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ENABLING EXPERIENCES - THE ROLE OF TOUR OPERATORS AND TOUR LEADERS
IN CREATING AND MANAGING PACKAGE TOURISM EXPERIENCES

Juulia Räikkönen



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ABSTRACT

The current thesis aims to create a deeper understanding of the factors that have an effect on package tourism experiences and, consequently, to illustrate the role of tour operators and tour leaders in experience creation and management. The thesis consists of an introductory essay and four distinct empirical studies. The first study lays the foundations for the thesis by examining tourism experiences on a general level and addresses research question 1: *What is the role of different experience factors in the formation of tourism experiences?* The remaining three studies are conducted in cooperation with Oy Aurinkomatkat – Suntours Ltd Ab and they address research question 2: *What is the role of tour operators and tour leaders in the creation of package tourism experiences?*

The first study subjects various models on the characteristics of experiences to empirical research by analyzing the narratives of successful tourism experiences (n=153). The second study focuses on the role of satisfaction with the tour operator in creating successful tourism experiences by analyzing a large set of customer satisfaction data (n=38,153). In the third study, written customer complaints (n=84) are analyzed in order to examine the role of tour leaders in service failure situations. Finally, the fourth study examines how concurrent service recovery by the tour leaders versus subsequent service recovery by the customer service department of the tour operator influence customer satisfaction and loyalty by analyzing survey data (n=220).

Based on the empirical findings, the role of the service providers in the creation of experiences appears to be quite limited. Even though tangible elements (e.g. products and services) are essential prerequisites for tourism experiences, especially peak experiences are more often associated with abstract and emotional factors. Additionally, in successful tourism experiences, the participation of individuals is passive rather than active, which is interesting as in marketing, tourism experiences are often connected to adventures and even extreme activities. Furthermore, the findings suggest that also negative incidents and emotions can be or become peak experiences.

In the experience creation process, service providers should focus on the intangible elements, as their employees can create not only functional but also emotional environments that trigger experiences. Even if moving tourists' physical bodies is easier than moving their minds, we need more experience products that focus on being and feeling as opposed to doing and learning.

The second study indicates that the tour operator's destination services and accommodation services are the key factors in explaining the success of a package tourism experience. Pre-tour services and environmental issues were also essential, whereas flight and airport services were the least important. However, together, these six components explained only 34% of the variance in the success of a tourism experience, which affirmed the limited role of tour operators in experience creation. Still, the tour operators need to endeavor to manage all service encounters, and pay particular attention to the professional skills of their employees. The tour leaders should be seen as experience enablers whose task is not to impose ready-made experiences but to concentrate on the consumers and empower them to experience whatever it is that they came to experience. Furthermore, both academics and managers need to question the dominant role of customer satisfaction in measuring tourism experiences and, instead, develop measures that better take into account the subjective and emotional elements of experiences.

The popularity of package tours is partly explained by the availability of assistance in case something goes wrong. The tour leaders sort out various service failures, most of which are related to the accommodation services. However, the analysis of customer complaints clearly indicates that the actions of the tour leaders are not perceived to be adequate. In some cases, the tour leader's inability to solve the problem causes even more dissatisfaction than the initial service failure itself.

Furthermore, according to the survey data, the service recovery efforts of the customer service department seem to be satisfactory, unlike the actions of the tour leaders. Managing service recoveries is one of the main tasks of the customer service department, but when the recovery takes place subsequently, the experience has already been ruined and cannot be fully reimbursed. Concurrent service recovery, in turn, has the opportunity to save the experience and, therefore, tour leaders need to be trained to manage the service recovery situations and empowered to make immediate decisions concerning, e.g., the type and amount of compensation.

An evident strength of the thesis is the use of various customer data sets and methodologies to enhance the understanding of tourism experiences. Tourism organizations collect and possess vast amounts of customer information, but the utilization is often inadequate and fails to lead to any organizational learning and value enhancement. Cooperation with academia could be one solution for the tour operators to better benefit from the data, and it would certainly enhance the theoretical understanding of tourism experiences.

Keywords: tourism experience, experience marketing, experience management, package tourism, tour operator, tour leader, customer satisfaction, service failure, service recovery

TIIVISTELMÄ

Väitöstutkimus tarkastelee valmismatkakokemuksiin vaikuttavia tekijöitä sekä havainnollistaa matkanjärjestäjien ja matkaoppaiden roolia valmismatkakokemusten luomisessa ja johtamisessa. Väitöskirja koostuu johdantoosuksesta ja neljästä empiirisestä tutkimuksesta, joista ensimmäinen tarkastelee matkailukokemuksia yleisellä tasolla ja vastaa tutkimusongelmaan 1: *Mikä on eri elämästekijöiden rooli matkailukokemusten muodostumisessa?* Kolme muuta tutkimusta on toteutettu yhteistyössä Aurinkomatkat Oy:n kanssa, ja ne keskittyvät tutkimusongelmaan 2: *Mikä on matkanjärjestäjien ja matkaoppaiden rooli valmismatkakokemusten luomisessa ja johtamisessa?*

Ensimmäinen tutkimus käsittelee matkailukokemusten perusolemusta analysoimalla hyvistä matkailukokemuksista kirjoitettuja lyhyitä narratiiveja (n=153) matkailu- ja kulutuskokemuksia kuvaavien teoreettisten mallien pohjalta. Toisessa tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan laajan asiakastyytyväisyysaineiston (n=38153) avulla sitä, miten tyytyväisyys valmismatkan eri elementteihin vaikuttaa matkailukokemusten onnistumiseen. Kolmannen tutkimuksen aineisto koostuu kirjallisista asiakasvalituksista (n=84), ja se käsittelee matkaoppaiden roolia palvelun epäonnistumistilanteissa. Neljäs tutkimus puolestaan keskittyy epäonnistuneen palvelun korjaamiseen ja vertailee kyselyaineiston (n=220) avulla sitä, miten matkaoppaiden välittömät palveluvirheen korjaamistoimenpiteet lomakohteessa sekä matkan jälkeen tapahtuva asiakasvalitusten käsittely ja jälkihoito vaikuttavat asiakastyytyväisyyteen ja -uskollisuuteen.

Tutkimustulokset osoittavat, että palveluntarjoajien merkitys matkailukokemusten luomisessa on melko rajallinen. Vaikka aineelliset elementit (esim. tuotteet ja palvelut) ovat matkailukokemusten perusedellytyksiä, matkailun huippukokemukset liittyvät useimmiten aineettomiin tekijöihin. Lisäksi onnistuneissa matkailukokemuksissa matkailijoiden osallistuminen on yllättävän passiivista, kun taas matkailumarkkinoinnissa elämykset liitetään usein vahvasti aktiviteetteihin, seikkailuihin ja jopa extreme-kokemuksiin. Lisäksi tutkimustulokset viittaavat, että myös negatiiviset tapahtumat ja tuntemukset voivat saada aikaan matkailun huippukokemuksia.

Palveluntarjoajien tulisi keskittyä erityisesti aineettomiin elementteihin saadakseen aikaan matkailuelämyksiä. Matkailuyritysten työntekijät voivat luoda paitsi hyvin toimivia myös emotionaalisia ympäristöjä, jotka ovat keskeisiä elämysten muodostumisessa. Vaikka matkailijan kehoa on helpompi

liikuttaa kuin hänen mieltään, tarvitaan lisää elämystuotteita, jotka keskittyvät aktiivisen tekemisen ja oppimisen sijaan leppoisaan olemiseen ja tuntemiseen.

Tutkimustulosten mukaan matkanjärjestäjän kohdepalveluiden ohella majoituspalvelut ovat tärkeimmät valmismatkakokemuksen onnistumiseen vaikuttavat tekijät. Myös matkaa edeltävät palvelut sekä matkakohteen ympäristöön liittyvät tekijät ovat olennaisia, mutta lento- ja lentokenttäpalveluiden merkitys on vähäinen. Tyytyväisyys näihin kuuteen tekijään selitti kuitenkin vain 34 % matkailukokemuksen onnistumisesta, mikä vahvistaa käsitystä palveluntarjoajien rajallisesta roolista elämysten luomisessa. Tästä huolimatta matkanjärjestäjien pitää pyrkiä hallitsemaan kaikkia asiakaspalvelutilanteita mahdollisimman hyvin ja kiinnittää huomiota erityisesti työntekijöiden osamiseen. Matkaoppaiden tulisi olla elämysten mahdollistajia ja tarjota matkailijoille tilaisuuksia juuri niihin kokemuksiin, joita he tulivat matkalta etsimään, eikä tyrkyttää valmiiksi pureskeltuja elämyksiä. Lisäksi matkailuyritysten johtajien tulisi tutkijoiden tapaan vahvemmin kyseenalaistaa asiakas-tyytyväisyyden hallitseva asema matkailukokemusten mittaamisessa ja pyrkiä kehittämään mittareita, jotka huomioivat paremmin elämysten henkilökohtaisen ja emotionaalisen luonteen.

Valmismatkojen suosio selittyi osin sillä, että matkailija voi luottaa matkanjärjestäjän apuun, jos jotakin yllättävää tapahtuu. Matkaoppaat selvittävät lukuisia palvelun epäonnistumistilanteita, joista suurin osa liittyy majoituspalveluihin. Kuitenkin asiakasvalitusten analyysi paljasti, että matkaoppaiden toiminta koetaan usein riittämättömäksi ja se saattaa jopa aiheuttaa enemmän tyytymättömyyttä kuin itse palvelun epäonnistuminen. Myös kyselyaineiston analyysi osoitti, että asiakkaat ovat tyytymättömiä matkaoppaiden tekemään palveluvirheiden korjaamiseen, mutta tyytyväisiä matkanjärjestäjän asiakaspalveluosaston valitusten käsittelyyn. Matkan jälkeen tapahtuvat toimenpiteet eivät kuitenkaan voi täysin pelastaa pilalle mennyttä matkailukokemusta. Siksi matkakohteessa tapahtuva palvelun korjaaminen on ensisijaisen tärkeää ja vaatii paitsi matkaoppaiden riittävää koulutusta myös valtuutusta välittömään päätöksentekoon esimerkiksi kompensaation muodon ja määrän suhteen.

Väitöstutkimuksen ilmeisenä vahvuutena on monien erilaisten asiakas-aineistojen käyttö akateemisessa tutkimuksessa. Matkailuyrityksillä on paljon asiakastietoa, mutta sen hyödyntäminen on usein puutteellista eikä johda organisaation oppimiseen. Matkanjärjestäjien ja tutkijoiden kiinteämpi yhteistyö voi lisätä sekä asiakastiedon hyödyntämistä matkailuyrityksissä että syventää matkailukokemusten teoreettista ymmärrystä.

Avainsanat: matkailukokemus, elämysten markkinointi, elämysten johtaminen, valmismatka, matkanjärjestäjä, matkaopas, asiakas-tyytyväisyys, palvelun epäonnistuminen, palvelun korjaaminen

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“Difficult roads often lead to beautiful destinations”

Unknown

I have finally reached the destination and it is time to look back and express my sincere gratitude to the various people who have guided me along the way. Comparing a thesis to a journey is a cliché, but perhaps permitted for a tourism researcher. As a geographer, I need a map to describe my journey. I use the most beautiful map I have ever seen; the imaginary *World of Experience* published in *The Atlas of Experience* by Louise van Swaaij and Jean Klare. Unfortunately, I was not permitted to republish the image, but in case needed, it can be found on the Internet¹.

More than ten years ago, hardly graduated and eager to see the world, I began my journey in the *World of Experience*. Suntours flew me to the metaphoric *Peninsula of Pleasure*, which I explored for two years. Already during this vocational training in package tourism, I was overly interested in how tourists perceive their vacations and amazed at how differently experiences could be interpreted. From the first pile of customer satisfaction questionnaires, I had the urge to understand what successful tourism experiences are made of. With Suntours, I traveled through *Amazing*, *Wonder*, and *Happy* and continued to the *Coast of Long Evenings* where I found *Sultry*, *Good Friends*, and *Cold Beer*. It was great fun, but I also had to climb the *Mountains of Work* and nearly exhausted myself somewhere between *Duty* and *Stress*. Conducting this thesis would not have been possible without Suntours Ltd and, therefore, I first wish to express my gratitude to Mr. Antero Kaleva, the former Manager of Production, Planning, Quality Assurance, and Sustainability, for hiring me in the first place, and for the research cooperation and the access to various data sets.

However, all good things must come to an end. I found myself in *Homesick*, and returned *Home*. There I was, in *Safe*, back at the Department of Economic Geography, where my supervisor, Professor Heli Marjanen, met me in *Welcome*. I felt enormous relief, just like years ago, when I accidentally ended up at the Turku School of Economics but then found my place within economic geography. For her guidance, support, and friendship, I thank

¹ <http://www.imaginaryatlas.com/2013/04/28/world-of-experience/>

Professor Marjanen, who insisted that I make my way to *Plans* and *Immediately*, but also showed me *Patience* as I was wandering around *Soon*, *Later*, *Perhaps*, and *Never*. I am also truly grateful to Professor Päivi Oinas, Professor Rami Olkkonen, and Professor Aino Halinen-Kaila for their guidance and encouragement.

Another place that I consider my scientific home is the Finnish University Network for Tourism Studies, the harbor of *Reunion*, where I came ashore again. FUNTS is an exceptional island in the *Sea of Possibilities* and I truly hope that its' fragile nature will survive the waves of finance stirred up by the climate change within the universities. In the unique and multi-disciplinary environment of FUNTS, I have met numerous academics who have opened my eyes, inspired me, and critically assessed my ideas.

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My *Territory of Science* reaches all the way from the *Highlands of Creativity* to the *Plains of Uncertainty*. The prior is a wonderful place surrounding the *Mountain of Concentration* where the *Stream of Ideas* flows through the *Sources of Inspiration*, and *Order* is found somewhere between *Main Issues* and *Side Issues*. The latter, in turn, is a drearier region with places like *Independence*, *Risk*, *Distrust*, *Mistake*, yet also *Trust*, *Hope*, *Heart*, and *Courage*. However, visiting all these locations is crucial in order to reach *Change*, the capital of the *World of Experience*.

I have had the opportunity to cooperate with incredible individuals. I am most grateful to M.Sc. Miia Grénman, a long lost friend, who became my closest colleague and who knows exactly how to finish my sentences. I

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Finally, the best place of the *World of Experience* is the *Valley of Love*, the *Safe Haven* of the *Sea of Plenty*. It is the location of *Blooming*, *Awakenings*, and *Symphony*. The reason it is called the *Valley of Love* is, of course, its

population: my numerous friends and relatives whom I am deeply grateful for. This thesis would have never been finished without the continuous and unquestionable assistance, time, and care offered by my parents, Janette and Jouko Rääkkönen. In addition to the concrete help in managing the everyday-life of a family with three children, I thank my mum for pushing me to experience the world and my dad for always having an encouraging attitude towards my studies.

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To my most incredible co-creations: Vilho, Veikka, and Viola.

Turku, October 20th 2014

Juulia Rääkkönen

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1 INTRODUCTION

*“We didn't realize we were making memories,
we just knew we were having fun.”*

Unknown

1.1 The package tourism industry

Tourism refers to the temporary travel of individuals outside their usual environment (WTO 1994), an activity which is more common today than ever before. In 2012, there were more than one billion international tourist arrivals worldwide and international tourism receipts hit a new record of 837 billion euros, equaling to a 4% increase from the previous year. In addition, another five to six billion tourists are estimated to travel domestically every year. It is clear that the tourism industry is a significant contributor to the global economy, as it generates export earnings not only through international tourism receipts but also through international passenger transport. Consequently, international tourism accounts for 30% of the world's exports of services, 6% of overall exports, and is ranked fifth as a worldwide export category, right after fuels, chemicals, food, and automotive products. (UNWTO 2013.)

The enormous growth of international tourism since the 1950s has been fueled by the development of the package tourism industry, which forms the context of the current thesis. Package tourism is seen as a model example of mass tourism, a Fordist mode of consumption characterized by undifferentiated products, a highly standardized production process, and a dependency on scale economies (Shaw & Williams 2004).

The history of package tourism is often traced back to Great Britain and Thomas Cook, who had a mission to popularize and democratize tourism by targeting tours to the lower middle and working classes. He saw the railways as an opportunity to create *“travel for the millions”* and organized the first domestic package tour in 1841. Later, his offerings covered also international destinations and even journeys around the world. (Kostiainen, Ahtola, Koivunen, Korpela & Syrjämaa 2004.) Shaw and Williams (1994) have dated the first phase of mass tourism to the 1920s in the United States, followed by the second phase in the 1950s in Europe. Notably, in the beginning, mass tourism was still mainly a domestic phenomenon directed towards popular

seaside resorts and accelerated by the invention of the motor car and its increasing availability to growing numbers of population (Ryan 2003). However, package tourism, as it is understood today, developed later in the 1950s as Thomas Cook and other British tour operators began to offer relatively cheap package tours to Southern Europe (Honkanen 2004). This third phase of mass tourism in the 1950s and 1960s was the phase of internationalization, which continued in the fourth phase from the 1980s onwards, as mass tourism spread out to destinations all over the world (Shaw & Williams 1994).

The emergence of the package tourism industry was fundamentally influenced by the social, economic, political, cultural, and technological development in the Western societies after the Second World War. The increasing economic affluence, the growing amount of leisure time, and the technological innovations were significant contributors, but the democratization of travel was largely due to the application of Fordist principles to the delivery of tourism (Ryan 2003; Kostiaainen et al. 2004; Robinson & Novelli 2005).

In Finland, Suntours Ltd, founded in 1963, was the first tour operator offering package tours to mass markets. Soon, however, there were both international (e.g. Vingresor, Tjäreborg, and Spies) and domestic (e.g. Lomamatkat, Kymppimatkat, and Hasse) tour operators competing for the growing package tourism market. The first occasional charter flights from Finland were conducted by Aero Oy (nowadays Finnair) and Karhumäki Airways in the beginning of the 1950s, when the charter flight and tour operating market slowly started to develop. Suntours offered a surprisingly vast selection of vacation destinations already in 1963, including for instance cruises to Gotland in Sweden, relaxation in Bornholm, Denmark, roundtrips in Germany, city trips to Vienna, Rome, Athens, and Paris, and even beach vacations to Rhodes. In the following decade, even more distant destinations were offered as Kenya was added to the destinations in 1973 and Thailand in 1974. In the 1960s, the market share of Suntours was as high as 75% but it decreased to only 20% due to the fierce competition in the beginning of the 1970s, when Keihäsmatkat became the largest tour operator in Finland. Kalevi Keihänen founded the company in 1965 and was a significant contributor to the development of the Finnish package tourism industry, as he targeted his tours to the lower middle class and truly made ordinary Finns accustomed to vacations abroad. However, due to the overcapacity of aircrafts and the increasing oil prices both Keihäsmatkat and its airline Spearair went bankrupt in 1974. (Marttinen, Matekovits & Selänniemi 2003; Kostiaainen et al. 2004.)

Figure 1 illustrates the development of the Finnish package tourism market measured by the amount of air-based leisure package tours (tailored package tours excluded) as recorded by the Association of Finnish Travel Agents (AFTA 2009). In 1965, nearly 17,000 air-based package tours were conducted

and the market expanded rapidly reaching 100,000 tours in just five years. The steady growth continued until the second oil crisis in the end of the 1970s, which decreased the amount of tours from 330,000 in 1978 to just 245,000 in 1979. However, growth was soon restored and five years later, the records were broken year after year. In 1987, over 700,000 package tours were conducted, two years later the amount exceeded one million, and finally the world record in air-based package tours per capita was reached in 1990 with nearly 1.2 million tours. In the beginning of the 1990s, Finland was headed for a severe recession, which caused a steep downturn in package tourism, resulting in only 550,000 tours in 1993. After the recession, an upturn followed slowly but surely. At the beginning of the new millennium, the number was again close to a million tours, where it has remained ever since, with only minor fluctuations. (Marttinen et al. 2003; AFTA 2009; 2012.)

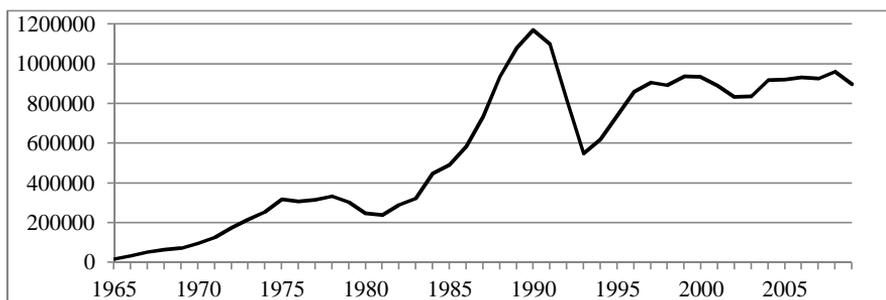


Figure 1 Development of the Finnish package tourism market (AFTA 2009)

The popularity of package tourism among Northern Europeans is often explained by climatic factors (e.g. Prebensen, Skallerud & Chen 2010). Prebensen (2005) used the term “*Nordic Sun-Birds*” to illustrate the phenomenon but noted that there were clear motivational differences among Norwegian package tourists. Cultural, economic, and environmental factors have encouraged the standardization and industrialization of the package tourism market in Northern Europe (Cooper, Fletcher, Gilbert, Shepherd & Wanhill 1998; Casarin 2001). In addition, package tours meet customer needs in terms of safety and simplicity regarding booking a trip and traveling (Prebensen 2005). Evidently, the popularity of package tours is also related to the lower risk level (Cavlek 2002; Lepp & Gibson 2008) as tourists can rely on the help and assistance of tour operators in case something goes wrong (Larsson Mossberg 1995; Yale 1995; Hanefors & Larsson Mossberg 1999; Bowie & Chang 2005).

1.2 The desire for experiences

Experiences are the main resource of tourism (Tung & Ritchie 2011; Walls, Okumus, Wang & Kwun 2011) and the “*raison d’être*” of the whole tourism industry (Pizam 2010). The experiences that tourism organizations seek to offer range from mundane everyday experiences to emotional and extraordinary peak experiences (Quan & Wang 2004; Morgan, Lugosi & Ritchie 2010; Walls et al. 2011). In both cases, experience management is seen as a solution for the problem of remaining competitive in a market where global competition and Internet technology have made products and services into commodities bought and sold on price alone (Morgan et al. 2010; cf. Schmitt 1999; 2003).

The tourism and leisure industries, in which sectors such as recreation, hospitality, entertainment, events, and sport are included, exist in order to provide consumers with various experiences (Morgan et al. 2010). Tourism is often mentioned as a model example of the dynamics of the current economy – whether it is called the experience society (Schulze 1997), the entertainment economy (Wolf 1999), the dream society (Jensen 1999), or the experience economy (Pine & Gilmore 1999) – in which pursuing experiences has become self-evident (Lüthje 2005; Sundbo & Darmer 2008). With the term experience economy, Pine and Gilmore (1999) referred to the natural progression of economic value from commodities to goods to services and finally to experiences that are characterized by a differentiated competitive position, premium pricing, and a high relevance to consumers. In the experience economy, consumers are looking for more than mere products and services; they want to acquire an interesting life, to experience new places, be entertained, and learn in an enjoyable way (Sundbo & Darmer 2008). Tourism experiences differ from ordinary services when it comes to a simple yet often ignored fundamental characteristic, i.e., the fact that: “*tourists travel because they want to, and not because they have to*” (Prebensen, Vittersø & Dahl 2013, 240).

