 euro.

The answers also indicate that the programme of Aikune workshop needs some changes. The time of the exercises practice can be reduced, and the time of relaxation can be longer.

To continue the development of Aikune in Europe, the specific steps must be taken. The first one is to register the company. The second step is to choose the most suitable partners. Then, it is vital to create pricing structure and start marketing. When the group

reaches the desired number of people, the classes will take place. After the whole course, feedback forms should be collected to evaluate the success and start the necessary development. After the previous step, a new group can be formed. This cycle should be repeated every time to keep the customers satisfied and the service quality high.

When choosing the partner, it is essential to evaluate the following factors: Where the place is located; what kind of contract we can make; Rental costs; Marketing perks; Contacts with the Finnish companies.

One of the main first English speaking target group will be the office workers since it is the easiest way to build the trust with Finnish people. Later, there will be more focus on wellness trips.

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*Appendix 1***Aikune workshop
Feedback Form****1. What is your age?**

- ☐ Less than 20
- ☐ 21 to 30
- ☐ 31 to 40
- ☐ 41 to 50
- ☐ 51 to 60
- ☐ 61 and older

2. What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

3. What are your country and city of living? (Example: Finland, Vantaa)

4. What is highest level of education you have completed?

- ☐ Comprehensive school
- ☐ High school
- ☐ Vocational degree
- ☐ Bachelor's level polytechnic degree or Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ Other _____

5. What is your level of income?

- ☐ No income
- ☐ Under 999 euro / month
- ☐ 1000 – 1999 euro / month
- ☐ 2000 – 2999 euro / month
- ☐ 3000 – 3999 euro / month
- ☐ Over 4000 euro / month

6. What social media networks do you use? (It is possible to choose several)

- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ Youtube
- ☐ Other _____
- ☐ I do not use social media

7. How did you get the information about Aikune workshop?

- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Internet web site, which one? _____

- Friends
- Other, what? _____

8. What were your main reasons for taking part in the Aikune class? (It is possible to choose several)

- Problems with back
- Problems with neck
- Problems with joints
- Free classes
- Curiosity
- Other, What? _____

9. Would you like to continue exercise Aikune with instructor?

- Yes
- No

10.If yes, which variations of classes would you prefer? (It is possible to choose several)

- Everyday lessons (60 min/20 days)
- Intensive course (3 hours per day/7days)
- Wellness trips (1-2 weeks)
- Private lessons (personal schedule)
- Other _____

11.Where do you see Aikune classes in the future?

- Fitness / Yoga centers
- Spa centeres
- Welllness / lifestyle resorts
- Other: _____

12.If you want to take part in the everyday Aikune classes, how many times per week are you ready to exercise? (The course is 20 lessons, so if you exercise once per week it will take 5 months; if you exercise 5 times per week, it will take one month)

- 1 time per week
- 2 times per week
- 3 times per week
- 4 times per week
- 5 times per week
- More than 5 times per week

13.If you want to take part in the Wellness trips, which countries would you like to go to?

- Greece
- Malta
- Thailand

- India
- Other: _____

14. How much are you ready to pay for Aikune group classes?

- Less than 5 euro / hour
- 6 – 10 euro / hour
- 11 – 15 euro / hour
- More than 16 euro / hour

15. Would you like to have individual Aikune classes?

- Yes
- No

16. If yes, how much are you ready to pay for it?

- Less than 10 euro / hour
- 11 – 15 euro / hour
- 16 – 20 euro / hour
- More than 21 euro / hour

17. How would you rate the Aikune class in general?

- Very good
- Good
- Satisfactory
- Bad
- Very bad

18. In your opinion, what could be improved?/What could be added to the programme?

If you are interested to receive future information about Aikune classes, please write your contact information (you can choose the most convenient way of contact yourself):

Name: Email: Phone: Facebook:
--

If you have any questions about Aikune, fill free to ask me here:

Varvara Gaigalova

E-mail: varvaragaigalova@gmail.com

Phone: +358466620087

Facebook: Varvara Gaigalova / Facebook group: Aikune Gymnastics

Appendix 2

GYMNASTICS FOR THE SPINE & JOINTS «AIKUNE»

TIME TO IMPROVE

COME AND CHECK THE CONDITION OF YOUR SPINE

FREE CLASSES ON THE 25th AND 26th OF NOVEMBER
FROM 18 TO 19

EVERYONE IS WELCOME!



