



Customer profile of a summer hiking tourist

Case: Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping (Kilpisjärven Retkeilykeskus)

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Abstract

Nature-based tourism has played significant role in Finland's tourism and can be considered one of the largest tourism fields globally. This growing tourism field covers a large variety of different organizations, companies and tourism activities, hiking being one of the most significant one. Hiking is a globally practised activity and can be seen as one of the important pull factors for rural hiking destinations gaining tourists and sales. Many secluded destinations in Finland, including Kilpisjärvi located in the northern part of the country, gain thousands of hiking tourists annually. The lack of data of understanding these tourists as consumers is noticeable. The growing sector or nature-based tourism in Finland requires more attention from the economical and customer-centric point of view.

The overall goal for the thesis was to create a customer profile of a summer hiking tourist visiting Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping facilities. The objectives were to receive primary data from hiking tourists through an online survey and then be used to generate a customer profile. The data gathered and the customer profile created were aiming to increase understanding of this specific tourism group from the customer perspective and to be used as a tool to increase understanding by the Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping.

The conducted research found the demographical, geographical psychological and customer characteristics of summer hiking tourists visiting the Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping during summer season. These characteristics can be applied when developing services and products for this specific customer group or used as a tool when developing customer-centric marketing approaches.

Keywords/tags (subjects)

Customer-centric marketing approach, customer profile, customer profiling, hiking, hiking tourism, nature-based tourism

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1 Introduction

This is a bachelor's degree thesis for Tourism management degree program at Jamk University of Applied Sciences. The thesis is about conducting customer profile of summer hiking tourists in a commissioner company in Kilpisjärvi, including both nature-based tourism and customer-centric marketing aspects. The following chapter is introducing the background to the importance of these two aspects, the author's own motivation for the subject chosen, the research questions and objectives and the benefits of conducting this research for the company.

1.1 Background

There are two starting points for the research. Firstly, consumers expect more authentic and customer-centric approach in marketing and customer service and understanding the consumers is a key to thrive in tourism industry. Secondly, the interest towards nature is increasing and nature-based tourism is one of the sectors in tourism field that is growing rapidly. (OECD,2009). People are growingly interest of gaining experiences and increasing health benefits which are some of the reasons for the growth. Finland, as being a huge nature-based tourism destination provider, has large capability for attracting tourists that seek nature experiences. The four seasons and large wilderness areas are optimistic for big variety of different activities. When attracting tourists, it is important to understand their needs, values and what are the key factors that may attract them. The key issue that the author noticed is that there is only limited research made of hiking tourists as customers in Finland.

1.2 Delimitation and the motivation for the research

This research is to gather primary data of summer hiking tourists in Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping to generate a customer profile. The aim was to choose a destination where hiking is one of the main pull factors of the destination and where tourism is growing. Kilpisjärvi provided optional resources for the research and since the commissioner company was familiar to the author through two summer seasons worked, it was seen as the most ideal to conduct the research there. The season was chosen to be summer due to the high number of tourists compared to other seasons in Kilpisjärvi and due to the operating months of the commissioner company. The first objective was to gather primary data from the whole Kilpisjärvi, but this was seen too wide of a perspective, and it was delimited for one specific company.

Nature-based tourism includes high variety of different activities. Hiking was chosen for the research, in addition as an interest of the author, is one of the most popular nature-based tourism activity and an area that needed more investigation in the terms of tourism.

1.3 Benefits for the commissioner company

The research will provide customer data of summer hiking tourists for the Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping. It will provide consumer characteristics of this specific customer group that the commissioner company can use as an inspiration for marketing and developing products and services. In addition, the data gathered can be used as a base or an inspiration for further studies made of summer hiking tourists in Kilpisjärvi.

1.4 Research question and the investigative questions

The following questions are to support the objective of the thesis. The objective was to increase understanding of summer hiking tourists who are using the commissioner company's services by developing a customer profile.

Research question: What kind of customer profile can be developed from primary data conducted of summer hiking tourists in Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping?

1st investigative question: What are the dimensions of an customer profile in customer centric marketing approach?

2nd investigative question: What type of demographical aspects summer hiking tourists using the commissioner company's facilities have?

3rd investigative question: What is the geographical perspective on summer hiking tourists using the commissioner company's facilities?

4th investigative question: What are the psychological aspects of summer hiking tourists using the commissioner company's facilities?

5th investigative question: What type of customer behaviour occur by summer hiking tourists using the commissioner company's facilities?

1.5 Key concepts

Customer-centric marketing approach is a strategic approach in marketing where the aim is to understand the consumers' needs and values in order to design service or a product that matches with those needs and values (MBA Skool Team, n.d.).

Customer profile is a characterization of a general customer or of a specific group of interest and it is based on data of the demographical, geographical and/or customer aspects (Oates, 2023). It is a created profile of an ideal customer that includes useful information such as possible age, gender and occupation but also needs and wants.

Customer profiling is an activity for marketing strategy where data is gathered to create a customer profile of a desired customer (Survey Monkey, n.d.).

Hiking is an outdoor activity of walking in the wilderness. Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.a) defines hiking as "the activity of going for long walks in the countryside". The duration can be from few hours to several days and the terrain may vary depending on the destination. The activity occurs only in nature, further from urban areas.

Hiking tourism is a sub concept in nature-based tourism where hiking functions as an activity of the primary focus in tourism operations. Hiking can be done for recreational, training or physical wellbeing purposes (Moira et al. 2021).

Nature-based tourism is a field in tourism industry where the activities are operating around the destinations' natural environments. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020). Nature-based tourism is one of the largest tourism sectors and can be found globally. It covers high variety of different organizations and companies, and it includes different subsectors, as for example, adventure tourism, ecotourism, skiing tourism and camping tourism.

2 Nature-based tourism

As the name may give a clue, nature-based tourism is about all the tourism activities that are related to natural environments. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2020) defines nature-based tourism as a form of tourism where the attraction of the tourism activities is based on the destination's nature elements. The nature-based tourism is a network of outdoor based activities such as mountain biking or skiing, resources of nature such as snowy hills or forest areas, and the tourism field itself including the stakeholders such as different organizations and companies. (Fossgard et al.,2019). The activities are widely broad and can be commercially produced by companies such as safari tours, skiing in resorts or guided hiking trips. Tourists can also practise nature-based tourism activities without having a company providing the activities. Examples of this kind of tourism are bird-watching, hiking trips without a guide and backcountry skiing. Geographically nature-based tourism can be globally recognised and can be found from nearly every country that practises tourism, although the activities may change depending on the region or the country. For example, in Botswana, Africa tourism is 11.5% of the country's overall GDB and the field is mainly relying on the nature-based tourism attractions such as nature conservation areas and wildlife. (African Nature-Based Tourism Platform, 2021, p.2). In Norway 2017, national tourists' biggest target of expenditure was saltwater fishing that shared 54% rate of the overall expenditure targets (Innovation Norway, 2017). The neighbouring country Sweden that registered 46.9 million overnight stays by tourists in 2021 (OECD iLibrary, n.d.), can be seen as a developing nature-based tourism destination. The country's destination marketing organization, Visit Sweden (n.d.), has recognised nine activities in nature-based tourism sector These activities are land-based such as hiking, cycling, nature guiding, accommodating in nature for example in a tent, forest bathing and animal watching. The water-based activities include paddling and fishing. The seasonally assorted activities are winter activities that include skiing, winter fishing, and dog sledding. g. Together these examples from different locations display the variety of nature-based tourism.

Nature-based tourism is playing a huge part in tourism field and is worth paying attention to. "Nature-based tourism is one of the fastest growing segments of the global tourism industry" (OECD,2009, p.107). According to World Travel & Tourism Council (2022, p.2), more than 50% of the demand in travel and tourism comes from nature and its biodiversity. This indicates a large portion of global tourism sector is relying on nature. Natural attractions such as mountains, rivers and forests are the main attractions for tourists worldwide (World Tourism Organization

(UNWTO), n.d. a). A study made by Konu et al. (2021) found that the visitors for Finland's national parks have grown from annual visits of 0,83 million to 3,2 million visits from 2000 to 2019. This increase is not unusual. There has been a 27% growth in visitors in different national parks around Canada when comparing the seasons 2020-2021 to 2021-2022 (Government of Canada, 2022) and 38.74% increase from 2021 to 2022 in three Australian natural parks and reserves: Botanic Gardens, Booderee and Kakadu (Parks Australia, 2023). The global increase of interest towards natural areas can be seen as one of the thriving forces of changes in nature-based tourism industry.

The reasons for the growth of nature-based tourism can be seen developing from the increased interest of tourists towards nature. The Covid-19 pandemic, that started to affect the global tourism in 2020, affected on tourists' behaviour. One visible change was that people started increasingly head to the nature. The opportunity to have more space from other visitors, have fresh air and being remote can be expected to be the thriving pull factors for people to head to the nature during the pandemic. (OECD, n.d. b). In addition to pandemic, there are various global tourism trends that affect increasingly to people's interest participating in nature-based tourism activities. The consumers' attention towards sustainability and the physical and mental wellbeing is increasing (Visit Finland, 2022), leading to tourists seek destinations from rural areas. Nature makes people move and helps to cope with stress (Metsähallitus, n.d. b). Due to the increased awareness of sustainability, consumers globally have started to value experiences over tangible products. This kind of shift in consumer trends is shaping the industry from service economy towards experience economy (Pine et al., 2011, p.111). All the changes mentioned are supporting the growth of nature-based tourism and can be expected to continue growing in the future.

2.1 Issues in nature-based tourism

Nature-based tourism can have many positive impacts such as generating profit for destinations, spreading awareness of nature conservation and importance of biodiversity of cultural heritage. However, there lies issues when tourism is occurring in natural environments. The following chapter is discussing some of the main issues in nature-based tourism through the sustainability pillar's three categories: ecological, economical, and social/cultural.

Ecological

“Biodiversity lies at the heart of nature-based tourism products” (UNWTO, n.d.a) When done sustainably, tourism activities in nature can raise awareness and increase people’s interest towards nature conservation. However, there lies issues when tourism practices are done in natural areas. Tourism can cause negative impacts on the area’s biodiversity by increasing soil erosion, disturbing wildlife, and spreading litter. In Kilpisjärvi, town located in northern Finland, The Saana Fell which is visited by thousands of hikers annually has visible erosion when the route to the summit is spreading by stamping (Metsähallitus, 2019). Hiking is not the only activity causing negative impacts to the nature. In addition to walking in nature, Kilpisjärvi wilderness areas are impacted by snow mobile traffic, which in addition to impacting the ground permanently, is also causing interference on bird nesting sites in the area (Metsähallitus, 2018). The issues of nature-based tourism are occur globally. In Mount Kosciuzko, Australia, tourism is affecting the loss of soil due the damage from walking and littering that is causing harm to the wildlife. (Buckley et al. 2003, p.125). Nature-based tourism activities that occur in the water, such as boating is affecting the waters by released untreated sewage water. The issues in nature-based tourism are not only caused by the visitors but also the companies themselves. For example, skiing resorts can impact negatively on the environment. Producing artificial snow and managing the skiing slopes are both factors affecting the natural biodiversity of the mountain slopes. (Buckley et al. 2003, p.142).

Economical

Nature provides opportunities for companies generate sales. In Finland, nature tourism covers most of the tourism industry and it is supporting other areas such as culture and culinary tourism. (Visit Finland, 2020). The ecological issues are correlated with the economic issues in nature-based tourism field. When the businesses are relying mainly on nature resources, the protection of nature is affecting directly on the revenues of tourism industry. (UNWTO, n.d. a). Nature needs to thrive to attract visitors. Climate change is generating challenges on companies to maintain their level of profitability. The arctic flora and fauna are highly fragile to the changes in climate, for example in the fell areas of northern Finland, the climate change effects decreasingly to the health of trees and bird species. (World Wide Fund for Nature, n.d.). The changes in environment effect on visitors choosing their travelling destinations. (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, 2022). A good example of this is the skiing resorts in Europe. The warming temperatures are decreasing the amount of snow gained in the European Alps (Marty, 2013), leading to a

shorter season to operate. In addition to the ecological issues that are linked to the environment, nature-based tourism is not always directly correlated with commercial activities. This is generating challenges to generate profit. In countries like Finland, Norway and Sweden, everyone has a right to roam, meaning everyone has a right to access and use the nature areas. This leads to people having free access to do hiking and other activities, leading less opportunities for companies to generate direct profit from them.

Social/cultural

To operate, nature-based tourism requires the ability to use natural sites, which can be in both governmental owned and in privately owned properties. (Buckley et al. 2003). For example, when natural areas are privately owned for commercial nature-based tourism activities, the government has less capability for practising conservation on those lands. The usage of natural resources can lead to conflicts. Finnish Lapland, a northern area in Finland, is mainly a nature-based destination and a land for the native people Sami to practise reindeer herding, which is one of their main livelihoods. “Co-ordination between traditional livelihoods and tourism regarding land use and other practices of the travel industry is vital for the Sámi both at the community and individual level” (Samediggi, n.d.). The reindeer herding is shaping the natural environment due trampling and consuming the flora of areas. (Kangas et al., 2022). On the other hand, tourism practices are occurring in the same locations as reindeer herding, which can lead to interference the herding activities due the pollution and disturbance. In addition to land usage conflicts, the names of different nature destinations in Lapland that were once known in Sami language has changed or being forgotten which can be seen as a threat to maintaining the sustainability of cultural heritage (Metsähallitus, 2018, p. 5).