The emergence of the experience economy has been fueled by the convergence of three major forces: the new technology, a more sophisticated, affluent, and demanding consumer base, and an escalating competitive intensity (Knutson, Beck, Kim & Cha 2007). According to estimates, the size of the experience economy in the Western countries is about 8–12% of the GNP (Sundbo & Darmer 2008). Measuring the size of the experience economy has proved to be challenging as, generally, only the sectors providing experiences as their core products are included in the calculations, while the sectors providing experiences as additions to core products are ignored (Saarinen 2002; Knutson & Beck 2003; Sundbo & Darmer 2008). Furthermore, the problem of measuring the experience economy reflects a more profound

challenge related to the empirical research on experiences, namely the lack of conceptual agreement on what actually is an experience (Saarinen 2002; Knutson & Beck 2003). Even though the significance of experiences is widely acknowledged within both the tourism industry and academia, there is no general consensus in the literature and the exact definition of an experience remains elusive (Jennings 2006; Neuhofer, Buhalis & Ladkin 2012).

In the current thesis, the definition by Tung and Ritchie (2011, 1369) is applied and a tourism experience² is understood as “*an individual’s subjective evaluation and undergoing of events related to tourism activities before, during, and after the trip*”. A tourism experience, such as a package tour, is practically everything that a tourist goes through during the vacation (Oh, Fiore & Jeoung 2007). Apart from being mundane or extraordinary (Walls et al. 2011), tourism experiences can also be behavioral or perceptual, cognitive or emotional, expressed or implied (Oh et al. 2007), good or bad, lasting or fleeting, and random phenomena or engineered perceptions (Carbone & Haeckel 1994). Furthermore, as Volo (2009, 122) has noted, the tourists are not fully aware of the way psychological processes give rise to, condition, or reinterpret experience, yet they can still recognize such events when they happen, sort them into good and bad, and store them into their memories. Consequently, the task of the tourism industry is to orchestrate the offerings that can create these memorable experiences to tourists. (Scott, Laws & Boksberger 2009; Volo 2009.)

Williams (2009) challenged the traditional view of the tourism experience (e.g. MacCannell 1973; Cohen 1979) as a distinct and bounded event that stands apart from the routines and the geographical spaces of every-day life. Thus, even though tourism experiences are seen as somewhat contrasting to daily experiences, they cannot consist of mere emotional or otherwise extraordinary events, but are bound to include also more ordinary daily occasions and routines which together form a complex entity (cf. Quang & Wang 2004).

Figure 2 illustrates the structure of the tourism experience as comprising a series of key phases and related processes (Williams 2009). The initial planning phase includes for example the selection of a destination, a mode of travel, and accommodation reflecting the motives and influenced by previous experiences, images and perceptions of places, as well as suggestions made by others. All tourism involves travel to the destination and eventually back home. Depending on the situation, traveling can be considered as a mean to an

² For consistency, the terms “tourism experience” (e.g. Nickerson 2006; Tung & Ritchie 2011) and “tourism industry” (e.g. Poon 1993; Buhalis 1998) are used throughout the study even though “tourist experience” (e.g. Ryan 1997a; 2002; Quan & Wang 2004; Komppula 2006; Mossberg 2007; Quinlan Cutler & Carmichael 2010) and “tourist industry” (e.g. Leiper 1979; Travis 1989) also frequently appear in literature.

end or as a central element of the tourism experience. The experience at the destination is the main component of the visit and typically includes various kinds of services and activities (e.g. sightseeing, leisure shopping, accommodation, and local travel) as well as varying levels of contact with the local population. In the recall phase, the experience is relived in conversations and memories, and by sharing photographs, videos, and souvenirs. This phase will also be a positive, negative, or mixed stimulus for the preliminary planning of the next visit, depending on the perceived levels of success or failure of the trip. (Williams 2009.)

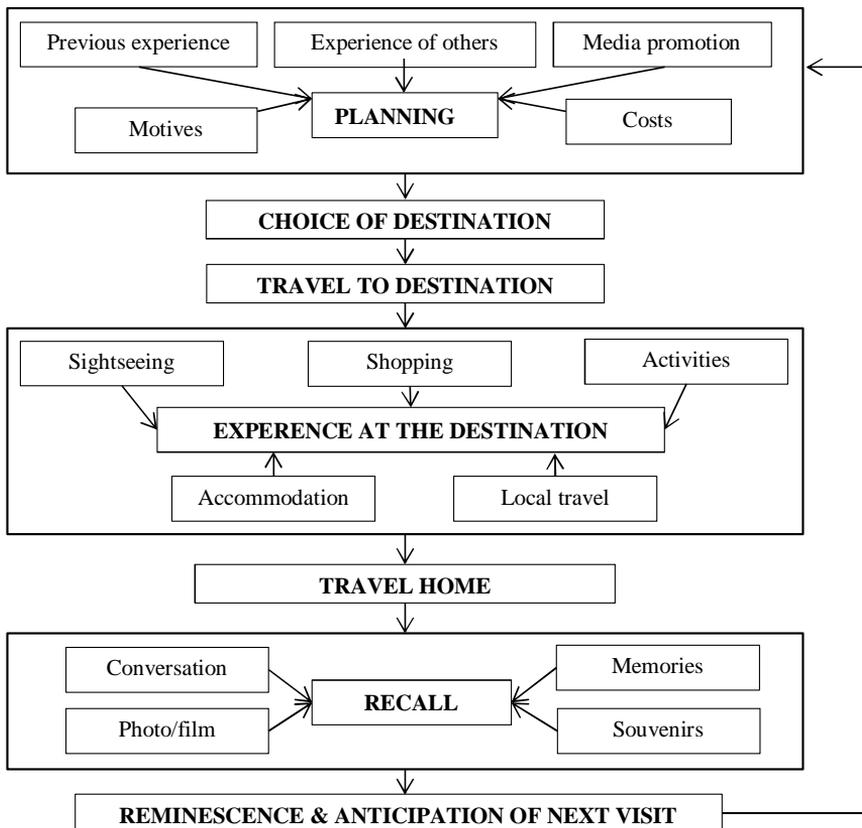


Figure 2 Structure of a tourism experience (Williams 2009)

As illustrated in Figure 2, a tourism experience includes various service experiences but also many non-commercial elements. “A *service experience*” refers to interactions between organizations, related systems and processes, service employees, and customers (Bitner, Faranda, Hubbert & Zeithaml 1997, 193) while non-commercial experiences emerge from interactions with for example the local population, other tourists, and the physical environment (cf.

Nickerson 2006). Carù and Cova (2003) have distinguished “*consumer experiences*” which clearly involve a product or service exchange from “*consumption experiences*” which are outside or beyond the market setting. For example a dinner party with friends is a communal consumption experience rather than a consumer experience even though it is linked to the marketplace where the food was purchased (Carù & Cova 2003).

The current thesis moves from the broad perspective of tourism experiences towards service or consumer experiences and more precisely defined service encounter experiences. The definition of “*consumer experience*” centers on the consumer and is often understood as the outcome of a service encounter (Knutson & Beck 2003; Björk & Sfantla 2009; Walls et al. 2011). For instance, Walls et al. (2011, 17) define a consumer experience as a “*multi-dimensional takeaway impression or outcome, based on the consumer’s willingness and capacity to be affected and influenced by physical and/or human interaction dimensions and formed by people’s encounters with products, services, and business influencing consumption values (emotive and cognitive), satisfaction, and repeat patronage*”. The term “*service encounter experience*” further highlights the significance of the service encounter, i.e., the exact moment of interaction between the customer and the firm (Shostack 1985; Bitner, Booms & Tetreault 1990).

Research on service encounters has traditionally concentrated on comparatively brief transactions (Bitner 1990) while less attention has been paid to temporally extended service encounters (Arnould & Price 1993). Tourism experiences are typical examples of extended service encounters as vacations usually last for example a weekend, a week, or even several weeks. This temporal dimension distinguishes tourism experiences from many other consumer experiences and, therefore, experience models that conceptualize brief transactions, may not be directly applicable to the context of tourism.

The increasing interest in experiential consumption has been well capitalized by consultants but also the academic interest in experiences has increased remarkably during the past few years (Björk & Sfantla 2009; Morgan et al. 2010). However, more research on experiential consumption within tourism is still needed (e.g. Knutson & Beck 2003; Oh et al. 2007; Volo 2009). The elusive nature of experiences requires conceptual research to further develop a theoretical understanding of the production and consumption of experiences, but also applied research is needed to overcome the practical challenges related to for example the marketing and commodification of experiences (Saarinen 2002; Tsiotsou & Ratten 2010).

1.3 Enabling and influencing experiences

Even though tour operators enable package tourism experiences by planning, bundling, and selling experience products (Bowie & Chang 2005; Budeanu 2005), they cannot guarantee that their package tours result in successful tourism experiences. Still, they have the opportunity to influence all the phases of the tourism experiences in order to trigger the experience formation. In the anticipation phase, the tour operators' marketing and sales efforts (e.g. brochures, Internet pages, employees of sales offices and call centers) create expectations. During the on-site activities the tourists' experiences are influenced by the accommodation and transportation service providers, which are chosen by the tour operator (Cooper et al. 1998). Furthermore, the tour leaders and guides represent the tour operator and try to ensure that the customers' vacations run smoothly. Thus, their actions have a clear impact on the tourists' perceptions of the whole tour (Cohen 1985; Larsson Mossberg 1995; Yale 1995). Finally, the travel to the destination and back home is influenced by the transportation services and employees of the airline companies, which of course may be owned by the tour operator as well (cf. Budeanu 2005).

Otto and Richie (1996) have argued that even though tourism experiences have clear functional components, such as accommodation and transportation services, the experiential benefits are also critical in the evaluation of tourism experiences, as the service encounter and pleasant physical environment often create opportunities for affective responses. Furthermore, as human interaction is an emotionally charged process, the extended interaction with a tour leader, tour guide, or other service provider also leads to experiential reactions (Otto & Richie 1996). In the context of extraordinary experiences, Arnould and Price (1993) have suggested that the service providers may orchestrate affective, narrative, and ritual content through the skills, engagement, emotions, and dramatic sense of their tour guides, whose task is to give their customers something they do not know how to ask for.

Research has demonstrated that besides mediating the tourism experiences (Cohen 1985; Jennings & Weiler 2006), the role of the tour leaders is especially important when something goes wrong during a package tour – when a tourist suddenly falls ill, is robbed, or faces service failures (Larsson Mossberg 1995; Yale 1995; Enoch 1996; Hanefors & Larsson Mossberg 1999; Bowie & Chang 2005). Therefore, in order to profoundly understand the role of the tour operator in influencing tourism experiences, also the negative incidents related to package tourism experiences need to be addressed.

Research on service failure and recovery is considered to be an evolving area of academic investigation due to its critical impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty (Swanson & Hsu 2009; Weber 2009). It is particularly

relevant for the tourism industry which is characterized by a high frequency of employee-consumer interaction (Bitner et al. 1990; Swanson & Hsu 2009). Service failures are inevitable and include for example the unavailability of services that have been promoted, disappointing physical environments, slow service, and employees who do not care about or are rude to the customers (Bowie & Buttle 2004). Service failures cause dissatisfaction (Kelley, Hoffman & Davis 1993), negative word-of-mouth behavior (Mattila 2001), customer defection (Keaveney 1995), switching the service provider, and seeking compensation through third parties (Bolfing 1989). Furthermore, service failures are found to increase costs and decrease employee performance and morale (Bitner, Booms & Mohr 1994; Swanson & Hsu 2009).

As service failures cannot be eliminated, organizations should understand the process of service recovery and have a service recovery strategy in order to establish procedures to handle failures and complaints effectively (Bowie & Buttle 2004; Schoefer & Ennew 2005). Chebat and Slusarczyk (2005) have argued that understanding how complaining customers are treated is an ethical question and a matter of profitable management, but still surprisingly little is known about the customers' actual behavioral and emotional responses to complaint handling and service recovery. A consistent and uniform finding of the previous service recovery research is, however, that the higher the level of recovery performance, the greater the post recovery satisfaction and loyalty (Davidow 2003a; McCollough 2009). Previous literature clearly indicates that frontline employees play a key role in the service failure and initial service recovery efforts (e.g. Karatepe 2006). Still, for example, Joireman, Grégoire, Devezer & Tripp (2013) request more studies focusing on the role of frontline employees and service environments in mediating the service failure and recovery situations.

1.4 Research gap

Previous research on consumer experiences consists of three broad research directions: i) creating a classification of experiences, ii) examining the causes of or explaining an experience, and iii) comparing the relationship between experiences and other constructs (Walls et al. 2011). Previous research on package tourism experiences, in turn, has concentrated on the role of the tour operator and tour leaders or guides in determining the quality of or satisfaction with the package tour (e.g. Quiroga 1990; Geva & Goldman 1991; Larsson Mossberg 1995; Wang, Hsieh & Huan 2000; Bowen 2001; 2002; Hudson, Hudson & Miller 2004; Zhang & Chow 2004; Bowie & Chang 2005; Wang, Hsieh, Chou & Lin 2007; Heung 2008; Neal & Gursoy 2008; Chang 2009;

Huang, Hsu & Chan 2010). By combining these research paradigms, two interesting research themes emerge.

The first is related to the role of different experience factors in the creation of successful tourism experiences. A vacation consists of various services and other elements that have an influence on the outcome and evaluation of the experience. As noted by Walls et al. (2011), there are various classifications and models of experiences that endeavor to uncover the elements and causes of experiences. In order to take one step further in understanding the nature of tourism experiences, empirical research is needed to verify which elements are meaningful to tourists and what components successful tourism experiences are actually constructed from. For instance, Knutson and Beck (2003) have noted that there is a need for closer investigation into how, and to what extent, various factors influence tourism experiences. Also Quan and Wang (2004) have stated that it is still somewhat unclear what the components that constitute the tourism experience per se are and how the significance of, for example, eating, sleeping, and transportation should be determined. Knutson and Beck (2003) accentuated the importance of empirical research in order to validate, refute, or modify the dimensions of an experience construct. In parallel to this, Tung and Ritchie (2011) later argued that more research must be conducted to uncover the specific elements that make certain experiences special, spectacular, and memorable.

The second theme is related to the role of tour operators in the creation of package tourism experiences. Previous research clearly demonstrates that satisfaction and dissatisfaction are the most common constructs used in the evaluation of package tourism experiences. For example, Huang et al. (2010, 29) suggest that *“as package tourists stay in the ‘bubble’ environment created by tour operators, their satisfaction with tour experience depends to a great extent on tour guiding and tour operator services”*.

Tourists do not, however, travel in order to achieve satisfaction with the tour operator but to pursue experiences (Quinlan Cutler & Carmichael 2010) – including both peak experiences and supporting consumer experiences – the content of which is dependent on the tourists’ motivation, expectations, and adaptability (Quang & Wang 2004). Therefore, satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the tour operator’s services may not be an adequate measure of successful tourism experiences. Various researchers (e.g. Oh et al. 2007; Neal & Gursoy 2008; Hosany & Gilbert 2010; Jennings 2010) have highlighted the significance and challenge of measuring experiences. Knutson and Beck (2003) have argued that in order to manage experiences, they should first be made measurable and have optimistically forecasted that one day experiences could be operationalized, managed, and measured in a similarly established way to service quality and customer satisfaction. Quinlan Cutler and Carmichael

(2010) have proposed that tourism experiences need further investigation, particularly into how experiences are influenced by i) physical and social settings, ii) product/service attributes; iii) whether satisfaction is an appropriate measurement of experience; and iv) the importance of internal and external factors in influencing tourism experiences. Furthermore, Walls et al. (2011) have stated that more research is needed to verify or falsify the general assumption that experience factors carry equal weight in experience formation, and to determine whether a weighting system could be used to measure the importance of the different factors involved in experience formation.

1.5 The aim of the study

Based on the identified research gaps, the aim of the thesis is **to create a deeper understanding of the factors that have an effect on package tourism experiences and consequently, to illustrate the role of tour operators and tour leaders in experience creation and management**. This is formulated into two research questions:

- 1. What is the role of different experience factors in the formation of tourism experiences?*
- 2. What is the role of tour operators and tour leaders in the creation of package tourism experiences?*

The research questions are addressed in four empirical studies, which approach tourism experiences from different perspectives (Table 1). The first study lays the foundations for the thesis by examining tourism experiences on a general level and focusing on the role of different experience factors and elements in the formation of tourism experiences. The remaining three studies concentrate on package tourism and examine the role of tour operators and tour leaders in creating and managing package tourism experiences. In these studies, research cooperation was conducted with Oy Aurinkomatkat – Suntours Ltd Ab which belongs to the Finnair Group and is the largest Finnish tour operator with about 300,000 customers, a total turnover of 245 million euros, and 280 employees of whom about 110 work abroad (Suntours 2012).

The first study subjects various models on the essence of experiences to empirical research by analyzing the narratives of successful tourism experiences in order to identify the experience elements that are significant to tourists. The second study focuses on the role of satisfaction with the elements of a package tour in creating successful tourism experiences by analyzing a large set of customer satisfaction data. The third study concentrates on service

failure and service recovery by analyzing written customer complaints in order to examine the role of tour leaders in service failure situations. Finally, in the fourth study, survey data is analyzed in order to compare how concurrent service recovery by the tour leaders versus subsequent service recovery by the customer service department of the tour operator influence customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Table 1 Research questions and themes

Research question	Context	Study	Theme	Focus on ...
1. What is the role of different experience factors in the formation of tourism experiences?	Tourism experiences in general	1	The essence of the experience	the different factors and elements of experiences and their importance in the formation of tourism experiences
2. What is the role of tour operators and tour leaders in the creation of package tourism experiences?	Package tourism experiences	2	Customer satisfaction, experienced value	the role of satisfaction with the elements of a package tour in the creation of successful tourism experiences
		3	Service failure and recovery	the role of tour leaders in service failure situations
		4	Service recovery, satisfaction, loyalty	the influence of concurrent versus subsequent service recovery on satisfaction and loyalty

1.6 Positioning the thesis

In the current thesis, tourism is viewed as a context rather than a discipline (cf. Ryan 1997b; Tribe 1997; 2000; Leiper 2000). It is a phenomenon that can be approached from the perspectives of various disciplines, which all have their own conceptual and theoretical research traditions. The current thesis belongs to the discipline of economic geography but, due to the multi-disciplinary nature of tourism research (e.g. Cooper et al. 1998; Kauppila 2004), it leans heavily also on sociology as well as marketing and management (Figure 3).

As a distinctively geographical phenomenon, tourism is inherently related to places, spaces, environments, landscapes, networks, and interactions. In geography, there are rich studies (e.g. Tuan 1977; 1989; Seamon 1979) on experiential features related to an individual's experiences of places, spaces, and landscapes – both pleasant and unpleasant – that constitute the basis of

geographical consciousness, i.e., the substance of the individual's involvement in the world (Li 2000). The discussions on for example embodiment (Crouch 2002), emplacement, and sense of place (Relph 1976; Tuan 1977) focus on physically, socially, and culturally embedded interrelationships between body, mind, and environment (Agapito, Mendes & Valle 2013). Experiences have been discussed also in relation to economic development (Lorentzen 2014), which is a typical research theme of economic and tourism geography (Kauppila 2004; Hall & Page 2009). For instance, Smidt-Jensen, Skytt and Winther (2009) have focused on the importance of experience-based activities to employment and local and regional development.



Figure 3 Experiences in geography, sociology, and marketing and management

The current thesis, however, applies a more business-oriented approach to tourism geography, according to which tourism experiences are considered an essential part of tourism-related patterns and flows which can be further extended to unraveling the complex international tourism system (Hall & Page 2009). The research on international tourism flows has created close connections between economic and tourism geography, international business, and marketing (Hall & Page 2009). In these discussions, tourism is embedded in the “*mobilities of commerce*” (Hall & Coles 2008) and included in research themes like the international trade in services, the internationalization of tourism businesses, place marketing and branding, and the experience economy (Hall & Page 2009). This thesis reflects a recent trend in tourism geography, i.e., the shift from traditional themes of geography to the research of various business-related issues (Coles & Hall 2006; Hall & Page 2009).

In the social sciences, the tourism experience is often “*purified*” as the peak experience (Quan & Wang 2004; Walls et al. 2011), a phenomenon which was debated already in the 1960s and 1970s by sociologists and psychologists such as Maslow (1964) and Csikszentmihalyi (1975). The tourism experience

literature also dates back to sociology and the early works of Boorstin (1964) and MacCannell (1973), who concentrated on travel motivation and authenticity, which still are focal themes in tourism sociology (Tung & Ritchie 2011; Uriely 2005; Walls et al. 2011). The current thesis discusses package tourist motivation but addresses authenticity only briefly as it is acknowledged that tourists do not necessarily pursue authenticity and can enjoy also inauthentic tourism experiences (Feifer 1985). Furthermore, due to the lack of empirical evidence, the discussion on the role of authenticity in tourism experiences has remained at the level of speculation (Honkanen 2004). Authenticity is considered relevant to the tourism experience only if it is what the tourists are actually seeking and is, therefore, linked to the evaluation of experiences through satisfaction (Quinlan Cutler & Carmichael 2010).

The marketing and management literature tends to understand experiences as mere consumer experiences, which are examined in order to operationalize the findings and better understand the tourists as consumers (Quan & Wang 2004). In the last decades, customer experience has become a key concept in marketing management, consumer behavior, and services marketing and thus the underlying logic and managerial rationale for experience marketing is well established in the literature (Tynan & McKechnie 2009). The research has focused especially on the interaction between customers and companies (Scott et al. 2009). For example, Pine and Gilmore (1999) have viewed experiences as series of memorable events that a company stages in order to engage consumers in a personal way while Carù and Cova (2007) have outlined a continuum based on the role of consumers and companies in creating experiences. In recent debates, however, the traditional experience economy has increasingly been replaced by the notion of “*experience co-creation*” and the emphasis has shifted from staging or producing experiences (e.g. Pine & Gilmore 1999) to creating and co-creating experiences (e.g. Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2003; 2004; Vargo & Lusch 2004), which recognize the active role of consumers in determining their own experiences in a quest for personal growth and value (Neuhofer et al. 2012). According to some researchers, the tourism industry is only beginning to explore co-creation (Binkhorst & Den Dekker 2009) while others find that the tourism industry is centered on creating experiences (Shaw, Bailey & Williams 2011) and, therefore, the significant role of tourists is apparent even if the term co-creation would not be used.