The habit to sit in the wrong position and other physical factors, which influence on spine and joints, can bring a discomfort into life. However, there are tools that can help, one of which is wellness gymnastics “**Aikune**”. The exercises included into this practice can correct the posture, gait and remove pain from back and joints.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Varvara
varvaragaigalova@gmail.com
0466620087

VENUE: Bulevardi 14, 5th floor,
Cohesion.f

GYMNASTICS FOR THE SPINE & JOINTS «AIKUNE»

TIME TO IMPROVE

COME AND CHECK THE CONDITION OF YOUR SPINE

FREE CLASSES ON THE 25.11 - 26.11 FROM 18 TO 19

EVERYONE IS WELCOME!

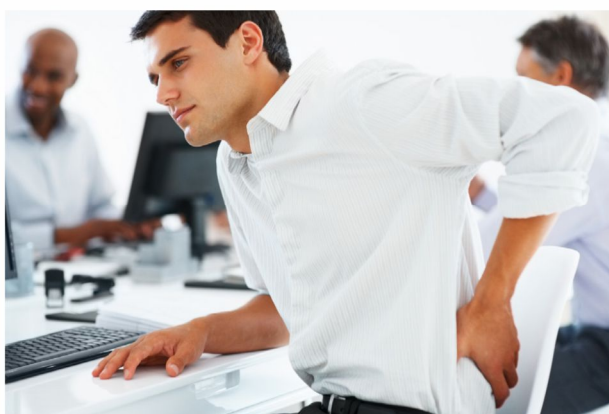
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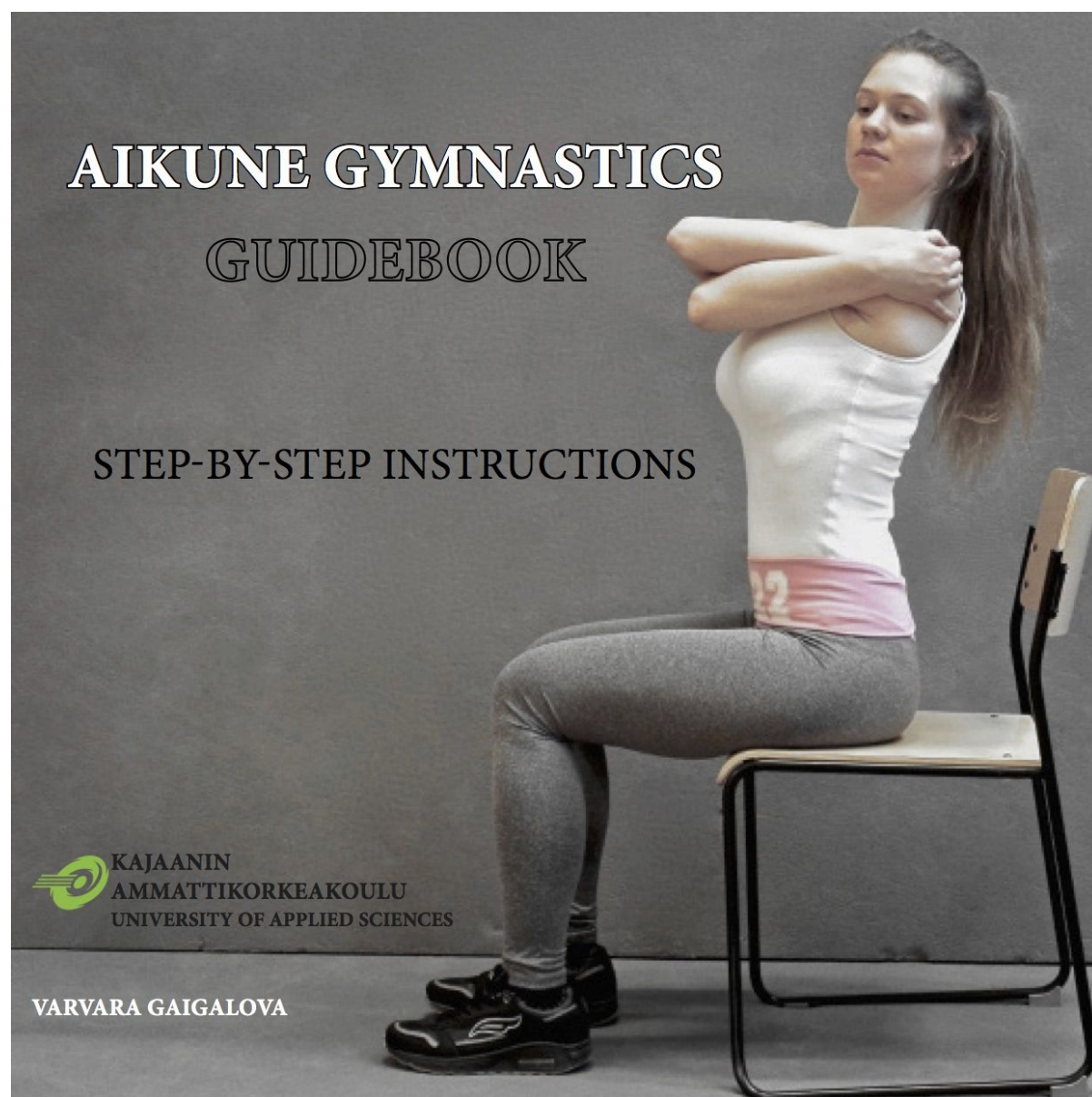
0466620087 Varvara

