

eXperienCeSki: Guidebook to experiences in children's ski schools

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<p>Cross-country skiing is often considered to be almost a national sport in Finland. It is a popular form of health-enhancing exercise among adults and there is also a considerable amount of children competing in cross-country skiing. But times are changing and recent research shows that cross-country skiing is losing active young skiers to other sports. Changes are needed in the way ski schools are organized.</p> <p>The goal of this product-oriented thesis was to create an inspirational guidebook for ski clubs on how to organize ski schools in a new way, or more precisely what kind of elements should be included in them. The thesis was commissioned by Suomen Maastohiihto Ry.</p> <p>The guidebook is called eXperienCeSki and it is based on the idea that every ski school practice should give the children new experiences. The main elements in the guidebook are stories, team spirit and co-operation with other sports. The guidebook had two objectives, which were to deliver the joy of skiing and to give a fresh perspective to ski school instructors. The thesis project was conducted starting from the spring of 2013 and finishing in the spring of 2014.</p> <p>The report part of the thesis includes a three part theoretical framework. It is inspired by the experience theme of the guidebook and consists of a clarification of the background of cross-country skiing, different experience theories and storytelling.</p> <p>The eXperienCeSki guidebook meets the goal and objectives set for it. Comments from ski school instructors were positive, and they could see themselves using the new elements presented in the guidebook in their work as ski school instructors. Using stories in ski schools especially got positive feedback.</p> <p>The commissioner is satisfied with the end result and the guidebook will be of use for them.</p>	
Keywords Cross-country skiing, ski schools, experiences, storytelling, guidebook	

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1 Introduction

Cross-country skiing has lost its appeal among 13-18 year-olds in Finland in the recent years. According to a research made by the Ministry of Education and Culture, cross-country skiing lost 43 000 active young skiers between the years 2005 and 2006 (Husu, Paronen, Suni & Vasankari 2011, 20-21). The same phenomenon is visible in the amount of licences bought for under 18 year olds. The amount has decreased by 17,6 % (Suomen Maastohiihto Ry 2014). The reasons behind this loss of skiers have not been researched. But because sports like floorball, as an example, have gained players, an assumption can be made that a modern teamsport has won the battle against traditional endurance sports like cross-country skiing. An other possible assumption is the lack of success for Finland in international competition events in the era before Sochi Olympic games, which were somewhat successful for cross-country skiing after many unsatisfactory olympiads.

The amount of success directly correlates to the amount of children in clubs, and the amount of children in clubs directly correlates to the amount of success (Pernu, 2013). That is why cross-country skiing needs more members to ski clubs. Everyone can not become elite level athletes and therefore big masses of active participants are needed. Even the ones who do not develop until the international level, hopefully learn the meaning of sports in life, and keep exercising throughout their adult lives and this way live a healthier life than people living without regular sports. Also if children engage with skiing in a young age, they are more likely to develop a strong relationship with the sport than if they would start later. A strong relationship is needed when looking to generate a true love for the sport, and through that a lifetime involved in the sport in different roles. (Zacheus, 2010.)

How do ski clubs make sure they attract children to do cross-country skiing and then keep them involved year after year? The author believes that the answer to this question can be found from the business world and more precisely from the experience economy and the art of storytelling. Getting children to come and keep coming to ski schools, means selling the experience of skiing and everything that is related to it. Sell-

ing an experience works the same way in the sports world as in the business world. The ski club is not selling ski school lessons as products, they are selling happiness, new friends and eventually a way of life. (Gallo, 2009.)

The cross-country scene in Finland has looked the same for tens of years and the consequence has been a drop in the amount of young skiers. A change is definitely needed and ski clubs need inspiration, information and practical tips on how to make the change. The eXperienCeSki guidebook strives to help clubs in the first part of this change project, which is to give inspiration and guidelines on how to arrange ski schools for children in a new way.

1.1 Goal and objectives

This thesis is a product based thesis. A product based thesis means there is a physical outcome to an outside commissioner together with a written report.

The goal of the thesis project was to create an inspirational guidebook for ski clubs in Finland on how to arrange ski schools for children between 6 and 12 years old. The commissioner did not want a step-by-step guide with exact rules on how to arrange ski schools. Instead the wish was for inspiration and guidelines, to create a new kind of model that would give a spark to the instructors to think differently.

The guidebook consists of four core elements, which are all somehow new to the ski school system. These elements are stories, strong team spirit, co-operation with other sports and renewing the inside competition system used in ski clubs. Besides these four elements the guidebook covers group division, feedback giving and getting and finally packaging the ski school experience from sport management point of view. The content of the guidebook was the authors responsibility and the visual layout was not that relevant.

In order to create new elements for ski schools, the author needed first to identify what are the biggest problems in the current ski school system. After doing that, a new basic structure was formed around the concept of experiences and storytelling.

The author formed two major objectives for the creation of eXperienCeSki guidebook.

1. Deliver the joy of skiing
2. Give clubs a fresh perspective

The first objective is broad and has many meanings. First and foremost it means that cross-country skiing needs to be made fun. The author has 12 years of experience from different ski clubs as a skier and a instructor and feels that often practises are too serious. Skiing does not only mean long distance ski trips, it also means playing tag or football on skis, team activities and obstacle courses. These activities were only examples but gives perspective to what can be done with skis.

The second objective for the guidebook is to make club actives to see skiing from a new perspective. It is related to the first objective, but the author wanted to underline that clubs need to change their mindset away from the traditional and in a way wake up to the modern worlds experience economy.

1.2 Commissioning company - Suomen Maastohiihto Ry.

Suomen Maastohiihto Ry is a member organisation of Suomen Hiihtoliitto. There used to exist only one federation for all nordic sports in Finland, but in 2010 cross-country skiing wanted to form their own organisation. Reasons behind this separation were mostly financial. The Finnish Ski Federation is more than 100 years old, so it is very traditional and is a big part of Finlands sport history. (Suomen Maastohiihto Ry 2014.)

The Finnish Cross-Country Ski Federation works in all sectors of cross-country skiing, meaning children and youth, adults, seniors and both leisure and competitive skiing in national and international level. They are responsible of developping cross-country skiing in all of the above mentioned sectors. (Suomen Maastohiihto Ry 2014.)

The federation has a permanent staff of 8 employees and 5 full time coaches. The chairman is Mr. Markku Haapasalmi who works together with 5 other members in the government. (Suomen Maastohiihto Ry 2014.)

Finland is divided into 19 different ski regions and all clubs in that geographical area belong to that ski region. Those regions are all part of the federation and have certain responsibilities towards the federation, but also get financial help for club activities for example. There are approximately 600 ski clubs in Finland. (Suomen Maastohiihto Ry 2014.)

Values of The Finnish Cross-Country Ski Federation are fairness, openness, co-operation, high level knowledge of cross-country skiing and Finnishness. (Suomen Maastohiihto Ry 2014.)

The contact person in the Finnish Cross-Country Ski Federation was Ms. Henna Sivenius who is the Youth Sports Developer of the federation and also in charge of ski clubs. Before commissioning the thesis, a development discussion was held between the author and Ms. Sivenius. The purpose of the discussion was to ensure that both were on the same page concerning the development direction of ski schools. Result was that both parties agreed about the problem areas of ski schools and Ms. Sivenius was excited to get one more fresh perspective on a problem the Federation had been working on for some time already.

2 Cross-country skiing in Finland

This chapter aims to explain the reader what kind of a sport cross-country skiing is. Focus is on competitive skiing rather than in leisure skiing. First some general information is provided about the physical performance of the sport. Second part of the chapter goes briefly through the history of skiing from the point of view of competitive skiing, giving a clear picture of the most important phases in the development of the sport. Third part of the chapter presents the ski school system in Finland and gives an overview on how it has been working for the past years. An example ski club is used. Finally cross-country skiing is discussed from a management perspective, how organizations work in ski clubs and how do they run ski schools, an example ski club is used in this chapter as well.

Cross-country skiing is an endurance sport, which requires many different qualities from the body. Strength, speed and technical skills are of great importance when trying to go fast on snow while balancing on narrow skis. (Anttila & Roponen 2008, 3-4.)

The sport consists of two techniques called classical and skating. Classical is the older of these two techniques as the name might give away. It is skied in a diagonal way on the contrary to skating, which is skied more in a horizontal way. Skating was developed from classical in the 1980's by a Swedish skier called Thomas Wassberg, when a need for more speed grew fast through competitions. (International Ski Federation 2014, Anttila & Roponen 2008, 13-14.)

Skiing is not all about the technique, most of all it is a great outdoor sport. It quickly develops all dimensions of the physical condition without straining any one part of the body too much. Because of this, it suits people in all age groups. (Anttila & Roponen 2008, 13-14)

In addition to physical qualities, cross-country skiing requires correct equipment. This means skis, poles, ski shoes and proper clothing for outdoor sports. Choosing correct skis is highly important both in leisure and competitive skiing. It is a good idea to ask

professionals for advice when choosing skis, because there are so many small things to consider that might be big issues in the end. (Anttila & Roponen 2008, 13-14.)

2.1 History

Cross-country skiing, or also known as nordic skiing, is one of the oldest sports in the world. Originally it was invented to ease moving in the nature during the cold, snowy, winter months in the nordic countries. Skiing was one instrument of surviving in the cruel nature and made hunting easier. (Blom & Lindroth 2002, 72-73.)