The current thesis bases its premises on services marketing (see Fisk, Brown & Bitner 1993) and addresses its traditional themes such as service encounters and experiences, service quality, customer satisfaction, and service recovery. This stream of literature is well adopted in the research on tourism marketing. Li and Petrick (2008) have discussed the current marketing paradigms and stated that tourism marketing scholars have most strongly embraced

relationship marketing in their conceptualization and research practices, but the research related to the network approach and the service-dominant logic has also been initiated.

The four empirical studies of the thesis (reported in Articles 1–4) can be positioned in the experience model of Knutson and Beck (2003) in order to demonstrate how they are connected to previous research, how they relate to each other, and which scientific discussion they contribute to (Figure 4). Based on a review of nearly 600 research articles, Knutson and Beck (2003) summarized and evidently also generalized the connections, correlations, and relationships among the constructs of experience, service quality, satisfaction, and value. The left side of the model illustrates the pre-experience phase while the heart of the model is the real-time experience that includes all encounters with the organization throughout the journey. The right side, in turn, represents the post-experience evaluation phase including personal perceptions, value, and satisfaction, as well as customer complaints and resolutions. Through banked memories the model leads to loyalty, which is of interest to the service providers as it can be directly linked to profitability (Kumar, Dalla Pozza & Ganesh 2013). However, in the current thesis, the model is not tested holistically, which according to Knutson and Beck (2003) would be its eventual goal.

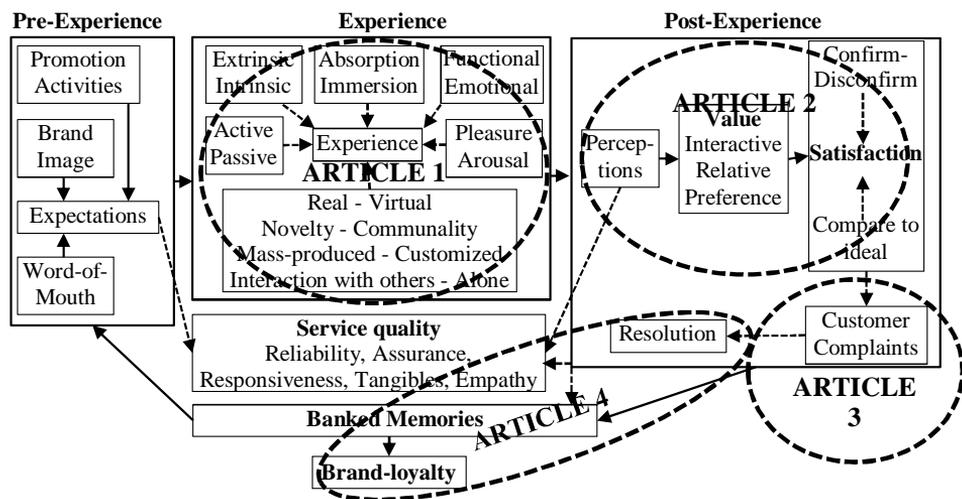


Figure 4 The four empirical studies positioned on the experience model by Knutson and Beck (2003)

The First article contributes to the understanding of the essence of the tourism experiences and the behavior of tourists by shedding light on what tourists actually gain from tourism. This enables tourism industry to recognize

and control the elements that are significant to tourists (cf. Lüthje 2001). The remaining three articles center on the post-experience phase of package tourism experiences. The second article contributes to the literature on experience creation and management as well as the discussions on the evaluation of tourism experiences. The third and fourth article, in turn, contribute to service failure and service recovery research, especially to the discussions on the role of frontline employees in mediating recovery satisfaction and loyalty. Furthermore, the current thesis enhances the understanding of the use of different methodologies and forms of customer information in developing the processes of tour operators and their package tourism offerings.

1.7 The structure of the thesis

The current thesis comprises of two parts: the introductory essay and four distinct research articles. Next, Chapter 2 presents the research approach, the methodological choices, and the methods of data collection and analysis.

Chapter 3 concentrates on the role of different experience factors in the formation of tourism experiences. The research on experiences is presented and the essence of experiences discussed through various experience models, after which the results of Article 1 (Räikkönen 2007) follow.

In Chapter 4, package tourism is viewed as a part of the international tourism system and package tourist motivation is discussed. Then, tour operating is addressed by defining the central concepts, the fundamental activities of tour operators, and the components of a package tour.

Chapter 5 focuses on the role of tour operators and tour leaders in the creation and management of package tourism experiences. The first part centers on managing and measuring the tourism experiences by discussing how prerequisites for experiences are created and how the tour leaders mediate experiences. Then the process of experience creation is addressed and pursuing loyalty through service quality, customer satisfaction, and value discussed, after which the results of Article 2 (Räikkönen & Honkanen 2013) follow. Second part, in turn, focuses on the role of tour operators in managing negative incidents that deteriorate tourism experiences. Service failure and recovery are defined and the results of Article 3 (Cortez Monto & Räikkönen 2010) presented. Then, service recovery management is discussed and the results of Article 4 (Räikkönen & Honkanen, submitted) presented.

Finally, Chapter 6 presents the conclusions and discussion in which the key empirical findings, the theoretical contribution, the managerial implications, and the limitations and paths for future research are addressed.

2 FOUR EMPIRICAL STUDIES ON TOURISM EXPERIENCES

2.1 The research approach and methodological choices

At a broad level, tourism research can be divided into two perspectives: i) tourism as a business or industry, and ii) tourism as a social or cultural phenomenon (Ritchie, Burns & Palmer 2005; cf. Quan & Wang 2004). This division is related to the trend of challenging dominant discourses and the emergence of critical dialogues (Atelejevic, Pritchard & Morgan 2007), to the wider “*hard*” science versus “*soft*” science dichotomy and, furthermore, to the constant tension between academic and industry-based tourism research (Jenkins 1999; Cooper 2003). The first perspective considers tourism first and foremost as a business or an industry to be predicted, managed, and controlled. Research is conducted mainly according to the positivist paradigm using quantitative methods and data such as statistics and satisfaction surveys (Cooper 2003; Jennings 2005). The objective of research is to report the value of tourism to particular economies, to improve tourism experiences, and to develop business practices in order to generate a more profitable industry (Fletcher 1989; Ritchie et al. 2005). The second perspective, in turn, views tourism as a social or cultural phenomenon capable of illuminating aspects of the modern condition (Cooper 2003). This more discursive, reflective, and reflexive approach relays mainly on phenomenology and qualitative methods in bringing respectability to tourism as a worthwhile subject of study, developing theories, and searching for deeper meanings for tourism in various societies (Jennings 2005; Ritchie et al. 2005).

The current thesis clearly approaches tourism from the perspective of business disciplines and employs a mainly quantitative methodology even though also qualitative data is analyzed. Previous literature has emphasized that experience research should focus particularly on managerial implications and facilitate practitioners in their experience creation efforts within tourism businesses and destinations (Tung & Ritchie 2011; Walls et al. 2011). The practical nature of the current thesis is evident as throughout the entire process, research has been conducted in cooperation with Suntours Ltd.

The research process begun with the interest in the essence of the tourism experience and the aim to empirically examine what kind of things tourists mention and emphasize when they describe their positive tourism experiences

and draw conclusions on the significance of the different components that constitute tourism experiences. At the same time, in autumn 2006, the leading Finnish newspaper, Helsingin Sanomat, arranged a writing contest “*Did you have a great journey?*” in which the readers of the newspaper were asked to shortly describe their great tourism experiences. These narratives (n=153) formed the data utilized in Article 1 (Räikkönen 2007).

After this first step of the project, attention was drawn to package tourism experiences. This was due to the fact that the author of the current thesis was previously employed as a tour leader and destination manager at Suntours Ltd and, therefore, had the possibility to cooperate with the company in the primary and secondary data collection. Various customer data sets could be analyzed in order to contribute to the academic discourse on package tourism experiences and to enhance the company’s customer knowledge.

In the service and hospitality industries, customer comment cards are widely used in obtaining customer feedback (Wang et al. 2007). In the tour operating sector, customer research is still somewhat naïve in its methods and most tour operators rely on traditional customer feedback questionnaires at the end of the vacation (Hudson et al. 2004). Although such methods are important and provide information about the customers’ actual vacation experiences (Hudson et al. 2004), they have been widely criticized for providing only a superficial understanding of the issue (Bowen 2002). Furthermore, they have certain limitations such as shortcomings in questionnaire design and possible tour leader interference (Wang et al. 2007).

Customer information can be collected with solicited (active) tools such as customer satisfaction surveys and unsolicited (passive) feedback mechanisms through complaints, compliments, and suggestions which rely on the customers’ own willingness to report their experiences (Wirtz & Lee 2003; Mattila & Wirtz 2004; Wirtz, Tambyah & Mattila 2010). In the current thesis, both solicited and unsolicited customer data of Suntours were used.

The author had become familiar with the customer satisfaction data of Suntours during the two year employment period with the company but was keen on examining how the use of customer satisfaction information could further enhance the understanding on package tourists and package tourism experiences. The author was given access to Suntours’ customer satisfaction data (n=38153) from summer season of 2005 which formed the data for Article 2 (Räikkönen & Honkanen 2013). Furthermore, the author and Suntours had a shared interest in examining also the negative incidents that deteriorate package tourism experiences, and therefore, additional customer data was needed. First, the researcher was given access to qualitative data in the form of written customer complaints (n=84) which were filed to Suntours by customers of one its destinations in the winter season of 2006–2007. A

broad analysis of these customer complaints was conducted as a part of Rosa Cortez Monto's master's thesis (Cortez Monto 2008), and further developed into Article 3 (Cortez Monto & Rääkkönen 2010), focusing especially on the role of tour leaders in customer complaints. Service recovery was further examined with a quantitative approach in order to examine the recovery satisfaction of customers and their perceptions of the service recovery efforts of tour leaders in vacation destination versus the customer service department of the company. An online survey was designed and data (n=304) was collected from customers who had complained to the company about some aspect of their package tour in the winter season of 2006–2007. A part of this survey data (n=220) was analyzed in Article 4 (Rääkkönen & Honkanen, submitted).

In practically oriented quantitative business research, the explicit discussion on philosophical viewpoints is often ignored and assumed to be self-evident (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008). The foundations of the current thesis lie on the assumptions of positivism, which has traditionally been the mainstream philosophical position of business studies (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008) and is still dominant also in tourism research, even though interpretive research is becoming increasingly common (Uriely 2005; Veal 2011). The current thesis is, however, characterized by the contradiction of trying to generalize a phenomenon as subjective and contextual as tourism experiences. The challenge is evidently to manage this contradiction in a way that results in more than caricatured generalizations or mere descriptions of single experiences.

The diversity of data sets and methods of analysis pushes the borders of positivism towards a more interpretive approach. The mixed methods approach can be seen as offering a third paradigm for social research through the way it combines quantitative and qualitative methodologies on the basis of pragmatism and a practice-driven need to mix methods (Descombe 2008). In tourism research, combining research methods seems to be a common strategy used to enhance the research findings by maximizing the strengths and minimizing the weaknesses of different methodologies (Finn, Elliott-White & Walton 2000).

As summarized in Table 2, the four empirical studies are based on qualitative and quantitative data sets. In social science and business research, the qualitative approach is often considered as the first phase of study which is then followed by a quantitative phase (Silverman 2001; Ghauri & Grønhaug 2005; Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008). This strategy was followed also in the current thesis as the qualitative studies were conducted prior to the quantitative studies in order to first gain a profound understanding of the essence of tourism experiences in general (Article 1) and of the role of tour leaders in service failure situations (Article 3). The quantitative studies, in turn, were

conducted in order to test hypotheses and generalize the findings (Article 2 and 4).

Table 2 Summary of the four empirical studies of the thesis

	<i>Article 1</i>	<i>Article 2</i>	<i>Article 3</i>	<i>Article 4</i>
Title	What are the components that constitute quality tourism experiences? (Matkalla koettuja elämyksiä ja elettyjä kokemuksia – Millainen on hyvä matkailukokemus?)	Does satisfaction with package tours lead to successful vacation experiences?	Tour leaders in customer complaints	Concurrent versus subsequent service recovery in package tourism – Implications on satisfaction and loyalty
Authors	Juulia Räikkönen	Juulia Räikkönen, Antti Honkanen	Rosa Cortez Monto, Juulia Räikkönen	Juulia Räikkönen, Antti Honkanen
Forum	The Finnish Journal of Tourism Research – Matkailututkimus	Journal of Destination Marketing & Management	1 st International Research Forum on Guided Tours – Proceedings	Submitted to a journal
Year	2007	2013	2010	submitted
Research question	What are the components that constitute quality tourism experiences?	How does satisfaction with the elements of a package tour affect the success of vacation experiences?	How do customers perceive the role of tour leaders in service failure and recovery situations?	How does concurrent versus subsequent service recovery influence recovery satisfaction and loyalty?
Data	Qualitative, Secondary, Short narratives of great journeys (Helsingin Sanomat, n=153)	Quantitative, Secondary, Customer satisfaction survey (Suntours Ltd, n=38153)	Qualitative, Secondary, Written customer complaints (Suntours Ltd, n=84)	Quantitative, Primary, Online survey (Suntours Ltd, n=220)
Methods of analyses	Analysis of narratives, Content analysis	Principal components/Regression analysis	Critical incidents technique, Content analysis	Exploratory/Confirmatory factor analysis, Path analysis

The different data sets can be discussed also in terms of primary and secondary data. In Article 4, the online survey data was primary, i.e., collected specifically for the purposes of the research project, while the rest of the

articles were based on secondary data, i.e., data not designed or collected by the researcher. Veal (2011) identified different types of secondary data sources which are typically used in tourism research: administrative/management data, national leisure participation survey, tourism surveys, economic surveys, the census of population, documentary sources, and opportunism. From these, the narratives of great journeys represent documentary data while customer satisfaction data and customer complaints evidently belong to administrative/management data sources. Both primary and secondary data sources have their advantages and shortcomings (cf. Veal 2011) and also in this process, the primary data collection required more time, money, and effort but the researcher was able to influence the research design, whereas the secondary data was instantly available but caused various challenges and limitations in the analysis phase as it was designed for other purposes

It needs to be noted that the data sets were collected in 2005–2007 but the articles were written in 2007–2014. This illustrates the difference between academic and industry-based practitioner research (see Jenkins 1999). Suntours Ltd was provided with distinct research reports shortly after the data collection and analysis. Academic research, however, obviously requires a different kind of knowledge, which is based on previous research and more sophisticated methods of analyses, which need to be learned and assimilated. In addition, the review and publication process is often time-consuming and may last for months, sometimes even years. Furthermore, the research process was interrupted several times due to, e.g. maternity leaves. This has caused limitations for the thesis as in the current world major changes take place quite rapidly. Most significantly, the Internet has dramatically changed the market conditions of tourism organizations by supporting interactivity, and reengineering the process of developing, managing, and marketing tourism products and destinations (Buhalis & Law 2008). For example the ever-increasing use of information and communication technologies now impacts every phase of the experience (Neuhofer et al. 2012). This needs to be considered when the results of the thesis are evaluated.

In Table 2, also the publication forum and authors are listed. In Article 1, the researcher is the sole author while Articles 2–4 are co-authored. In Article 2 and Article 4, the researcher is the corresponding author but the second author has considerably assisted in the analyses and the composition of the manuscripts. In Article 3, the researcher is the second author and has contributed to the framing and composition of the article but the analysis was conducted by the corresponding author.

2.2 Data collection and methods of analysis

2.2.1 *Analyzing narratives of tourism experiences*

In Article 1, the aim was to specify what components constitute great tourism experiences by analyzing what kind of things tourists mention and emphasize when they describe positive tourism experiences. The data consisted of 153 short narratives which competed in the “*Did you have a great journey*³?” writing contest arranged by Helsingin Sanomat in the autumn of 2006. The readers were asked to describe their tourism experiences with one hundred words by answering the following questions: *Did you have a great journey? Why was it great? Was it great because of the weather, a successful destination choice, or some particular event or occasion?* The writing contest could be entered through email or letter (78 narratives) or directly on the Internet forum (75 narratives), where all the narratives were published after the participation deadline had expired (Helsingin Sanomat 2006a; 2006b).

The narratives that entered the competition through the Internet forum were on average slightly shorter (93 words) than narratives that were sent via email or letter (113 words). Due to the secondary nature of the data, the background information of respondents was very limited. Out of the respondents, 86 were female, 30 were male, and 37 used a pseudonym which did not allow for an identification of their gender. The data was rich in relation to the different types of tourists including, individual but also package tourists and tourists traveling alone but more frequently with their spouse, friends, or family.

It needs to be noted that the data consisted of stories told about tourism experiences rather than the actual experiences. As the tourists “*narrate their identities*” (Elsrud 2001) through the stories, they also have the opportunity to select, exaggerate, and embellish the actual events and feelings. Nevertheless, a narrative is a common way of structuring a series of events and offers a framework in which experiences can be organized and made comprehensible and memorable. Furthermore, the stories construct the reality and existence of a tourist whether they are real or not. (Lüthje 2001.)

Narrative inquiry refers to a subset of qualitative research designs in which stories are used to describe human action (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008). There are two kinds of narrative inquiry: *analysis of narratives*, which moves from stories to common elements, and *narrative analysis*, which moves from elements to stories (Polkinghorne 1995). This study employed the former, the analysis of narratives, in which the stories are analyzed with paradigmatic

³ In Finnish “*Oliko hyvä matka?*” the exact translation of which would be something like “*Did you have a good journey?*” In English, however, this would give a too bland impression and, therefore, the term “*great journey*” is deliberately used.

processes resulting in either descriptions of themes that hold across the stories or in taxonomies of types of stories, characters, or settings. This method should not be mixed with the narrative analysis in which the researcher collects descriptions of events and synthesizes or configures them by means of a plot into a story (Polkinghorne 1995).

In the analysis of narratives, a traditional content analysis referring to the interpretation of the content of published or unpublished texts (Veal 2011) was employed. It is an observational research method for a systematic evaluation of the actual or symbolic content of all forms of recorded communication (Hall & Valentin 2005) and it is situated at the crossroads of qualitative and quantitative methods by allowing a quantitative analysis of qualitative data (Kondracki, Wellman & Amundson 2002). In this study, the qualitative data was analyzed mainly deductively, as the existing models of the contents and influences on tourism experiences were subjected to empirical research. In other words, the themes used in the coding process were derived mainly from previous models on tourism and consumer experiences and, as a result, the importance of the different characters of experiences was evaluated based on their frequency in the narratives. However, content analysis was used also inductively when peak experiences were identified from the data without reference to any previous model.

In the analysis, NVivo, one of the most widely used computer-aided data analysis software packages for qualitative research (Veal 2011), was used to index and coordinate the content analysis. Even though NVivo significantly facilitates the shaping and understanding of the data and also assists in the developing and testing of theoretical assumptions (Veal 2011), it does not eliminate the main drawback of the content analysis, i.e., the potential influence of the researcher. Therefore, the selection criteria and the interpretive skills of the researcher still remain the most significant factors for the validity and reliability of the analysis (Hall & Valentin 2005).

2.2.2 Multivariate analysis of customer satisfaction data

In Article 2, a large set of customer satisfaction data of Suntours was analyzed with statistical analyses in order to examine how the customer satisfaction with the different elements of a package tour affects the success of a tourism experience. The data was collected through a self-administrated survey questionnaire (38,153 respondents) from the customers of Suntours in the summer season of 2005 (167,928 customers). The questionnaires were distributed to the customers at the end of the vacation by the tour leaders handed out to all customers who were willing to accept them, preferably at

least one questionnaire per hotel room. This caused a limitation for the study as tourism experiences may not be equally pleasant for all family members (Larson, Gillman & Richards 1997; Shaw & Dawson 2001; Backer & Schänzel 2012) and also couples have their distinct experiences (Selännemi 2002). Survey participation was encouraged by giving away two gift vouchers worth 200 euro to two random respondents every month. Due to the lack of the exact number of distributed questionnaires, the response rate (23%) was calculated by the total number of customers.

As the questionnaire was not designed for academic research, various limitations needed to be considered in relation to the questionnaire design, operationalization, and the use of single-item scales. The questionnaire began with basic demographic questions and then concentrated on the success of the vacation experience and respondents' satisfaction with the package tour. Some questions, such as satisfaction with the children's club, only related to particular customers and were, thus, left out of the analysis. The questionnaire ended with questions about the respondent's future behavior such as recommendations and future vacation interests. The attributes were mainly rated with a five-point Likert scale (1=poor, 5=very good), which is considered suitable for evaluating tourism experiences as it provides an effective measure for consumer attitudes, and is easy to construct and manage (Yuksel 2001; Hudson et al. 2004).

The operationalization caused some challenges even though the questionnaire design shared common ground with questionnaires used in similar academic studies (e.g. Hudson & Shephard 1998; Hudson et al. 2004; Andriotis, Agiomirgianakis & Mihiotis 2008; Neal & Gursoy 2008). In line with the previous literature, the study employed the SERVPERF approach, i.e., instead of measuring expectations and performance like the SERVQUAL (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry 1985) does, it measured performance only (Cronin & Taylor 1994) and examined the attributes reflecting the various aspects of experiences in different stages of interaction between the tourism industry and the tourists (cf. Hudson et al. 2004; Neal & Gursoy 2008). Furthermore, as is typical for service companies, some attributes, such as the success of the vacation, were measured with a single-item scale. It is acknowledged that the use of multi-item measures is highly recommended in marketing research (Churchill 1979), but recent research (Berqvist & Rossiter 2007) has also suggested that single-item marketing construct variables can achieve equal predictive validity to multi-item measures.

The data was subjected to a statistical analysis, which has been an essential tool for social science researchers for more than a century. The number of applications of statistical methods has expanded dramatically with the advent of computer hardware and software, allowing the use of sophisticated multi-

variate data analysis methods, which are needed to comprehend more complex relationships between different attributes. The statistical methods traditionally used by social scientists include for example multiple regression, logistic regression, and analysis of variance, but also techniques such as exploratory factor analysis, cluster analysis, and multidimensional scaling. (Hair, Hult, Ringle & Sarstedt 2014.)

The analysis was a two-phase process. First, a principal components analysis was conducted in order to identify the components of a package tour. Factor analysis, including both principal components analysis and common factor analysis, is a statistical approach which is used to analyze interrelationships among a large number of variables and to explain these variables in terms of their common underlying dimensions. The objective is to find a way of condensing the information contained in a number of original variables into a smaller set of variates with minimal loss of information (Tabachnick & Fidell 2001; Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson 2006). As a result, six clear components were identified and named as destination services, flight services, environment, accommodation services, pre-tour services, and airport services. Because the relationship between the dimensions of the package tour and the perceived success of the tourism experience was to be examined, the component points were analyzed in relation to the question “*How successful was your Suntour as a whole?*” A multiple regression analysis, which is one of the most popular methods in analyzing the relationships between a single continuous dependent variable and several continuous independent variables, was conducted to predict the changes in the dependent variable in response to changes in the independent variables (Hair et al. 2006).