varvaragaigalova@gmail.com



VENUE: Bulevardi 14, 5th floor, Cohesion.fi

Aikune Guidebook



AIKUNE GYMNASTICS GUIDE BOOK

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

Varvara Gaigalova

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Photography © Varvara Gaigalova

Models: Diyako Sheikh Mohammadi and Elena Fedorchenko

NOTICE

Information given in this guidebook is not intended to be taken as a replacement for medical advice. Any person with condition requiring medical attention should previously consult a qualified practitioner or therapist.

PREFACE

This guidebook was created for Kajaani University of Applied Sciences. It is the part of the thesis "Aikune Gymnastics - a New Wellness Tourism Product for European Market" and has been done over the period from May 2015 to August 2015 for Bachelor's Degree in Tourism. The supervisor on the Thesis has been Mikko Keränen. Solely the author has made the guidebook; some parts of the text, however, are based on the existing literature regarding the above topic, and the author has done his best to provide references to these sources.

Varvara Gaigalova

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INTRODUCTION

The guidebook, presented to your attention, is electronic PDF guide about Aikune gymnastics. Its main goal is to familiarize the reader with basic techniques and exercises.

Aikune gymnastics was developed in 1998 in Kazakhstan. The gymnastics is the complex of exercises designed for treatment and prophylaxis of spine and joints diseases. In total, there are about 1000 exercises. Basic Aikune exercises are primary directed towards the deep muscles and ligaments that are supporting the spine. There are also exercises directed at strengthening of the internal muscles and ligaments of the spine, torso, hands and legs. Regular performance of the exercises allows to get rid of the back and neck aches as well as to form and correct the posture. (Baimagambetov 2005)

The system is easy to master, it does not require any additional devices and is suitable for people of different age categories. It is recommended to start practicing Aikune with the instructor, but after taking

the course participants are able to continue exercising independently at home.

The guidebook consists of three parts. The first part illustrates the basic complex of exercises done in the sitting position. It focuses on the spine, posture and gait problems and the general strengthening of the back muscles, flexibility and endurance developing. The second part of the guide includes the exercises done in the lying position. This set of exercises aims at spine stretching, back and neck muscles strengthening. The third part concentrates on the standing exercises, which improve hands joints mobility and flexibility.



THE SPINE BASIC EXERCISES. SITTING POSITION

This section of the guidebook introduces the basic set of exercises performed in the sitting position, and it is suitable for any age group starting from six years. The total duration of the whole set of exercises is 20 – 40 min. Each person can control the load independently depending on his / her physical condition and health. It is useful to increase the performing time and reduce the time of relaxation. All the exercises are performed smoothly and slowly. Below there are step-by-step instructions on how to perform each exercise and pictures illustrating the right posture. The exercises require a chair or stool and comfortable clothes, which do not restrict the movements.