The first skis were found in Russia and they date as far as 6300 BC. They were nothing but pieces of wood, but already then the shape resembled the shape of modern skis. At that time and long after, only one pole was used because it was practical to have one hand free for a weapon. Since then equipment and skiing has developed step by step. In 1741 two poles started to be used instead of only one. This change was revolutionary for the speed and also the purpose of skiing. But only in 1843 the first official races were held in Norway, and at the end of 19th century cross-country skiing became bigger when the first international meets were arranged also in Norway. First international races in Finland were arranged in Helsinki in 1906. In 1924 the first Winter Olympics were held in Chamonix, France. Since then the sport started taking big steps in technical development and equipment but also in the physical performance. (International Ski Federation 2014; Blom & Lindroth 2002, 72-73.)

Now in 2014 cross-country skiing has a World Cup circuit and World Championships every two years, and it is an Olympic sport as well. The newest development in competitive skiing internationally is a competition tour called Tour de Ski, which is a circuit of seven races in ten days in different countries in central Europe. (International Ski Federation 2014.)

Long distance ski races are getting more popular rapidly and some might argue that it is the future of the sport. Long distance races or marathons as they are called in the ski world, first were events for leisure skiers. Now there are more professionals attending

and long distance teams have been formed all over the world. It will be interesting to see to which direction skiing starts to develop. For now the brand of cross-country skiing is doing rather well internationally and hopefully will be growing in Finland along with the recent Olympic medals.

2.2 Ski clubs and ski schools

Organized sport in Finland is relatively young. Only in the beginning of the 1900 century it started to flourish and first official sport clubs were created. (Heikkala, Honkanen, Laine, Pullinen & Ruuskanen-Himma 2003, 8-10.) One of these clubs is Lahti Ski Club, which was started in 1922. The club was first started to organize large scale winter sport events, and already a year later the first Lahti Ski Games were held. (Lahden Hiihtoseura 2014.)

In the 1980's the sport culture in Finland went through a change. More specialized clubs were formed because people started to have more free time and different needs for sports. More than 3700 new clubs were started during that time, and most of them were specialized clubs for a certain sport. This also meant a growth for ski clubs and children sports. (Zacheus, 2010)

Lahti Ski Club is a club for ski sports meaning cross-country skiing, ski jumping, nordic combined, alpine skiing with all its forms, and biathlon. Cross-country skiing is one of the fastest growing sectors inside the club, and in the last three years the club has started to work ambitiously to get more children in the ski school groups and it has worked. The club did not wake up a minute too early, because recent research (Husu et al. 2011, 20-21) has showed that cross-country skiing has lost its appeal among children and youth, as mentioned in the introduction of this thesis. See Table 1 where other traditional sports are listed as well.

Table 1. Decrease in popularity in different sports between 2005 and 2006 (Husu et al. 2001, 20-21)

Sport	Amount of children
Cross-country skiing	-43000
Cyckling	-22000
Track&Field	-18000
Swimming	-16000
Football	-13000

The ski school in Lahti Ski Club covers children from 2 to 16 years old and adults as well a few times per winter. But the focus here is in the children. There are four groups, one for 2 to 6 year-olds, one for 6 to 12 year-olds, one for 13 to 16 year-olds who compete and for 13 to 16 year-olds who do not take skiing so seriously. It is a good idea to have a group for not so serious skiers, because studies show (Pernu, 2013) that there is a significant drop in the amount of competition licenses bought for under 18 year-olds, see Table 2 for illustration. This could mean that there is a demand for leisure skiing, skiing as a hobby in other words.

Table 2. Number of licenses for under 18 year-olds (Pernu, P. 2013)

Year	Licenses
2003	5848
2008	4798
2012	4816

The youngest group of the ski school in Lahti Ski Club has practise once per week and the other groups twice. For the youngest the practices are about getting to know the element of snow, getting used to the equipment and learning how their body works. The older group, children from 6 to 12 years old is in many ways the most important

age group. That is why the author chose to focus in this age group in the guidebook, instead the younger or older children. At this age, skiing should be as versatile as possible mixed with learning different ski techniques. Most children only want to ski, race and have fun with friends, regardless of the result as Asta Leppä writes in her column in Helsingin Sanomat (24.2.2013.). Often it is the parents who start wanting results and success when the child is fine with just participating. Ski clubs and ski schools should support these kinds of children by giving them a chance to only have skiing as a hobby. Johanna Manninen reminds in her column in Etelä-Suomen Sanomat (24.3.2013), that clubs are also raising future elite level athletes. But she also writes, that children should do as much and as many sports as possible while young, because that is the best way to develop diversily.

Keeping in mind all of this it can be concluded that ski clubs have a big responsibility to fulfill needs of competitive and also the not so competitive children. Ski schools need to support the physical and emotional development of children by organizing trainings that are full of experiences for everyone.

2.3 Sport management perspective

Ski clubs are mostly small organizations ran by a few people volunteer based. But there are some bigger clubs, which even have full-time employees, Lahti Ski Club for example.

Lahti Ski Club has five different sports, it also has five different sectors under the main organization. Each sector has their own board of directors, which make the final decisions concerning the specific sport. Guidelines are given from the main organization. Ski schools are the responsibility of one person in this board who plans the practices and communicates with instructors. (Lahden Hiihtoseura 2014.) In most cases this person is not a professional in children sports, most often is is a person who has a past in the club. This is the case also in Lahti Ski Club. Most clubs have a need for more information and ideas from a higher level also to have a more united policy on how to arrange ski clubs in 2014. Many clubs are going through a generation switch in their

management and at this point it is essential to change some habits to meet the requirements of children of today.

Money to ski clubs, and in this case Lahti Ski Club, comes from partners, membership fees, money raising campaigns for junior athletes and events organized by the club such as Lahti Ski Games. The problem is, that how to get the money straight to the field to be used for the benefit of the children and athletes. This leads to a bigger problem in money flow, which starts from higher levels. The main associations for Finnish sport are Valo, the Olympic Comity and the Paralympic Comity. Resources from these associations need to get to use more efficiently. (Sport.fi 2014.)

A new research made by KPMG researched some major issues in Finnish organized sport. The goal of the research was to form a proposal on how organized sports should be organized in Finland in the future. Other goal was to find out how are the goals of organized sports met at the moment in the sports society. The research was published on the 4th of April 2014 and was commissioned by Valo, Olympic Comity and the sport department of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Main reason to commission this research was to start going towards the new visions and goals that Valo and the Olympic comity set for finnish sport. The goal that Valo set is that Finland will be the worlds most active nation in 2020. The goal set by the Olympic comity is to be the most succesfull Nordic nation in 2020. The research identified four major areas where the biggest focus should be set, and they are: 1. Add the amount of sports and activity in schools and workplaces. This includes the creation of shared models between sport clubs, schools and workplaces. 2. Making use of the knowledge different sports institutions have. 3. Simple structures in sports management. This means forming only one organization to control finnish sport, instead of three separate ones. 4. Widening the financial field. This includes building the brand of Finnish sport by increasing the amount of sport events and modernizing the infrastructure of sports facilities. (KPMG 4 Apr 2014.)

Finland has 16 years to work towards achieving the above listed goals and make Finnish sport more attractive and more successful. In order to do all this, large-scale efforts are needed from sports clubs and the Finnish sport community in general. Cross-country skiing is one of the biggest sports in Finland, despite the loss of skiers recently, with over 600 ski clubs. Because of that ski clubs have a responsibility to start working together with different parties, such as cities and regions, towards a better future.

3 Experience theories

According to Joseph Pine II and James Gilmore (1999) we are living in an experience economy where experiences differ from services as much as services from goods (1999, 2-3).

According to the same authors customers of the experience economy are not called customers, they are called guests because the company, the experience stager, sets the stage for the guests to enter. Giving guests experiences is about engaging them in a personal, memorable way, not necessarily entertaining them, even if entertainment is one dimension of experiences. Service providers design the service and think what the customer wants when the experience stager thinks how to communicate and act with the guest. (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 12; Tarssanen 2009, 9.)

But how to define an experience? One definition by Pine and Gilmore states that “experiences are events that engage individuals in a personal way (1999, 12). Another definition is by Sanna Tarssanen (2009, 11) which states that “an experience is a multisensory, positive, comprehensive emotional experience, that can lead to personal change.” An experience of any kind is always very personal because there are so many issues affecting it from the guests past and personality. The experience stager can only provide the setting or in Pine and Gilmore's terms, the stage for the experience, the guests does the rest.

The next chapter presents the process of experiencing, experience realms and finally opens up the different levels of experiences with the help of the Experience Pyramid.

3.1 Process of experiencing

The process of experiencing starts with the physical body and sensory perceptions, as Figure 1 illustrates. All the five basic senses and also the sense of balance and somatic sense are working in order to get clues on what is happening in the surrounding envi-

ronment. Sensory perception often works without the conscious mind being aware of it, and can give mental images and rise up memories, which make every experience unique and personal. (Boswijk, Thijssen & Peelen 2007, 20-21.)

Sensory perceptions lead to emotions, the second phase in the process of experiencing. Emotions are a way of processing information gotten through different senses. How does it feel to go to ski practice for example, and what kind of a personal history does an individual have with the place or with different elements in the environment. Besides the personal history and former experiences, it is all about the current mental state that one has, is one angry, happy or something else. (Boswijk et al. 2007, 21-22.)