2.2.3 *Customer complaints and the critical incidents technique*

The strategy in Article 3 was similar to that of Article 1 as the qualitative data was analyzed with content analysis and NVivo was used to facilitate the analysis. The data consisted of written customer complaints (n=84) filed by the customers that had visited one of Suntours destinations in the winter season of 2006–2007. The complaints were analyzed in order to examine service failures in package tourism and especially the role of tour leaders in the initial service recovery. Due to the confidential nature of the complaints, all demographic information of the respondents was removed before the material was handed over to the researchers and, therefore, the data was not analyzed with respect to socio-demographic factors. The complaints were rich in content and their form varied from a few lines sent over the Internet to hand-written letters.

In the analysis, the critical incident technique was used to identify the interaction between the customer and the tour leader. The critical incident technique was first introduced by Flanagan (1954), who described it as a set of procedures for collecting direct observations of human behavior in order to facilitate their potential usefulness in solving practical problems and to develop broad psychological principles. It has become a common tool in service research for reflecting customer-perceived quality and customer dis/satisfaction based on positive and negative critical incidents (Edwardsson & Roos 2001). In the service quality and management literature critical incidents are defined as interaction incidents, which the customer perceives or remembers as unusually positive/negative and tells them as stories (Flanagan 1954; Bitner 1990; Edwardsson & Roos 2001). Critical incidents can be collected with various methods (Edwardsson 1992) and typically researchers have focused on examining the most frequent service-quality dimensions by using traditional content analysis (Edwardsson & Roos 2001).

The criterion for identification of the critical incidents was adopted from Bitner et al. (1990) and each incident needed to: i) involve interaction between the customer and the employee of the company (tour leader), ii) be very dissatisfying from the customer's point of view, iii) be a discrete episode, and iv) contain sufficient detail for the researcher to be able to visualize it. The complaints covered all aspects of the packaged tour, but, in order to examine the role of tour leaders in service failures, only incidents in which tour leaders were mentioned were included in the analysis. A careful classification produced 56 critical incidents containing descriptions of tour leaders' actions in service failure situations. The tour leaders referred to the employed tour leaders of Suntours working at the destination and, therefore, for example sales personnel of travel agencies, flight attendants, and other pre- or post-tour personnel were excluded from the analysis. Customers do not usually complain in writing unless the incident has been critical, and so the mere fact that the complaints were given in written form confirms the dissatisfying nature of the incidents. Furthermore, due to the discrete nature of the incidents, a single complaint could contain more than one critical incident.

In the analysis, the incidents were grouped according to the type of tour leaders' actions. The study employed a deductive approach to content analysis as the coding followed the categorization of Bitner et al. (1990) with slight modifications. All incidents were grouped into one of the three main categories which were: i) employee response to service delivery system failure, ii) employee response to customer needs and requests, and iii) unprompted and unsolicited employee actions. An independent but informed associate was also asked to read through and verify the results of the categorization.

2.2.4 *Structural equation modelling and path analysis*

The multivariate statistical analyses used in Article 2 are considered first-generation techniques (Fornell 1982; 1987). For the past 20 years, researchers have increasingly turned to second-generation techniques, i.e., structural equation modeling, in order to overcome the weaknesses of the first-generation techniques (Hair et al. 2014) such as the exploratory and descriptive nature of analysis and the incapability of assessing measurement error (Byrne 2012). Structural equation modeling takes a confirmatory approach to the analysis and the hypothesized model can be tested statistically in a simultaneous analysis of the entire system of variables to determine the extent to which it is consistent with the data. If the goodness-of-fit is adequate, the model argues for the plausibility of postulated relations among the variables; if it is inadequate, the tenability of such relations is rejected. (Byrne 2012.)

In Article 4, a path analysis (a subset of structural equation modeling) was used to analyze package tourists' perceptions of the service recovery efforts of the tour operator (concurrent service recovery in the vacation destination versus subsequent service recovery after the vacation) in order to test the predicted relationships between service recovery efforts, recovery satisfaction, and loyalty which was divided into word-of-mouth behavior and repurchase intention.

The data of the study consisted of an online survey sent to those customers of Suntours who had filed a written complaint to the company in the winter season of 2006–2007 and included a valid email address. The survey was carried out in November 2007 so the service failure had occurred from six to twelve months earlier depending on the respondent. In the winter season 2006–2007, Suntours received a total of 1,021 customer complaints. The survey was sent to all 456 valid email address included in the complaints and 304 responses were received. The response rate of 67% was achieved by offering a gift certificate worth 200 euros to one randomly selected respondent and by sending a reminder email. The high response rate indicated that the complainers were willing to share their opinions about the service recovery efforts of the company. For the purposes of Article 4, only those customers who complained both concurrently to tour leaders in vacation destination and subsequently, after the vacation, were included in the analysis (n=220).

The survey design was based on various studies on service failure, service recovery, and customer complaints and the questions were related to the causes of the service failure, their opinions on the service recovery efforts of the employees both in the vacation destination and afterwards in the customer service department, the post complaint consumer behavior, and the attitudes towards the company. The questionnaire mainly consisted of multiple-choice

questions but also some open-ended questions were included. Concurrent and subsequent service recovery, satisfaction, and loyalty were measured with multiple-item scales, which were adopted from previous studies (Bolfing 1989; Blodgett, Granbois & Walters 1993; Blodgett, Hill & Tax 1997; Smith, Bolton & Wagner 1999; Davidow 2003b; Karatepe 2006) and slightly modified to suit the context of package tourism. In the measurement, a five-point Likert-scale was used and before analysis, the scales of three items were reversed and an imputation for missing values was conducted with The Expectation-Maximization (EM) technique.

The analysis consisted of different phases. As there were no previous studies in which concurrent and subsequent service recovery was compared, an exploratory factor analysis was first conducted in order to discover the underlying structure of the exogenous variables concerning concurrent and subsequent service recovery. After this, the constructs were validated with confirmatory factor analyses and the hypotheses derived from previous literature were tested by conducting a path analysis. The model was further modified based on the modification indices, and the final model was accepted due to adequate goodness-of-fit statistics.

3 THE ROLE OF DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE FACTORS IN THE FORMATION OF TOURISM EXPERIENCES

3.1 The research on consumer and tourism experiences

The theoretical origins of hedonic consumption (Hirschman & Holbrook 1982) and consumer experiences (Walls et al. 2011) can be traced back to several specialized subfields of behavioral sciences, including culture production systems within sociology (Hirsch 1972), esthetics within philosophy (Jaeger 1945; Kaplan 1987), affective response within psycholinguistics (Osgood, Suci & Tannenbaum 1957), and fantasy imagery and daydreaming studies within psychology (Singer 1966; Swanson 1978). Even though Solomon and Corbit (1974) presented the standard pattern of affective dynamics that shed light on the empirical commonalities in hedonic experiences (Walls et al. 2011), it was Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) who truly brought the experiential aspects of consumption to the study of marketing and consumer behavior by contrasting the prevailing information processing model with an experiential view that emphasizes the myriad ways in which consumers seek pleasure and enjoyment (Tung & Ritchie 2011; Alba & Williams 2013). During the past 30 years, hedonic consumption has gained broad recognition but the framing has been quite narrow, partly because many of its integral characteristics seem to be difficult to investigate within the traditional experimental paradigms (Alba & Williams 2013).

The tourism experience literature goes back to the early works of Boorstin (1964) and MacCannell (1973), who concentrated particularly on authenticity and presented descriptions of a general type of tourism experience (Uriely 2005; Tung & Ritchie 2011). Boorstin (1964) was concerned for the loss of real travel due to the growth of mass tourism, the commodification of culture, and the tourists' desires for pseudo-events. MacCannell (1973), again, argued that tourists search for authentic experiences but become victims of a staged authenticity due to the limited ability of the tourism industry to provide authentic experiences. In a critical response, Cohen (1979) stated their arguments were not universally valid because different tourists desire different kinds of experiences: recreational, diversionary, experiential, experimental, and existential. (Shaw & Williams 2004; Tung & Ritchie 2011; Walls et al. 2011.)

Since the early days of research on tourism experience, the Western societies have gone through enormous changes related to the post-industrial restructuring of the economy, society, and culture which has continuously challenged the distinctive nature of tourism (Williams 2009). According to one fundamental assumption, tourism was earlier generally considered as a form of escape, a quest to experience something different and find a kind of authenticity that could not be obtained in normal everyday routines (Shaw & Williams 2004; Williams 2009; cf. MacCannell 1973; 1976). Since the 1980s, however, a process called de-differentiation has blurred the formerly clear distinctions between work and leisure, vacation and daily activities, or home and away (Shaw & Williams 2004; Williams 2009). In our globalizing societies, what was once different is now familiar and many tourism-related experiences are reachable without the necessity to travel, as the experiences of foreign cultures, tastes, and fashions have become embedded into our everyday lives (Uriely 2005; Williams 2009). So, as Urry (2000) argued, in the excessively mobile societies of the 21st century, much of life is lived in a touristic manner, implying “*the end of tourism*” (Lash & Urry 1994; Urry 1995). But, tourism has not come to an end, in contrast, the desire to travel for leisure seems to be deeply ingrained in the post-industrial cultures (Burns & Novelli 2008). The postmodern view (Uriely 2005) has, however, influenced tourism research with new trends, such as the mobilities turn (e.g. Sheller & Urry 2004; Gale 2008), which recognizes the interconnected mobilities of a variety of individuals, including leisure shoppers, second home owners, business travelers, and numerous other people voluntarily on the move (Gale 2008).

In the academic marketing and management literature on consumer experiences, the work of Pine and Gilmore (1999) as well as Schmitt (1999) has been widely cited even though their ideas were primarily targeted to managers within various businesses. According to Pine and Gilmore (1999), each experience derives from the interaction between the staged event and the individual’s prior state of mind and being, while Schmitt (1999) saw an experience as a private, personal event that occurs in response to some stimulation and involves one’s entire being.

Experiential marketing constitutes one of the latest strategic developments in marketing and there is great potential in applying it to tourism marketing (Tsiotsou & Ratten 2010). Experiential marketing is based on the idea that consumers no longer simply buy commodities but, their consumption habits in fact express who they are and, thus, it is closely related to for example symbolic and ritual consumption (Kim, Sullivan & Forney 2007). Similar aspects are acknowledged also in the performance turn which was introduced by Ek, Larsen, Hornskov, and Mansfeldt (2008) and aims at developing

tourism theory in a new direction by challenging the tourist gaze and demanding metaphors that are based more on multisensory experiences (cf. Perkin & Thorns 2001). Furthermore, the performance turn considers tourism as intricately tied up with significant others, such as family members and friends (cf. Trauer & Ryan 2005), argues that tourists are not just passive spectators, but inscribe places with their own stories and follow their own paths, and highlights that tourists not only consume experiences but also co-produce, co-design, and co-exhibit them (Ek et al. 2008).

These ideas clearly converge with both sensory marketing (Hultén, Broweus & van Dijk 2009; Krishna 2010) and the service-dominant logic (Vargo & Lusch 2004). Sensory marketing claims that the human senses have been overlooked in mainstream marketing and argues that “*the supreme sensory experience*” contributes “*to an individual’s sensory experience through a synthesis of the five human senses*” (Hultén et al. 2009, 163). In tourism literature, however, the multisensory nature of experiences has been widely discussed. Even though the idea of the tourist gaze (Urry 1990) has dominated the tourism discourse for decades, for instance Ryan (1997a; 2002) challenged the dominance of the visual sense by arguing that the tourism experience is a multi-functional leisure activity which engages all senses. Also Urry (2001) himself “*embodied*” the gaze (cf. Jokinen & Veijola 1994) by stating that tourist bodies encounter other bodies, objects, and the physical world multi-sensuously.

The service-dominant logic, which has recently become an established paradigm in marketing (Cabiddu, Lui & Piccoli 2013), is based on the idea that the service encounter is a value exchange process between the customer and the service provider, both of whom are viewed as resource integrators (Vargo & Lusch 2004). In tourism, this experience value lies in being at the destination and taking part in producing and enjoying various experiences while there (Sandström, Edvardsson, Kristensson, & Magnusson 2008; Prebensen, Vittersø & Dahl 2013). In the tourism literature, the service-dominant logic has not gained as wide a recognition as in mainstream marketing (Li & Petrick 2008), even though there have been tourism experience studies (e.g. Shaw et al. 2011; Neuhofer et al. 2012; Prebensen & Foss 2011; Cabiddu et al. 2013; Prebensen, Vittersø & Dahl 2013) based on the ideas of Vargo and Lusch (2004). This is partly explained by the distinct nature of tourism consumption, as the tourism sector is based around the customer experience, which means that suppliers and consumers interact more closely at all stages of their relationship (Shaw et al. 2011). Furthermore, in the tourism literature, the shift towards more experiential tourism products has been frequently linked to the notions of the experience economy (Pine & Gilmore 1999) or more generally to shift from Fordist to post-Fordist

consumption (Shaw & Williams 2004). According to Alsos, Eide, and Madsen (2014) the experience economy takes co-creation further as customers expect to be involved in holistic, multidimensional, and multileveled ways. The research on co-creation tourism experiences has focused mainly on the on-site experience but through new technology such as mobile technologies and social media, experience co-creation is reaching entirely new levels, allowing tourism organizations to extend their experience co-creation into the virtual space (Neuhofer et al. 2012).

Interestingly, as a typical form of mass tourism, package tourism clearly represents the view of the traditional goods-centered paradigm in which value is created within the business and delivered to the customers (cf. Tynan & McKechnie 2009). Typically, package tourism is described using terms that Lusch and Vargo (2006) associate with the goods-dominant logic (e.g. goods, products, features, attributes, profit maximization, price, supply chain, promotion, and product orientation), as opposed to the concepts used in the service-dominant logic (e.g. service, experiences, solution, value propositions, dialogue, and service orientation). However, Prebensen and Foss (2011) have analyzed the co-creation and coping strategies of tourists in the context of package tourism and suggested that the most important task for the tour operator is to try to involve the tourists and encourage them to participate in creating their own well-being.

3.2 The essence of experiences

3.2.1 *Memorable and positive experiences*

Reaching an unambiguous definition for an experience has proved to be challenging. For example, Jennings (2006, 2) has noted that “*we may be able to pin down a number of unifying themes, but a definitive answer remains continually out of reach*”. This is partly explained by the fact that the English language has only one word for “*experience*”, while for example Finnish, Swedish, and German are more nuanced in this respect and have i) a neutral and broad notion of experience (*kokemus, erfarenhet, Erfahrung*) referring to all kinds of experiences, and ii) a more narrow and precise notion (*elämys, upplevelse, Erlebniss*) referring to subjective, emotional, or otherwise meaningful experiences (Aho 2001; Saarinen 2001a; Lütke 2001; Haahti 2003; Björk & Sfantla 2009).

To emphasize this distinction, Walls et al. (2011) have distinguished the “*scientific experience*”, which provides universal knowledge for all, from the “*philosophical experience*”, which is a unique and personal occurrence that

somehow changes or transforms an individual and is gained when the event is translated into knowledge instead of remaining a simple lived occurrence. Similarly, Volo has (2009) made a distinction between the “*experience as offering*”, which relies heavily on the role of marketers within the tourism industry, and the “*experience essence*”, which is again more subjective and happens rarely on command. These different notions of experiences are derived from previous literature. According to Carù and Cova (2003), the research on experiential consumption consists of two perspectives: the first considers any consumption experience as necessarily dependent on the acquisition of products and services from the market, while the second is romantic and seeks to over-saturate all events into constructs of strong emotions and unforgettable and extraordinary experiences.

A distinct character of experiences is memorability – Pine and Gilmore have (1999, 12) stated, “*while commodities are fungible, goods tangible, and services intangible, experiences are memorable*”. Correspondingly, Pizam (2010, 343) has noted that “*creating memorable experiences is the essence*” of the tourism and hospitality industry. Positive memorable experiences have been proven to lead to positive outcomes such as revisiting intentions and positive word-of-mouth behavior (Tung & Ritchie 2011; cf. Woodside, Caldwell & Albers-Miller 2004) and therefore “*tourism businesses should seek to create conditions that facilitate the realization of positive memorable experiences*” (Kim, Ritchie & McCormick 2012, 13). The memorability of an experience can be increased by various factors, including affective feelings, cognitive evaluations, and novel events (Kim et al. 2012).

Even though the fundamental aim of tourism is to deliver positive experiences to tourists (Tung & Ritchie 2011), tourism experiences are not always positive but instead “*range from exciting positive experiences to unpleasant negative experiences*” (Walls et al. 2011, 18). In tourism research positive experiences are emphasized even if according to Kim et al. (2012), the memory literature clearly suggests that memorable experiences can be both positive and negative and, just as positive experiences do, also negative experiences affect future intentions and word-of-mouth behavior (Alegre & Garau 2010; Lugosi & Walls 2013).

As international tourists’ experiences are intense and take place in a new environment, the adaptation process includes both success and failure, feelings of pleasure and enjoyment but also confusion, fatigue, and disorientation (Hottola 2004). Swarbrooke and Horner (1999) have stated that negative experiences during the vacation are caused by too much stress or insufficient arousal resulting in dissatisfaction and boredom. Pearce and Caltabiano (1983) have analyzed both positive and negative tourism experiences in relation to Maslow’s (1954) hierarchy of needs and stated that the positive experiences

were primarily related to psychological needs, (e.g. love, belongingness, and self-actualization) while the negative experiences were slightly more connected to basic needs (e.g. food and accommodation) and considered to prevent meeting the needs higher up in the hierarchy (e.g. due to too many other tourists).

In relation to this discussion, attention also needs to be drawn to the various ways in which tourists share the memories of their experiences. According to Arnould and Price (1993), consumers use extraordinary experiences to give agency and coherence to their stories about “*the self*”. Stories of positive and negative tourism experiences have always been told to friends and relatives (word-of-mouth behavior), but with the proliferation of information and communication technologies, this sharing has moved to a totally different level and real-time communication has replaced postcards as contemporary tourists mediate their experiences via stories, photographs, and videos while the experience is still taking place (Neuhof et al. 2012).

Interestingly, Kim et al. (2012) have proved that individuals tend to recall positive experiences more easily than negative ones. However, according to Elsrud (2001), tourists, – and especially their non-institutionalized counterparts, i.e., travelers – “*narrate their identities*” by manifesting for example risk and the adventure related to health risks, illnesses, eating habits, and other bodily threats and practices that seem to be the foundations for creating strong, and even heroic, life stories.

3.2.2 *Pursuing emotional and extraordinary experiences*

Researchers have endeavored to capture the essence of an experience by presenting various continuums that illustrate the characteristics of experiences, such as active–passive, extrinsic–intrinsic, absorption–immersion, functional–emotional, pleasure–arousal, real–virtual, novelty–communality, mass-produced–customized, and interaction with others–alone (see Knutson & Beck 2003). Walls et al. (2011) have created a framework of the composition of hospitality and tourism consumer experiences (Figure 5), which comprehensively and explicitly compresses the various debates on the nature of tourism experiences into two continuums: i) ordinary to extraordinary experiences, and ii) cognitive (objective) to affective (subjective) experiences. The inner circle of the model can be interpreted to demonstrate the effect of an experience on a consumer, while the outer circle concentrates on the factors that have an effect on the experiences: physical experience elements, human interaction elements, individual characteristics, and situational factors (Walls et al. 2011).

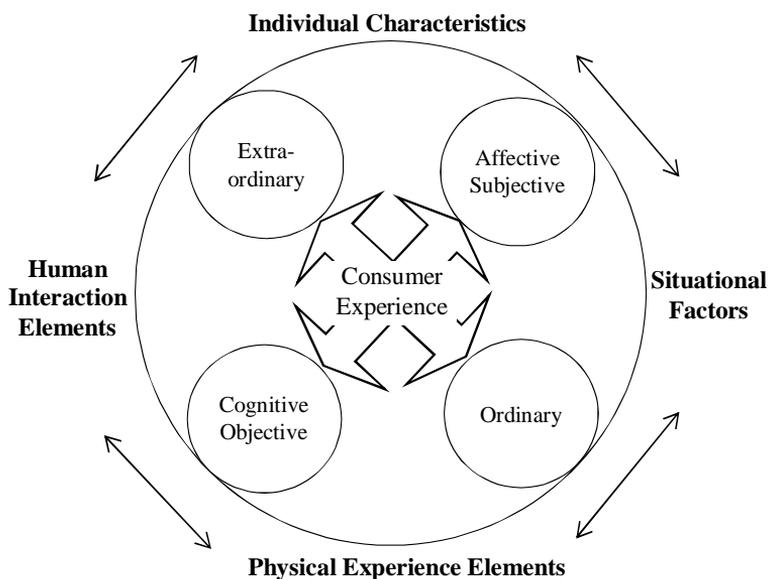


Figure 5 A framework for the composition of hospitality and tourism experiences (Walls et al. 2011)

There are also various other conceptualizations that focus on either how experiences influence individuals or how other factors influence experiences. For example Aho (2001) has identified four different effects that an experience can have on a tourist – emotional, intellectual, competence, and transformational – while Nickerson has (2006) summarized the various factors that affect a tourism experience into three dimensions: the traveler himself, the product, and the local population. According to Berry, Carbone, and Haeckel (2002), a customer's total experience is formed by functional or emotional experience clues which are related to the product or service itself, the physical setting, or the employees. These clues are somewhat comparable to the technical resources that are needed to create the service and the way the service is delivered to the customer (Grönroos 2001). Also Pine and Gilmore have (1999) focused on the content of an experience and, based on the level of guest participation and the kind of connection that unites customers with the event, formed four realms of experiences: entertainment, education, escape, and estheticism.

Regardless of the academic field, researchers consider experiences to employ a unique combination of cognitive and emotive processes (Saarinen 2001a; 2001b; Oh et al. 2007; Björk & Sfantla 2009; Walls et al. 2011). In recent research, the emotional characteristics have been emphasized as the academic attention has shifted from the idea of experiences as displayed objects provided by the industry to the tourist's subjective negotiations of

meanings (Uriely 2005). Emotional experiences are affective, subjective, and short-term, while cognitive experiences are long-term processes that often require at least some kind of pre-knowledge (Saarinen 2001a; 2001b). Due to the strong emotional effectiveness, emotional experiences are considered more focal to the tourism industry and, furthermore, their temporal nature binds them tightly to a certain space and activity, which is often made relevant by local stories and myths, either fictional or, at best, authentic (Aho 2001; Lütjhe 2001; Saarinen 2001a; 2001b). The settings can be natural or artificial, but there are no artificial experiences as each experience is real to its participant. Therefore, emotional experiences cannot be exchanged, compared, or proved to be right or wrong. (Pine & Gilmore 1999; Saarinen 2001a; 2001b.)

Emotions, both positive and negative, have attracted the interest of service researchers for a number of years (Roos, Friman & Edvardsson 2009) and most studies have focused on customers' perceptions and assessments of the interactions between customers and service providers (Petzer, De Meyer, Svavi & Svensson 2012). According to Petzer et al. (2012), human emotion is i) a feeling that assists in motivating, organizing, and guiding perception, thought, and action (Izard 1991), ii) a phenomenon that causes mental states, physical changes, facial and vocal expressions, and is usually followed by actions (Oatley & Jenkins 1996), and iii) more intense than a mood in its relationship to the stimuli (Batson, Shaw & Oleson 1992). Beside the positive/negative or cognitive/affective dichotomy, emotions have also been approached from the perspective of pleasure and arousal (Russell & Pratt 1980), i.e., the degree to which a person feels either good, joyful, and happy, or stimulated and active (Bigné, Andreu & Gnoth 2006).