2.2 Nature-based tourism in Finland

In 2019 tourism industry employ over 154 000 people in Finland and new trends such as purchasing experiences over tangible items, taking care of health, and experiencing authenticity are factors that are increasingly affecting the industry. (Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2022). Nature is the main pull factors for tourism in Finland (Visit Finland, n.d.) and it can be also seen highlighted on the country’s tourism strategy for 2022-2028. Hiking is one of the main nature tourism activities next to cycling, winter sports and water sports. (Visit Finland, 2020). Government of Finland is funding the nature parks facilities which is opening possibilities for companies specifically operating in nature tourism field to rely their offerings on this. Every one euro invested on nature parks

services and nature centres is bringing approximately 10 euros to the area surrounding of the nature park. (Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2022, p. 14). In 2022 Finnish National Parks alone gained 3 545 600 visits which is a 11.90% increase compared to 2018 statistics. (Metsähallitus, n.d. a).

2.3 Hiking tourism

One form of nature-based tourism is hiking tourism (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020) which is one of the biggest activities in the nature-based tourism field (Martin, 2017). Hiking can be seen as movement in the form of walking for long distances in the countryside (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.a). Hiking can be also defined as an activity of physical challenging attributes for developing physical fitness or collecting recreational benefits. (Moira et al. 2021). This definition for hiking is fairly broad. Kurk'oja (2017, p.1) defines hiking as a hobby that's purpose is to promote wellbeing by taking time away from daily routines, exercising and spending time in the nature. Hiking tourism itself can be seen as a form of tourism in which participating on a hiking trip or trips is the main purpose of the trip. The distance, duration and location of a hike may vary but there can be found similar type of characteristics from each hike. Hiking tourism often includes camping tourism since in overnight hikes the accommodation part is occurring in nature, often in a tent. In this research, hiking is referred as a physical activity of walking, done in a natural environment. The duration of the hike can vary from two hours to several days.

Motivations behind hiking

To understand consumer behaviour, it is important to understand their motives and hiking tourists are no exception. There can be found several indicators of what motivates hiking tourists in participation, and they can be both physical and psychological reasons. People may go hiking to challenge themselves, enjoy the peace and quiet or spend time with family or friends. A study conducted by Moira et al. (2021), to recognize the motives, behaviours, and other social characteristics of Hellenic Federation of Mountaineering & Climbing in Greece found that the highest motivator for participating in hiking tourism is the feeling the need to connect with nature. Other main motivators found from the study were linked to maintaining physical level of fitness, having a chance to do other activities than during daily life, recreational indicators, and receive knowledge from different cultures, since there were activities of visiting historical and cultural sites during hikes such a wineries and monuments (p. 20). However, the motivators can vary depending on the location. An-

other study on hikers' motivators around The United States' national parks found that hikers participating on easier hikes were mainly motivated to do so for social and learning purposes, to spend time with others and to learn with others, whereas people attending more challenging hikes were motivated for the purpose of gaining new experiences. (Wilcer et al., 2019, p.12). Hiking has health benefits, both physical and emotional, due the contact with nature, having social interactions and physical activity that comes with it. (Mitten et al. 2018).

3 Kilpisjärvi and the commissioner company

3.1 The destination: Kilpisjärvi

Kilpisjärvi is a village of approximately 100 permanent residents, located in the municipality of Enontekiö in Finnish Lapland. The village has had tourism activities from as early as from the 1930s. (Enontekiö, n.d.). The Norwegian border is located 12 kilometres from the village and the nearest town in Finland, Karesuvanto, is 100 kilometres away. The village is growing and investments in tourism field are developed increasingly (Metsähallitus, 2017) and it the location for most of the accommodation companies in Enontekiö. There are 30 accommodation companies, of which two, Hotel Cahkal and Hotel Santa's Hotel Rakka, were founded as recently as in the past two years.

There are various of well-known hiking trails in the area such as 55km- one way hike to Halti which is the highest point of Finland, 1029 metres high Saana fell and Malla Nature Park including the crossing point of the three nations Finland Sweden and Norway. The wilderness in the area offers multiple hiking opportunities without following a specific trail. In 2017 the visitor number prediction just for Saana was 80 000 (Metsähallitus, 2017) and it can be assumed to be increased due to the increase of interest in nature tourism. The commissioner company: Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping

The main pull factor of Kilpisjärvi are the landscapes of the fells and other nature in the area. (Metsähallitus, 2017) and this can lead to the assumption that nature-based tourists are one of the destination's main customer groups. Research conducted by Auvinen (2015) on customers in Lapland Hotel Kilpis, found how 58 out of 193 came to Kilpisjärvi for mainly nature purposes such as

hiking and fishing, and there were additional 18 respondents for “other reasons” which also included nature purposes such as hiking on a fell. Kilpisjärvi itself has no official visitor database, however, the municipality of Enontekiö, has tourism data on Visitory. In September 2022 there was 19 700 registered overnights in Enontekiö and 86,1% of these were Finnish travellers. International travellers made 2700 overnights of which Norwegians (390) and German (320) shared the largest portions. Kilpisjärvi’s main tourism season is from late spring to autumn. Especially during spring, the number of inhabitants can go up to 200 due to Norwegian holidaymakers on privately owned villas. (Metsähallitus, 2017). Due to the seasonality, high number of seasonal workers are moving to the area to work for the summer season.

When it comes to marketing, Kilpisjärvi has no destination marketing organization specifically for promoting the destination. The destination is promoted mainly by the companies themselves, the municipality of Enontekiö and Destination marketing organization, Visit Lapland. In September 2023, Arctic Kilpisjärvi ry, a tourism association, was founded. Arctic Kilpisjärvi ry is for tourism companies around Kilpisjärvi to co-operate in a same association. Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & camping is not part of the association.

3.2 The commissioner company: Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping

This research was conducted in Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping known as Kilpisjärven Retkeilykeskus in Finnish. The company started as the Governmentally owned guesthouse in the early 20th century and is nowadays a family-owned business with 25 hotel rooms, 13 cottages and a caravan and camping facilities. (Kilpisjärven Retkeilykeskus, n.d.). In addition to accommodation business, there is also a restaurant, café, and a gift shop. The reception also rents sauna and shower facilities and gear such as baby carriers, walking sticks and bikes. The company is located five kilometres from the village towards Norway and it is next to one of the starting points for Saana fell summit hiking trail. The main tourism season is from early June till late September. Other time of the year Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping remains closed except during few weeks during late spring, when tourists come to Kilpisjärvi for skiing purposes. During summer season there are around 30 employees of which large portion is seasonal workers.

Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping has no customer data that is accessible. However, they are a growing company: the turnover in 2021 was 1.6 million which is a 27.4% increase to year 2020

(Finder. n.d.). There can be many factors affecting to the increase such as Covid-19 pandemic, that increased national travelling in Finland, however, there was growth occurring before the covid-19 pandemic: turnover of 2019 was 1,5 million which is 6,6% growth to the previous year.

The company's promoting platforms are their website including a blog and their social media channels (Instagram, TikTok) which are active during their opening months. They are mainly promoting the area's natural sites such as Saana Fell which is geographically the nearest attraction. Their most active channel Instagram has over 15 000 followers whereas TikTok has 1219 followers.

4 Customer-centric marketing approach

Customer-centric marketing approach, also known as consumer orientated marketing, is a marketing strategy where the company intends to understand the consumers' needs and their values in order to provide the most suitable product or service for them (MBA Skool Team, n.d.). The consumer behaviors are constantly evolving, and companies are required to know their customers better than before. Because of the developing digitalization that makes access to customer data easier "we now have the power to communicate with individual precision to the right person with the right message at the right time through the right touchpoint" (Williams, 2014, p. Preface x). Customer-centric approach can hold inside, for instance, conducting customer surveys, generating customer profiles, and understanding their customer's purchasing journey.

4.1 Customer segmentation and profiles

Multiple studies present information about the motivators for doing hiking, however, there can be found only limited research conducted on hiking tourists as consumers, since their activities during trips are not always commercially based and therefore harder to track. To understand customer profiling, it is important to understand what the concept means, what aspects should be included and what should be taken in account when generating a customer profile of hiking tourists. Customer profiles personas, also known as buyer personas, are a crafted profile example of a real consumer, and it is created to help to understand the consumer so that the company can generate a more efficient marketing strategy for the most ideal customer group. (Revella, 2015). Profiles are an example of customers that aim to provide a prospective of understanding behaviour, motivations, values and some challenges and they can be used as a tool, for example, when developing

customer service (Nylund, 2021). It is important for companies to define their ideal customer and understand what their needs and values are so that they can provide services and products to match with customer's expectations. To generate a customer profile, customers are needed to be segmented. Nylund (2021) defines customer segmenting as a profile that is based on quantitative data which is often used as a tool for marketing, whereas behaviour profiling is something that is based on qualitative data, and it can be used for improving customer service. However, these two aspects are often mixed and can be used together.

Customer segmentation refers to activity of developing groups from customers based on related characteristics. In retail industry, customer segmentation data aims to generate understanding of customers that are segmented on groups, aiming to do direct marketing and other actions to increase customer loyalty. (Collica, 2011). Segmentation can be based on geographical, psychographic, and demographical characteristics and considerations of behavioural characteristics (Kotler, 2009, p. 341). Geographical segmentation can take in account different types of locations from larger perspective such as country to smaller perspective such as city. (Mahr, 2022). The advantages of taking this sort of segmentation into account it is an easy way of segmenting the markets and it can help understand better consumers with different needs who come from different kinds of locations. Demographical segmentation means person's more specific characteristics such as age, gender, education, and occupation. People have different requirements and desires in different ages (Kotler et al., 2009, pp. 342-345). Segmenting consumers on their age can give direction on what type of services and products they may value and seek for. However, it is important to avoid leaning on stereotypes since not all people segmented on same ages or genders tend to value similar services or products. Segmenting on psychographic characteristics means generating groups of people based on three different aspects known as AIO variables. (Kotler et al., 2009, p. 349). They are activities such as hobbies and daily routines, interests such as values and view on sustainability and opinions on different aspects. These kind of three segmenting models mentioned before are beneficial for generating an understanding on the consumers overall life and what type of aspects they may value as a person. When it comes to behavioural segmentation, there is a deeper understanding on the consumer behaviour that these people may have. For example, what kind of benefits the consumer may seek from the service or product, what type of level of usage they may have and what sort of attitudes they may have before during and after purchasing.

There are areas that are needed to be determined when it comes to current customers (Hooley et al, 2017, p. 89). These are to identify the main target customer, to identify what generates value for that specific target customer and to identify the activities that could develop stronger relationships with these customers. It is to understand the activities before, during, and after their customer journey, their characteristics and status as customer. No matter the purpose of the segmentation and profiling project, whatsoever it is aimed for marketing or created for a customer, there needs to be a great understanding of the objectives of the segmentation and what kind of information is needed to generate segmentation. (Collica, 2021) The key questions to receive insights for the consumer profile (Hooley et al., 2017, p.91) are related to determining the following:

- Who are the customers and who is involved in purchasing?
- When the customer tends to purchase?
- Why they end up purchasing?
- Where they purchase?
- How they use the service or product purchased?
- What is their decision criteria?

In addition to aim to answer the questions above more qualitative views can be taken in consideration when profiling. Research about profiling different kinds of people in nature in Finland conducted by Nylund (2021, pp.6-17), takes inconsideration aspects such as their relationship with nature, attributes towards sustainability, level of skills when being outdoors, where was their phone while participating in outdoor activity, how did they do their research about their place and how much time was consumed when doing the research.

When generating a customer profile there are at least six steps to proceed (Robinson, 2023). They all are based on overall understanding of the target market and who is your business for. What kind of services you provide and for whom you are targeting on those services. In order to be efficient when providing what your target market needs and demands, it is required to be specified. Aiming to provide something for every consumer's needs can lead too wide of a message and in addition to wasting resources you might not target to your most ideal customer group. (Suntook & Murphy, 2008). Mass marketing can be seen decreasing through digitalization and data collection where consumers receive more specified and targeted promotion.