After sensory perceptions and emotions comes the experience, third phase in the process of experiencing. Boswijk et al. (2007, 22) defines an experience as “an immediate, relatively isolated occurrence with a complex of emotions that make an impression and represent a certain value for the individual within the context of a specific situation.” It means that an experience is most often a bundle of emotions, which either occur all at the same time or after each other.

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) studied the concept of flow, which can be considered as an ultimate experience. The study and the characteristics of flow are relevant for athletes and performing artists for example. Csikszentmihalyi (1990; Boswijk et al. 2007, 23) recognized the following aspects in a perfect flow or an optimal experience:

- A feeling of playfulness.
- A sense of being in control of the situation.
- Utter concentration.
- Pleasure in the activity itself.
- A loss of sense of time.
- A good balance between the challenge and one’s own capacities.
- A clear objective.

The challenge here is that how to get companies, experience stagers, to produce such strong experiences, keeping in mind that an experience is always personal.

The fourth phase in the process of experiencing is getting a meaningful experience. It has to do with individuality again. The individual starts to process the experience in a more personal way, they start thinking that what does this mean to them, as a person with a unique history. A meaningful experience is about experiencing the experience in many contexts and constantly interacting. (Boswijk et al. 2007, 24.)

The fifth phase in the process of experiencing is giving meaning.

After an meaningful experience to one self, the individual starts building bridges to the surrounding environment. Being in contact with it by doing and undergoing things. Thinking and going outside of one self, looking for deeper motives and reasons behind the experience. (Boswijk et al. 2007, 26-27.)



Figure 1 Process of experiencing (Boswijk et al. 2007, 20)

3.2 Experience realms

Pine & Gilmore (1999, 30-38; Tarssanen 2009, 9-10) have introduced a model of experience realms. Figure 2 illustrates that model. Experiences are multidimensional and can engage a guest in any of the dimensions. They can be analyzed from four different perspectives, which finally define the four realms of experiences. (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 30.)

The horizontal axis in Figure 2, is the first dimension, which represents the level of guest participation. It can be either passive or active. In passive participation the guest is observing or watching something that does not require participation.

A classical music concert for example. In active guest participation the experience requires the guests participation in order to make the experience, such as benji jumping.

The second dimension, which is shown on the vertical axis of Figure 2, describes the kind of connections or relationships the guest has with the experience. This can either be absorption or immersion. If the guest is absorbed in the experience, they are in a way going into it, whereas in immersion the experience goes into the guest. An example of the first could be a simple action of watching television. The person goes into the experience when they emphasize the characters or the plot. An example of the latter could be playing a computer game. While playing, the person is involved in the game so much that they feel being a part of the game, they are immersed in the experience.

When these dimensions are put together, the four realms of experiences are generated as shown in Figure 2. They are entertainment, educational, esthetic and escapist. These four realms are not limited by each other. Often a “perfect experience” has elements from all of the realms. (Pine & Gilmore 1990, 31, 102; Tarssanen 2009, 20.) These realms will be presented in the following paragraphs.

The realm of entertainment is a very traditional one. It is usually passive, the guest is merely watching and absorbing a show for instance. Entertainment is as old as mankind. But along with the growth of the experience economy, the so to say normal entertaining experiences as watching a play, might not be enough. Then the experience stagers are required to add elements from the other experience realms. (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 31.)

The next realm is the educational. It requires the guests active participation to absorb the surrounding environment. Real education is serious, but educational experiences do not have to be. (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 32.) Ski schools for instance, one of the main goals of children going to ski schools, is simply to learn how to ski as the name “school” already indicates. But as said, it does not have to, and should not be boring, which is the point of the eXperienCeSki guidebook. Edutainment (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 32) is a word that suits well with educational experiences. A not so traditional example is working holidays, where the tourist goes to a destination to work on something important for the local community. The tourist learns valuable things about a

foreign culture while still being on holiday away from home and also making new friendships.

Third experience realm is the escapist. It is completely opposite to an entertainment experience. Escapist experience requires very active participation and complete immersion to the experience. The guest becomes an actor to whom the experience stagers set the stage. (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 33.) Good examples are theme parks, role playing of different types of safari adventures. In the ski school environment an escapist experience is also reachable with the help of storytelling for example. If the child is completely immersed in the story and taking part in the treasure hunt for instance, the escapist experience is fulfilled.

Finally the fourth experience realm is the esthetic. In an esthetic experience the guest is immersed in the experience but do not have an effect on it leaving the environment untouched. The guest wants to only be there and sense the environment, without actually doing anything. (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 35.) These kind of esthetic experiences include going to museums and natural landmarks or special natural areas.

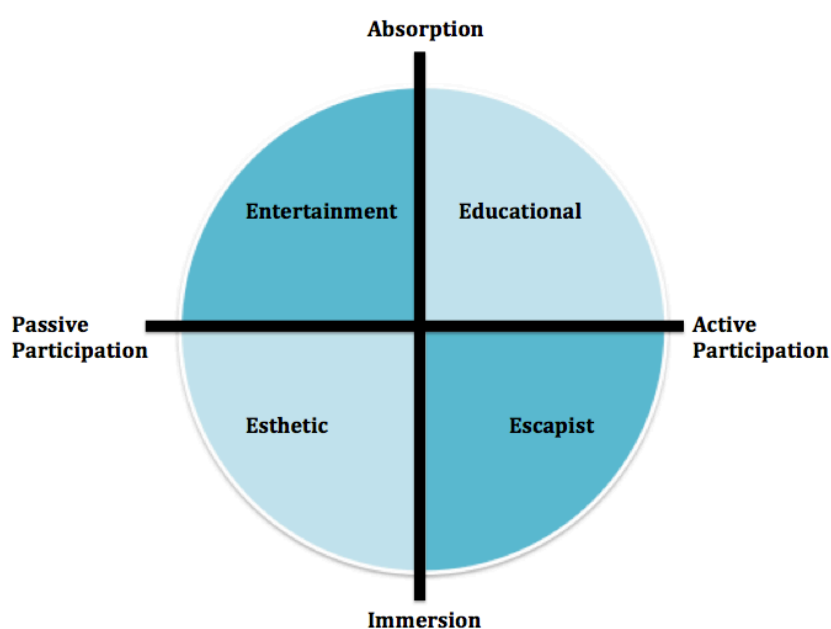


Figure 2 The experience realms (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 30)

3.3 The Experience Pyramid

The Experience Pyramid is a model of a perfect experience and also a practical tool to analyze experience products or events. It is created by Sanna Tarssanen and Mika Kylänen (2005, 137).

In the model experiences are analyzed from two different view points. The horizontal level represents the elements of an experience and the vertical level represents the different levels of experiencing, as Figure 3 shows. The underlying idea is that in each level of experiencing every experience element is present. Tarssanen explains (2009, 12) that even if an experience can not be promised with absolute certainty, the main elements of an experience can be included and so a service is refined to an experience. In the next paragraphs all the elements of the Experience Pyramid are clarified.

The first two elements of experiences are individuality and authenticity as Figure 3 illustrates. Individuality stands for uniqueness. The experience should not be found from anywhere else in that specific form. It should also be easily altered according to the guests personal needs and interests. Authenticity is related to individuality because in the end it is always the guest who determines if the experience is authentic. In this relation authenticity means credibility. The guest needs to believe that the experience is true, that it is not only created for tourists for example. Authenticity also often means locality. Taking the example of a tourist experience, authenticity and locality would mean that products and people are truly local, not only actors or products made in another country. (Tarssanen 2009, 12.)

Next two elements of experiences are the element of story and multisensory perception, as presented in Figure 3. Story is closely related to authenticity. It is important that all the different elements of an experience are tied together with a story that is consistent. The story must also be well scripted in order to be authentic, there should not be space for chance. All details must suit together in every step of the experience and every step of the story. In other words, the theme must be present at all times.

(Tarssanen 2009, 13; Pine & Gilmore 1999, 46-48.) Multi-sensory perception is part of a good and authentic story. As many senses as possible should be involved in a meaningful experience. But the senses involved must always suit the theme. There can not be too much or too little sensory stimulation because it can also be disturbing if the elements do not support each other. (Tarssanen 2009, 14.)

Finally the two last elements are contrast and interaction. Contrast means new and different, from the guests perspective. The guests should get to experience something that they can not experience in their everyday life. When staging something exotic to guests, the experience stager needs to keep in mind the guests background and what is exotic or normal for them, and offer something different. Interaction means successful communication between the guests and the people who are in any way involved in the experience staging. The interaction with the guests should also be similar on every stage of the experience to strengthen the authenticity. This kind of good interaction also strengthens the sense of community among the guests and good team spirit and sense of belonging to a group strengthens the experience on an emotional level. But interaction also strengthens the level of individuality, if it is done well between the guide and guest for instance. (Tarssanen 2009, 14.)

The second part of the Experience pyramid points out the levels of experiences, as shown in Figure 3. Every level should possess all the elements described in the previous paragraphs. The levels illustrate the path of the guest starting from the moment when they start building interest towards the experience and after several stages arriving hopefully in an experience that leads to personal change. These levels are motivational, physical, intellectual, emotional and mental and they are presented next. (Tarssanen 2009, 15.)