Subjectivity, in turn, means that all experiences require involvement or participation by a person and are thus internal and individualized (Knutson & Beck 2003). Individuality and participation have been highlighted also by O'Sullivan and Spangler (1998, 3) who have proposed that an experience involves i) the state of being physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, or spiritually engaged; ii) a change in knowledge, skill, memory, or emotion derived through such participation; iii) the conscious perception of having intentionally encountered, gone to, or lived through an activity or an event; and iv) an effort directed at addressing a psychological or internal need of the participant.

The role of both emotionality and subjectivity is highlighted especially in the case of extraordinary experiences (Arnould & Price 1993) or transcendent customer experiences (Schouten, McAlexander & Koenig 2007), which are related to self-transformation, awakening, a separation from the mundane, and a connectedness to larger phenomena outside the self. The origins of these extraordinary experiences date back to early sociologists and psychologists of

the 1960s and 1970s (Walls et al. 2011). In Maslow's (1964) "*peak experience*", an individual transcends ordinary reality and perceives being or ultimate reality while Csikszentmihalyi (1975) introduced the concept of "*flow*", an optimal state of experience, referring to a mental state in which an individual is so fully involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter.

The dichotomy of the ordinary versus the extraordinary has been discussed by various researchers. Quan and Wang (2004) have differentiated tourism experiences from daily routine experiences and divided them into two types. Firstly, "*peak tourism experiences*" refer to the attractions that constitute the major motivations to engage in tourism. Secondly, "*supporting consumer experiences*" respond to the basic consumer needs during the vacation, such as eating, sleeping, and transportation which, however, may turn to peak experiences and become the highlights of the entire vacation. Furthermore, Quan and Wang (2004) have argued that peak tourism experiences are usually in sharp contrast to people's daily experiences while supporting consumer experiences are often characterized by an extension and sometimes also an intensification of these daily experiences. Also Mossberg (2007, 64) has contrasted tourism experiences to daily experiences but sees peak experiences and supporting experiences "*as a blend of activities experienced during the whole journey*".

3.2.3 *The elements of great tourism experiences*

As noted by Knutson and Beck (2003), previous literature has presented various models and classifications on the nature of tourism experiences but there have been hardly any studies that empirically analyze tourism experiences based on these conceptualizations. Therefore, the motivation in Article 1 was to examine which factors, elements, or components constitute great tourism experiences by analyzing what kind of things tourists mention and emphasize when they describe their positive tourism experiences. Due to the fact that Article 1 was published in Finnish, a rather detailed English summary of the results is provided here.

The narratives of the research data (n=153) described various kind of tourism experiences, which were considered subjective, memorable, and apparently significant to the participants as they had been sent to a writing contest. The experiences were also multisensory, as suggested by the previous literature. Even though experiences that engaged all senses were directly described in only 4% of the narratives, different sensory experiences were mentioned more than 300 times. The visual sense was naturally the most common and 60% of the narratives described various sights, sceneries, and

observations. Different feelings, such as the blaze of the sun and the sense of well-being or exhaustion, were found in 46% of the narratives, while different flavors, such as the delicacies of Tuscany and wines from the Carpathian Mountains, were mentioned in 31% of the narratives. The whispering wind, the thunder of the sea or rapids, music, and other sounds were referred to in 26% of the narratives, and various smells, such as the fragrance of anise or the whiff of diesel fumes, were mentioned in 12% of the narratives. Furthermore, the experiences were mostly positive, even though some narratives described also negative experiences such as “*overpowering experiences of despair and sheer horror*” or as one respondent wrote: “*The trip was crowned by a thief, who tore the pendants from my wife’s ears on a crowded street of Lima. Despite the tears – an unforgettable event.*”

The contribution of Article 1 can be discussed through the tangible versus the intangible nature of tourism experiences (Figure 6). The influence of the traveler on the experience and the influence of the experience on the traveler are placed in the middle as it seemed to be the most central factor in experience creation. The narratives were first analyzed in relation to how the experiences influenced the participant based on the classification of Aho (2001). Nearly all experiences were emotional (97%) while only 6% induced intellectual effects, 5% increased the competence of the participant, and 3% were considered transformational as they caused more lasting changes in the participant. Then, as suggested by Nickerson (2006), the factors that influenced the experiences, i.e., the traveler him/herself, the product, and the local population, were examined. However, this classification proved to be somewhat problematic as the influence of the traveler referred to such a wide range of factors that it needed to be further divided into three: the traveler him/herself, other travelers, and the environment. Still, nearly all narratives described factors related to the traveler him/herself (98%) and the environment (natural, built, or spiritual) (98%). Other travelers were referred to in 64% of the narratives and tourism products were mentioned in 84%. Somewhat surprisingly, the local population was described in only 28% of the narratives, mostly as friendly and helpful people in their daily chores and celebrations as well as depicted as part of the landscape.

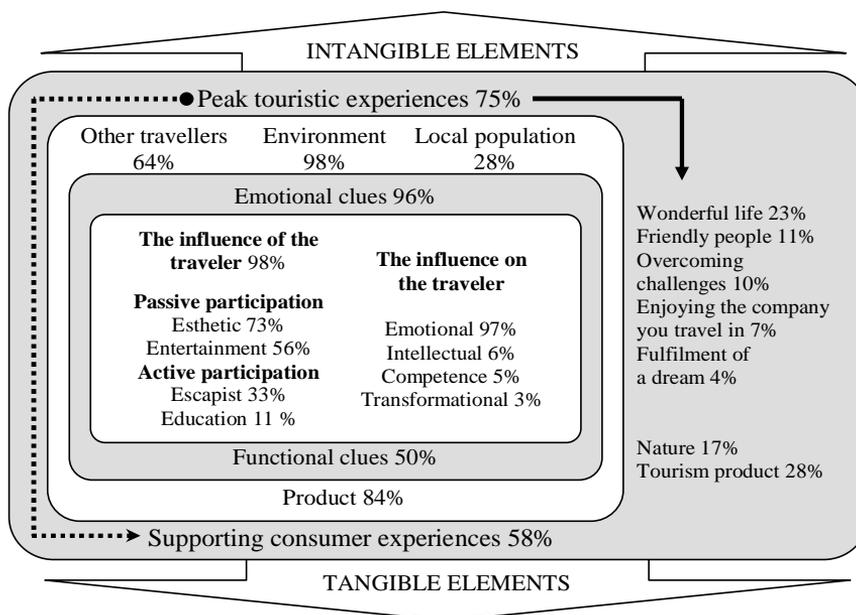


Figure 6 Tangible versus intangible elements of tourism experiences (Räikkönen 2007)

In relation to the realms of experiences (Pine & Gilmore 1999), the analysis clearly indicated that during the tourism experiences, passive participation was favored over active doing, as esthetic and entertaining experiences were described considerably more often than escapist or educational experiences. Esthetic experiences were the most common with 73% of the narratives describing for example sightseeing, excursions, or simple immersion into the atmosphere of the destination. Entertaining experiences, typically musical events and experiences of amusement or pleasure in general, were emphasized in 56% of the narratives. Escapist experiences were mentioned in every third narrative (33%) and included mainly physical exercises but also surfing on the Internet and acting in a movie were mentioned. Only 10% of the narratives described educational experiences, in which both increasing one's knowledge (e.g. learning languages or astrology) and developing one's skills (e.g. canoeing or dancing) were mentioned.

The tangible elements, such as tourism products, can be influenced by the tourism industry while the more intangible and emotional elements are often out of the service providers' control. In the analysis, functional and emotional clues (Berry et al. 2002) were sometimes difficult to separate but, interestingly, the intangible elements were clearly emphasized in the narratives, as emotional clues (96%) were far more frequently addressed than functional clues (50%).

Three out of four narratives included a peak experience, i.e., defined the best or the most rewarding experience of the journey or consisted of only one event or experience. In order to understand the nature of the peak experiences, they were classified into 1) *The tourism product* (28%), 2) *The wonderful life* (23%), 3) *Nature* (17%), 4) *Friendly people* (11%), 5) *Travel companion* (7%), 6) *Survival experiences* (10%), and 7) *Dream come true experiences* (4%). Based on this classification, the peak tourism experiences were not necessarily related to tourism destinations, attractions, or major motivations to engage in tourism, as suggested by Quan and Wang (2004), as less than half of the peak experiences referred to tourism products (e.g. destinations, attractions, sights, excursions, natural environment). The majority of peak experiences referred to more abstract or intangible elements (e.g. tranquility, peace of mind, friendliness, companionship, overcoming challenges, and the fulfillment of dreams). Out of the narratives which contained peak experiences, 58% also included supporting consumer experiences, which were, as proposed by Quan and Wang (2004), clearly bound to destinations, attractions, services, or events and satisfied the tourists' basic needs (e.g. restaurants, accommodation and transportation, shopping facilities, attractions, events, and organized excursions).

Furthermore, 17% of the narratives contrasted tourism experiences with daily experiences by describing for example a break from the daily routines and being released from work-related stress. Even though the majority of the comparisons were related to the tourists themselves, some pointed out the differences of sceneries, service cultures, and overall conditions of society between the destination region and the daily environment. The extension and the intensification of daily routines was mentioned in only a few narratives describing how more time and effort was put into cooking and how fresh ingredients or local specialties were used.

In conclusion, according to the study, these great tourism experiences were positive but also included some negative elements and were multisensory but mainly sensed by seeing and feeling. The experiences were highly emotional, subjective, esthetic, entertaining, and passive rather than active. The environments in which the experiences took place were important, and so were the products that enabled the experience formation, as well as other tourists. On the other hand, the great tourism experiences were not that connected to the local population and even surprisingly few narratives described escapist experiences. Furthermore, the narrated great experiences were not educational and even less transformational. They did not induce intellectual effects nor did they increase the participants' competence. Therefore, the study clearly indicated that great tourism experiences were obtained by being and feeling rather than by doing or learning.

4 PACKAGE TOURISM – EXPERIENCES FOR THE MASSES

4.1 Package tourism in the international tourism system

The increasing interest in tourism experiences is tightly connected to the shift from Fordist to post-Fordist consumption (Honkanen 2004; Lüthje 2005; Shaw et al. 2011). Tourism consumption can essentially be divided into institutionalized and non-institutionalized tourism (Cohen 1972) or, similarly, into group package tours and individual travel (Wang et al. 2000). Fordist-type group package tours refer to inclusive tours packaged and marketed by travel retailers, while in independent travel, individuals assemble their own itinerary by purchasing for example the accommodation and transportation directly from the suppliers (Cooper et al. 1998; Wang et al. 2000; Hyde 2008).

Individual travel is seen as a phenomenon of the post-Fordist economies in which consumption is not a consequence of production but a driver of the production process as the consumers increasingly consume material objects, signs, and symbols to extract value, meaning, and status (Robinson & Novelli 2005). In tourism, post-Fordist consumption is often contrasted to mass tourism and considered a “*better*” or more sustainable mode of tourism (Honkanen 2004), whether it is called post-Fordist tourism (Feifer 1985), alternative tourism (Butler 1990; Pearce 1992) new tourism (Krippendorf 1986; 1989; Poon 1989), ecotourism (Romeril 1985; Weaver 2002), or niche tourism (Robinson & Novelli 2005).

In business-oriented tourism research, tourism is often viewed as the organization and conduct of tourism activities as well as the facilities and services that are necessary for meeting the needs of tourists (Williams 2009). Thus, tourism is a process formed by the interaction between tourists and the tourism industry (Leiper 1979; Travis 1989). In the current study, package tourism experiences are seen as an essential part of tourism-related patterns and flows, which can be further extended to the complex international tourism system (cf. Hall & Page 2009). As illustrated in Figure 7, the tourism system consists of tourists, tourist-generating regions, transit routes, destination regions, and the tourism industry, which are all arranged into spatial and functional connections and operate within broader physical, cultural, social, economic, political, and technological environments (Travis 1989; based on Leiper 1979). This system does not exist without the interaction between the

tourists and the tourism industry. The tourists are searching for experiences and need certain services and facilities, which a diverse spectrum of resources aims to provide. Tourist generating regions are the permanent residential bases of the tourists as well as the places where tourism experiences begin and end. In these regions, the potential tourism demand is formed and the major marketing functions conducted. Transit routes, in turn, are paths that link the tourist generating regions to the destination regions and the locations of the main transportation services. Destination regions are the locations that attract tourists and have characteristics which tourists wish to experience personally. The destination is also the main location of the focal parts of the tourism industry, such as the accommodation establishments, hospitality services, entertainment, and recreational facilities. (Leiper 1979.)

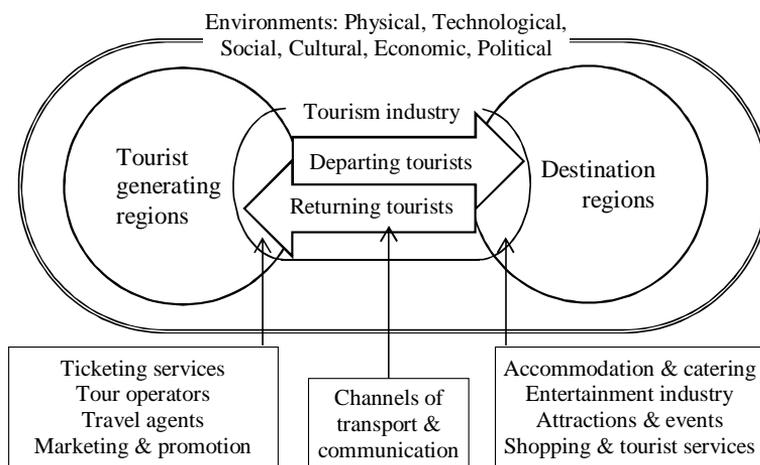


Figure 7 The tourism system (Travis 1989; based on Leiper 1979)

4.2 Package tourist motivation

In order to profoundly understand package tourism experiences, the tourist motivation needs to be discussed. According to Uriely (2005), the early conceptualizations of tourism experiences (Boorstin 1964; MacCannell 1973) were not concerned with the various meanings and motivations related to tourism behavior as the pluralizing of the tourism experience began by the emergence of various tourist typologies (e.g. Cohen 1972; Plog 1977; Smith 1977; Pearce 1982; Krippendorf 1989). Thus, the discussion on tourism motivation can be traced back to Cohen's (1979) argument that different tourists require different experiences, which in turn hold varying recreational,

diversionary, experiential, experimental, or existential meanings (Shaw & Williams 2004).

Tourist motivation is related to the fundamental understanding of what tourists do when they are on vacation and the questions that for instance Shaw and Williams (2004) have proposed: Is tourist behavior different from behavior in the home environment? What characterizes tourist behavior? What factors influence tourist behavior? It is widely acknowledged that during their vacations, the behavior patterns of tourists usually differ from their everyday behavior, at least to some extent (Williams 2009). This behavioral shift away from the norm and towards a temporary opposite is called “*inversion*” (Graburn 1983) and it can be related for example to the environment, lifestyle, formality, and health. In the tourism context, inversion influences geographical destination choices but it also affects tourist behavior, such as the justification for relaxing and doing nothing, excessive consumption of food and alcohol, a loosening of dress codes through varying states of nudity, and a liberalization of sexual behavior (Vuoristo 2004; Williams 2009).

According to Uriely (2005), many of the early theories representing the modernist view were founded on the idea that tourist motivation derives from the need (cf. Maslow 1954) to escape from everyday routines (e.g. MacCannell 1973). The later conceptualizations consist of two implicit propositions, i) the combinations of stimuli that both encourage tourist behavior and attract tourists to particular destinations (push and pull factors), and ii) the benefit or reward derived from the tourism activity (Williams 2009). Crompton (1979) focused on push and pull factors and identified seven socio-psychological motives for pleasure vacations: i) escape from a perceived mundane environment, ii) exploration and evaluation of self, iii) relaxation, iv) prestige, v) regression, vi) enhancement of kinship relationships, and vii) facilitation of social interaction. The Leisure Motivation Scale by Beard and Ragheb (1983), in turn, concentrated on the benefits of tourism experiences and identified four components: i) an intellectual component in which the tourist acquires knowledge, ii) a social component through which his/her social networks are maintained or extended, iii) a competence component in which skills were developed, and iv) a stimulus-avoidance component which reflects the desire for release from pressured situations. Furthermore, Iso-Ahola (1982) combined the elements of escape from routine environments (personal and intrapersonal) to intrinsic rewards (personal and interpersonal) in the environments to be visited, creating a matrix of four different types of motives.

Williams (2009) noted that even though the tourist typologies are viewed as limitations by some (e.g. Frankling 2004), a comprehension of the diversity of tourism requires differentiating one form of activity from another and, there-

fore, the typologies should be merited. Table 3 summarizes the basic ideas of the widely cited typology of Cohen (1972) that classifies tourists into institutionalized (organized mass tourists and individual mass tourists) and non-institutionalized tourists (explorers and drifters). Institutionalized, i.e., mass tourism is characterized as a commercialized and organized type of tourism that has significant impacts on the vacation destinations, and mass tourists are seen to seek familiar experiences and have a limited interest in the host populations. However, more recent studies (Wickens 2002; Prebensen 2005) have challenged the view that all mass tourists can be classified into organized or individual mass tourists. Uriely (2005) has considered this deconstruction of well-established typologies as another step of the pluralization of the tourism experience.

Table 3 Typological framework of tourism and tourists (Williams 2009; based on Cohen 1972)

Motives	Pleasure	Mixed	Experiential	
<i>Level of development</i>	Commercialized	←→	Non-commercialized	
<i>Impact</i>	Significant	←→	Minimal	
<i>Level of organization</i>	Organized	←→	Independent	
<i>Experience sought</i>	Familiar	←→	Novel	
<i>Interest in/concern for hosts</i>	Limited	←→	Significant	
	Organized mass tourists	Individual mass tourists	Explorers	Drifters

There are studies that have particularly shed light on the different motives and behaviors of package or charter tourists, a seemingly heterogeneous group of mass tourists. Despite the stereotypical conception of the mass tourist as a lower middle-class individual (Smith 1977), there are variety of reasons why someone chooses a package tour (Sheldon & Mak 1987; Enoch 1996; Laws 1997; Wickens 2002; Bastakis, Buhalis & Butler 2004). In fact, Finnish package tourists seem to come from all social classes (Selänniemi 1996; Rääkkönen & Honkanen 2013).

According to Selänniemi (1996), who has examined Finnish package tourists based on ethnographic fieldwork, package tourism has become an integral part of modern Finnish culture. However, a homogeneous cultural category of mass tourists did not seem to exist as the package tourists were a

heterogeneous group of individuals benefiting from mass tourism services. In relation to motivation, Selänniemi (1996) divided Finnish package tourists into *destination-bound tourists* who travel to some geographically and culturally distinct destination and *image-bound tourists* who travel away from home to a place where they can escape the everyday routines and enjoy the liberty of being a tourist.

Also Wickens (2002) has used a qualitative approach (86 interviews) and clustered British package tourists into five segments. *The cultural heritage type* was motivated by the culture, history, or nature and searched for authenticity without physical hardships. *The raver type* sought cheap prices as well as sensual and hedonistic experiences on the beach and in the night-life, and stated that “*sex makes the holiday*”. Similarly, also *The Shirley Valentine type* was searching romantic experiences, pleasure, and a break from routines but consisted of older, mainly single women spending time sunbathing and flirting. *The heliolatrous type*, in turn, “*just wanted two weeks of hot sunshine*” spent on the beach and would “*never visit the same resort twice*”. By contrast, *The Lord Byron type* consisted of repeat visitors, who had fallen in love with the destination and had many direct experiences with the locals.

A quantitative approach was applied in a study of Prebensen (2005), which identified four segments among Norwegian package tourists (n=1222). Two of these segments, *Active sun and family* (n=402) and *Sun and comfort* (n=319), were traveling with family and looking for sun and warmth. The *Culture patron* segment (n=126), was motivated by culture while the last segment, *Experiencing* (n=326), had many motives yet none of them extremely strong.

The three studies cited above clearly indicate that package tourists do share some common motivations, such as the search for sun and warmth (Selänniemi 1996; Prebensen 2005) as well as the need to escape, the desire for pleasure, and the need for ontological security (Wickens 2002). However, all strongly highlight that despite these similarities, package tourists diverge in many ways and, therefore, the industry should avoid generalizing this often stereotyped category of tourists and, instead, communicate that mass tourists are accepted as individuals (Prebensen 2005).

4.3 The tour operating business

4.3.1 Definitions of package tour and tour operator

The Package Travel Act (1079/1994) defines a package tour as “*a combination of pre-arranged services offered for an inclusive price, entailing at least: (1) transport and accommodation; or (2) transport or accommodation,*

together with some additional travel service essential to the package as a whole". Furthermore, it *"is offered, other than occasionally, by a business organizing or retailing travel services for payment; and covers a period of more than twenty-four hours or includes overnight accommodation"* (Package Travel Act 1079/1994)

In the tourism literature, package tours are defined as *"standardized, quality controlled, repeatable offers comprising two or more elements of transport, accommodation, food, destination attractions, other facilities, and services"* (Middleton 1994, 292). Typically, package tourism refers to mass tourism even though, by definition, package tours can also mean highly individual and tailor-made products targeted for example to various niche tourism markets (see Munt 1994; Robinson & Novelli 2005). Charter tourism is another term which is frequently used in the tourism literature (e.g. Larsson Mossberg 1995) and that more explicitly refers to mass tourism as charter flights usually require large quantities of tourists. In the current thesis, the term *"package tourism"* is used and it refers to air-based package tours organized by tour operators. The term *"charter tourism"* is not used due to the fact that the research data also includes package tours which are based on scheduled flights, not charter flights.

Package tourism has for a long been a predominant form of outbound leisure tourism in Europe (Cooper et al. 1998; Buhalis & Laws 2001; Bastakis et al. 2004). Especially in Northern Europe, the cultural, economic, and environmental factors have encouraged the standardization and industrialization of the package tourism market which, in turn, has allowed large tour operators to dominate the distribution channels (Cooper et al. 1998; Casarin 2001) and led to fierce competition (Roper 2005). In past few decades, these large tour operators have grown into even more massive organizations (see Budeanu 2005) by integrating transportation services and travel retailing into their core tour-operating business (Bastakis et al. 2004). This integration has also recently reached the tourism destination areas where the tour operators have acquired accommodation establishments as well as incoming tour and coach operators (Bastakis et al. 2004; Robinson & Novelli 2005). Notably, however, Suntours still relies on local partners in its vacation destinations.

According to the Package Travel Act (1079/1994), an organizer *"designs and provides packages and offers them for sale either directly or indirectly by means of some other business, or who on his own account offers packages organized by someone else"*. Thus, fundamentally, tour operating refers to combining for example aircraft seats and beds in hotels in a way that attracts potential tourists (Cooper et al. 1998). Tour operators buy tourism services from direct providers, combine them into attractive packages and products, and then sell them to customers either directly or through travel retailers

(Budeanu 2005). Due to their high purchasing power, the large tour operators can negotiate cheaper arrangements and achieve economies of scale, which can be passed on to customers (Tepelus 2005).