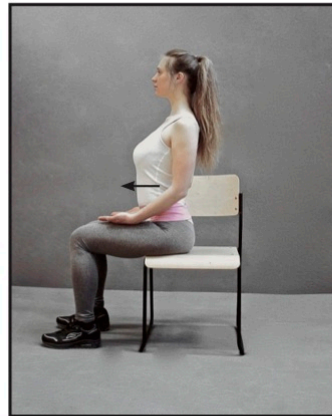
1 The starting position: sit on the chair keeping back straight. Place both feet on the floor, bend your knees at a right angle. Relax shoulders and keep them away from the ears. Hands are freely lying on the knees; palms are facing up. Head is looking straight ahead. (Picture 1)

2 Bend the whole spine forward with the maximum deflection. The spine should flex into the smooth arc. This exercise helps to gently stretch the spine and to reinforce the deep back muscles that are supporting it. The duration of the exercise is 5 - 10 min. (Picture 2)

3 After a small break (0,5 – 3 min), come back to the previous position. (Picture 2) Retract the stomach inside. Try to breathe with your chest. This exercise helps to reduce the weight. The duration of the exercise is 5 - 10 min.



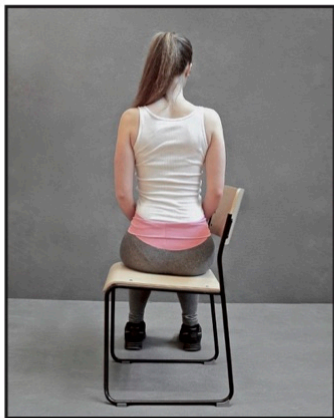
PICTURE 1



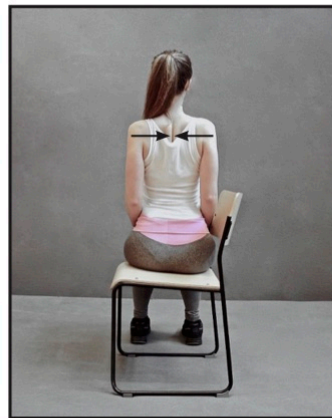
PICTURE 2

4 After a small break (0,5 – 3 minutes), come back to the previous position (exercise 3). Then connect tightly the shoulder blades together (might require some effort). The connected shoulder blades should be lowered down. Regular implementation of this exercise helps to eliminate the slouch (round back) and to correct the irregularities of the spine. The duration of the exercise is 5 - 10 min. Pictures 3 and 4 show the difference between usual and brought together blades (Picture 3 – normal shoulder blades, Picture 4 – connected together shoulder blades).

This was the last static exercise in the sitting position. The basic complex is finished. After it, take a small rest. The next exercises will be more dynamic.



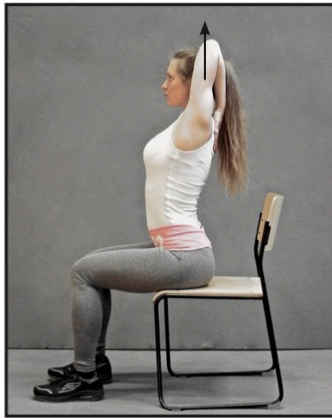
PICTURE 3



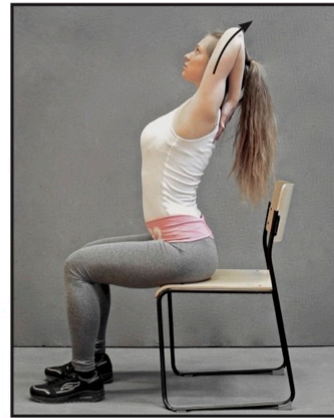
PICTURE 4

5 From the starting position (Picture 1) bend the whole spine forward with the maximum deflection. Lift your elbows up, placing the palms on to the shoulders. Five times stretch yourself upwards. This exercise is helpful for chest and shoulders. (Picture 5)

6 Keeping the previous position (Picture 5), five times stretch yourself backwards. (Picture 6)



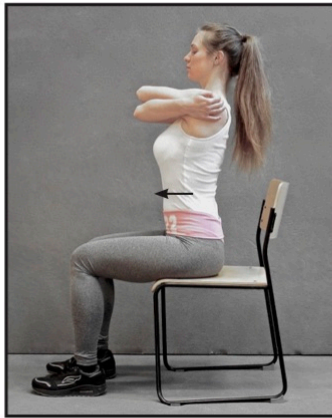
PICTURE 5



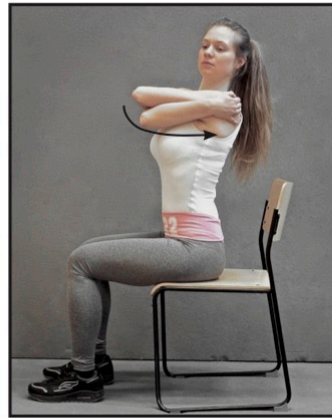
PICTURE 6

7 From the starting position (Picture 1) bend the whole spine forward with the maximum deflection. Lift your hands up to the shoulders level and “hug” the shoulder blades with the opposite hands. (Picture 7)