The motivational level is the first step when the experience stager is in communication or interacts with the guest. It includes marketing actions, which should create positive images and expectations, make promises to the guest and provoke interest. Already on this first level as many experience elements as possible should be used. (Tarssanen 2009, 15.)

Second level is the physical level. At this level the guest is already immersed in the experience and is taking it in with all senses. The guest should physically feel safe. Sometimes it is the nature of the experience that the guest needs to feel scared but there should never be a real possibility of any kind of danger. (Tarssanen 2009, 16.)

Third level is the intellectual level and it includes the experience of learning. The guest observes the environment intellectually and tries to make sense of things with the help of sensory perception. The guest gathers information and possibly learns from it if it is possible. This can happen either consciously or unconsciously. (Tarssanen 2009, 16.)

Fourth level is the emotional level. This is the level where the actual experience takes place. Emotions are personal and dependent on the individual's history. But if in the previous levels all the different elements have been present, it is highly likely that positive emotions will accrue and create a positive experience. (Tarssanen 2009, 16.)

Finally the fifth level of experiences is the mental level. The guest will achieve this level through positive experiences, which can lead to a change in habits, way of thinking, life values or something else. The guest's experience is so strong that they will take this new way of seeing things with them in their everyday life. (Tarssanen 2009, 16.)

A perfect experience theoretically includes all the elements and levels that the Experience Pyramid illustrates. But an experience of any level is always extremely personal and subjective and sometimes something much more simple can produce a meaningful experience that leads to personal change. Never the less a meaningful experience is much more likely to happen if all the criteria is fulfilled. (Tarssanen 2009, 10.)

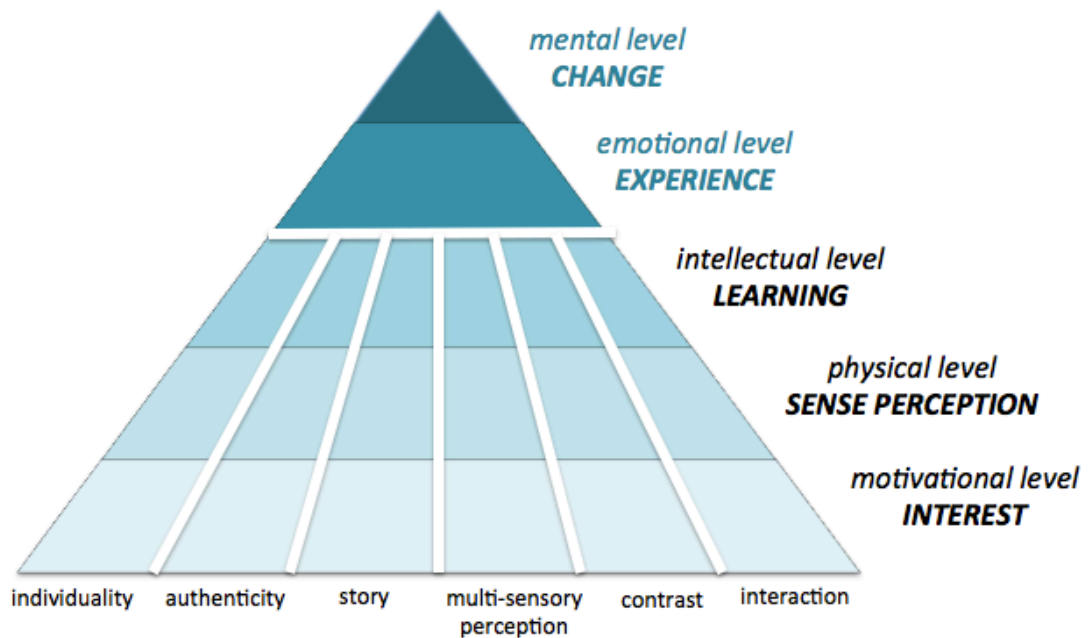


Figure 3. The Experience Pyramid (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2005, 13)

3.4 World Snow Day

Cross-country skiing is a big sport in Central-Europe and the Nordic countries. But as well as in Finland, the sport is suffering from loss of skiers and especially children. The International Ski Federation has noticed the decline in youth participation and wants to make a change starting with an event called World Snow Day. The whole underlying idea of the event is that children would enjoy, explore and experience new things with the element of snow. (World Snow Day 2014; International Cross-Country Ski Federation 2014.) It is getting clear that the experience factor needs to be added in to cross-country skiing in order to involve children of the modern world.

World Snow Day is one part of an international campaign called Bring Children to the Snow, ran by the International Ski Federation. The vision of the event is “to create the worlds biggest event on snow by coordinating organizers all around the world to stage events simultaneously to celebrate all things snow has to offer (International Ski Federation).” The point is to motivate children from 4 to 14 years old to do snow sports and spread the joy of snow. The idea is, that individual organizers in the ski world would get active and organize the World Snow Day on the same day everywhere on the globe. It has been organized three times in 30 countries so far. Next World Snow

Day will be held on the 18th of January 2015. (World Snow Day 2014)

This event is a good example of putting experience theory into practice. It is up to the organizer to decide what to include in the event, but it could be executed in every experience realm. Mostly this kind of sports event would mean active guest participation, which would be either educational or escapist, or both. Passive participation is possible as well if the event would include a show or sport demonstration where the guests, the children, would only be observing. The goal would be to get the children completely immersed in the experience so that they are authentically connected with the element of snow and get meaningful experiences through that.

4 Storytelling

Telling stories is an extremely old way to connect with people, dating back to the ancient Greece and Rome and even the cavemen (Aaltonen & Heikkilä 2003, 15; Harvard Business Review 2003). Storytelling is about transforming past events into words, pictures and sounds (Menetelmäblogi 2012). People use stories in their everyday lives constantly and even search for sources of stories from wild experiences or trips abroad with friends. Storytelling in everyday life used to be more common before the technological era. Now instead of gathering around the fireplace people gather around the television and let the electronic device tell the stories. (Menetelmäblogi 2012.)

Stories are an essential part of a meaningful experience. A good story engages the guest or listener emotionally very strongly. (Tarssanen 2009, 13.) A story can be a medium to create images, deliver information, teach, communicate plans and pass on feelings and values. A story can be either fictive or reality based. (Menetelmäblogi 2012.)

Businesses are using storytelling as a marketing tool, and in today's world it means often digital storytelling. Businesses can share their stories globally through social media and that way build their brand image. Pine and Gilmore (1999, 46-48) compare experience theming and storytelling to theatre. Businesses could and some already do, use the technique of drama when designing their company story, customer path or the product or event itself. (Matkailualan tutkimus- ja koulutusinstituutti 2010)

A good storyteller recognizes the most important elements of a story and uses them as an advantage. Nick Morgan (2013) states in his article in the Forbes website that "A story is not an anecdote. A story is a tale of struggle leading to change. The world has minimal patience for anecdotes, but it will never tire of great stories."

The next chapter will present the secrets to the art of telling stories.

4.1 The art of telling stories

Storytelling can mean telling stories with words, pictures or sounds but in this chapter storytelling is discussed in the context of producing oral stories.

A CEO or a manager of an organization is a leader and needs to make speeches rather often. Speeches may be held to customers or guests, or the employees. In any circumstance the message needs to be delivered in a way that the listener is engaged and wants to hear more. That is in fact the goal of the storyteller, to get the listener to listen intensively. Also from a manager point of view the goal is to get the listener to think for themselves. Storytelling is a skill and requires practice, but when it is learned it will not be forgotten. (Aaltonen & Heikkilä 2003, 177.)

According to Mika Aaltonen and Titi Heikkilä (2003) there are four major points to know about telling stories, they are listed below.

- Know your audience.
- Know yourself.
- Know your story.
- Know the means of bodylanguage.

The first important point is to know your audience. This entails pre-preparation for the presentation. The speaker tries to find out everything there is to know about the audience. Also what is currently happening in the other levels of the organization and of course the surrounding environment. This helps to understand the values of the people in the audience. (Aaltonen & Heikkilä 2003, 178.)

Second important point after knowing the audience, is for the speaker to know him or herself. They must know their strengths and weaknesses and know how to control themselves in all possible situations. The speaker must also make the story a part of them, meaning that the speaker knows the story so well that it becomes personal and the speaker is sometimes even emotionally connected to it. The storyteller has the responsibility to create the wanted atmosphere in the presentation, or storytelling situa-

tion. In order to do this, the speaker needs to be well prepared mentally and physically. They can even do a warm up to ensure that they are ready to perform and step on stage. (Aaltonen & Heikkilä 2003, 178.)

Third point what the speaker needs to know is the story itself. The audience will know and sense if there is any hesitation in the speaking or bodylanguage. The speaker needs to live the story. Only way to know the story that well, is practice. The best comedians for instance practise their shows and jokes more than the audience can ever guess, and they are storytellers from the top. Besides knowing the story, the speaker should also be familiar with the technique of drama. An effective story has a intriguing beginning, a turning point in the middle and an exciting ending. A good storyteller knows how to build a story according to this model. (Aaltonen & Heikkilä 2003, 179-180.)

The fourth point worth knowing when wanting to tell engaging stories are the different means of bodylanguage. Bodylanguage includes facial expressions, body movements and tone of voice. A skillfull storyteller uses all the elements of bodylanguage to support the verbal message. If all the elements do not match with each other the audience can easily see it and the story becomes implausible. (Aaltonen & Heikkilä 2003, 180-181.)