In Finland, package tourism is a common way of distributing outbound tourism, even though the market share of package tours has decreased from 55% at the beginning of the century to 36% in 2012 (Statistics Finland 2012). By contrast, air-based package tours (cf. charter tours) seem to have maintained their popularity, as during the last decade close to one million air-based package tours were conducted annually (AFTA 2009; 2012). Overall, the Finnish package tourism market (Table 4) is dominated by three large tour operators. In 2012, Suntours was the largest tour operator with 32% share of the package tourism market, followed by Finnmatkat (TUI) with 29% and Tjäreborg (Thomas Cook) with 19% (AFTA 2012).

Table 4 The Finnish package tourism market in 2012 (AFTA 2012)

Tour operator	Customers	Market share
Aurinkomatkat – Suntours	302,316	32%
Finnmatkat (TUI)	275,800	29%
Tjäreborg (Thomas Cook)	182,662	19%
Lomamatkat	56,400	6%
Apollomatkat	46,944	5%
Detur Finland	28,100	3%
Others	62,862	7%
	955,084	100%

During the past few years, the European tour operators have had to respond to the presumed crisis in the traditional package travel sector by creating more individualized, diversified, and flexible packages. This has provided tourists with a greater freedom and flexibility in their choices while the underlying demand-side motivations, i.e., cost savings and reduced risks, have been met. (Buhalis & Laws 2001; Casarin 2001; Bastakis et al. 2004; Bramwell 2004; Shaw & Williams 2004.) The arguments about the decline in mass tourism, however, seem to be overstated and package tourism is not considered to be a disappearing phenomenon (e.g. Williams & Shaw 1998; Bramwell 2004; Honkanen 2004; Shaw & Williams 2004).

However, the development of information and communication technologies has considerably changed the role of the travel agents and also that of tour operators, from being providers of advisory functions and transaction

processing to the direction of providing consultative services (Cheynel, Downes & Legg 2006). In the current trend of “*do-it-yourself*” travel arrangements, the opportunities in the tour-operating business seem to lie in the concentration on certain markets and on tailor-made services instead of relying on mere scale economies.

Besides bundling and selling package tourism products, tour operators have certain duties, which are defined in the Package Travel Act (1079/1994). First, the organizer has the duty to provide assistance if the tourist falls ill, has an accident, becomes the victim of a crime, or sustains some other loss or injury during the travel. The organizer “*shall assist the traveler in the procurement of medical care or repatriation, the clarification of the offence, loss or injury and the other necessary measures*”. Second, if the tour operator needs to cancel or change the travel arrangements for reasons of force majeure, “*the organizer shall assist the traveler in like manner and take action, in so far as possible, to limit the loss or inconvenience suffered by the traveler*” (The Package Travel Act 1079/1994).

Furthermore, the Package Travel Act (1079/1994) addresses the faults in the performance of the organizer by stating that there is a fault in the performance of the organizer: “*i) if in terms of services or other arrangements, the travel does not correspond to what can be deemed to have been agreed on; ii) the organizer has failed to supply to the traveler information and this failure can be deemed to have affected the traveler’s decision to travel; or iii) the organizer has failed to comply with the duty to provide assistance.*” However, minor changes to or defects in the travel arrangements which, based on the destination or the nature of the travel, it is reasonable to expect the traveler to be prepared for, shall not be deemed to be faults. (The Package Travel Act 1079/1994.)

4.3.2 *A package tour as a tourism experience product*

A package tour is typically viewed as a bundle of different services. Bowie and Chang (2005) described the package tour as a labor-intensive and synthetic multitude of components that contains both the “*soft*” characteristics of services (seasonality, perishability, inseparability, intangibility, and simultaneous production and consumption) as well as tangible “*hard*” elements such as hotel rooms and airplane fares.

Even though the development of package tourism clearly describes a Western phenomenon, package tourism has become extremely common also in Asia where the increasing tourism demand has accelerated the rapid growth of the mass tourism market (Chen & Hsu 2012; Wong & Lee 2012). There is,

however, a slight difference between Western and Asian package tourism. In the Asian context the term “*group package tour*” (Wang et al. 2000; Wang et al. 2007) is widely used to highlight an intense interaction between a group of tourists and their tour leader (Lee, Wilkins & Lee 2011). According to Wang et al. (2000), a group package tour consists of the following components or sectors: pre-tour briefing, airport/plane, hotel, restaurants, coach, scenic spots, shopping opportunities, optional tours, and other services (Figure 8). Correspondingly, Bowie and Chang (2005) included into guided package tours the services of the tour leader, hotels, restaurants, coach, shopping opportunities, optional tours, attractions, and other services.

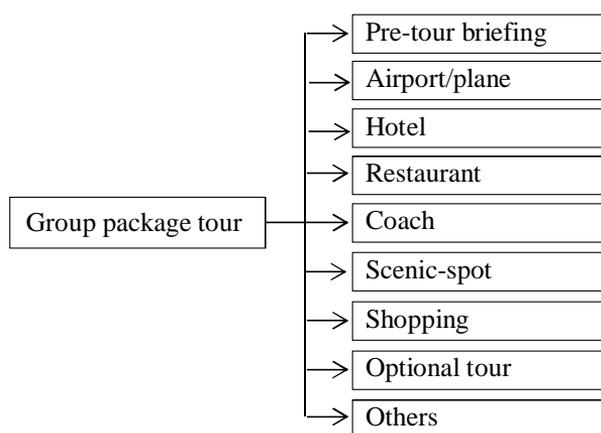


Figure 8 The sectors of a group package tour (Wang et al. 2000)

In contrast, characteristic of the European “*package tours*” (Hanefors & Larsson Mossberg 1999) or “*charter tours*” (Larsson Mossberg 1995) is that the tourists are left to enjoy their vacations quite independently and the tour leaders are present only occasionally (e.g. during transfers and excursions). Terms such as “*guided package tour*” (Bowie & Chang 2005) or “*inclusive tour*” (Bowen 2001) are, however, used in the European context to describe more intense roundtrip-type package tours.

To highlight the significance of the consumer–company interaction, Carù and Cova (2007) have outlined a continuum based on the role of consumers and companies in constructing experiences. At one extreme are the experiences that are mainly constructed by consumers and at the other are the experiences largely developed by companies. Northern European package tours are likely to fall in the middle of this continuum, as tour operators provide an experiential platform by assembling the packages (e.g. Swarbrooke & Horner 2007), but in the end, the consumers construct their own experiences

by choosing which services they wish to use. Notably, the more service encounters the tourists have, the more possibilities there are for tour operators to influence their experiences (Larsson Mossberg 1995; Hanefors & Larsson Mossberg 1999).

A package tour can be considered as a tourism experience product (cf. Komppula & Boksberg 2005). A product consists of a commodity, a service, or a combination of these two. It is “*the result of a production process in which added value is created*” (Edvardsson 1997, 33). The concept of service refers to the customer’s perceptions of the process and the outcome that together constitute the service, form the perception of quality, and determine the level of customer satisfaction (Edvardsson 1997). Instead of services, companies provide prerequisites for various services, by which Edvardsson (1997) refers to a proposed offer based on the service concept, the service process, and the service system. The service concept is a detailed description of what is to be done for the customer (what needs and wishes are to be satisfied) and how this is to be achieved (the service offer). The service process, in turn, refers to the chain of activities that must function in order to produce the service, while the service system consists of the resources that are required or available for the service process and the service concept to be realized. (Edvardsson 1997.)

Komppula (2006; see also Komppula & Boxberg 2005) has applied the idea of prerequisites for services to the tourism context and stated that these prerequisites form the “*augmented tourism product*”, which actually is the company itself, its reputation and its image (Komppula 2006, 139). This tourism product can be described also as a service package (Figure 9) consisting of different molecules (see Shostack 1977) or modules. The core of the product is formed by the service concept, which can be understood as the description of the customer value. Various activity modules such as accommodation and transportation, in turn, form the service process, which is a chain of services produced by one or several companies. The customer experiences the product within the service environment and the framework of the service provider, filtering the experiences through his/her expectations and previous mental images of the company and similar products. (Komppula & Boxberg 2005.)

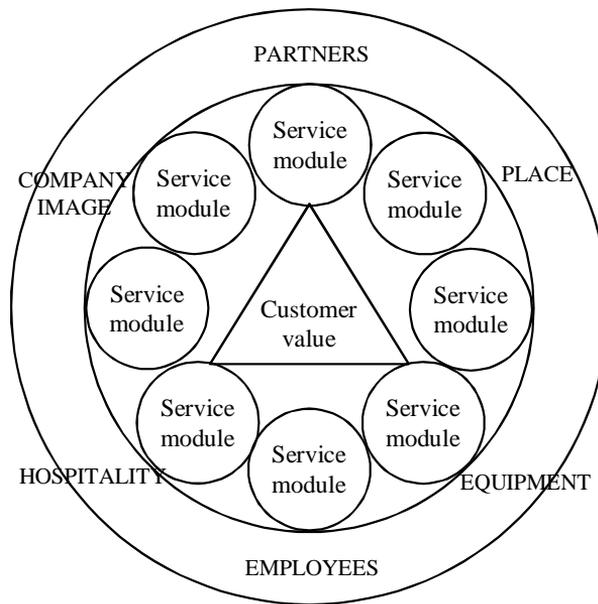


Figure 9 The tourism product as a service package (Komppula & Boxberg 2005)

The tour operator's role is to provide the best possible prerequisites for the experience: an attractive idea and description of the product, a successful service process, and a reliable, functioning service system (Komppula 2006, 136). The challenge of package tourism is that even though the tour operators bundle the experience products, the tourists still use the services offered by multiple individual service providers. Ideally, each module and process in the service delivery system should bring added value to either the service or the experience and the tourists should feel that they are getting added value by not having to pay attention to details, allowing them to focus instead on enjoying their holiday (Komppula & Boxberg 2005). However, if some part of the package tour product does not provide the promised and expected service to a satisfying degree, it may decrease the overall value of the experience and lead to dissatisfaction (Neal & Gursoy 2008). To ensure positive, satisfactory, and value adding experiences, companies must endeavor to control their service process in its entirety, even if they do not have direct control over all parts of it (Edvardsson 1997).

5 THE ROLE OF TOUR OPERATORS AND TOUR LEADERS IN THE CREATION OF PACKAGE TOURISM EXPERIENCES

5.1 Managing and measuring experiences

5.1.1 *Creating prerequisites for experiences*

There is a consensus among researchers that an underpinning character of an experience is that it cannot be produced or sold by tourism organizations (Uriely 2005; Tung & Ritchie 2011; Walls et al. 2011). Due to its subjective and internal nature, an experience takes place in the mind of the tourist and, thus, what is an emotional experience to one tourist might not be it to another. Therefore, the tourism organizations can create favorable prerequisites, circumstances, and environments for experience formation, but the outcome still depends on how the tourist reacts to the interaction with the event and may differ tremendously from what was intended by the service provider. (O'Sullivan & Spangler 1998; Aho 2001; Lüthje 2001; Komppula 2005; 2006; Mossberg 2007; Walls et al. 2011.)

This, however, does not mean that tourism organizations cannot influence their customers' experiences. On the contrary, a lot can be done to trigger experiences. Walls et al. (2011) have identified four external factors which make each individual's experience distinctly unique and argued that tourism companies can enhance the consumers' experiences by managing the physical and human interaction elements (e.g. designing the business setting and training the employees), while individual characters (e.g. personality and sensitivity to the environment) and situational factors (e.g. the purpose of the trip and the travel companion) are usually out of the business entity's control.

Somewhat similarly, Quinlan Cutler and Carmichael (2010) have divided the tourism experience (Figure 10) into the influential and the personal realm. The influential realm refers to the external elements that have an impact on the tourism experience: i) the physical aspects, such as physical settings, spatial characteristics, and geographical features, ii) the social aspects like social settings, personal relationships, and interactions with personnel, other tourists, and the host population, and iii) the various products and services which the tourism industry offers in order to create experiences. The personal realm, in turn, refers to the elements within an individual that shape the experience,

such as knowledge, memory, perception, emotion, and self-identity that feed into motivation and expectations for future experiences, providing a cycle of motivation/expectation, experience, and outcome which is evaluated through the level of satisfaction/dissatisfaction. (Quinlan Cutler & Carmichael 2010.)

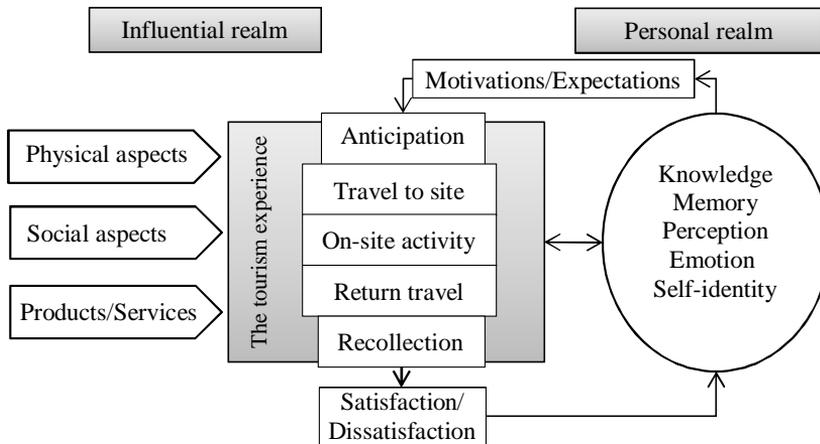


Figure 10 A conceptual model of a tourism experience (Quinlan Cutler & Carmichael 2010)

In order to clarify experience creation in the context of tourism, Mossberg (2007) has proposed a term “*experiencescape*” which is based on Bitner’s (1992) concept of servicescape referring to the complex mix of environmental features around a service that influences internal responses and behavior. Experiencescapes are dream worlds that contain stages for tourists to play different roles, meeting places for interaction, and arenas for experiencing new things. Furthermore, Mossberg (2007) has suggested that tourism experiences are influenced by the physical surroundings as well as the social surroundings which are created by personnel, other customers, and products and souvenirs communicating the theme or the story of the company.

Notably, also in the context of retailing, the consumer experience has been conceptualized in a somewhat similar way. For example Bäckström and Johansson (2006), based on a profound literature review, have suggested that experiential retailing consisting of personal variables (e.g. consumer values, motivation, demographic factors, and resources) and situational variables (atmospherics, store design, and social dimensions) which both influence consumers’ in-store experiences. According to Verhoef, Lemon, Parasuraman, Roggeveen, Tsiros & Schlesinger (2009), the previous literature on retail experiences has focused only on the elements of the retail environment, that are under the retailer’s control, and examined how they influence specific

customer responses. In order to broaden this narrow view, Verhoef et al. (2009) proposed a conceptual model on retail experiences including social environment, service interface, retail atmosphere, assortment, price, alternative channels, retail brand, situation moderators, and consumer moderators.

5.1.2 *Tour leaders as mediators*

Tour leaders are the public faces of the tour operators and vitally important as their task is to ensure that the vacations of their customers run smoothly and to sort out any problems that might arise (Yale 1995). According to Larsson Mossberg (1995), the role of tour leaders is important as their performances and duties affect tourists' perceptions of the whole tour.

The work of tour leaders consists of various tasks. At the beginning of the vacation, they meet the customers at the airport and direct them onto the transfer bus, give an introductory talk about the hotels and the destination, make sure that the customers are taken care of at the hotel, and organize a welcome party. They also prepare a file of local information, sell excursions, and are on call 24 hours a day in case of an emergency. Finally, at the end of the vacation, the tour leaders accompany tourists to the airport and ensure that the check in is done without problems. (Yale 1995). In general, tour leaders are distinguished from tour guides who conduct the actual excursions, but notably, it is common that Finnish tour leaders also act as tour guides as the local guides practically never speak Finnish (Räikkönen & Cortez Monto 2010).

Even though mass-produced package tours differ from truly extraordinary experiences, such as river rafting, the well-cited study of Arnould and Price (1993) provides interesting ideas on the role of tour guides in orchestrating the delivery of experiences. According to Arnould and Price (1993), the emotional outcomes of extraordinary experiences are embedded in the relationships between the customer and the service provider. The guides "*socialize*" participants into intrinsically meaningful experiences, while the participants bring their own preconscious scripts to these travel "*performances*". The extraordinary experience is a pilgrimage, orchestrated by the guides, to a sacred place where pilgrims and guides bond, and also a rite of intensification that emotionally links different people together. The pilgrim returns home renewed and the experience itself is vividly recalled but difficult to describe.

Even in the case of package tourism, the tour leaders can be seen as a crucial competitive advantage. It is relatively challenging to differentiate the standardized package tourism offerings, as it is common that the customers of different tour operators end up traveling on the same flight and staying at the same hotel. But, the performance of the tour leader can differentiate the

package tour from the competitors' products have an effect on for example the company image. (Larsson Mossberg 1995.) A tour operator that provides good service through caring personnel who, in turn, make the tourists feel safe, is much more likely to have loyal customers (Hanefors & Larsson Mossberg 1999).

Tour leaders are especially crucial when things go wrong, for example, when a tourist loses his/her passport or is robbed. Furthermore, they sort out the problems arising from service failures made by the company itself but also by the airlines, the ground handling agents, and the hoteliers. The tour leaders are often the first to receive the most customer complaints, particularly those that are likely to lead to continued dispute. Ideally, the tour leader will sort out the problem on the spot, or at least prevent it from getting worse, so that if compensation does have to be paid, it can be kept to a minimum and the company will attract as little bad publicity as possible. (Yale 1995.) In managing service failures, the tour leaders inevitably face the tension resulting from the different demands from the tourists and the tour operator – they must provide emotional support to the tourists in difficult circumstances while simultaneously trying to influence the tourists' perceptions of the tour operator in order to protect the company (Adib & Guerrier 2001).

Based on this background, it is evident that tour leaders have a significant role in mediating tourism experiences and can, therefore, be considered as brokers. Cohen (1985) used this term in relation to tour guiding and argued that the role of a tour guide has moved away from being a pathfinder toward a mediatory role consisting of social mediation and cultural brokerage. By combining these two aspects, Jennings and Weiler (2006, 58) defined brokering as *“any active attempt by an individual to mediate the tourist experience of another individual”* and a broker or a mediator as *“someone who assists in sense-making and in the tourist's (re)constructions of his or her experience as well as the (re)presentation of that experience”*.

Brokering can be divided into formal and informal mediation. Tour leaders, tour guides, and other formal brokers are intentionally engaged in brokering and recruited, trained, or at least somehow expected to mediate the tourist's experience. Informal brokers (e.g. local population), in turn, do not have a badge or uniform that identifies them as mediators and, therefore, their mediation largely goes unnoticed, even though it may have a great influence on the tourist's experience. Notably, the contribution of mediators to the experience can be positive, negative, or neutral, yet even the nature of formal mediation is seldom monitored or assessed by the tourism industry. Furthermore, it seems that the understanding of the expectations and needs of tourists with regard to mediation is quite poor, which makes training and evaluation even more challenging. (Jennings & Weiler 2006.)

5.1.3 *Experience creation as a process*

Customer information and learning based on that knowledge are evidently key factors in experience creation. However, despite the plethora of literature on experience management and value co-creation, there is a surprising lack of frameworks to help organizations manage the co-creation process. Previous literature has presented examples of companies that have adopted co-creation and given useful insights into what needs to be addressed but relatively little direction has been given on how this process should be undertaken. (Payne, Storbacka & Frow 2008.)

Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) have argued that value is created in the consumer–company interaction and identified four key building blocks in this process: dialogue, access, risk assessment, and transparency (DART). *Dialogue* means interactivity, deep engagement, and a propensity to act. It goes beyond listening to the customers and implies shared learning and communication between two equal problem solvers, creating a loyal community. *Access* means access to desirable experiences. Instead of traditional ownership, consumers increasingly prefer access to products, services, experiences, or even lifestyles provided by for example car sharing services, or in the tourism context, time-share vacation homes. *Risk assessment* refers to the probability of harm to consumers of which they need to be better informed. This does not only involve providing information and data but also using the appropriate methodologies for assessing the personal and societal risk associated with the products and services. *Transparency* means sharing more information about products, technologies, and business systems. Traditionally, companies have benefited from the information asymmetry between consumers and companies but increasing transparency facilitates trust creation between both sides. Adopting this DART-model may be difficult as it challenges the traditional roles of companies and consumers. The tension manifests itself at certain points of interactions which provide opportunities for collaboration and negotiation between the consumer and the company as well as opportunities for those processes to break down. (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004.)

Even though tourism research has not been as eager to adopt the service-dominant logic (Vargo & Lusch 2004) as mainstream marketing, the application of its concepts provide a framework for examining supplier-consumer processes involved in the co-creation of tourism experiences (Shaw et al. 2011). Payne et al. (2008) have developed a conceptual framework (Figure 11) for understanding and managing value co-creation which also recognizes the centrality of different processes: customer value-creating processes, supplier value-creating processes, and encounter processes.

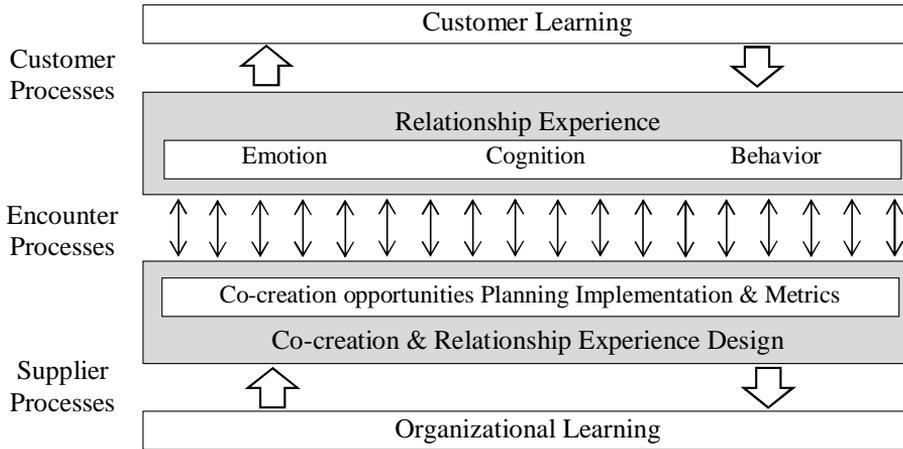


Figure 11 A conceptual framework for value co-creation (Payne et al. 2008)

The arrows in the middle represent the interactive encounters between the customer and the supplier, which occur as a result of their respective value-creating processes. Based on these experiences, the customer engages in learning which has an impact on how the customer will engage in future value co-creation activities with the supplier. The customer's value creation process involves a series of activities performed to achieve a particular goal. In this process, resources like information, knowledge, and skills play a key role. In order to improve competitiveness, the supplier has to develop its capacity to either add to the customer's total pool of resources in terms of competence and capabilities, or enable a more efficient and effective use of the available resources. Creating customer experiences is less about the products and more about relationships which the customer has vis-à-vis the total offering. This should not be viewed in the traditional "*engineering*" sense, but as a dynamic, interactive, non-linear, and often unconscious process. Recognizing these customer processes is needed in order to develop an understanding of where the supplier's offering fits within the customer's overall activities. By understanding the customer's emotions, cognition, and behavior, the supplier can shift the focus of marketing communications from seeking attention to the dialogue with the customers, supporting their experiences and learning processes. (Payne et al. 2008.)