4.2 Digital marketing and the role of social media

Digital marketing is all the marketing aspects that are occurring online and in digital world. As Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick (2019, pp. 5-6) presents, digital marketing is much more than websites. It's about the data, technology such as devices, and platforms such as digital media. It is inevitable to acknowledge the importance of social media when it comes to marketing. The estimate for social media users for 2023 is 3.43 billion and advertisements can be seen increasingly transforming into digital forms. Social media users vary from young to older generations, young adults being the largest age group for using social media (Zahay et al. 2021, pp.1-6). The use of social media is affecting on the level of brand awareness, consumers' buying decisions and other decisions consumer may make such as planning a destination for a holiday. A study conducted to identify the role of social media on purchasing decision process is showing how 46.3% agree that feedback from other users on social media effect on their buying purchases, whereas 26.8% strongly agreed with the statement. (Nguyen, 2021). When planning destinations 79% consider photos posted by other travelers important whereas 71% consider reviews of travelers on travel websites important. (Terttunen, 2017). Social media in marketing strategy is linked to a high brand awareness since it helps to gain exposure and generating a platform to connect with consumers. (Tran, 2021). For businesses it's important to develop their social media presence in order to maintain their competitiveness.

4.3 Customer journey

Part of understanding the customer it is important to recognize the customer journey of that target market. This means identifying the touchpoints that occur in the journey the customer takes from planning to purchasing and possible after that. Customer journey is seen as the customer's experience throughout the purchasing journey including touch points throughout pre, during and post stages and the touchpoints can be both under and out of control by the company. (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). The pre phase holds inside of the planning, searching and considerations. When a consumer is planning on their stay on a vacation, the pre phase would hold inside planning on the dates, considering options, and searching for alternatives. The during phase holds inside the aspects of making a choice, purchasing and possible travelling and transportation. The post phase are the activities taking place after trip such as printing photos, spearing word-of-mouth, or posting on social media. To generate an understanding of a customer journey, there should be a set of

objectives why the mapping is created, understanding of the key touchpoints, and understanding of the customer profiles (Bynder, n.d.).

4.4 5 Ps of marketing

In order for companies to focus on the right things in customer-centric approach, they need to determine the 5 ps: product, price, people, promotion and place. This model guides companies to find the areas that need improving so that the target market's needs and demands are met (In house marketing, n.d.). In the model, people mean not only understanding the customers but also the employees. This is especially important in-service industry where employees are interacting with customer and needs of customers are needed to be met. Place means the online and physical place of the company where the consumers take place. For this, it is crucial for companies to understand their customer's journey and touchpoints so that they can be there at the right place at the right time. Promotion gets its roots from the place and the people. Companies need to know what the touchpoints in customer's journey and what kind of platforms the customers are using so that they can generate the most effective promotion strategy. Price and product/service, the design should be done by keeping the consumer in the middle: what do they value and how much they are willing to pay for it (In house marketing, n.d.).

5 Implementation

The purpose of this study is to gather customer profile data from summer hiking tourists in Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping to generate a customer profile. The customer profiles created are to be used as inspiration and tools for marketing and they may vary depending on the person in charge of the analysis. This is because customer profiles are an illustration of a person and developing them requires authors' own perspective. The following chapter is introducing the research methodology, the implementation of chosen methods and the reasoning for those decisions and explaining the author's own process throughout the research. Figure 1 below illustrates the whole research process from planning to finalizing the thesis.

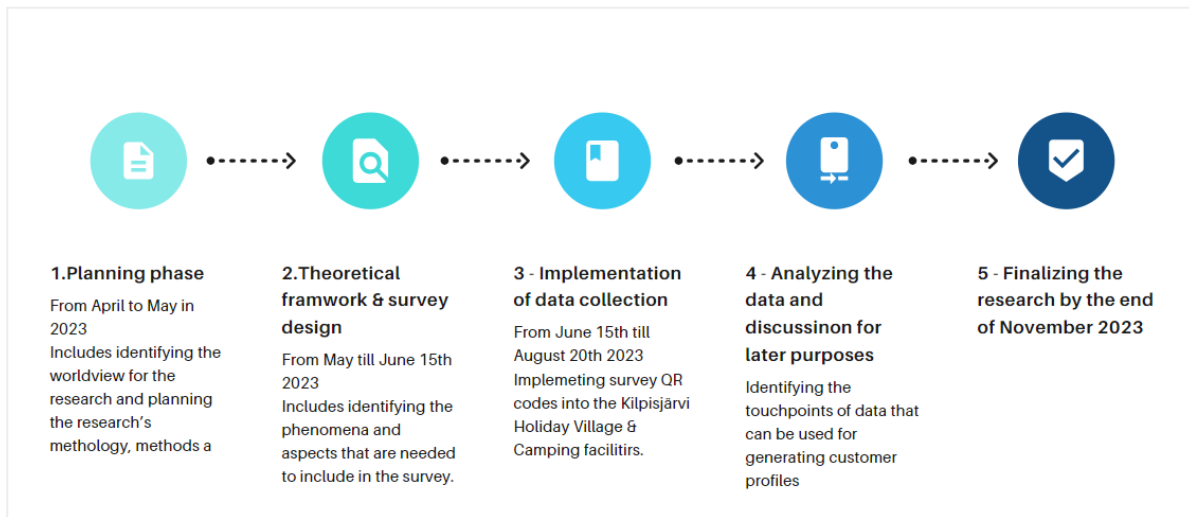


Figure 1. Illustration of the research process

5.1 Methodology

The meaning of research methodology is to build a logical design for the research so that the desired objectives can be met and that the research carry out it's value and reliability throughout the whole process. (Pedamkar, 2023). The methodology is much wider perspective on the study than methods, and there can be found many dimensions in the methodology (Kothari, 2004). Research methodology should be designed on general category for research approach, the nature of the conducted study, the objective of the research, the design itself and the gathered data type (Pedamkar, 2023).

Before deciding the general approach, the philosophical worldviews were needed to be identified. Creswell (2003) says he sees worldviews as how the reality of the world is seen in the study and what are the beliefs and orientations. He introduces four main worldviews: post positivism, transformative, constructivism and pragmatism. This study identifies it worldview on constructivism. It is a view which aims to understand and generate a perspective how other might view the world. Since there was not a problem to begin with the study but rather to develop understanding, this worldview is the most suitable for the study.

The general category for the approach of this study is quantitative but includes hints of qualitative aspects. To generate a customer profile from a large quantity of responders, putting the data in numerical forms and analyzing numerical data was seen as most effective. "A quantitative method

often serves three purposes, that is, description, forecasting and decision-making" (Franses & Paap, 2001, p. 11). Since the research purpose is to generate a customer profile which is a descriptive way of displaying potential customers, the quantitative aspects were needed for the research, As presented in the theoretical framework, to develop customer profiles based on segmentation, often quantitative research takes place. The nature of the study is descriptive. This means that the study aims to develop outlines for the population or issues (Pedamkar, 2003). Since customer profile generated in this study is based on numerical quantitative data but is needed to be analyzed for deeper understanding, descriptive research in was seen the most appropriate.

The study's design was chosen to be exploratory research which is to "increased our understanding of the issue rather than offering conclusive solutions to current problems" (Pedamkar, 2003, p. 33.). The study is to gather more data and aims to understand what kind of summer hiking tourists' customer profiles may look like in the chosen commissioner company. The study lives within the theory, worldwide perspectives, author and the data gathered.

5.2 Collection of data

The data collection method was chosen to be an online survey that was conducted in the commissioner company's facilities during summer season from 15th of June till 20th of August. To generate the survey, the theoretical framework was used as a base for the questions. Before the implementation of the survey, it was pretested on 7 persons from different nationalities: Finnish, Canadian and German. The data collected was quantitative meaning the answers were put in groups and numerical forms but there were qualitative aspects involved such as open questions where respondents wrote answers with their own words.

To generate a customer profile of hiking tourists it is needed to collect a large sample group to track a high number of people. "A survey design provides a quantitative or numerical description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population" (Creswell, 2003, p. 155). Therefore, a survey was chosen as a data collecting method. Survey does not require physical face-to-face contact and the data collecting can be done regardless of if the author is present or not. Therefore, the data can be collected continually leading to a wider perspective on hiking tourists from different times and days during the data collecting time.

The questions chosen were to give information from all the three categories mentioned that are relevant for a customer profile: demographical, geographical, and psychographic. To gather the

desired sample group from all the responders, the first question of the survey was to determine if the responder is a hiking tourist or not. Figure 2 illustrates the survey's design and structure. After the first question, which was to collect the sample group, responders moved onto the demographical questions. After demographical questions, responders were to answer if they have been to Kilpisjärvi before or not. To understand their decision making, the ones who had not been to Kilpisjärvi before were to answer why they chose the destination. The following question about their planning was for the same reason: to understand their planning process. After deducting the the customer journey and customer behaviour aspects, responders were to answer about social media behaviour. The ones who used social media were to answer more specifically on the platforms used and the time. Psychological questions, in this research meaning the motivations and dislike areas when hiking, were conducted at the end of the thesis.

To start the survey planning it is important to determine the topic, objectives and the outline for the research and based on these develop overall and more specific questions for the research and for the survey. (Punch, 2003, pp.51-52). The outline of the research was set for hiking tourism since it's giving a specific activity from nature tourism industry, which can be very wide from water activities to air and land activities. Another outline needed to be determined was the timeline and location for the survey. The timeline for the collecting survey answers was set on the summer season from 15th of June till 20th of August. This specific timeline is supporting the objective of the research for collecting data from hiking tourists specifically from summer season. Also, summer is the main tourism season in Kilpisjärvi, leading to possibility to gather a larger sample group. The locations for placing the surveys were chosen according to different services provided in the Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping. There were English and Finnish QR codes printed to different facilities: the reception, restaurant, and the accommodation facilities. Every customer who needs to rent out sauna or purchase an access to shower needs to go through reception. Platform chosen for the survey was Google Forms due to its easy usability, familiarity, and safety.

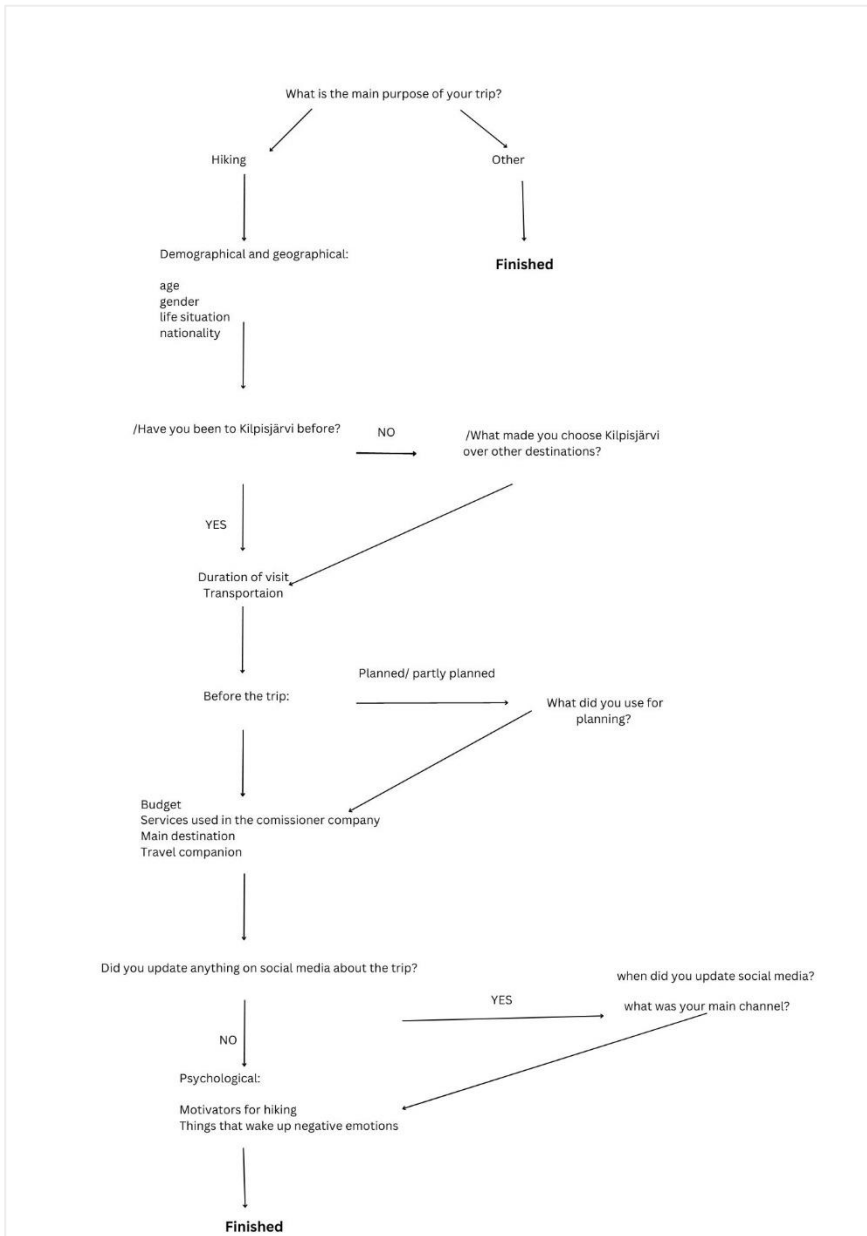


Figure 2. Survey question journey

5.3 Analysis of data

For analyzing the gathered data, a cluster analysis was used as analyzing method. This type of analyzing method is grouping data into similar categories (Calzon. 2023). These groups were used to generate a customer profile based on the largest average gained responses. The data was put to excel where the largest categories for the received answers were determined and sealed together for generating the customer profile. Even though the customer profiles were made based on the data gathered, author's own analysis was needed to generate a conclusion.