The last and possibly the most important point the storyteller needs to know is that they should forget all rules and notes during the speech or presentation. Authenticity is the key. Also the speaker needs to find their own voice and style of telling stories. (Aaltonen & Heikkilä 2003, 181.)

5 eXperienCeSki - the guidebook

The product of this bachelor's thesis is a guidebook called eXperienCeSki, commissioned by Suomen Maastohiihto ry. It is targeted for ski school instructors and gives new ideas on how to organize cross-country ski schools in Finland for children from 6 to 12 years old. It is written in Finnish. The guidebook is aiming to be a source of inspiration to ski clubs and the instructors and give a new set of guidelines to them. It is not a step by step practical guide. The goal and mission is to offer experiences to children every time they attend ski schools.

The name of the guidebook, eXperienCeSki, is created by the author. Ski clubs can use this model when planning their ski schools. Some clubs might even start using only the term eXperienCeSki instead of the term ski school. The word school often has a negative echo in it, so calling ski schools something else would possibly sound more appealing to children. The name eXperienCeSki describes well the concept presented in the guidebook, because it is about new experiences acquired with the help of different elements like storytelling. Details of the content will be presented later in this chapter. The capital letters in the word eXperienCeSki derive from the expression "x-country ski", which is often used internationally when talking about cross-country skiing in an unofficial situation.

This chapter will present the content of the guidebook, the planning process and finally opinions and comments about the guidebook from ski school instructors.

5.1 Content of the guidebook

The eXperienCeSki guidebook can be found from the attachments as Attachment 1. The guidebook has 26 pages in its final version. It has nine chapters and presents four different core ideas on how to get children more excited to do skiing as a hobby in a club.

The first chapter is a short introduction that explains some background to cross-country skiing and ski clubs, and why doing sports at a young age is important. Second

chapter describes the goals of the guidebook and briefly presents the four core ideas, which are storytelling, co-operation between different sports, team spirit and re-designing clubs' inside competitions.

The next chapters in the guidebook present the above mentioned elements in detail. Firstly storytelling. The author believes that storytelling would be an excellent form of educating and inspiring children in ski schools. This requires a lot from the instructors, they must be genuinely excited and involved in the story because a story loses its affect if it is not done or told well enough. Children are also very observant and sense quickly if the instructor is not taking something seriously. In the guidebook the author presents four example stories for different aged children. They are only described briefly because the authors and commissioners mutual decision was to draw a line here and leave space for the ski clubs to plan the stories more precisely. The stories could be put in the trainings only in one part or build the entire training around the storyline. Most example stories that the author designed include a reward for the children at the end. The stories would always advance one step in one training, so that the children would solve different kind of tasks related to the story. In the end the problem or mystery of the story is solved and the children are rewarded.

The author also wanted to include some of the most important physical abilities of children sport in the storytelling. There are six of these abilities, and so six themes that the tasks in the story should include. The abilities are endurance, agility, strength, skill, speed and balance. For example when the story starts in the first training, the group of children need to do something that develops endurance, like a long hike or ski trip. This needs to be designed well into the story that it feels relevant for the children to do the hike.

After storytelling the guidebook presents an idea of tighter co-operation between different sports. It suggests that sport clubs from the same city or area could do co-operation and organize trainings for children from each others clubs so that all children would get a chance to try different sports. Most clubs have several sports so the co-operation could even be inside the same club, as some clubs already luckily do.

Fifth chapter talks about team spirit and why is it so important in an individual sport. Skiing has changed as a sport and it requires much more physically than it used to. The old attitude and stereotype that a skier goes alone to the forrest for many hours to do a training is wrong. Those types of trainings still are done but it is not only like that. Group trainings with a lot of content in them are the key in modern skiing in a competitive level. Keeping that in mind, children in ski schools should also be training like that. Modern age children are also grown in the hype of team sports such as ice hockey and most feel that is the fun way to do sports. Cross-country ski clubs should offer the same if they want to keep attracting children to the sport.

After team spirit the guidebook handles competitions inside the club. Traditionally clubs organize ski races during the winter, some more often then others. But the way of arranging them has been the same since a very long time. The author thinks that a change is needed in this issue too. The guidebook presents many suggestions on how to make ski racing even more interesting and challenging.

Besides the four core ideas described in the previous paragraphs, the guidebook talks about group division, feedback giving and packaging the ski school experience. Group division in the eXperienCeSki model would be according to age as normally. There would a group for 6 to 8 year-olds and a group for 9 to 12 year-olds. The older group would be good to divide into smaller groups according to level if there are possibilities for this. Correct group division ensures that everyone gets good practices and they are rewarding. Designing the stories is also easier for spesific ages.

Feedback giving is an essential part of teaching a physical skills. The ski instructors need to give feedback for the children in a positive way, as much as possible and in a way that the instructor explains how to do a certain thing not to underline the mistake. Also children should be able to give feedback for the instructors. The guidebook presents a few simple ideas for that.

Ski school packaging will be essential more and more every winter because of the changing climate and difficult snow conditions. Cross-country skiing requires a lot of equipment and it is not easy to choose them without help. Ski clubs could offer differ-

ent packages which some include skis, ski shoes and poles in addition to the regular membership fee. Few example packages are presented in the guidebook.

5.2 Process description

In the following paragraphs the process of planning and writing the guidebook will be explained in detail, is it also illustrated in Figure 4.

The thesis project started in February 2013 by brainstorming subjects. From the start was clear that the thesis will be a project based thesis that involves my passion for, and expertise in cross-country skiing. There were many ideas in the beginning from event creation to different types of guidebooks. The final decision came quickly when looking at the website of Suomen Maastohiihto Ry and their old ski school guidebook from year 2004. It was clear that a new set of guidelines and fresh ideas were needed in addition to the practical guide they already had.

After deciding the topic and the way of executing it, was time for the first meeting with the commissioner in March 2013. The idea of the guidebook was introduced to Ms. Henna Sivenius from Suomen Maastohiihto Ry, and there was straight a mutual feeling that this is precisely what cross-country skiing would need at the moment. The thesis was commissioned. Many topics were discussed and when leaving the meeting there was a countless amount of ideas and topics and it was sure that all of them would not fit in the guidebook.

After the first meeting started the work of limiting ideas. The parts that were first confirmed to be in the guidebook were stories, team spirit and co-operation between sports. In May 2013 not many weeks after the first meeting, second meeting with Ms. Sivenius was held. In that meeting the core topics were confirmed to be the previously mentioned three, and also giving new ideas for club's inside competitions. The goal of the guidebook was cleared to be a source of inspiration for ski club instructors. The visual side was discussed and it was decided to be done as a PDF file and the end product would be put online in the website of Suomen Maastohiihto Ry. Instructions were given to not to think too much about the visual look of the guidebook, the

responsibility was the content and the visual part could be edited by professionals later. A timeframe was set, the guide would need be finished by the beginning of November 2013.

At this point the project seemed clear, now it was time to write the guidebook. It took five months to write, the author was doing a work placement at the same time. The draft was sent to Ms. Sivenius a number of times to control the direction of the writing. The language was confirmed to be relaxed and as simple as possible, instructors who work volunteer based would probably not like to read long texts with complicated expressions. The name eXperienCeSki was invented by the author by chance during one brainstorming afternoon. The author wanted to include the word experience in the name since it was the whole starting point of the guidebook, to give children experiences from skiing.

In October 2013 the first draft was finished and the visual layout already looked the same as in the final version. Third meeting with Ms. Sivenius was held and the draft got good feedback. But mutual opinion was that there could be something more. Brainstorming started and then a realization occurred, it would be practical if ski clubs could offer more to the children than only ski trainings. Perhaps ski clubs could offer equipment too. This is how the idea of packaging the ski school experience was born. Ms. Sivenius also suggested that the author could write something about feedback giving to remind instructors that it is a crucial part of children sports and giving positive experiences. This third meeting was very fruitful and the author got a lot of inspiration to write the new parts of the guidebook. The final table of contents looks as follows topic wise, the chapters have playful names in Finnish in the guidebook.

- Stories.
- Co-operation between sports.
- Team spirit.
- Renewing the inside competition system.
- Group division.
- Feedback and communication.
- Packaging the ski school experience.

During October and November of 2013 the guidebook was finished and given to the commissioner. But was decided that the final version would be given only in the spring of 2014 when the whole thesis would be ready. This decision could be made since there was no hurry from the commissioners side and publishing plans were not clear. The author took a three month break from school during the winter due to the competition season and competing in cross-country skiing full time. In March 2014 the thesis project was re-started and the guidebook finished at the same time as the report in end of April. Four ski club instructors were chosen to read the guidebook and give their comments, which are presented in the next chapter. The questions that were asked were designed so that the author would get a general picture on how real life instructors react to this kind of new thinking and would they consider using the ideas presented.

Publishing the guidebook on the website of Suomen Maastohiihto Ry is still unsure at the time of publishing this report. There is also a possibility to give out the guidebook as a paper version straight to ski clubs. In anyway, the guidebook will be handed to the commissioner who will have the right to decide where or when to publish it. One possibility is to use the guidebook as a tool in training of ski school instructors in ski clubs. What ever the final use will be for the guidebook, the author has been convinced by the commissioner that it will be of important use to Suomen Maastohiihto ry.