8 Slowly twist the torso to one side with some effort. The head looks straight at the elbows. Return to the starting position and do the same movement in the opposite direction. Repeat it three times. This exercise focuses on the twisting of the spine and increases its mobility and flexibility. (Picture 8)



PICTURE 7



PICTURE 8



THE SPINE AND THE NECK EXERCISES. LYING POSITION

This section of the guidebook introduces exercises, performed in the lying position, and focuses on spine and neck problems. The exercises help to strengthen the spine and its muscles. (Baimagambetov 2005) It is necessary to be very careful while working with neck. All the movements are done slowly and under the instructor's control. Below there are step-by-step instructions on how to perform each exercise and pictures illustrating the right position. The exercises require a fitness/yoga mat and comfortable clothes.

1 Lie down on the back on the mat. Place both feet on the surface, bending the knees at a right angle. Put the hands along the body. Hands and feet are relaxed. (Picture 1)

2 Lift the spine flexing it into an arc to the maximum height and keep it in this position. The shoulders are on the floor; hands are lying relaxed along the body. The stomach is retracted inside; breathe with your chest. The weight must be distributed evenly. If some part of the back is heavier, lift it up. The duration of the exercise is 5 -10 min. (Picture 2)

3 Relieve the tension from the spine and push it into the floor with an effort. Make sure, that the shoulders are firmly pressed to the floor. The stomach is retracted; hands and feet are relaxed. The duration of the exercise is 5 – 10 min. (Picture 3)



PICTURE 1



PICTURE 2



PICTURE 3

4 Raise the spine flexing it into the arc to the maximum height and keep it in this position. The stomach is retracted inside. Breathe with your chest. Put your head on a nape in a way that neck forms an arc. All the movements are performed slowly. Working with the neck for the first time is possible only under the instructor's control. The duration of the exercise is 5 – 10 min. (Picture 4)

5 Relieve the tension from both spine and neck and press it into the floor with an effort. Make sure, that the shoulders are on the floor; the stomach is retracted. The duration of the exercise is 5 – 10 min. (Picture 5)



PICTURE 4



PICTURE 5

6 Relieve the tension from both spine and neck and press it into the floor with an effort. Make sure, that the shoulders are on the floor; the stomach is retracted. The duration of the exercise is 5 – 10 min. (Picture 5)

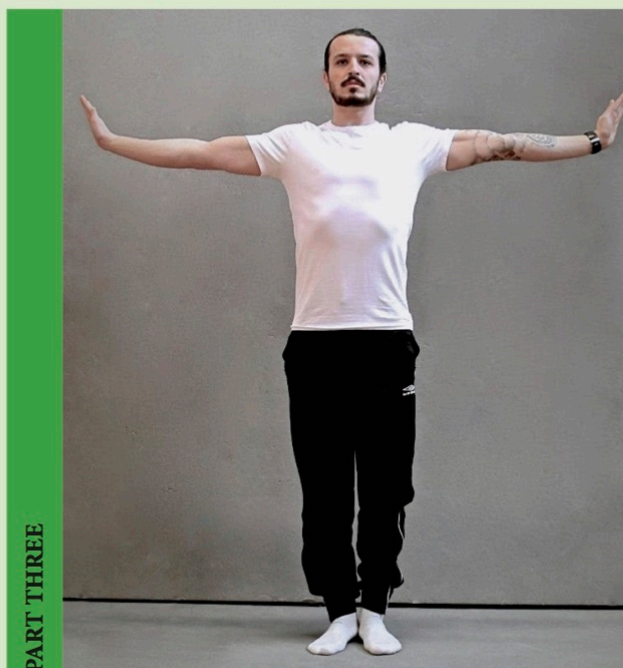
7 Press the spine into the floor and put the head on nape, making an arc with the neck. The stomach is retracted inside; hands and feet are relaxed. The duration of the exercise is 5 – 10 min. (Picture 7)