Because this study is to generate a customer profile based on a data collected via surveys, the analysis and result of the research may vary depending on different timelines and on the person who is analysing. The customer profile is to be used as an inspiration or as a tool for the company to develop their marketing and understanding of the potential customers.

6 Results

The following chapter is introducing the primary data that was collected via online surveys. The data presented is categorized in the four groups: geographical, demographical, psychological, customer characteristic & customer journey. The implemented survey and question orders can be seen in appendix 1. In total there were 23 questions in the survey, however the total number responders answered depended on if they had been to Kilpisjärvi before or if they planned their trip beforehand. The survey gathered 192 responds. After the first question which was to collect the sample group from the total responders, 146 were doing their travels for hiking purposes and these are the answers that were analyzed.

6.1 Questions & results

Main purpose for the trip: The survey started with the following question: What is the main purpose of your trip? (Figure 3.) After the sampling question, total of 146 respondents' main purpose was hiking. The rest 50 respondents' main reason for the trip can be categorised in three groups: 1) road trip 2) leisure and other tourism activities 3) passing through to some other location. These 50 responders did not continue rest of the survey questions.

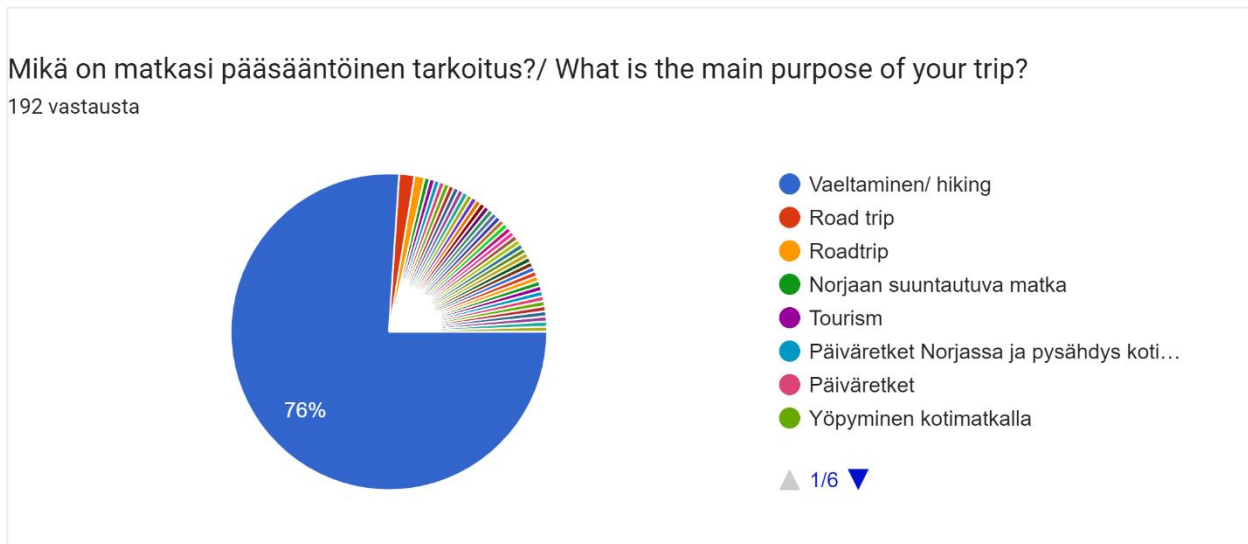


Figure 3. Main purpose of the trip

Geographical characteristics: To collect data from the geographical perspective, question about the nationality is needed. 89,6% of the responders were national Finnish travelers (Figure 4).

The rest portion of 10,4% was international travelers, coming from total 10 different countries. 6,3% were from European countries: Germany (2,1%), French (0,7%), Ireland (0,7%), Norway (0,7%), Scotland (0,7), Switzerland (0,7%) and Austria (0,7%). Outside of Europe was the smallest portion (2,8%): India (0,7%), Australia (1,4%), Venezuela (0,7%). There was undermined responds of 1.4%. These were originally from abroad but currently live in Finland.

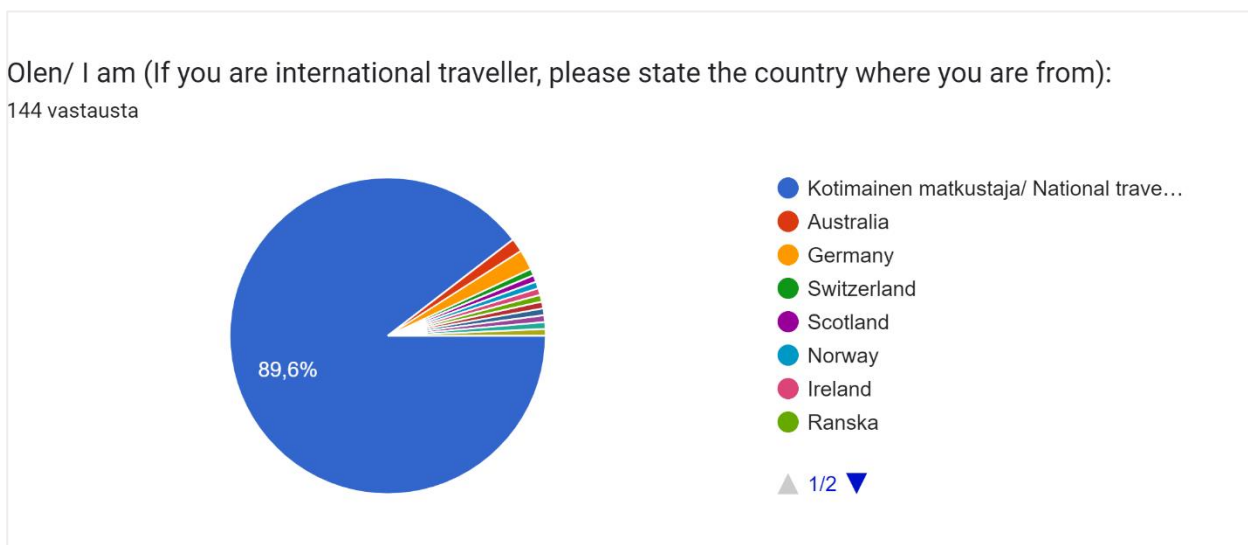


Figure 4. Geographical characteristics

Demographical characteristics: To gain demographical data from the respondents, the following questions were to identify the age, gender, the current life situation and whom the responders are travelling with.

The distribution of three age groups was even-tempered (figure 5.). These three age groups are from 18 years till 50 years: 18-28 (28,8%), 41-50 (25,3%) and 29-40 (24,0%). People from ages 51-60(15,1%) and 61-70 (5,5%) shared smaller amount of responders' ages. There were no responders from age 71 or above and under 18 years old (1,4%) shared the smallest portion of the total responds.

From the responders 61,6% identified themselves as females and 37,7% identified as males. 0,7% preferred not to answer the question. (Figure 6).

Majority of the responders are working (65,1%). 18,5% of the responders are both working and studying and 11,6% of the total responders are only studying. Small portion of the responders were either unemployed (2,1%) or retired (2,7%). (Figure 7).

When asked whom the responders came hiking with, 87% of the responders were hiking with another person or persons whereas 13% were hiking alone (Figure. More specifically of whom the responders were hiking with, 37% of the were with a partner, 32,3% with a family and 16,4% with a friend or multiple friends, 0,7% was with an organized group hike and another 0,7% was combined with a partner and friends. (Figure 8).

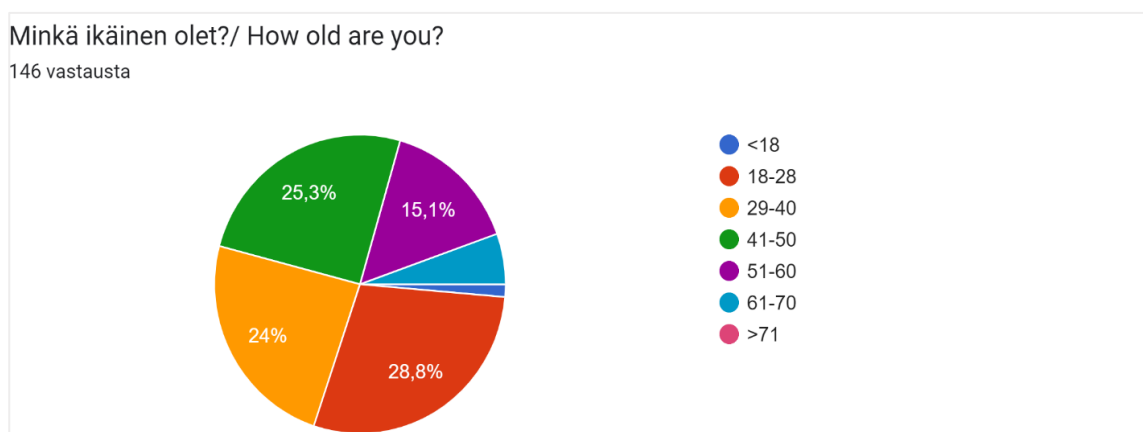


Figure 5. Demographical characteristics: age

Sukupuolesi/ your gender:

146 vastausta

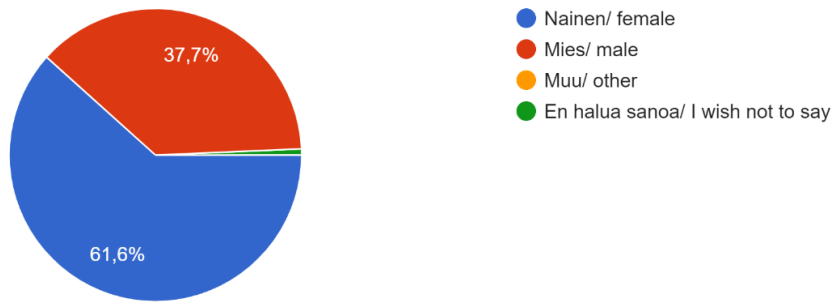


Figure 6. Demographical characteristics: gender

Elämäntilanteesi/ Your life situation:

146 vastausta

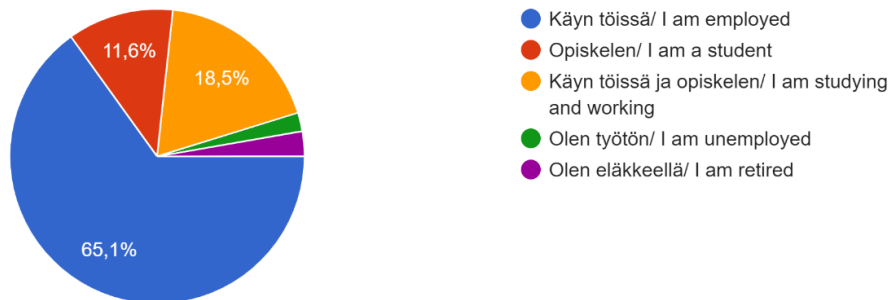


Figure 7. Demographical characteristics: life situation

Kenen kanssa tulit vaeltamaan?/ Who did you come to do hiking with?

146 vastausta

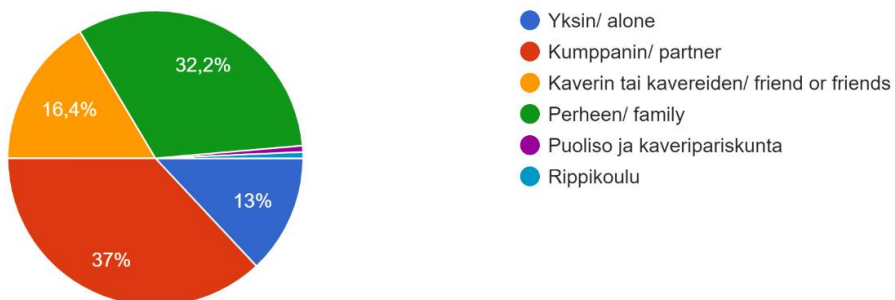


Figure 8. Companion for hiking

Psychological perspective: The following two questions' answers are not displayed directly from surveys due to anonymity reasons. Responders were asked with a multiple-choice question which had also room for open answer, to determine what their motivation is for attending on a hiking trip (figure9.). They were asked to pick maximum of two, however, this was not successful in the results since more than two were picked in some cases. The two main choices that gained above half of the responder's answers were relaxation and being close to nature. 107 out of 146 (73,3%), are seeking the presence of nature when hiking whereas 90 out of 146 (62,3%) summer hiking tourists in Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping seek peace and relaxation when they go for a hike. The third largest motivation indicator was seeking for adventure when going for hiking (41,8%). Motivation indicator categories which received 30-40% respond rate were exercising (34,9%), to challenge themselves (34,9%) and to escape from everyday life (30,1%). Less than 20% from the responders are seeking from hiking to gain social interaction or gain memories with other people (12,4%) or the opposite to be alone (9,6%). 1,4% of the responders had all the above mentioned as the indicators for going on a hiking trip but they also brought out specifically the feeling you get.