Figure 4. Process description

5.3 Remarks from ski school instructors

The author contacted four ski school instructors via e-mail, who work in ski clubs around the region of Päijät-Häme. The instructors were chosen according to their experience as ski school instructors, which gives them plenty of insight into children sports and what children like and dislike in trainings in general. Two of the instructors are around 20 years old and the other two are under 40 and under 60 years old.

They were sent the guidebook through e-mail and they had a weeks time to read the guidebook, and to answer the three following questions.

1. Did you get new ideas from the guidebook?
2. In your opinion, does cross-country skiing need this kind of new way of thinking?
3. Could you see yourself using storytelling or other elements presented in the guidebook when you are instructing ski schools?

Besides the three structured question the instructors were asked to express their opinions freely. These free general comments were all positive and similar to each other. The adjectives they used to describe the guidebook were fantastic, great and inspiring. One of the instructures pointed out that they were not sure about the practicality of one certain game example.

The first question was asking if the instructors got new ideas from the guidebook. All answers said that yes, especially the storytelling part was inspirational. One comment was also praising the feedback section. Another comment said that the co-operation between sports should definetely be taken into use. One answer made a good point that with the help of stories even the less athletic children could be genuinely excited about coming to ski school.

Second question aimed to find out whether cross-country skiing needs this kind of new thinking in the opinion of people who are actively involved in the sport.

The answer unanimously was yes. One instructor wanted to underline the importance of team spirit, which is not utilized to its full potential at the moment in ski clubs. One other instructor highlighted the importance of clubs' inside races and would not start changing them.

Third question asked whether or not the instructors would see themselves using storytelling or other elements from the guidebook in their work as ski school instructors. Everyone said yes for sure they would use storytelling. Most also said that they would see themselves using more team activities and the feedback system.

To conclude the answers, could say that the guidebook got a sincerely positive response and instructors would be ready to use most of the ideas in practice. But stories would need more details and renewing the clubs' inside competitions would be difficult. Some minor changes were made in the guidebook according to the instructors' feedback. These changes were mostly related to spelling and the some specific sentences.

6 Discussion

The discussion chapter of this thesis starts by evaluating the thesis process as a whole, both the product and report parts. Then some development ideas are presented on how the commissioner can keep developing the eXperienCeSki model. After that, personal learning outcomes of the thesis process are discussed.

6.1 Evaluation of the thesis process

The goal of this thesis process was to create an inspirational guidebook for ski clubs in Finland on how to arrange ski schools for children between 6 and 12 years old.

The goal was reached since the guidebook was created successfully. The author formed two objectives in the beginning of the process, which were the following: The guidebook should deliver the joy of skiing and it should give ski clubs a fresh perspective. According to the small group of ski club instructors who read the guidebook, the objectives were clearly met. Also the commissioner was satisfied with the content of the guidebook and feels that it offers the missing part of inspiration that ski clubs sometimes miss. In addition to the instructors and commissioner, the author is also satisfied with the end result feeling that it truly offers something new for the cross-country ski clubs.

The process of writing the guidebook did not go as was first planned. The first goal was to have the guidebook ready by August 2013 to be published on the new website of Suomen Maastohiihto Ry in September 2013. But the author and the commissioner did not set a strict date and because of that it kept changing often. The commissioner did not have a hurry to publish the guidebook so the process got longer more easily. The author was also doing a work placement at the same time as writing the guidebook, which proved to be a very big workload. But finally the guidebook was finished in November 2013 but once more the publishing date was pushed forward until the spring and until the whole thesis process is finished. In March 2014 the guidebook was looked through again and some minor things fixed and it was officially ready at the same time as the report in the end of April. All in all the writing of the guidebook took

a year, which was a bit longer than expected. The author first was supposed to graduate in December 2013 but due to personal reasons graduation happens in May 2014.

The report part of the thesis was started in the spring of 2013 by collecting sources and information, and thinking of subjects for the theoretical framework. The process of choosing the theoretical framework was surprisingly easy, and the plan did not even change during the year. It was clear that cross-country skiing needed its own chapter. The subchapter Sport management perspective was added later, only on the final stretch of the report writing.

Second part of the theoretical framework was also easy to choose since the topic of experiences and the experience economy have been the foundation of the degree programme. Experiences were also the underlying idea of the guidebook.

Storytelling has been inspiring the author every since a course on the first year of studies. It is a topic that does not have so much of literature but most sources that discuss experiences underline the importance of stories in meaningful experiences. It was quickly decided that stories would also become the main ingredient in the guidebook. Already in the autumn of 2013 there was a clear table of contents and sources were collected. But the actual writing process started in the beginning of March 2014 and was finished in two months. The writing process was hectic and the timetable was tight, no room for surprising events. But with full-time dedication it was possible to finish the report in time.

The thesis process was slower than very first planned but finally it did not bother either the commissioner or the author. There were several changes along the way from both ends, which could have been prevented if the process was planned better together with the commissioner from the beginning. But there were also many force majors during the year, which affected the whole process. In conclusion, time management could have been better, but the goals were met in the guidebook which was the most important part personally for the author.

6.2 Development ideas for eXperienCeSki

The eXperienCeSki guidebook is an inspirational guidebook for ski school instructors. Next step from this could be a step by step guide to make the job of the instructors even easier. That kind of a more precise guidebook could handle practical issues like how to arrange certain games in ski schools or how could clubs organize their organizations more efficiently.

Another development idea would be to create a story handbook for ski school instructors who start to use the stories and possibly run out of them at some point. This handbook would describe specifically the storyline of each story, and give different options for ski schools which are arranged once, and which twice per week. eXperienCeSki gives only a few story examples and they are not very detailed. One of the instructors who was asked to give comments said that they feel that more specific instructions would be necessary in most cases.

Third development idea addresses technology. Modern day children are mostly used to technology and spend many hours a day behind different kinds of screens. Technology could be used as a tool to connect with the children outside of ski school. The clubs' website could have a part dedicated to the children where they could chat or play games. If money was not an issue even mobile apps could be created. Technology will be a must in the future in every area of life, even sports. Cross-country skiing should not be left behind because technology can truly increase the value of ski school experience.

Fourth idea that would be worth developing is a reward system already in use in many sports, like swimming for instance. Every time a child learns a technique or otherwise does something that is previously agreed to be worth rewarding, they would be rewarded. The reward could be a simple badge or diploma. By collecting these badges the child would grow motivation to develop.

6.3 Personal learning outcomes

The thesis process was the most challenging part of the degree programme. But it also was the most rewarding. It was a real life project, and even if there were people to help, the main responsibility was mine. All in all I felt that I managed the process rather well taking into consideration the amount of changes that happened along the process. But there were also points of self critique.

I knew the commissioner and the interviewed ski school instructors well, which was not only a positive thing. I could have been more professional when communicating with them even if only for practice. Also I did not manage the end part of the report writing as well as I could have. I should have sent the questions about the guidebook to more people, a few weeks earlier and asked more detailed questions. Now it stayed on quite a general level.

The part that I handled the best was surely the creation of the guidebook. It gives new ideas to cross-country ski clubs and will force them to change the way of their thinking.

The thesis process taught me several things but the most important learning outcomes are listed below.

- Time and project management.
- Producing something completely new.
- Found out a personal weakness of being too relaxed when a deadline is still far.
- Found out a personal strength of being surprisingly innovative.

I knew already before the project that managing a project requires good planning, but now I know what it means in practise and what kind of tools I personally need. I did not use any project management tools, probably should have. I only used timelines written on paper and a calender. I also got a confirmation that I need pressure to give out my best. I have always considered myself as a non-creative person but this project taught me that if one know the topic well enough, it is possible to be innovative. I also

learned that producing something completely new requires a certain state of mind and enough patience to consider everything from all sides. The writing of the theoretical framework taught me also more about the topics I was writing about.

The subject of the thesis was chosen because of the authors personal history and interest in cross-country skiing. The eXperienCeSki guidebook was designed because there is a growing need to change old habits in ski schools around the country. The need derives from the fact, that children are choosing other sports that have a more exciting image than cross-country, team sports for instance.

The guidebook met the goals set upon it and hopefully it will be part of the change that will be necessary in ski schools in the very near future.

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Attachments

Attachment 1.
eXperienCeSki guidebook

eXperienCeSki



Kuva: Heidi Passila

Opas lasten hiihtoelämyksiin.



SUOMEN MAASTOHIIHTO

NUORI
SUOMI
ILOA LIIKKEELLE

SISÄLLYSLUETTELO

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eXperienCeSki – Elämyksiä hiihdosta

Maastohiihto on vuosikymmeniä ollut suomalaisten rakastama liikuntamuoto.

Maassamme on paljon hiihtoperinteitä ja yksi niistä on hiihtokoulu. Hiihtoseurat kautta maan järjestävät hiihtokouluja eri ikäisille lapsille ja nuorille opettaen tekniikkaa ja ennen kaikkea vieden eteenpäin hiihtämisen iloa. Tutkittu fakta on, että minkä nuorena oppii, sen vanhana taitaa, ja sama koskee liikuntaa. Mikäli lapsuudessa liikunta on tuonut iloisia elämyksiä ja onnistumisia on liikunta todennäköisemmin mukana ihmisen elämässä vanhempanakin. Myös tulevien huippu-hiihtäjien kannalta on äärimmäisen tärkeää saada lapset jo varhaisessa vaiheessa rakastamaan liikuntaa ja hiihtoa. Vain todellisen lajirakkauden kautta saadaan sekä maailmanmestareita, että aktiivisia arjen kuntoliikkujia jotka elävät terveemmän ja pidemmän elämän kuin liikkumattomat.