Similarly, Payne et al. (2008) have suggested that as the supplier learns more about the customer, more opportunities become available for the supplier to further improve the design of the relationship experience and enhance the co-creation with customers. Creating value for the customer begins with an understanding of the customer's value-creating processes, which involves a

review of the co-creation opportunities; planning, testing, and prototyping these opportunities with the customers; implementing customer solutions and managing customer encounters; and developing metrics to assess whether the company is making the appropriate value propositions. Payne et al. (2008) have identified three types of co-creation opportunities, i.e., strategic options for creating value: opportunities provided by i) technological breakthroughs, ii) changes in industry logics, and iii) changes in customer preferences and lifestyles. Planning aims at supporting better value-creation and requires a change from “*making, selling, and servicing*” to “*listening, customizing, and co-creating*”.

Shaw et al. (2011) have discussed the service-dominant logic and examined co-creation processes from the perspective of tourism management in the context of the hotel industry. They have connected value co-creation to innovation and argued that hotels which aim at development through product/service innovation are strongly reliant on the implementation of co-creation strategies with customers. Furthermore, Shaw et al. (2011) suggest that co-creation is already relatively well advanced in some areas of the tourism industry, even if the academic research in this field lags behind to some extent. Furthermore, there are tourism studies that discuss similar issues but approach the theme from the perspective of innovation management (e.g. Hall & Shaw 2008; Hjalager, 2010). For example, Hjalager & Nordin (2011) have provided a framework for understanding user-driven innovation in tourism, classifying sixteen approaches to user-driven innovation into four categories, based on the role of users (active/passive) and their involvement (many users/limited amount of users). Also Alsos et al. (2014) have discussed the consequences of the experience turn for innovation research and noted that understanding the elements and the nature of experience production and consumption as well as the different values and value creations of customers is vital for market-oriented experience design and innovations.

5.1.4 *Pursuing loyalty through quality, satisfaction, and value*

Service providers strive for quality tourism experiences, satisfied customers, and delivering value in order to obtain a competitive advantage by engaging consumers and inspiring repurchase intentions and positive word-of-mouth behavior. Thus, ultimately, organizations try to find strategic differentiators to achieve consumer loyalty. (Mascarenhas, Kesavan & Bernacchi 2006; Kumar et al. 2013). Loyalty can be divided into “*attitudinal loyalty*” referring to intentions and the likelihood to recommend, repurchase, or revisit, and “*behavioral loyalty*” referring to the actual behavior of customers, which often

interests companies more since it can be directly linked to revenues and profitability (Kumar et al. 2013). Experience management is often seen as a solution for enhancing customer relationships and building customer loyalty (Frow & Payne 2007; Morgan et al. 2010).

Knutson and Beck (2003) have argued that in order to manage tourism experiences, they need to be made measurable. Likewise, Maklan and Klaus (2011) have highlighted the lack of widely agreed measurement indicators for customer experiences. The challenges of defining and measuring experiences creates a dilemma for market researchers, who acknowledge that even though competition is increasingly based on customer experiences, they are still guiding managerial decisions with indicators that are more suitable for the evaluation of products and services (Maklan & Klaus 2011).

Various researchers have developed scales for measuring experiences such as the consumer experience index (Knutson et al. 2007) and its variation for the hotel industry (Knutson, Beck, Kim & Cha 2009), the pleasure–arousal–dominance scale (Mehrabian & Russel 1974), the absorbing experience scale (Swanson 1978), the sensation seeking scale (Zuckerman 1994), and the experiential value scale (Mathwick, Malhotra & Rigdon 2001). It seems, however, that these scales are still just extensions of the scales that are used to evaluate products and services and thus they are too limited to capture the holistic nature of experiences. Maklan and Klaus (2011) have argued that market researchers need to develop an appropriate measure for the customer experience which i) is based on an overall cognitive and emotional assessment of value rather than expectations, ii) captures value perceptions and not just the attributes of product and service delivery, iii) also assesses emotional responses, iv) determines a focal time period, and v) is validated against behavioral and attitudinal measures. In response, Klaus and Maklan (2012; see also Maklan & Klaus 2011) have proposed the EXQ scale, which includes both specific concrete attributes and also more abstract perceptual attributes. The context of the study, mortgages, is by no means directly applicable to package tourism, but the authors suggested that the instrument might interest providers of other high-involvement and high-impact services and that further research is needed in relation to more hedonic consumer experience settings.

Despite these specific experience scales, the evaluation of consumer experiences is still most often conducted with measures of service quality, customer satisfaction, and consumer value (e.g. Oliver 1999; Cronin, Brady & Hult 2000; Gallarza & Gil Saura 2006). These complementary yet distinct concepts (Chadee & Mattsson 1996; Komppula 2006) have been revisited by academics over the last 30 years. Waves of conceptual research have begun with service quality and carried through to satisfaction. The past years have, however, witnessed a growing interest in customer value, partially replacing the more

narrow concepts of quality and satisfaction (e.g. Gallarza & Gil Saura 2006; Gallarza & Gil 2008; Sánchez-Fernández, Ángeles Iniesta-Bonillo & Holbrook 2009).

According to the common definition of service quality, a “*service should correspond to the customer’s expectations and satisfy his needs*” (Edvardsson 1997, 33). The close relationship between quality and satisfaction is evident; customers are satisfied when their judgment of the service they have received equals or exceeds what they expected (Oliver 1980). Satisfaction can be further divided into overall satisfaction (Spreng, MacKenzie & Olshavsky 1996), i.e., the emotional reaction to a product or service experience, and attribute satisfaction (Oliver 1993), i.e., the consumer's subjective satisfaction judgment resulting from attribute performance (Petrick & Backman 2002).

The debate on the conceptual distinction of quality and satisfaction still continues. So far, the literature has recognized that satisfaction and quality are both subjective evaluations of a service experience, based on the comparison between perceived performance and some standard reference point (Orsingher & Marzocchi 2003). Satisfaction, however, is a psychological outcome emerging from a specific experience, and is at least partially linked to emotional feelings, whereas service quality, which does not necessarily imply a personal experience, is more concerned with the attributes of the service itself and results mainly from a cognitive process (Crompton & MacKay 1989; Orsingher & Marzocchi 2003).

For years, companies around the world have invested heavily in customer satisfaction in the hope of increasing loyalty and, consequently, profitability (Kumar et al. 2013). Also in tourism research, satisfaction is one of the most frequently examined topics (Neal & Gursoy 2008) and, in general, tourism experiences are considered to result in customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction as was depicted in the conceptual model of a tourism experience (Figure 10) by Quinlan Cutler & Carmichael (2010).

Without a doubt, a satisfied customer base is a laudable goal for all businesses (Kumar et al. 2013), but, customer satisfaction is not the only criterion in determining the loyalty and future purchases of customers (Liljander & Roos 2001). A recent study of Kumar et al. (2013) has challenged the dominant paradigm concerning the link between satisfaction and loyalty by arguing that even though there is an overall positive relationship between satisfaction and loyalty, the variance explained by mere satisfaction is rather small (about 8%). As customer satisfaction does not adequately explain loyalty, other variables, such as perceived value, switching costs, trust, commitment, loyalty program membership, and level of customer involvement, should be taken into account in order to paint a more complete picture (Kumar et al. 2013).

Consumer value is evidently a more elusive concept than service quality or customer satisfaction (Grönroos 2000; Carù & Cova 2003) and researchers have defined it in various ways (Prebensen, Woo, Chen & Uysal 2013). Gallarza and Gil Saura's (2006) review of value research in tourism revealed that most of the empirical testing of tourism value models adopts a utilitarian perspective, where value is merely quality in relation to the price paid or the very simple view of value for money. Also Prebensen, Woo, Chen and Uysal (2013) have noted that, traditionally, value was seen as a trade-off between quality and price (Cravens, Holland, Lamb & Moncrieff 1988) or benefits and costs/sacrifices (Zeithaml 1988), but have also pointed out that due to the fact that tourists want to be involved and spend time and money on their vacations, this involvement should not be considered as a mere sacrifice or cost for the tourist.

Many researchers (e.g. Gallarza & Gil Saura, 2006; Bradley & Sparks 2012; Prebensen, Woo, Chen & Uysal 2013) have followed the lead of Holbrook (1999, 5), who defined value as "*an interactive relativistic preference experience*", referring to: i) the interaction between a consumer and a product, ii) the simultaneously subjective, comparative, and situational nature of value, iii) preference judgments or evaluations, and iv) consumption experiences rather than mere purchasing (Holbrook 1999; Gallarza & Gil 2008). Furthermore, Holbrook (1994, 1999) proposed a multidimensional value typology with three dimensions: extrinsic/intrinsic, self/other-oriented, and active/reactive, resulting in eight types of consumer value: efficiency, excellence, status, esteem, play, esthetics, ethics, and spirituality. According to Gallarza and Gil Saura (2006), Holbrook's typology can be used to explain tourism experiences, as their empirical study suggested a strong relation between the two self-oriented extrinsic values (efficiency and quality). It also emphasized the importance of the other-oriented dimension and the dual nature (cognitive and affective) of value, due to which there is a need to surpass the utilitarian approaches on value proposals (Gallarza & Gil Saura 2006). Sánchez-Fernández et al. (2009), in turn, have reduced the typology to six types of consumer value, and based on empirical evidence, suggested that consumer value is a higher-level abstraction rather than a directly measurable attribute. They also found that the intrinsic categories (play, esthetics, and altruistic) are more reflective of consumer value than the extrinsic categories (efficiency, quality, and social).

According to Komppula (2006, 139), tourists' perceptions of value result from a variety of quality-related perceptions and experiences with the service provider over a period of time. Based on the ideas of Woodruff (1997), Komppula (2005) has distinguished three stages of value. "*Expected value*" refers to the needs, goals, and purposes that underlie tourist motivations, while

“*perceived value*” reflects the perceptions and experiences before and during the service is actually being performed. Finally, “*experienced value*” is formed during and after the service process and reflects the customer satisfaction with the received value, which is evaluated against the customer’s goals and purposes. According to Komppula and Gartner (2013), the experienced value refers to the multidimensional outcome that the traveler constructs after returning home (cf. Walls et al. 2011). Similarly, based on Woodruff (1997), Prebensen, Woo, Chen and Uysal (2013, 254) argue that the value of a tourism experience is the sum of many experiences and, therefore, they define the value of the destination experience as “*the process by which a tourist receives, selects, organizes, and interprets information based on the various experiences at the destination, to create a meaningful picture of a value of destination experience.*”

Academics seem to agree that quality is an antecedent of both satisfaction and value, yet there are distinct viewpoints on whether satisfaction influences value or vice versa (e.g. Gallarza & Gil Saura, 2006, Sánchez, Callarisa, Rodríguez & Moliner, 2006). For example Prebensen, Woo, Chen and Uysal (2013) consider value as an important antecedent to satisfaction while Komppula and Gartner (2013) argue that value reflects customer satisfaction which is, therefore, an antecedent of value.

5.1.5 *Satisfaction versus experienced value*

In Article 2, customer satisfaction was considered as an antecedent of experienced value, which was measured by the success of the vacation experience. Based on the above discussion, the experience model by Quinlan Cutler and Carmichael (2010) was further developed by adding the perspective of a tour operator and the concepts of service quality, value, and loyalty along with dis/satisfaction (Figure 12).

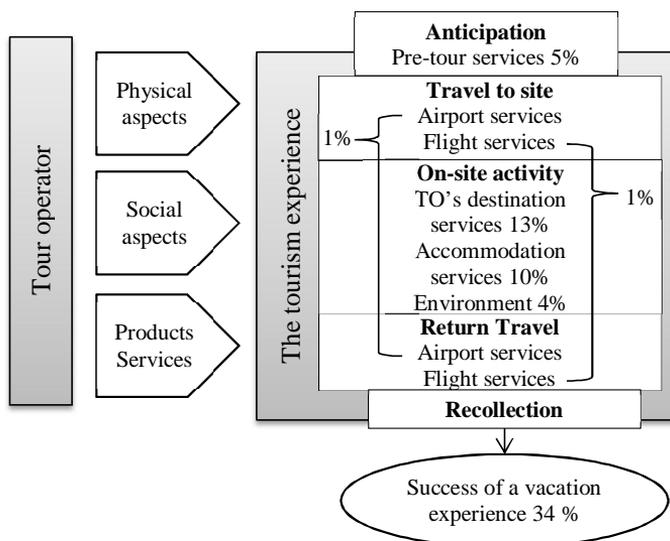


Figure 13 Package tour components and the success of an experience (Räikkönen & Honkanen 2013)

In response to Walls et al. (2010) who requested more research on whether different experience factors carry equal weight in experience formation, it was proposed that the components which are located in the tourism destination region are far more important than the services within the tourist generating region or on the transit routes (cf. Leiper 1979). Furthermore, the different components of a package tour product were not equally important for the success of a tourism experience, and therefore, in experience creation and resource allocation, the tour operators' destination services and accommodation services should be emphasized. The flight and airport services, by contrast, did not seem to influence the success of a tourism experience to a great extent, which is somewhat contradictory to previous studies (Martín-Cejas 2006).

Furthermore, the study indicated that focusing on satisfaction and mere external factors might not lead to adequate and accurate measuring of the success of a tourism experience, as satisfaction is a prerequisite of experienced value but not sufficient on its own. Even if a tourist is perfectly satisfied with the tourism product and the destination, the tourism experience may still end up being unsuccessful. The experienced value seems to be a more multidimensional construct than satisfaction and, therefore, future research should further examine the relationship of satisfaction and value in experience evaluation.

5.2 Managing service failures and service recoveries

5.2.1 *Service failure, service recovery, and dissatisfaction*

Alegre and Garau (2010) have argued that in order to understand tourism experiences, factors that influence both satisfaction and dissatisfaction need to be taken into account. The relationship between satisfaction and dissatisfaction is complex because they are not always the opposite sides of the same coin. Even if certain factors generate satisfaction, their absence may not lead to dissatisfaction and vice versa. (Bitner et al. 1990; Alegre & Garau 2010.)

Dissatisfaction and stress for tourists in vacation experiences are caused by for example overcrowding and environmental degradation (Alegre & Garau 2010), unfamiliar customs and food, difficulties over money, personal safety and health, language problems, and relationships with fellow tourists (Bowie & Chang 2005). Furthermore, tourism experiences can be deteriorated by various service failures such as transport delays, problems with accommodation services (e.g. cleanliness, safety issues, and maintenance works) and service staff (Bowie & Chang 2005; Moscardo 2006), insufficient or misleading information, high price levels, and inconsistency in quality (Johnston 1995). *Service failure* occurs when the provided service does not match the customer's expectation of the service promised in the pre-encounter marketing mix (Bowie & Buttle 2004). Service failures are inevitable and, unfortunately, frequent, as well (Fisk et al. 1993; McCollough 2009) causing significantly lower levels of satisfaction as well as lower likelihoods of repurchasing and recommendations (McCollough 2000; Garlick 2005).

Service recovery, in turn, refers to the actions that an organization takes in response to a service failure (Grönroos 1988; 1990) in order to resolve the problem, alter negative attitudes, and, to ultimately, retain the dissatisfied consumers (Miller, Craighead & Karwan 2000). Notably, service recovery is not just complaint handling or management but it also addresses the company's ability to react immediately to failed service encounters, thus pleasing the customers before they find it necessary to complain (Miller et al. 2000; Michel & Meuter 2008). The nature of service recovery can be either proactive and preventive or reactive and transaction-specific, the latter pair of which has received considerably more attention in the literature (Boshoff 1999).

When consumers are dissatisfied they either voice or do not voice their dissatisfaction (Bolfing 1989; Davidow 2003a; Dickinger & Bauernfeind 2009). A customer complaint is just one way of expressing dissatisfaction but it is, nevertheless, important because the service provider can still influence the customer's post-dissatisfaction response (Davidow 2003a). Therefore, customer complaints should be encouraged, seen as a positive asset to the

organization, and used as a starting point for understanding service failures, developing effective service recovery strategies, and improving customer retention (Mack, Muller, Crotts & Broderick 2000; Swanson & Hsu 2009).

Often, customers do not file a complaint because it requires too much effort or does not seem worth the possible compensation (Chebat, Davidow & Codjovi 2005). Instead, they can express their dissatisfaction by for example spreading negative word-of-mouth, boycotting, switching service providers, or seeking compensation through third parties (Singh, 1990). Previous research has identified different types of complainers (e.g. Singh 1988, 1990; Kim & Lynn 2007; Joireman et al. 2013) as well as different factors that influence complaining behavior (Chebat et al. 2005; Svavi & Erling Olsen 2012).

Complaints to the company can be made *concurrently* to the frontline employee (e.g. tour leader) when the service failure occurs, or be filed *subsequently*, for example, by letter of complaint, telephone, or increasingly by email (Bowie & Buttle 2004; Dickinger & Bauernfeind 2009). The benefits of concurrent complaining are evident as the customer gives the company the opportunity to respond and attempt to rectify the problem on the spot (Bowie & Buttle 2004). Various studies acknowledge that training frontline employees and empowering them to take immediate actions is crucially important (e.g. Karatepe 2006; Joireman et al. 2013). In subsequent complaining, the damage has already happened and cannot be rectified although the company still has the opportunity to win back the customer (Bowie & Buttle 2004).

In the context of package tours, two major sources of dissatisfaction and complaints seem to be the tour operator's arrangements (hotel selection and itinerary) and the tour leader's competence (Bowie & Chang 2005). According to Rääkkönen and Cortez Monto (2010), accommodation was the primary cause of most (64%) package tourism complaints and, interestingly, the tour leader services were the primary cause of only 3% of complaints – however – nearly 20% of the respondents reported their tour leaders as a cause for service failure. Furthermore, a qualitative analysis of customer complaints in Article 3 resulted in a similar finding as the primary reason for dissatisfaction was most frequently failure in the core service, but when primary and secondary reasons were combined, the behavior of the tour leader was identified as a focal reason for complaining. This finding is consistent with previous research on exit behavior indicating that customer relationships often end as a consequence of a negative incident (Oliver 1997; Bolton 1998) and that the trigger incident (i.e. the core service failure) is typically followed by a determinant incident, (i.e. the recovery effort) which often causes the termination of the relationship (Coulter 2009; cf. Coulter & Ligas 2000).

In Finland, concurrent complaining is encouraged by legislation. According to the Package Travel Act (1079/1994) "*the traveler does not have the right to*

invoke a fault, unless he or she files a complaint regarding the same with the organizer without undue delay after the traveler has become aware or ought to have become aware of the fault". If the complaint or claim is filed subsequently, the tourist is required to have informed the tour organizer about the service failure within a reasonable time, according to Verhelä (2000), no more than two months after returning home from the package tour. In reality, however, the frontline employees seem to have limited problem-solving abilities, as 70% of package tourists who filed a complaint subsequently, after their vacation, were of the opinion that the problem should have been solved concurrently, during the vacation (Räikkönen & Cortez Monto 2010).

5.2.2 *Tour leaders in customer complaints*

In Article 3, the role of tour leaders in service failure situations was examined based on the study of Bitner et al. (1990) in which three categories of service failures within tourism and hospitality industries were identified: i) employee response to service delivery system failure, ii) employee response to customer needs and requests, and iii) unprompted and unsolicited employee actions. This categorization has been used also in a more recent study by Swanson and Hsu (2009), who stated that a majority of travel and tourism related service failures were system delivery failures (72%), followed by unprompted employee actions (19%), and failure to respond to customer requests (9%). Article 3, however, did not aim to quantify service failures but rather concentrated on describing the incidents related to tour leaders within these categories.

In the first category, "*employee response towards service delivery system failure*", the tour leader had not helped or informed the tourists properly, or the service had been slow. The incident often began with a failure in some part of the core service, but the tour leader's reaction increased the customer's dissatisfaction. The most frequently mentioned incident was the lack of help from the tour leader when a significant service failure occurred in the hotel. Especially in cases when the customers had to change hotels, they would have needed the tour leader's help and expertise. Furthermore, the customers had expected a more personal interaction in the notifications regarding unusual circumstances such as flight delays, and were disappointed by the unfriendly answers to their questions or by tour leaders rushing away from them in a hurry. Finally, both the lack of information and misleading or inaccurate information caused dissatisfaction. Notably, in many complaints, the customer pointed out that the original failure in the core service would not have made

them file a complaint had the tour leader handled the situation in a more appropriate way.

In the second category, “*employee response to customer needs and requests*”, the tour leaders did not adjust the service according to the tourists’ wishes and needs. Dissatisfaction was perceived especially when the tour leader had first promised something out of the ordinary and then failed to fulfill the promise, which left the tourists feeling frustrated and angry. In particular, the tourists expected the tour leaders to help them in the case of sudden illness and were dissatisfied because the tour leaders did not help them at the hospital or advise them about medication. Furthermore, the tour leaders were expected to offer certificates for the insurance companies to prove illness during the vacation.

The third category, “*unprompted and unsolicited employee actions*”, contained the most varied reasons for dissatisfaction in relation to the tour leaders. It included for example behavior that was not considered suitable for a tour leader, such as spending time with other tour leaders and ignoring the tourists at the destination or during excursions. Inefficient actions in handling the group resulting in delays were also mentioned but, surprisingly, this category also contained some positive remarks about tour leaders, who for example had offered to do something for the customers so they could enjoy themselves during the excursion.

The analysis clearly revealed that there are discrepancies between the expected and the actual content of the tour leaders’ responsibilities – often, dissatisfaction is caused due to different views on the tour leaders’ tasks. In order to reduce this gap, either tourists should be better informed about the content of tour leaders’ responsibilities or the tour leaders’ tasks should be modified to better respond to the expectations.

5.2.3 *Managing service recovery – Still pursuing loyalty*

Based on the focal idea of relationship marketing, i.e., “*attracting, maintaining, and enhancing customer relationships*” (Berry 1983, 25), the goal of service recovery is to retain existing customers (Swanson & Hsu 2009). Previous research has shown that replacing existing customers is far more costly than keeping them loyal (Reichheld & Sasser 1990), but still organizational responses to service failures are often ad hoc and not well-planned (Laws 2001). Service recovery is a service encounter in its own right (Swanson & Hsu 2009) and the service provider’s reaction either makes things better by reinforcing a strong customer bond or worsens the situation by

making a seemingly minor distraction into a major incident (Berry, Parasuraman & Zeithaml 1994; Hoffman, Kelley & Rotalsky 1995).

Davidow (2003a) proposed a model of post-complaint customer behavior responses (Figure 14), which illustrates the central concepts and relationships of service failure and recovery: the organizational response to the service failure, situational contingencies, perceived justice, response evaluation, and post-dissatisfaction customer response.