PICTURE 6



PICTURE 7

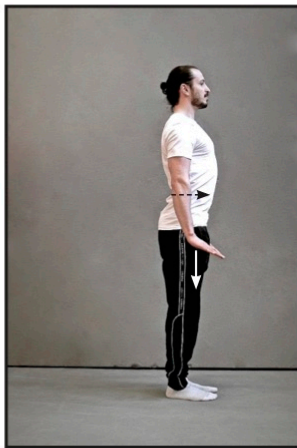


THE HANDS JOINTS EXERCISES. STANDING POSITION

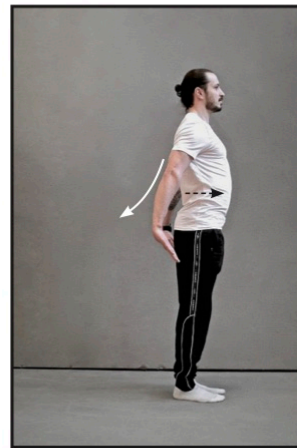
This section of the guidebook introduces the basic set of exercises, performed in the standing position, with the focus on hands. The exercises are meant for people with the joints problems, they help increase the hands mobility and flexibility. Below there are step-by-step instructions on how to perform each exercise and pictures illustrating the right posture. This complex of the exercise is recommended to perform 3 – 5 times. The exercises require comfortable clothes.

1 The basic position: stand straight; heels in and toes out; the head is looking straight; arms are along the body; palms are facing the floor. Bend the whole spine forward making an arc with the maximum deflection. Head, shoulders and tailbone must be kept on the same vertical level. Pull down your arms to the floor ten times. (Picture 1)

2 Standing in the basic position, stretch your arms back ten times. Legs are straight; shoulders are lowered. (Picture 2)



PICTURE 1

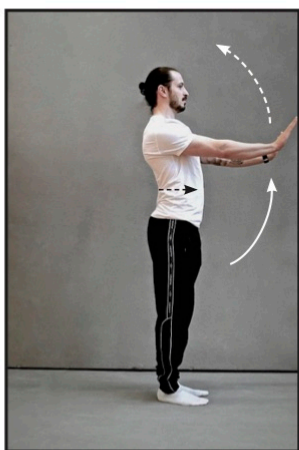


PICTURE 2

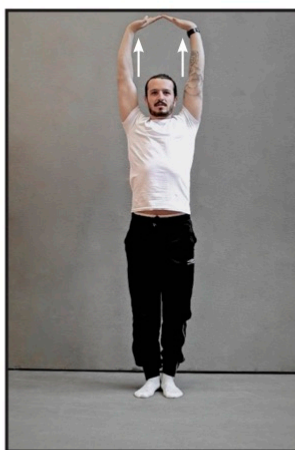
3 From the starting position slowly raise the arms forward in front of you. Palms must be stretched up towards the body. Try to stretch the hands as much as possible and hold this tension. (Picture 3)

4 Raise the hands to the vertical position over the head, turning the palms towards to each other. Stretch the arms up ten times. (Picture 4)

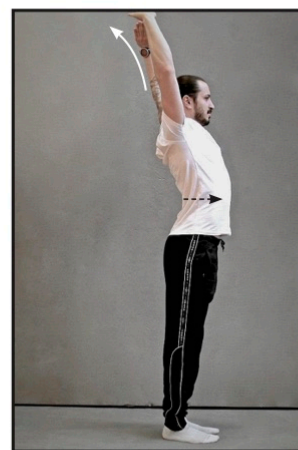
5 Then, stretch the arms ten times more backwards. (Picture 5)



PICTURE 3



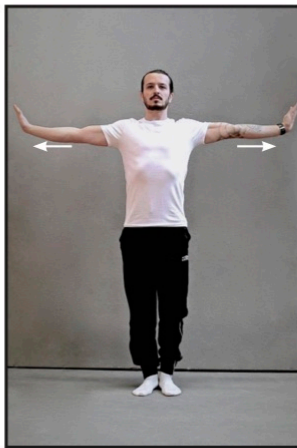
PICTURE 4



PICTURE 5

6 Slowly lower the arms into the opposite sides, keeping the strong tension. When the hands are on the shoulders level, ten times stretch them into the opposite directions.
(Picture 6)

7 After that continue lowering the hands through the sides until the starting position.
(Picture 7)



PICTURE 6



PICTURE 7

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