Lyhyesti

eXperienCeSki on uudenlainen hiihtokoulumalli 6-12-vuotiaille lapsille. Hiihtokoulujen perusidea säilyy, eli hiihdon opetusta ja liikunnan riemua kaikentasoisille pikkuhiihtäjille. Toteutus vain uusiutuu.

Tämän oppaan tarkoitus on olla inspiraationlähde hiihtokoulujen ohjaajille ja valmentajille. Tarkoitus on myös saada ohjaajat ajattelemaan ohjausta uudella tavalla ja rohkeasti vaihtamaan toimintamalleja vanhoista totutuista uusiin ja jännittäviin.

Tavoite on yksinkertainen. Hiihtokoulun tulee antaa lapsille elämyksiä joka ikisellä harjoituskerralla. Seuraavat elementit ovat **eXperienCeSki**:n ydin ja lähtökohta:

- Tarinankerronta
- Lajikokeilut
- Joukkuetoiminta
- Sarjahiihtojen uudistaminen

Tarinankerronta on voimakas tapa saada lapset aidosti mukaan toimintaan. Sitä käytetään paljon kouluissa oppimisen edistämiseksi joten miksi ei myös urheilussa kun sen räätälöi lajiin ja harjoitukseen sopivaksi. Tämä kuitenkin vaatii ohjaajilta ja valmentajilta aitoa innostusta ja halua käyttää tarinoita harjoituksissa.

Lajikokeiluilla tarkoitetaan rohkeaa yhteistyötä saman seuran eri lajijaostojen kesken ja miksei alueen muidenkin seurojen kanssa. Ideana on yhtenäisyys. Seurojen tai jaostojen ei tarvitsisi kilpailla harrastajista vaan tarjota kaikille hyviä, monipuolisia ja kehittäviä harjoituksia ja elämyksiä liikunnan parissa.

Joukkutoiminta tarkoittaa ryhmässä toimimista. Vaikka hiihto on yksilölaji niin ryhmätoiminta on monella tapaa korvaamattoman tärkeää. Suositut joukkuelajit kuten salibandy, vetävät paljon lapsia mukaan isolta osalta mukavan joukkutoiminnan takia.

Hiihdossakin on tilaa vahvalle joukkuetoiminnalle, kunhan muistaa että kyseessä on kuitenkin hiihto, ei salibandy tai jalkapallokoulu.

Sarjahiihtojen uudistaminen tarkoittaa kaikkien vanhojen tapojen kumoamista. Lisää kilpailumuotoja, rohkeita kokeiluja eri tekniikoilla ja tavoilla hiihtää. Myös enemmän viestejä ja joukkuekisoja sarjahiihtoihin mukaan.



Olipa kerran...

Tarinankerrontaa voi hyödyntää monella tavalla. Yksi mahdollisuus on rakentaa hiihtokoulukerrat yhtenäisen tarinan sisään ja näin innostaa lapsia tulemaan seuraavallakin kerralla. Näin myös nostatettaisiin mielenkiintoa ja jännitystä kun ohjelmaan tulisi lisää syvyyttä. Tarinan ei tarvitse olla harjoituskerran ainoa sisältö vaan voi olla esimerkiksi aina viimeinen osio harjoituksissa. Ohjaajan olisi tärkeää aidosti mennä tarinan tunnelmaan mukaan ja luoda uskottava ilmapiiri jotta tarina ei menisi vitsailuksi.

Alla on listattu kuusi fyysistä osa-aluetta jotka ovat tärkeitä lasten liikunnassa etenkin hiihdon näkökulmasta. Näitä eri osa-alueita voisi käyttää eri harjoituskertojen teemoina joihin liittyen voisi suunnitella tarinan kulun. Näin ollen teemat kiertäisivät kolmen viikon sykleissä, olettaen että hiihtokoulua on kaksi kertaa viikossa. Tehtäviä ja tarinoiden eri vaiheita voi suorittaa yksin, pareittain tai pienissä ryhmissä näin tuoden vaihtelua tavalliseen.

Teemat:

1. Kestävyys
2. Ketteryys
3. Voima
4. Taito
5. Nopeus
6. Tasapaino

Esimerkki: Ensimmäisen viikon ensimmäisen harjoituskerran teema on kestävyys. Silloin tarinaan ujutetaan esimerkiksi raastava aartenmetsästys matka eli pitkä sauvakävelyvaellus pienine välitehtävineen jotka sopivasti tuovat virikettä pidempään kestävyys-suoritukseen.

Esimerkkitarina 6-8 vuotiaiden ryhmälle:

Talvi on kadonnut mystisesti, sitä ei näy eikä kuulu. Selviää, että syksy on kaapannut Talven sillä syksy ei halua vuodenajan vaihtuvan. Ryhmän tehtävä on saada syksy luopumaan talvesta jotta saadaan lumi maahan. Syksy keksii kaikenlaisia ehtoja Talven palauttamiselle, eli erilaisia liikunnallisia tehtäviä kunkin viikon teeman mukaan. Kun kaikki tehtävät on suoritettu, Syksy lupaa palauttaa Talven. Reippaat hiihtokoululaiset saavat palkinnoksi esimerkiksi seuran pipon.

Esimerkkitarina 9-12v ryhmälle:

Aartenmetsästys. Ohjaaja on valmistanut aarrekartan jossa on niin monta askelmaa kun hiihtokoulukertoja. Kartta voi olla oikea kartta lähialueen maastosta ja aina edetään yksi askelma kerrallaan suorittaen rastin vaatima tehtävä. Viimeiseltä rastilta löytyy kuin

löytyykin aarre joka voi olla esimerkiksi joku alueen erikoisuus kuten ruisleipäpaketti jokaiselle, pitovoidepurkki tai jokin seuran vaatekappale kuten putkihuivi.

Esimerkkitarina 1 kummalle tahansa ryhmälle:

Kadonneiden lahjojen metsästys. Joulupukki on hajamielisesti unohtanut mihin on piilottanut osan tulevan joulun lahjoista ja tarvitsee ryhmän apua. Tehtävänä on löytää joka treenikerralla yksi kirjain, joista lopuksi muotoutuu piilopaikan sijainti. Kirjain paljastuu aina esimerkiksi onnistuneen lajitaidon oppimisen jälkeen tai esteradan läpimenon jälkeen.

Esimerkkitarina 2 kummalle tahansa ryhmälle:

”Hiihtotähden kadonneet sukset”. Tämä vaihtoehto on teoreettinen eikä välttämättä ole mahdollinen kaikilla paikkakunnilla. Ideana olisi käyttää oman kaupungin tai läheisen

kaupungin hiihtotähteä. Esimerkiksi Lahden seudulla voisi käyttää Aino-Kaisa Saarista; ”Aikun kadonneet sukset”-seikkailu. Jokaisella treenikerralla taas edettäisiin vihjeiden mukaan yksi etappi ja suoritettaisiin tehtäviä ensimmäisessä esimerkissä mainittujen teemojen mukaan. Viimeisellä kerralla hiihtotähti tulisikin paikalle ja voisi esimerkiksi vetää treenit. Toki hiihtotähti voi myös olla seuran paras juniori- tai aikuishiihtäjä.



Lajiyhteistyö

Tärkeintä lasten liikunnassa on sen monipuolisuus ja hauskuus. Vaikka kyseessä onkin hiihtokoulu, on hyvä muistaa, että pelkkä hiihtäjille tarkoitettujen harjoitusten teko ei välttämättä tee lapsista hiihtäjiä tai synnytä lajirakkautta. Koska hiihto on niin monipuolinen laji, on monesta muusta lajista paljon hyötyä kuten kaikki valmentajat jo tietävätkin. Toteutus vain usein ontuu. Pallopelit, voimistelu, suunnistus ja yleisurheilu ovat erinomaisia lajeja hiihtäjien hyödyntää.

Monissa urheiluseuroissa on useampia eri lajijaostoja joten ei pitäisi olla mikään ongelma hyödyntää niitä. Hiihtäjät salibandy treeneihin ja sählyn harrastajat tekemään hiihtäjien loikkaharjoitusta.

Kun oman seuran lajeja on hyödynnetty voi myös ottaa yhteyttä naapuriseuraan ja naapurikaupungin hiihtoseuraan ja joko järjestää yhteisharjoituksia hiihtäjien kesken tai järjestää ”urheilijavaihtarit” ja kokeilla uusia lajeja. Lapsilla säilyisi mielenkiinto yllä kun

tarpeeksi usein olisi jotain uutta ja jännittävää. Samalla tietenkin tulisi uusia ärsykeitä fyysisesti ja lapset kehittyisivät monipuolisesti.

Mikäli eri seurojen tai jopa oman seuran eri jaostojen hetkellinen yhdistäminen tuntuu hankalalta niin aina voi suoraan ottaa harjoituksiin vaikutteita muista lajeista kuten esimerkiksi rakentamalla suunnistuspainotteinen harjoituskerta.