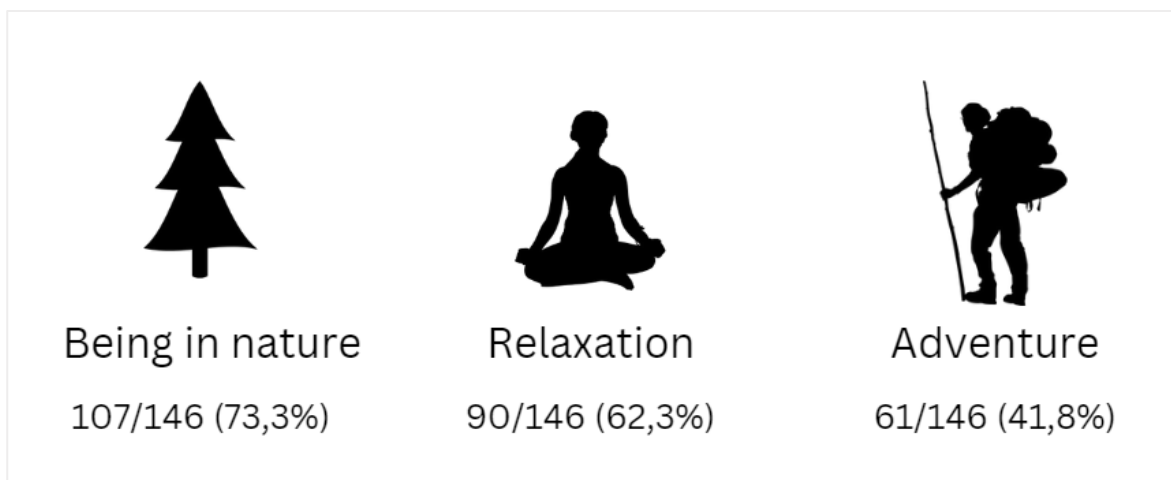


Figure 9. Top 3 motivators

To determine what kind of aspects alert negative emotions in the responders when hiking, the answers were collected through completely open 100 responds (Figure 10.). These answers were categorized into two main groups: anthropogenic and natural causes. **Anthropogenic causes** were grouped into five different factors. These factors are one way, or another related factor caused by a human. The biggest factor that was seen 38% in all the responds was seeing trash in the nature or in a wilderness cabin. These were for example plastic in the fells or finding toilet paper in the

nature. The next factor that displayed 29% in the received responds was social factors meaning other hikers or people in the nature. Responders indicated that for example large groups, noisy people or arrogant people wake up negative emotions when hiking. 20% from the responders brought up a physical or psychological indicator. For example, tiredness, injuries, lack of sleep were indicators that affected the negative emotions increase. Other less high-rate answers, which were mentioned in 7% of the responds, were about equipment and trail signs. Bad hiking boots, uncomfortable sleeping mattress, unclear trail signs or longer route than was informed woke up negative emotions in responders. **Natural causes** were mentioned 31% in the received responds. These were for example, mosquitos and weather conditions such as rain or wind.

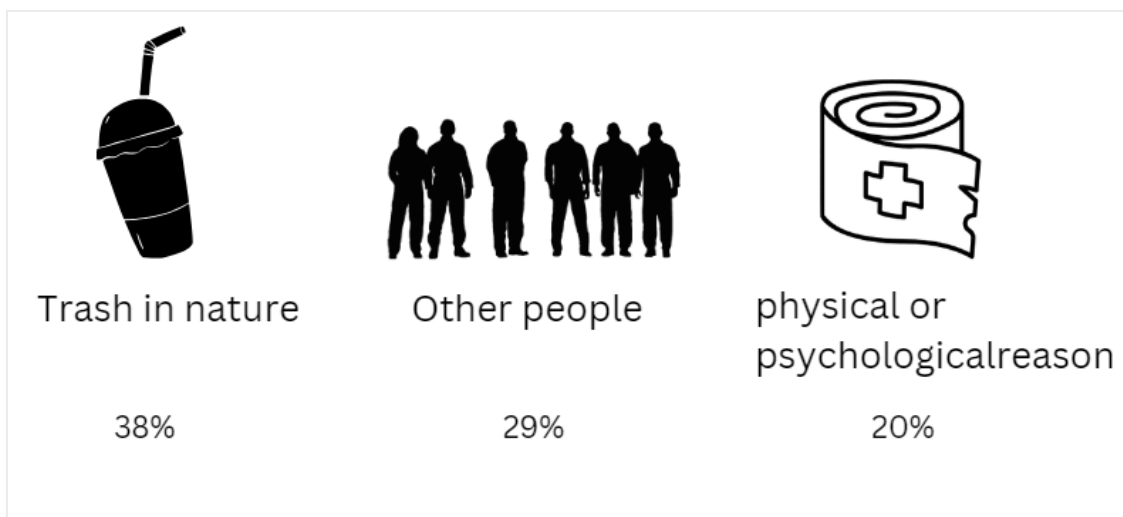


Figure 10. Top 3 anthropogenic causes

Customer journey and customer characteristics:

The following questions were to determine the customer journey aspects of visiting Kilpisjärvi. 61,1% have been to Kilpisjärvi before. The first timers travelling to Kilpisjärvi were 38,4% from the total responders.

The reasons the first-time hikers choosing Kilpisjärvi over other destinations were determined with an open question, which is a more of a qualitative perspective on the study. The direct answers are not displayed due to anonymity reasons. These answers were divided into seven categories and are illustrated in the figure 11 below. The first category, which is 32,7% from the responders is people who had destination elsewhere and were just passing through. These destinations included

places like Tromso and Lofoten in Norway and some undetermined destinations in Sweden. Second category is about social impacts. This group of 21,8% in total was impacted by other people such as a partner, organization, or a friend that either planned the trip or recommended Kilpisjärvi as a destination. The third category (12,7%) is about the scenery in Kilpisjärvi itself that attracted them to choose Kilpisjärvi. Some answers more specifically talked about the nearby fells. Nature destinations around Kilpisjärvi were the main pull factor for the fourth category. This category was 12,7% from the total responders. The nature destinations were places like Malla national park and Halti, the highest point of Finland. Fifth category is more specifically Saana from the nature destinations in Kilpisjärvi (7,2%). 6th category is about exploring the unknown or fulfilling the need for visiting Kilpisjärvi. 9,0% of the responders did not have any other main reason for choosing Kilpisjärvi but to visit it for the first time. The last 7th category is other reasons, and this was 3.6% from the total responds. For this category the main reason choosing Kilpisjärvi was the easy public transport to get there, or it was located at the end of the responder's hiking trail.

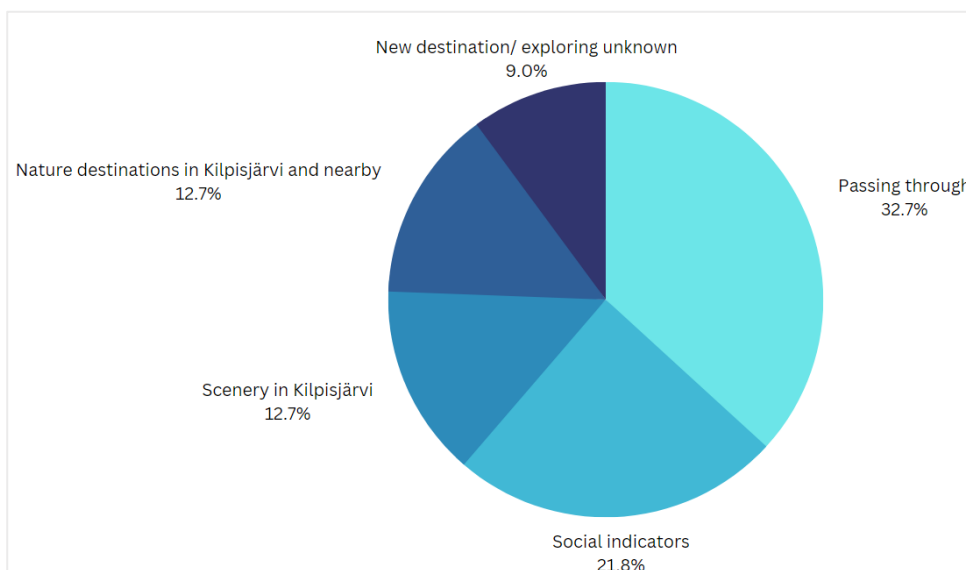


Figure 11. Reasons for choosing Kilpisjärvi as a travel destination

The destination for the hiking received variety of different locations (Figure 12.). 27,4% of the responders had more than one destination. From specific destinations, Saana Fell in Kilpisjärvi got the highest responds of 18,5%. The second highest was undetermined destination located outside of Kilpisjärvi area. 13.7% went to hike the wilderness area without a more specific spot and 8,2% went to hike Halti, the highest peak of Finland. A closer hiking spot to Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping, Malla's natural park, received 5,5% of the responds. From the open responds the answers can be categorized into x groups. 1) 5,6% had their destination elsewhere than Kilpisjärvi.

These were destinations such as Pältsä in Sweden, or Barras in Norway. 2) 3,5% were multiple destinations such as Saivaara and Halti or nearby destinations such as Malla national park combined with a hiking trip to Sweden. 3) 2,1% Had one destination in Kilpisjärvi area such Kilpisjärvi itself, the three-country cairn which is located right in boarder of Malla's nature park, and the nearby wilderness area of Kilpisjärvi.

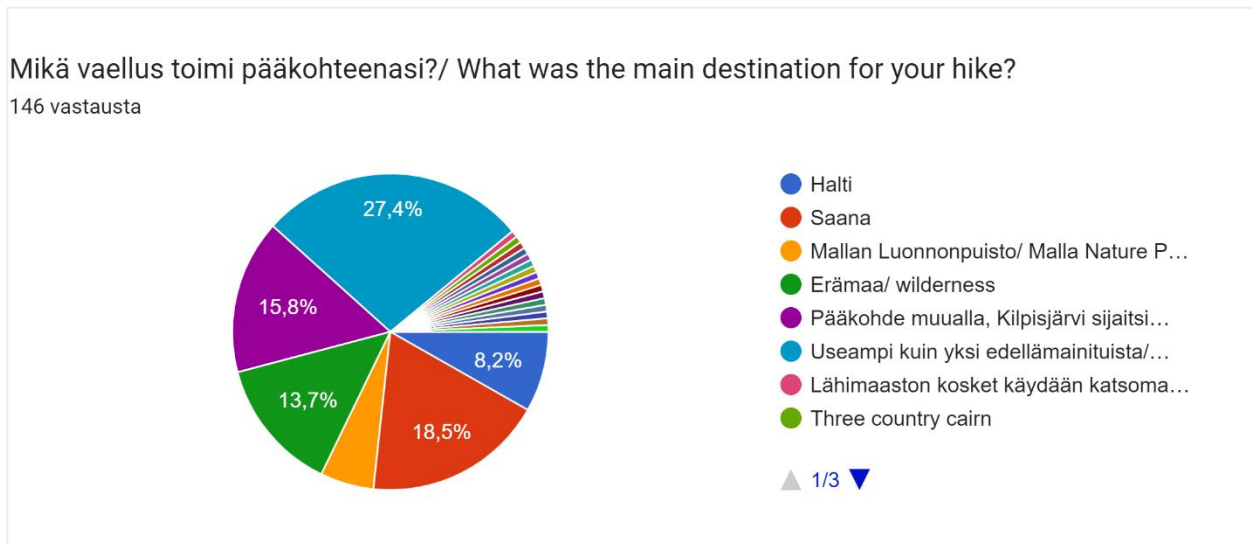


Figure 12. Main destination for the hike

For the time of visitation (figure 13.) over than half (54,1%) stayed in Kilpisjärvi for 2-6 days. 19,2% stayed or are staying for a day. 2-3 weeks (1,4%) and a month or longer visitation (0,7%) in Kilpisjärvi gathered the smallest amount of responds. 14,4% of responders' main duration for Kilpisjärvi was a week and for 10,3% of the responders was an only few hours.

The form of transportation (figure 14.) was mainly focused on by private transport (75,7%), meaning a privately own vehicle such as a car, motorcycle, or a bike. 16% used public transport and 8.3% used both forms of transportation to get to Kilpisjärvi.