Meidän jengi

Perinteisesti hiihdon harjoittelu on yksinäistä puurtamista ja hymyilläkin saa vain palkintopallilla jos silloinkaan. Monet lapset saavat tästä vaikutteita ja hiihdosta saattaa syntyä aavistuksen negatiivinen kuva. Mutta onneksi näin ei ole pakko olla! Hiihto ei ole sama laji kuin muutama vuosikymmen sitten. Lajin fyysiset vaatimukset ovat muuttuneet joten harjoittelukin on muuttunut.

Selvä asia on myös se, että jos haluaa kansainvälisesti menestyvän maajoukkueen on sen ryhmähenki oltava hyvä. Ryhmäharjoittelu on tärkeää ja siitä pitäisi osata ja haluta ottaa hyöty irti eikä tehdä sitä vaikeaksi asiaksi. Ryhmässä toimimisen perusteet opitaan lapsena, joten jo hiihtokoulusta asti pitäisi siihen myös panostaa.

[eXperienCeSki:n](#) ideologian mukaan erilaiset joukkuepelit ja ryhmätehtävät toisivat lapsille lisää elämyksiä kaiken muun hyvän lisäksi. Jokaiseen hiihtokoulukertaan tulisi sisältyä joku joukkuepeli, kuten jalkapallo tai suksisähly. Onneksi näin jo suurimmaksi

osaksi onkin. Lisäksi voisi ottaa pienissä ryhmissä tai pareissa kilpailuja joita normaalisti tehdään yksin, esimerkiksi sukkulaviesti mutta sen sijaan että jokainen juoksee yksin, juostaisiinkin pareittain.

Mikäli hiihtokoulussa on menossa tarina, tarinaan liittyvät tehtävät voi suorittaa pienryhmissä niin, että ryhmät kilpailevat keskenään kuka ehtii ensin rastille tai suorittaa esteradan ensin.

Hiihtokoulukerta olisi hyvä aina lopettaa yhteiseen huutoon tai esimerkiksi ylävitosiin ryhmän kesken jotta syntyisi tunne yhteenkuuluvuudesta ja omasta jengistä, myös uudet harrastajat pääsisivät helpommin mukaan.

SkaBailut

Suurin osa hiihtoseuroista järjestää talvisin sarjahiihtoja. Jotkut kerran viikossa ydintalvella, jotkut kerran kuussa. Parasta olisi jos kerran viikossa koko talven ajan olisi jonkinlaiset seuran sisäiset kilpailut. Osa näistä voisi olla sarjahiihtoja cup-tyylisesti joissa kilpailtaisiin suhteellisen perinteisesti väliaikalähdöllä normaaleilla matkoilla, vaikka joka toinen viikko. Joka toinen viikko taas voisi olla perinteistä poikkeavat kisailut. Seuraavana listaus erilaisista kisailu mahdollisuuksista:

- Hiihdetään takaperin kenttä tai jokin muu lyhyt matka
- ”Sokea ja opas”-parikilpailu, toinen on side silmillä toinen ohjeistaa
- Sauvoittahiihto-kisa
- Alamäki- ja ylämäkikisat

- Wassberg-kisat, saa hiihtää pelkkää wassua
- Ryhmähihto-kisa, 3-4 hengen ryhmissä sauvoista kiinni pitäen
- Pujottelu-kisa
- Koko perheen viestit; joukkueeseen voi kuulua lapsen lisäksi äiti, isä, mummo, vaari, eno, täti, setä.....
- Yhdellä sauvalla tai yhdellä suksella hiihtoa

Listaa voi jatkaa niin pitkäksi kuin mielikuvitus riittää ja myös ideoida yhdessä lasten kanssa. Kisailupäivien lisäksi lapsille on tärkeää, että jokaisella harjoituskerralla on pieniä tai isompia kisailuja joissa saa haastaa itsensä ja kaverinsa.

Ryhmät

Oikeanlainen ryhmäjako on tärkeää, jotta kaikki hiihtokoululaiset voivat saada elämyksiä ja toimia rohkeasti ryhmässä.

[eXperienCeSki:n](#) ryhmäjako tehdään pääasiassa iän mukaan; 6-8-vuotiaat ja 9-12-vuotiaat. Nuoremman ikäryhmän toiminta painottuu täysin leikkeihin ja pelailuihin kun taas vanhempi ikäryhmä tekee jo selkeästi enemmän niin sanottuja oikeita harjoituksia joissa on tavoitteena jonkin lajitaidon tai kunnan osa-alueen kehittäminen.

Vanhempi ikäryhmä olisi vielä hyvä jakaa kahtia 9- ja 10- vuotiaisiin ja 11- ja 12-vuotiaisiin jotta kaikille tulee kehittäviä ja hauskoja harjoituksia, herkkyykskaudet huomioiden ja tarinoita iän mukaan sovittaen.

Lisäksi täytyy huomioida mahdolliset tasoerot ja rohkeasti nostaa esimerkiksi nuorempia vanhempien ryhmään jos selkeästi kykyjä on.

Palaute ja kommunikaatio

Ohjaajalta lapselle

Alla on kerrottu kolme ydinasiaa lasten ja nuorten valmennuksesta/ohjauksesta.

Kun opetellaan tekniikkaa tai vain pelataan peliä, pitäisi ohjaajan muistaa aina antaa palautetta (1.), kertoa mitä lapsi tekee oikein ja **miten** pitäisi tehdä (2.), ei virheen kautta, ja tämä pitäisi tehdä positiivisella, iloisella ja innostavalla tavalla (3.).

Toisin sanoen kaikki kommunikaatio ohjattavien kanssa tulisi aina tapahtua vahvuuksien, positiivisuuden ja iloisuuden kautta. Niin, että lapsi kokee olevansa hyvä ja voivansa kehittyä vaikka jokin asia oikeasti olisikin haastava.

1. Runsas palautteen anto
2. Tehtäväkeskeinen palaute
3. Positiivisuus

Lapselta ohjaajalle

Jotta harjoituksia voidaan kehittää aina vain parempaan suuntaan, on tärkeää saada palautetta. Ja mikäs sen parempaa kun kuulla itse ohjattavilta eli hiihtokoululaisilta mikä oli mukavaa ja mikä tylsää. Tähän tarkoitukseen seurat voisivat kehittää yksinkertaisen, suoran ja helpon palautesysteemin, esimerkiksi ”palautetaulun” johon lapset kävisivät piirtämässä hymiön sen mukaan miten kivaa oli. Näin ohjaajat saisivat heti tietää mikä oli yleisfiilis. Jos haluaa mennä pidemmälle, niin ohjaaja voi eritellä taululle harjoituskerran eri osa-alueet ja lapset voivat siis näin tarkemmin ilmaista mikä oli erityisen mukavaa. Jos palautetaulu tuntuu liian hankalalta tai aikaa vievältä voi aina myös ”äänestää jaloilla” joka tässä tapauksessa tarkoittaisi, että urheilukentällä on esimerkiksi piirretty hiekkaan hymynaama ja surunaama ja lapset juoksevat kilpaa sen hymiön päälle joka parhaiten kuvaa fiiliksiä. Tärkeintä olisi saada suoraa ja nopeaa palautetta, ja myös saada lapset kertaamaan mitä tuli tehtyä.

Hiihtoelämys-paketti

Suurin osa aikuisista kokee hiihdon vaikeaksi lajiksi välineiden ja voitelun takia. Moni lapsi joutuu lopettamaan kivan harrastuksen kustannussyistä tai vaan siksi, että välinerumba koetaan liian vaikeaksi. Onneksi moni seura järjestää jo voitelukoulutuksia ja monelle on jopa välinekirjasto. Mutta asiat voisivat olla vieläkin paremmin! Seura voisi räätälöidä erilaisia paketteja joihin kuuluu hiihtokoulu- ja jäsenmaksun lisäksi myös kokonainen suksipaketti! Seura tekisi yhteistyötä paikallisen urheiluliikkeen kanssa jonne seuralaiset voisivat viedä seuralta maksun jälkeen saadun kupongin joka oikeuttaa heidät tiettyyn pakettiin. Liikkeen hiihtoasiantuntija tietenkin opastaisi jokaista valitsemaan tarpeisiinsa parhaat mahdolliset välineet.

Pakettiesimerkit:

Hiihtokoulu-paketti

- Sisältää hiihtokoulu- ja jäsenmaksun.
- Seuran pipo

Hiihtoelämys-paketti

- Sisältää hiihtokoulu- ja jäsenmaksun
- Sisältää MYÖS suksipaketin (sukset, siteet, sauvat, monot)
- Seuran pipo

SuperElämys-paketti

- Sisältää hiihtokoulu- ja jäsenmaksun
- Sisältää suksipaketin (sukset, siteet, sauvat, monot)
- Sisältää MYÖS voidepaketin ja yhden voitelukoulutuksen
- Seuran pipo

Keskustelua voi jatkaa ja uusia ideoita jakaa Suomen Maastohiihto Ry:n Facebook sivulla:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Suomen-Maastohiihto/302783486492>

Ajankohtaista tietoa kotisivuilta:

<http://www.hiitoliitto.fi/maastohiihto/>

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SUOMEN MAASTOHIIHTO

HIIHTO ON ELÄMYS.

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