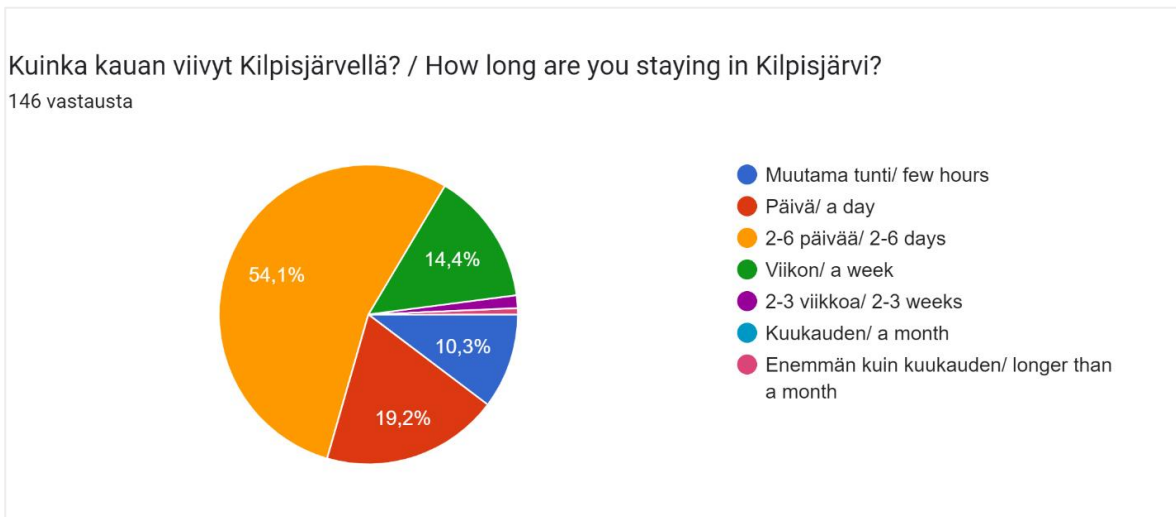


Figure 13. Duration for the trip

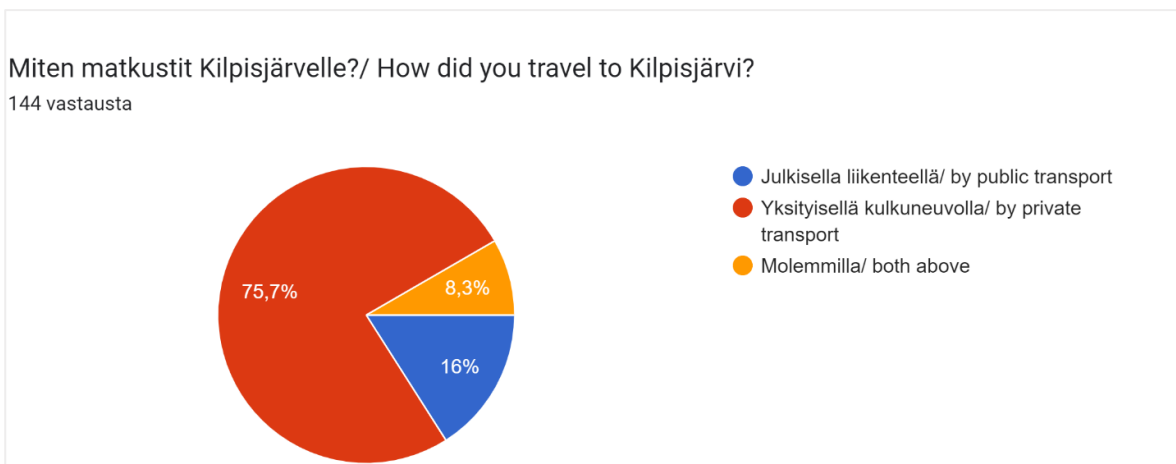


Figure 14. Transportation

The pre-phase of the trip involves whatever the visitors planned their hiking trip and what kind of digital or nondigital tools they used for the planning. 51,7% partly planned their hiking trip, whereas 34,5% did a full plan (figure 15.). The rest 13,8% made spontaneous travel plans on the road. Internet, including webpages and blogs played a huge part on the individuals that planned or partially planned their hiking trip (figure 16). 90,5% in total used internet and 31% used either or also social media. Nondigital way for planning, which was asking others, was done by 42,1% of the responders. Other nondigital platforms for planning was maps and booklets that were used 6,4% of the responders. Other responds that were 0,8% each from the responders were planning based

on their own knowledge combined with talking to a friend, knowing the hiking destination, not using anything for the planning and confirmation camp.

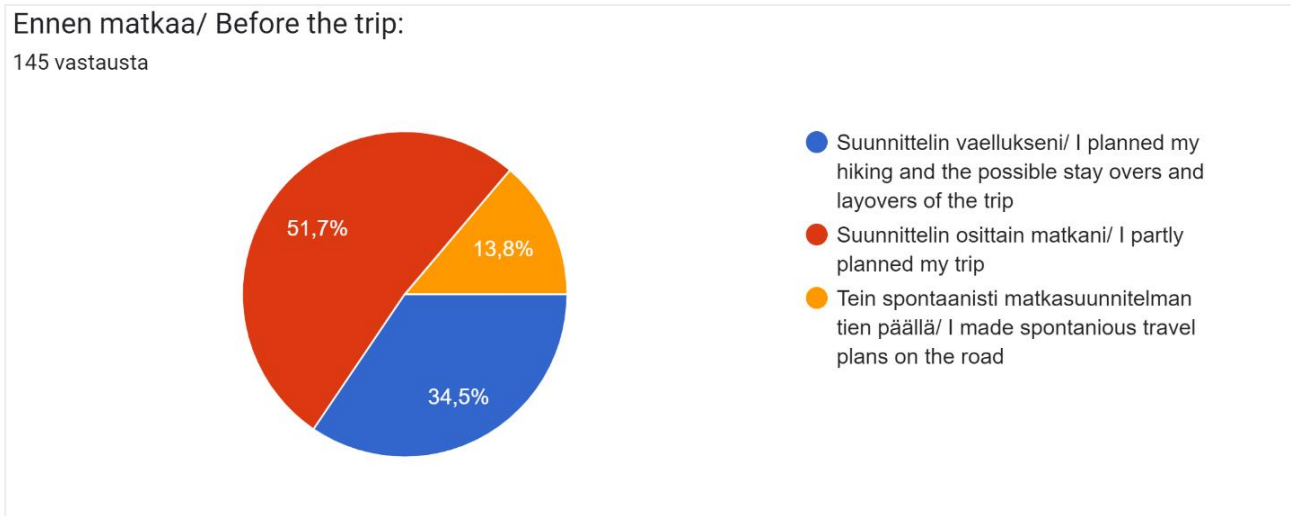


Figure 15. Planning for the trip

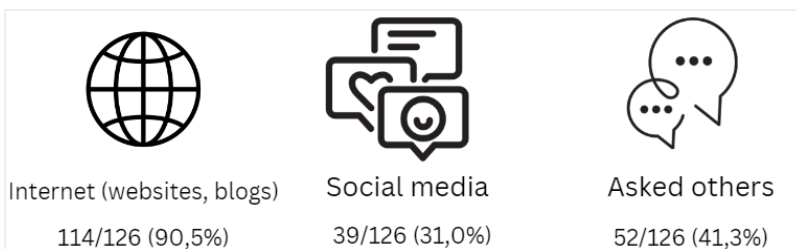


Figure 16. Top 3 channels used for planning

Social media plays important role throughout responder's customer journey: more than half, (63,4%) of the responders updated social media about their hiking trip. Most updates were done during the trip (73,1%) or after the trip (60,2%) and less were done before the trip (19,4%) (figure 17.). For the main channel used (figure 18.), Instagram was used by 67,7% of the responders. 20,4% responded to use Facebook as the main channel. Snapchat (3,2%), Twitter (1,1%), WhatsApp (3,3%), TikTok (1,1%) and IRC- gallery (1,1%) were less used by the responders. Other answers gained from the question was combination of two channels: Strava & Instagram (1,1%) and Instagram & Facebook (2,2%). YouTube was not by any of the responders.

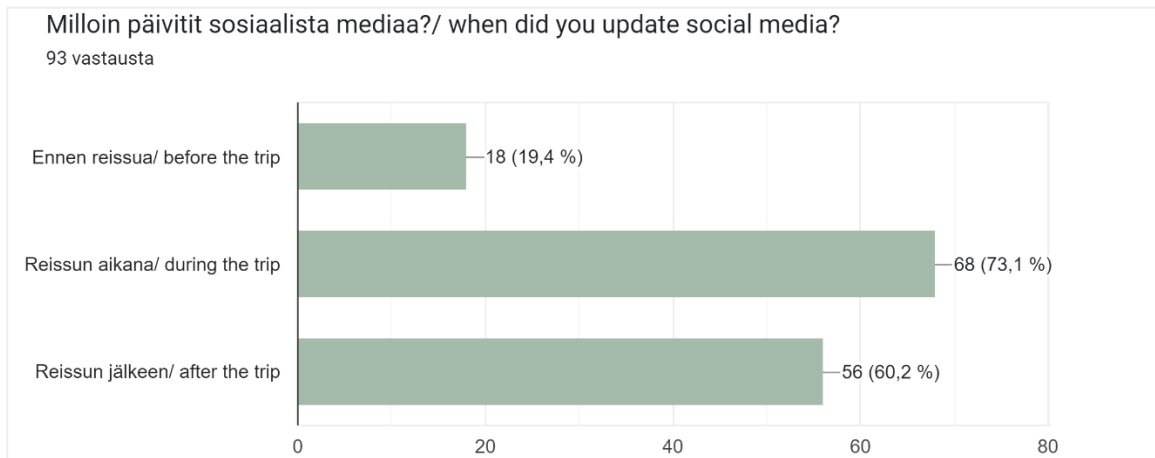


Figure 17. Timing for using social media

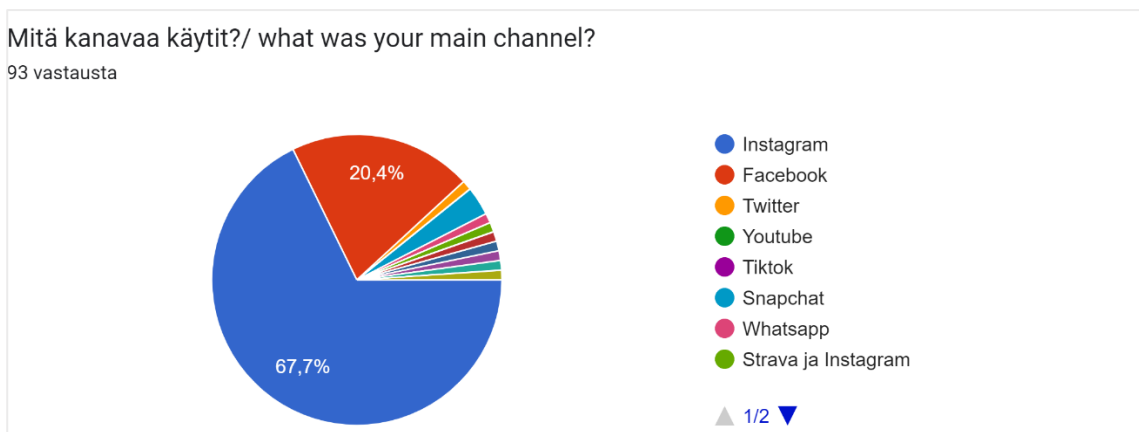


Figure 18. Main social media channel used during the trip

The following questions were to indicate customer perspective in Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping:

When it comes to spending on a hiking trip, the responses were quite equally divided between three spending groups: Over 800€, 201-400€ and 401-600€. People who used more than 800€ were 29,2% of the responders, spending level between 201-400€ was 29,2% and 401-600€ played 25% of the total amount of responders. Only 2,1% uses less than 50€ for their hiking trip and 9,7% 601-800€. Spending from 50 to 200€ was 12,5% of the total responders. (Figure 19.).

When it comes to timing in using Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping's services, 45,2% answered they used the services before, during and after their hiking trip or multiple trips. 30,1% answered the used the services after their hiking trip or trips and 13% said they used the services before the

trip or trips. The least answers were between the hikes which was 11,6% of the responders. (Figure 20.).

Since consumers may use different services in one company, responders were able to have multiple answers on what services they used in Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping (figure 21). From the responders 94,5% used the restaurant and café side, 56,8% used the sauna and shower facilities and 48,6% used the gift shop. In terms of accommodation in the responds, 31,5% used room or cottage accommodation and 35,6% used the camping site. 72 people, which is 49.3% from total responders, purchased something from the gift shop. As a multiple choice, responders had option to answer for more than one option. The options were that the purchasing from the shop was done to buy a gift, a souvenir, a medal or in other words a trophy and/or purchase something that was needed for the hike. In addition to the ready given answers, responders had option to write down their own if needed. The purchase done for a souvenir got the highest rate of 47 out of 72 in total, whereas purchasing done for a medal/trophy got the lowest rate of ready given answers which is 7 out of 72. 26 out of 72 purchased for a gift and 18 for something for the hike. Open responds were 5/72 and those were postcards and stamps, a key to a wilderness cabin in Norway (DNT- key), and items of soap and lipstick. (Figure 22.).

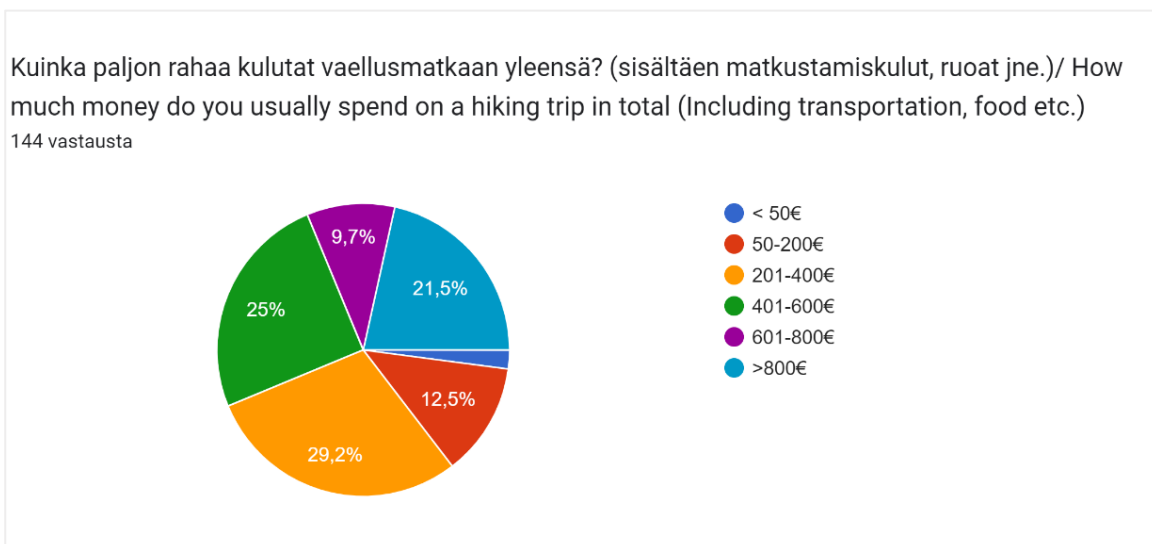


Figure 19. Usual level for total spending on a hiking trip

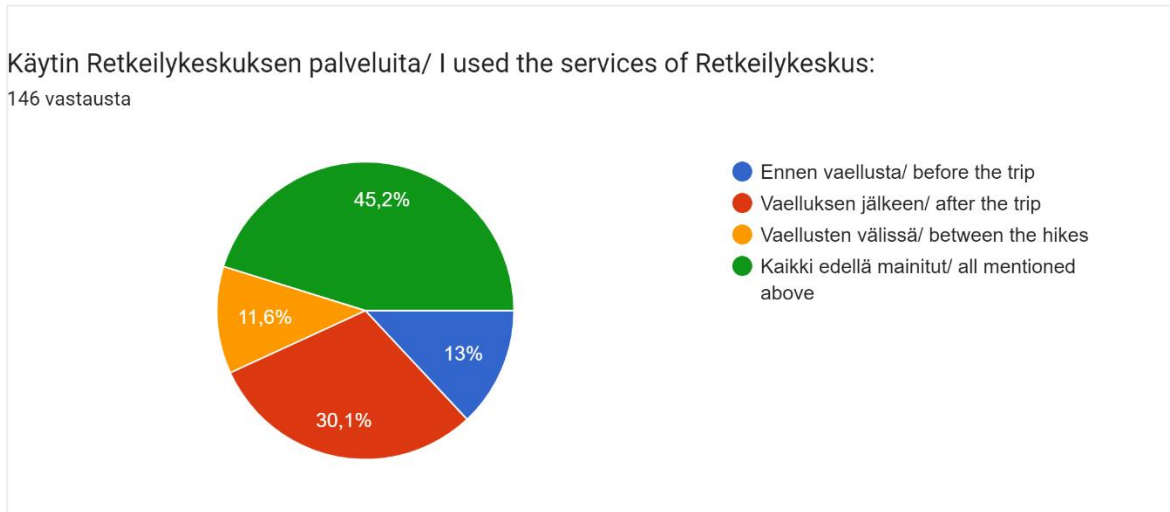


Figure 20. Timing for using Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping's services

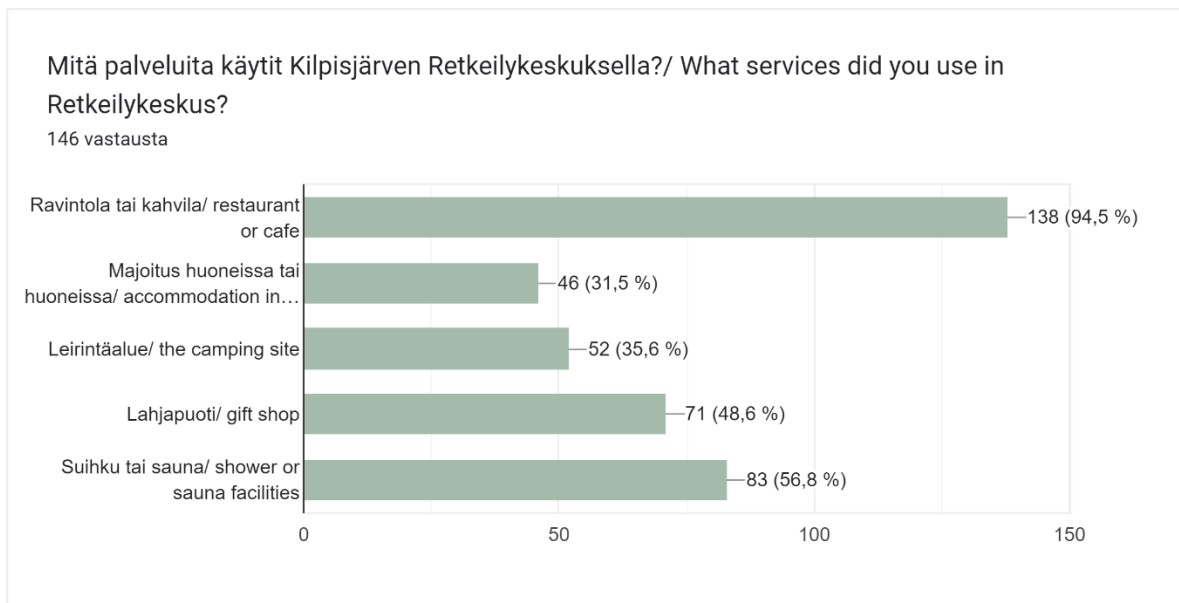


Figure 21. The services used at the Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping

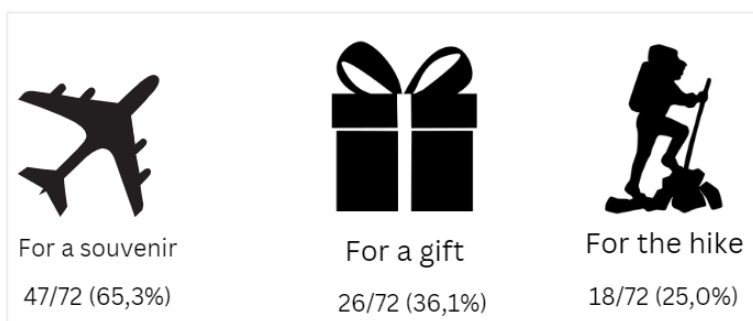


Figure 22. Top 3 reasons for purchasing

6.2 Customer profiling

The following chapter is introducing an illustration of summer hiking tourist customer customer in Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping. The customer profile was created from segmented primary data conducted from the online survey and authors' own analyzing and making conclusions based on the majority of the answers received.

Customer profile: National hiking tourist

The customer profile created is a Finnish hiking tourist. They are aged from 18 to 28 and are currently employed. They travelled to Kilpisjärvi by car with their partner for a 2 to 6 days stay. They have been in Kilpisjärvi before and they came to Kilpisjärvi for multiple hiking destinations, including Saana fell. Their stay was partly planned, meaning they had room for making while travelling. For the plans that were made, they talked with friends who had previously visited the destination and used internet and Instagram on social media. When looking at their usual budget for hiking trips, they spend 201 to 600 euros.

As a customer in Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping they used services before between and after the multiple hikes. They came in mainly for the restaurant or café services but did also use the sauna and shower facilities. While visiting the Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping they spend some time for purchasing from the gift shop. The reason to purchase was to buy a souvenir and a gift. Part of their stay in Kilpisjärvi they stayed a night in Kilpisjärvi holiday Village & Camping's camping site.

Their main channel in social media is Instagram, which additional to planning, they use for posting content. The main timing for posting on Instagram was set during and after their hiking trips.

The purpose for the hiking trip is search for peace and to be in the nature. While hiking they get negative emotions from other people that cause noise or other disturbance and things unrelated to nature such as trash. Weather conditions such as rain also cause negative emotions.



Figure 23. Illustration of the customer profile

7 Research reliability, validity and ethicality

The following chapter is to discuss about the research it's reliability, validity and ethicality. The discussion is about stating the possible issues that may occur and how these issues were managed throughout the research.

7.1 Reliability

Research reliability means if the chosen research methods in gathering and analysing the data will support consistent results (Saunders et al. 2008). In other words, it means that reliable research would show same results if the research was conducted again using the same techniques.

Since this research is about conducting customer profile data of summer hiking tourists in Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping, the results may vary depending on the year and timing. This means that if the same survey would be implemented during summer but another year from now, the results may vary, since the customers using the facilities may be different than during this research was implemented. Another factor that may effect on the reliability is the activity of hiking tourists to respond on the survey. There was no controlling of whom may answer the survey questions since the survey was implemented in various locations in Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping. Another summer season customers may be more active than other, and this may effect on the results. However, these can be seen as issues concerning the reliability it is important to remember that customer profiles are illustrations and constantly developing with the company. Therefore, the issues stated are not seen as major for the research reliability.

7.2 Validity

Validity is about how close the results of the research are to the actual truth (Saunders et al. 2008.). There occur two main issues in this research's validity. First when phrasing the questions implemented in the survey and secondly when categorising and analysing the results conducted. Because the goal of this results was to gather customer profile data from specifically hiking tourists, there was need to limit the responders so that the data is gathered from people whose main purpose for the trip was hiking. However, since the term hiking was not determined in the survey, it can mean different things to different people. When analysing this question there could be lost of data, since some responders were indeed on a trip for hiking but selected the "other reason". There occurred similar kind of data gaps in the survey. Some questions were not limited as obligatory to answer which led responders skipping the question completely. This lack means that not all

possible responds were analysed that may affect on the result. The analysing of the results was based on grouping the answers in categories and relying the conclusion on the preponderance of the responds gathered. This phase in the research had room for humane error that can affect the validity. The action of transferring open answers to different categories and grouping is relying on interpreting the answer and there may lead to miscommunication between the intended answer and how the author has understood it.

7.3 Ethicality

The thesis was conducted by following the Jamk's ethical principles and good scientific practice. The ethicality concerns of this research are about objectively, confidentiality and if the survey was accessible to all the potential participants. To ensure objectively of the research, the survey was implemented in different facilities for anyone to answer them without the author as an intermediary. To ensure that the responders knew what the data was for, there was a statement opening in the survey before the questions. The statement text, that tells the participant about the object and goal of the survey, can be found in appendix 1. Since the statement text promised the responders anonymity and that single responds will not be displayed, the open question answers were not displayed in this research but kept only for the author's own analyzing. This kind of decision to protect the confidentiality of the responders leads to the issue of full openness of the research. In order for the responders answer the survey questions, they needed to be able to access to it through a qr code. This led to the concern if the survey was accessible for all the responders. People who may not be familiar with the usage of qr code or may not have the access through a lack of internet or other device related reasons, may have not had the opportunity to answer the survey.

8 Discussion and further development

The research was to conduct primary data of summer hiking tourists in Kilpisjärvi Holiday & Camping and to develop a customer profile from the implemented survey's findings. The data collected was analyzed through placing the answers in groups and customer profile was created based on the biggest group of each question. The findings generated a customer profile of a summer hiking tourist; a Finnish female traveler, aged 18-28, who is travelling with their partner for 2-6 days visit in Kilpisjärvi aiming to do multiple hikes in the destination.

As the results indicate, 89,6% of the summer hiking tourists using Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping's services are Finnish. When taking this into account, it is important to analyze if this is the valid rate for the summer hiking tourists' nationality or if the Finnish hiking tourists were more active for taking part of the survey. The large share of Finnish travelers in Kilpisjärvi and in the municipality of Enontekiö, however is supported by looking at the other surveys and analyses conducted in the area.

The customer profile generated illustrates that a summer hiking tourist in Kilpisjärvi is most likely to travel with a partner than alone. As indicated in the research by Moira et al. (2021), hiking tourists' decision making for the hiking destination can vary depending on the motivation. If the hiking tourist is motivated to participate on a hike for social factors such as spending time with others, they might choose a hiking route of easier level. This fact, however, was not shown on the research conducted on this thesis. The results show that there were multiple hiking destinations chosen from different levels.

The motivations that the summer hiking tourists had in this survey support the findings in the study conducted by Moira et al. (2021) about the hikers of Hellenic Federation of Mountaineering & Climbing in Greece. The presence of nature is one of the key indicators that motivates people to attend on a hiking trip. Another aspect that is also supported is the recreational benefits of hiking. As founded in this research, trash, noise, and other disturbance can be seen as causing negative emotions on hiker. Since the motivation for going hiking is to be in nature, it can be deduced that factors that can be considered as opposite to nature, are things that summer hiking tourists aim to avoid.

Perspective on customer journey were deducted on this research indicating that summer hiking tourists who used Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping's services, were partly planning their trip but they did leave room for spontaneous decision making. The pre phase of the trip is significant, since in this stage most of the decisions are made. Understanding that there is room for companies to effect on the summer hiker's decision making also during the trip, is important. Having an effecting website and social media presence throughout the whole summer season can influence on summer hiking tourists to come and visit Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping's facilities.

Since the aim of the study was to collect data to generate a customer profile, no pre conclusions were done of how the data is expected to turn out. The survey was designed to support the customer profile's different perspectives such as demographical and geographical aspects. The data was presented in a form of customer profile, however no further conclusions were done on data to avoid stereotyping. According to Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.b), stereotype is "a set idea that people have about what someone or something is like, especially an idea that is wrong". For example, any conclusions on an age or gender were left out in the customer profile.

As stated in this research, social media is an important factor among consumers. This research also founded that more than half of the responders (63,4%) admit posting content on social media from their travels. This amount is significant and should not be dismissed and active social media presence is needed by the Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping.

Customer profiles are beneficial tool to be used in customer-centric approach marketing. They give inspiration on developing the services and marketing towards the direction that meets with the ideal customer's needs and wants. This research shows the touchpoints of customer journey that the summer hiking tourists may take when visiting Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping and the characteristics that they may obtain as customers. The customer profile can be beneficial for the Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping to understand why summer hiking tourists chose Kilpisjärvi and what they used to plan their trip, what they came for when visiting their company, whom they came with, for what purposes they purchased, when is the most ideal timing for them to post on social media, what are the platforms they use on social media. The psychological characteristics including motivations and aspects waking negative emotions can be used for example in customer service or when promoting the destination for hiking tourists.

Further development

The customer profile generated in this thesis can be used for further development. Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping can focus on developing a deeper customer journey research. The research results in this thesis present how Instagram is used by summer hiking tourists for planning but also as a main social media platform when posting content. This information can be used as an inspiration when promoting. For example, different kinds of social media marketing campaigns such as polls can reach the desired audience of summer hiking tourists.

In addition, for understanding summer hiking tourists as consumer in Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping, the company can develop this research's customer profile for other marketing purposes. The profile can be implemented for further and deeper research on customer journey, or the data can be implemented for theoretical framework tools such as Value proposition canvas or for the 5 p's of marketing. Value proposition canvas is a visual tool invented by Alex Osterwalder to recognize the touchpoints between the company's services and/or products and the customer's needs and wants (Mansfield, 2019). Identifying from the customer profile that negative emotions are awakened through disturbance by other people, can be implemented in customer service when giving destination hiking route information. This information can also be implemented when marketing the destination to influence on the planning phase. The area of psychological factors can be developed further for deeper understanding, due to the limited questions conducted on this thesis' research.

Even though stereotypes are important to be avoided, there are studies that support marketing aimed for specifically on certain generations. The developed customer profile in this research is a person from generation Z, people born in 1990's or early 2000's. This generation is relying heavily on social media (Thomas et al. 2015), and as found from this research summer hiking tourists in the commissioner company tend to use Instagram when posting content. To acknowledge this, it is beneficial for the Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping to be able to reach hiking tourist from the customer profile's perspective. Among social media usage, this specific generation values sustainability and unique brands (Mintel, 2023). Even though the generation Z is an active on social media, the results show that social media is important regardless of the age. The social media usage is large as is the variety of responders from different ages. This indicates that the social media is used frequently by summer hiking tourists and may not depend specifically on the age.

9 Conclusion

This research, made for JAMK University of applied sciences bachelor's degree program in tourism management, was to conduct a customer profile of summer hiking tourists in Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping. The reason for the research was to increase understanding on this specific tourism group and to see them as a customer from the view of commissioner company. In a larger perspective, data gathered from hiking tourists in Finland is beneficial as the nature-based tourism is growing globally and nationally and it is worth to pay attention to. Kilpisjärvi as being a growing nature-based destination, understanding the consumers in the area can help the company develop their marketing, products, and services.

The research in this thesis gathered primary data of summer hiking tourists in Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village located in Finnish Lapland. The timeline for conducting the data was from 15th of June till 20th of August in 2023. The data gathering method was a survey, that collected quantitative data, however open questions and answers gave qualitative aspects to the survey as well. The survey was in digital mode and responders got access to it through qr codes that were implemented in different locations of the commissioner company. The answers were analyzed by using cluster analyzing method. This means that the answers were put into groups and the largest portions were implemented into the customer profile.

The research question of “what kind of customer profile can be developed from the primary data conducted of summer hiking tourists in Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping?” and the investigative questions were answered on this thesis. The geographical, demographical, and psychological dimensions of a customer profile were identified before conducting the survey and were used as a base for the research. The customer profile generated from the results is a Finnish female hiking tourist aged 18-28 that used the company's services for multiple reasons such as buying the restaurant or café services and products from the gift shop. The customer profile displays the illustrated customer's main social media channel, customer characteristics and other information to determine aspects on their customer journey and behavior. There were results of psychological aspects of motivation and dislike factors, however, due to the narrow questioning these require more further development. Customer profiles are illustrations and there for can vary depending

on the perspectives and results. Therefore, different kind of dimensions created could create a different kind of customer profile.

Kilpisjärvi Holiday Village & Camping benefits from the customer profile by gaining information of hiking tourists that use their facilities. The customer profile created can be used for further development and inspiration such as marketing frameworks including value proposition canvas and illustration of a customer journey.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Survey



Vaellusmatkailijoiden asiakaskysely/ Customer survey for hiking tourists

Kyselyyn vastaaminen vie noin 5 minuuttia/
It takes approximately 5 minutes to finish the survey

Tämä lomake on tehty keräämään tietoa vaellusmatkailijoista, jotka käyttävät Kilpisjärven Retkeilykeskuksen palveluita. Tietoa kerätään matkailualan opiskelijan opinnäytetyötä varten, jonka tarkoituksena on kerätä ymmärrystä Kilpisjärven vaellusmatkailijoista itse vaeltajina, mutta myös asiakkaina. Kysely sisältää kysymyksiä, joita käytetään asiakassegmentointiin sekä asiakasprofilointiin. Yksittäisiä vastauksia ei julkaista ja kysely suoritetaan anonyyminä.

This survey is created to collect information about hiking tourists that are using services in Kilpisjärvi Retkeilykeskus. The information collected is for a Tourism management Bachelor's degree thesis and the purpose is to gain understanding of Kilpisjärvi's hiking tourists as hikers but also as customers. The survey includes questions that are used for customer segmentation and customer profiling. The survey is completely anonymous, and the answers will not be displayed.

jaelski@hotmail.com [Vaihda tiliä](#)



 Ei jaettu

*** Pakollinen kysymys**

Mikä on matkasi pääsääntöinen tarkoitus?/ *
What is the main purpose of your trip?

Vaeltaminen/ hiking

Muu: _____

Minkä ikäinen olet?/ How old are you?

- <18
- 18-28
- 29-40
- 41-50
- 51-60
- 61-70
- >71

Sukupuolesi/ your gender:

- Nainen/ female
- Mies/ male
- Muu/ other
- En halua sanoa/ I wish not to say

Elämäntilanteesi/ Your life situation:

- Käyn töissä/ I am employed
- Opiskelen/ I am a student
- Käyn töissä ja opiskelen/ I am studying and working
- Olen työtön/ I am unemployed
- Olen eläkkeellä/ I am retired

Olen/ I am (If you are international traveller, please state the country where you are from):

- Kotimainen matkustaja/ National traveller
- Muu: _____

Oletko ollut ennen Kilpisjärvellä? /Have you been to Kilpisjärvi before?

- Kyllä/ yes
 - Ensimmäinen kerta/ this is my first time
-

Miksi valitsit Kilpisjärven muiden kohteiden sijasta? /What made you choose Kilpisjärvi over other destinations?

Oma vastauksesi _____

Kuinka kauan viivyt Kilpisjärvellä? / How long are you staying in Kilpisjärvi?

- Muutama tunti/ few hours
- Päivä/ a day
- 2-6 päivää/ 2-6 days
- Viikon/ a week
- 2-3 viikkoa/ 2-3 weeks
- Kuukauden/ a month
- Enemmän kuin kuukauden/ longer than a month

Miten matkustit Kilpisjärvelle?/ How did you travel to Kilpisjärvi?

- Julkisella liikenteellä/ by public transport
- Yksityisellä kulkuneuvolla/ by private transport
- Molemmilla/ both above

Ennen matkaa/ Before the trip:

- Suunnittelin vaellukseni/ I planned my hiking and the possible stay overs and layovers of the trip
- Suunnittelin osittain matkani/ I partly planned my trip
- Tein spontaanisti matkasuunnitelman tien päällä/ I made spontaneous travel plans on the road

Mitä käytit matkan suunnitteluun?/ What did you use for planning?

- Internettiä (sisältäen nettisivut, blogit jne.) / Internet (including webpages, blogs etc.)
- Sosiaalista mediaa (Instagram, Facebook jne.)/ By using social media
- Kysyin/juttelin siellä käyneiltä/ I talked with others who have been there
- Muu: _____

Kuinka paljon rahaa kulutat vaellusmatkaan yleensä? (sisältäen matkustamiskulut, ruoat jne.)/ How much money do you usually spend on a hiking trip in total (Including transportation, food etc.)

- < 50€
- 50-200€
- 201-400€
- 401-600€
- 601-800€
- >800€

Käytin Retkeilykeskuksen palveluita/ I used the services of Retkeilykeskus: *

- Ennen vaellusta/ before the trip
- Vaelluksen jälkeen/ after the trip
- Vaellusten välissä/ between the hikes
- Kaikki edellä mainitut/ all mentioned above

Mitä palveluita käytit Kilpisjärven Retkeilykeskuksella?/ What services did you use in Retkeilykeskus?

- Ravintola tai kahvila/ restaurant or cafe
- Majoitus huoneissa tai huoneissa/ accommodation in cottages or rooms
- Lahjapuoti/ gift shop
- Suihku tai sauna/ shower or sauna facilities
- Leirintäalue/ the camping site

Jos vastasit "lahjapuoti", miksi päädyit ostamaan tuotteen?/ If you answered "gift shop" why did you end up purchasing a product?

- Lahjaksi/ for a gift
- Matkamuistoksi/ for a souvenir
- Kunniamerkiksi/ for a medal
- Tarpeeseen vaellusta varten (väline/vaate)/ for the hike (gear/clothing)
- Muu: _____

Mikä vaellus toimi pääkohteenasi?/ What was the main destination for your hike?

- Halti
- Saana
- Mallan Luonnonpuisto/ Malla Nature Park
- Erämaa/ wilderness
- Pääkohde muualla, Kilpisjärvi sijaitsi matkan varrella/ main destination was elsewhere, Kilpisjärvi was on the route
- Useampi kuin yksi edellämainituista/ more than one above
- Muu: _____

Kenen kanssa tulit vaeltamaan?/ Who did you come to do hiking with?

- Yksin/ alone
- Kumppanin/ partner
- Kaverin tai kavereiden/ friend or friends
- Perheen/ family
- Muu: _____

Teitkö sosiaaliseen mediaan päivitystä reissusta?/ did you update anything on social media about the trip?

- Kyllä/ yes
- En/ no

Milloin päivitit sosiaalista mediaa?/ when did you update social media?

- Ennen reissua/ before the trip
- Reissun aikana/ during the trip
- Reissun jälkeen/ after the trip

Mitä kanavaa käytit?/ what was your main channel?

- Instagram
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Youtube
- Tiktok
- Muu: _____

Haen vaeltamisella (max 2)/ by hiking I am seeking for (choose max 2):

- Rauhaa ja rentoutumista/ peace and relaxation
- Kuntoilua/ exercise
- Pakoa arjesta/ escape from the daily routine
- Luonnon läheisyyttä/ being in nature
- Seikkailua/ adventure
- Itseni haastamista/ to challenge myself
- Sosialisointia tai kokemuksia muiden kanssa/ social interaction or creating memories with others
- Yksinoloa/ being alone
- Muu: _____

Mitkä asiat herättävät negatiivisia kokemuksia vaeltaessa?/ What are things that wake up negative emotions during a hike?

Oma vastauksesi _____

Olet suorittanut kyselyn. Painamalla "lähetä" painiketta tallennat vastauksesi. Kiitos! You have now finished the survey and may submit it. Thank you!