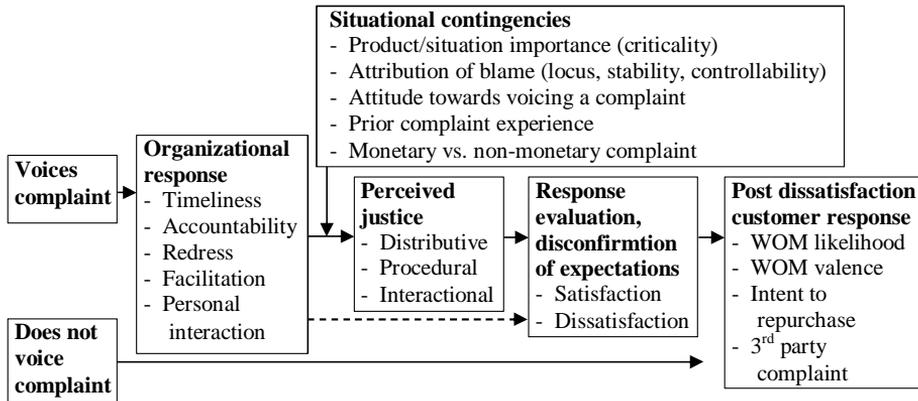


Figure 14 Post-complaint customer behavior responses model (Davidow 2003a)

There are various ways in which organizations can respond to service failures, such as acknowledging the problem, providing an explanation, offering discounts, coupons, or a replacement service, and following up on the recovery progress (Bradley & Sparks 2009). Smith et al. (1999) have identified four recovery attributes (compensation, response speed, apology, and initiation), Davidow (2003a) has listed five organizational responses (timeliness, accountability, redress, facilitation, and personal interaction), and Karatepe (2006) seven types of responses (atonement, facilitation, promptness, apology, explanation, attentiveness, and effort).

Previous research clearly demonstrates the importance of service recovery efforts (Mattila & Mount 2003) but surprisingly often, complaints are still ignored by service providers. According to Lee and Hu (2005), only about 20% of hotel customers' e-complaints received a response, and according to a more recent study by Dickinger and Bauernfeind (2009), only 44% of on airline e-complaints received a response. Furthermore, Swanson and Hsu (2009) have noted that within the travel and tourism sector, in over one third of the service failure incidents the service provider made no recovery attempts. When recovery did take place, the most common strategy was service correction (23%),

followed by various forms of compensation, such as refunding the money (13%) or correction plus discount or refund (12%), credit for future service (10%), free addition (10%), management intervention (9%), failure escalation (9%), discount (7%), and apology (7%) (Swanson & Hsu 2009).

Service recovery studies are usually based on two theoretical paradigms (McCole 2004; McCollough 2009): the disconfirmation theory, focusing on the difference between expectations and perceptions (e.g. Singh & Widing 1991; McCollough, Berry & Yadav 2000), and the equity or justice theory (Bies & Moag 1986), concentrating on individuals' perceptions of the fairness of a situation or a decision (e.g. Goodwin & Ross 1992; Tax, Brown & Chandrashekar 1998; Karatepe 2006). There is a growing literature demonstrating the links between different recovery strategies, justice considerations, and customer evaluations of service recovery (see Bradley & Sparks 2009). Perceived justice is divided into *distributive justice* related to the fairness of the decision outcome, *procedural justice* referring to the fairness of the decision-making process, and *interactional justice* related to the fairness of the interpersonal behavior (Davidow 2003a).

Empirical findings suggest that atonement or compensation is the most important recovery dimension associated with distributive justice (Karatepe 2006; cf. Tax et al. 1998; Bowen, Gilliland & Folger 1999), whereas facilitation and promptness (Karatepe 2006) or the speed of complaint handling (Tax et al. 1998) are important dimensions of procedural justice. Furthermore, as customers become frustrated and angry if they do not receive any information of the complaint handling process (Schoefer & Ennew 2004), managers should make sure that their customers know where to complain and how the complaint will be handled (Davidow 2003b). Finally, apology, explanation, attentiveness, and effort are positively related to perceptions of interactional justice (Blodgett et al. 1997; Tax et al. 1998; Davidow 2003a; Karatepe 2006; Bradley & Sparks 2009) but the effects of attentiveness and effort seem to be stronger than the effects of apology and explanation (Karatepe 2006).

Regardless of the theoretical paradigm, a consistent and uniform finding of previous research has been that successful service recovery results in complaint/recovery satisfaction and leads to loyalty, i.e., positive word-of-mouth behavior and repurchase intention (McCollough 2009). Evidently, the success of a service recovery is most often measured with customer satisfaction, yet Boshoff (1999, 2005) has criticized the limited amount of items usually used in the measurement and has developed an instrument (RECOVSAT) for assessing satisfaction at the dimensional level. According to Davidow (2003b), the only relevant measure of complaint handling, however, is repurchase and thus, managers should focus especially on increasingly important word-of-mouth activity. Notably, voicing both positive and negative

experiences through online customer reviews has become significant criteria in tourists' decision making processes (Black & Kelley 2009). Occasionally, effective recovery has also been linked to other positive outcomes such as trust, service quality, and value (Tax et al. 1998; Boshoff 2005).

Various situational factors also have an effect on justice perceptions, satisfaction, and loyalty. According to Davidow (2003a), these situational contingencies include for example the importance of the product or the situation, the attribution of blame, and the attitude towards voicing a complaint, prior complaint experience, and monetary versus non-monetary motive of complaint. Furthermore, research has addressed the perceived criticality of the consumption experience (Sparks & Fredline 2007), whether the service failure is noticed first by the customer or by the service provider, and the severity, magnitude, or harm of the service failure (Mattila 1999; McCollough 2009).

Previous literature clearly demonstrates that in successful service recoveries, adequate compensation (Smith et al. 1999; Davidow 2003a; Kim, Kim & Kim 2009) and the interpersonal skills of the frontline employees (Blodgett et al. 1997; Karatepe 2006) are crucial and that complaints should also be processed quickly (Mattila & Mount 2003). A successful service recovery may even lead to the "*service recovery paradox*", referring to a situation where post-failure satisfaction exceeds pre-failure satisfaction (McCollough & Bharadwaj 1992; Smith & Bolton 2002). However, service providers should strive to deliver services correctly in the first place instead of permitting failures and then trying to respond with a superior recovery action, as there is no clear consensus supporting the service recovery paradox (De Matos, Henrique & Rossi 2007; Michel & Meuter 2008).

A poor recovery, in turn, results in "*double deviation*" or second failure (Bitner et al. 1990; Bhandari, Tsarenko & Polonsky 2007), leading to considerably higher levels of dissatisfaction, switching and exit behavior, negative word-of-mouth behavior (Hoffman & Kelley 2000; Maxham & Netemeyer 2002; Coulter 2009), and even a desire for revenge (Bechwati & Morrin 2003). A recent study, however, suggests that following a failed recovery, companies still have a second chance, which accentuates the role of service recovery even in the case of severe dissatisfaction (Joireman et al. 2013).

As research on customer experiences in general, also research on service recoveries has focused mainly on cognitive aspects (Slåtten, Mehmetoglu, Svensson & Sviri 2009; Martin, Martin, Hubbard & Palmer 2008). Recently, however, the emphasis has shifted to understanding the range of emotions related to service experiences, such as customer anger and rage (Nguyen & McColl-Kennedy 2003; McColl-Kennedy, Patterson, Smith & Brady 2009; Sviri, Slåtten, Svensson & Edvardsson 2011). Emotions are found to mediate the relations between justice, satisfaction, and behavioral response as

individuals do not calculate justice but rather react to a justice-related emotion. The actual behavior of customers is, therefore, mostly emotion-driven. Even if the problem itself can be fixed, the customers do not necessarily remain loyal to the service provider unless their emotions are properly attended to. (Smith & Bolton 2002; Chebat & Slusarczyk 2005; Sviri et al. 2011; Petzer et al. 2012.)

5.2.4 *Concurrent versus subsequent service recovery*

Despite the fact that the previous literature is unanimous in highlighting the importance of frontline employees, there are no studies that combine or compare concurrent and subsequent service recoveries even though both have an effect on post-complaint customer behavior (Bowie & Buttle, 2004). In the context of package tourism, a study of Rääkkönen and Cortez Monto (2010) has noted that the tour leaders were considered polite and approachable but their ability to correct service failures and solve problems was considered limited and the service recovery took too much time. Furthermore, the tour leaders seemed to understand the importance of an apology but they did not provide a proper explanation for the service failure often enough and, as a result, 45% of the respondents were not satisfied with the tour leaders' service recovery actions (Rääkkönen & Cortez Monto 2010).

Article 4 examined how concurrent service recovery by tour leaders in the vacation destination versus the subsequent service recovery by the customer service department influenced the recovery satisfaction and customer loyalty which was divided into positive word-of-mouth behavior and repurchase intention. The study contributes to the academic understanding of service recovery by providing a holistic view on the topic, combining both concurrent and subsequent service recoveries. Furthermore, it offers valuable information to tour operators who strive for efficient and satisfactory recovery processes in order to retain their customers despite a service failure.

The survey design was based on various studies on service recovery (Bolfing 1989; Blodgett et al. 1993; Blodgett et al. 1997; Smith et al. 1999; Mattila 2001; Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002; Davidow 2003b; Karatepe 2006). However, as no previous studies had examined concurrent versus subsequent service recoveries, the exploratory factor analysis was first conducted in order to discover the underlying structure of the exogenous variables concerning concurrent and subsequent service recovery. The second phase consisted of testing the predicted relationships between these exogenous constructs and the endogenous constructs derived from previous studies using the path analysis.

As illustrated in Figure 15, all structural paths were consistent with the signs of the hypothesized relationships among the constructs and all proposed hypotheses were supported. Concurrent service recovery had a significant but fairly weak effect on recovery satisfaction and, in fact, even the effect of facilitation seemed to have a stronger effect on satisfaction. Compensation and subsequent service recovery, in turn, had a much greater effect on recovery satisfaction, which is a finding consistent with previous research. Also, as hypothesized, recovery satisfaction had a fairly strong significant effect on both word-of-mouth behavior and repurchase intention. Furthermore, the analysis indicated that there was a direct effect from subsequent service recovery to both word-of-mouth behavior and repurchase intention and from facilitation to word-of-mouth behavior. This emphasizes the importance of subsequent service recovery on customer loyalty, yet clearly indicates that the service recovery actions of tour leaders were not sufficient.

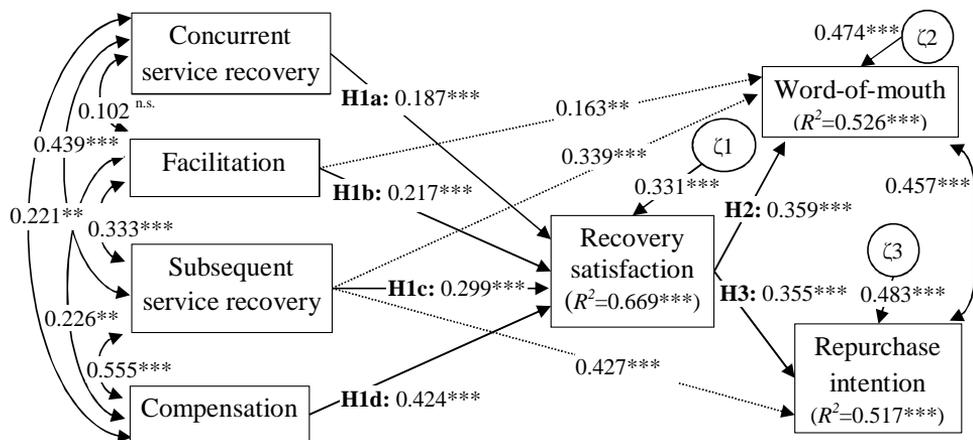


Figure 15 Results of the path analysis (Räikkönen & Honkanen, submitted)

The study contributes to the service recovery literature by comparing concurrent and subsequent service recoveries, which has not been done before. Compensation played a key role in affecting recovery satisfaction, which is a finding consistent with previous literature (Tax et al. 1998; Bowen et al. 1999; Karatepe 2006; Kim et al. 2009), but subsequent service recovery was also found to be important for both recovery satisfaction and loyalty, while the tour leaders' ability to manage service recoveries in a way that creates recovery satisfaction, appeared to be limited. Furthermore, the survey data from actual service recovery experiences of package tourists can be considered as strength of the study as service recovery research mainly relies on the use of scenario data.

6 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

6.1 Theoretical contribution

The aim of the thesis was to create a deeper understanding of the factors that have an effect on package tourism experiences and, consequently, to illustrate the role of tour operators and tour leaders in experience creation and management. This was formulated into two research questions: 1) *What is the role of different experience factors in the formation of tourism experiences?* 2) *What is the role of tour operators and tour leaders in the creation of package tourism experiences?* The research questions were addressed in four distinct empirical studies, which are reported in Articles 1–4. Article 1 examined tourism experiences at a general level while the remaining three articles focused on package tourism, which was the actual context of the thesis.

The key empirical findings and contribution of the thesis are illustrated in Figure 16, which is derived from the experience model (Figure 4) of Knutson and Beck (2003) but is considerably simplified version as only the concepts and relationships that were examined in the empirical studies are included. Notably, the model is used to highlight the main results and contribution of the thesis, not to explain it holistically, as each empirical study was based on different data sets and employed different methods of analysis.

Based on the empirical findings of the thesis, the role of service providers in experience creation seems to be quite limited. Even though tangible elements such as attractions, events, as well as products and services offered by the tourism industry are essential prerequisites for the creation of successful tourism experiences, it seems that especially peak experiences are more often associated with abstract and emotional elements such as tranquility, peace of mind, companionship, overcoming challenges, and fulfilment of dreams. In addition, it is clear that in successful tourism experiences the participation of individuals is passive rather than active, which highlights the importance of entertaining and esthetic elements as opposed to escapist and educational elements. This is an interesting finding as in marketing, tourism experiences are often connected to activities, adventures, and even extreme experiences offered by different service providers and tour operators (Saarinen 2001a; Tuohino & Pitkänen 2002). Furthermore, the analysis implies that also negative incidents involved in tourism experiences can be or become extraordinary emotional peak experiences and highlights of the whole journey.

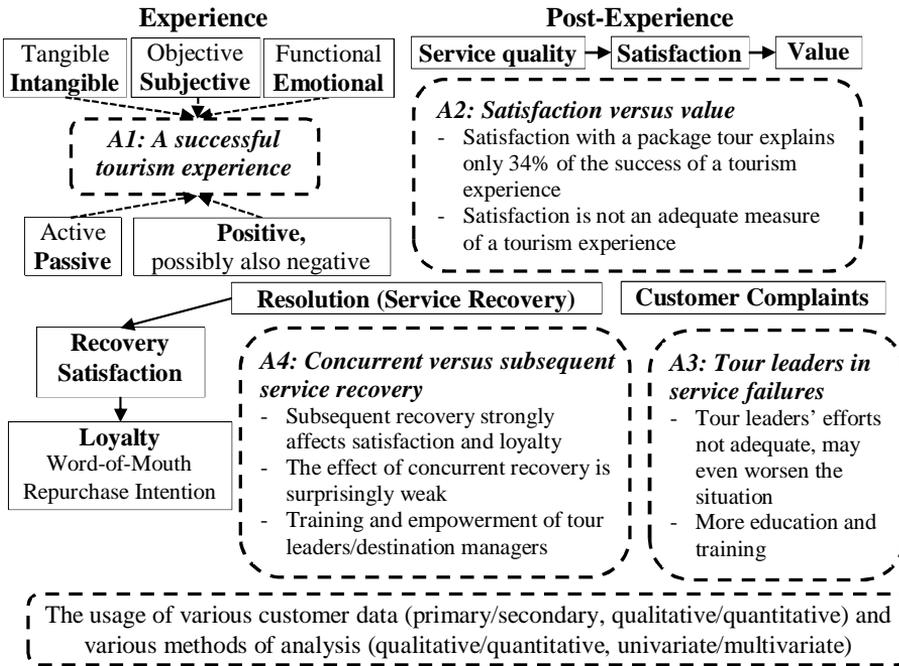


Figure 16 Key empirical findings and contribution of the thesis

The limited role of service providers was affirmed also in the context of package tourism. A quantitative analysis of a large customer satisfaction data of the tour operator Suntours Ltd resulted in the identification of six dimensions of a package tour out of which destination services and accommodation services were the key factors in explaining the success of the tourism experience. Pre-tour services and environmental issues were also essential, whereas flight and airport services were the least important. The main result of the study, however, was that, together, these six components explained only 34% of the variance in the success of a tourism experience. Therefore, it is argued that satisfaction with the services of tour operators has only a limited impact on the success of a package tourism experience. This finding strengthens the idea that hybrid and complex tourism experiences are influenced by various factors and actors, many of which are irrespective of the tour operator.

Based on the empirical evidence of the thesis, the dominant role of customer satisfaction in measuring and evaluating tourism experiences can be questioned and criticized (cf. Kumar et al. 2013; Maklan & Klaus 2011). There have been various attempts to develop distinct experience scales but, to a large extent, they are still derived from the measurements of service quality or satisfaction and mainly focus on the tangible elements of service encounters. Concentrating on consumer value in a broader sense than the traditional value for money perspective evidently offers a fertile ground for understand-

ing the nature of tourism experiences (cf. Gallarza & Gil Saura 2006; Gallarza & Gil 2008). Blind faith in customer satisfaction, in turn, may lead to a situation where service providers continuously focus on the activities that they have traditionally provided instead of taking a more broad perspective in enhancing the possibilities for experience creation. One of the challenges of experience management, however, is to figure out how to include the subjective and emotional elements of experiences in the measurement and evaluation of tourism experiences.

The first two studies of the thesis concentrated on positive and successful tourism experiences and indicated that the ability of tour operators and other service providers to influence tourism experiences is rather restricted. Evidently, the role of tour operators and tour leaders becomes more crucial when something goes wrong and negative incidents and service failures deteriorate the package tourism experience. The remaining two studies examined the role of tour operators and tour leaders in service failure and service recovery situations. In relation to these discussions, the contribution of the current thesis lies in enhancing the understanding of the perceptions of the role of service providers, especially the actions of frontline employees, in service failure situations. Furthermore, the effects of concurrent and subsequent service recoveries on satisfaction and loyalty were contrasted, which has not been done in earlier studies.

Customer complaints were examined in order to analyze how customers perceive the actions of tour leaders in service failure situations. According to the results, tour leaders were criticized for their unwillingness or inability to help the tourist, slow service, insufficient personal interaction, having an impatient or unfriendly attitude towards the tourist, and providing misleading or inaccurate information. The tour leaders did not manage to fulfill the promises they had made nor offer adequate assistance in the case of sudden illness. Furthermore, the tourists felt that the tour leaders ignored them or took insufficient action when guiding the group of tourists. The tour leaders' actions in handling the service failure were clearly significant, but not necessarily in a positive way. Most likely, the tour leaders' intentions were good, but often their efforts were not perceived to be adequate. In order to better serve tourists in difficult and emotional service encounters, it is important to understand complainants' expectations and sources of dissatisfaction and provide the necessary training for frontline employees.

The last study took one step further in examining service recoveries by comparing concurrent service recovery by the tour leaders and subsequent service recovery by the customer service department of the tour operator. The analysis tested the hypothesized effects between concurrent versus subsequent service recovery, recovery satisfaction, and loyalty which was divided into

word-of-mouth behavior and repurchase intention. Compensation and subsequent service recovery had strong effects on satisfaction while the effect of concurrent recovery was even weaker than the effect of mere facilitation of complaints. Recovery satisfaction had a strong effect on both word-of-mouth behavior and repurchase intention. Furthermore, subsequent service recovery directly affected word-of-mouth behavior and repurchase intention and also facilitation had a direct effect on word-of-mouth behavior. The analysis emphasized the importance of subsequent service recovery for satisfaction and loyalty but also indicated that the service recovery actions of tour leaders were not sufficient. Besides training, the tour leaders and destination managers evidently need to be empowered to take immediate action in order to successfully manage the service recovery.

Interestingly, as value has partly replaced satisfaction in measuring customer experiences in general in the past few years, a similar development could be expected in relation to negative service experiences. As the explanatory power of satisfaction on loyalty has been criticized in recent research (Kumar et al. 2013), it can be questioned whether satisfaction is a valid measure for service recovery and an adequate indicator of post-recovery customer loyalty.

An evident strength of the current thesis is that in the empirical analyses various data sets and methodologies were used to enhance the understanding of tourism experiences. The use of secondary customer data in academic research is relatively rare and obviously causes certain limitations. Previous research has, however, demanded studies that facilitate experience creation efforts within the organizations of the tourism industry (Tung & Ritchie 2011; Walls et al. 2011) as well as multivariate methods for analyzing customer satisfaction data (Morgan, Anderson & Mittal 2005), which the thesis endeavored to respond to.

Organizations collect vast amounts of market intelligence such as customer satisfaction data in order to become data-driven and achieve positive outcomes in relation to employees, customer perceptions and behavior, and also financial performance (Morgan et al. 2005; Garver & Williams 2009). Mere data collection, however, is not enough and various researchers claim that the dissemination, comprehension, and utilization of customer data is inadequate (Kennedy, Goolsby & Arnould 2003; Morgan et al. 2005; Garver & Williams 2009). Furthermore, instead of going through formal channels, most customer feedback is received through frontline employees and hardly ever recorded or communicated to the managers. Therefore, this tacit knowledge seldom becomes explicit, a transition which would benefit the organizational learning and service improvement efforts. (Wirtz et al. 2009.)

Nearly ten years ago, Morgan et al. (2005) reported that even though many companies had formalized data scanning systems and data collection was frequent, most companies still used single-item measures, collected data from existing customers only, and did not distinguish strategic customers from others. In the data analysis, customer data from different sources was rarely integrated, most companies used only univariate analyses, and the relationships between constructs were not frequently examined. Most importantly, even though most companies disseminated customer information at least once a quarter, the root causes were not sufficiently identified, which made the users skeptical towards the data. Furthermore, even though customer data was an important input in the decision-making, it was often used at a tactical rather than a strategic level. (Morgan et al. 2005.)

Effective customer data usage leads to organizational learning and value enhancement. La and Kandampully (2004) focused on service recovery management and argued that the ability of the service provider to learn from service failures is not only important because it reduces the need for compensations, but also because it helps to increase the service reliability and facilitate continuous service innovation, thus contributing to the provision of superior customer value both in the long term and in the short term. However, this potential to contribute to the innovation process can be realized only if learning is viewed as part of the organizational learning rather than solely as an operational issue. The value of organizational learning through service failures is that it can also contribute to the organization's collective know-how and its service vision, as well as guide the implementation of various value-enhancing innovations, rather than just be dispersed among individual departments or remain in the tacit knowledge sphere of individual employees. (La & Kandampully 2004.)

In previous research, the tour operators' customer satisfaction questionnaires and methods of analysis have been criticized. Wang et al. (2007) stated that the managerial effectiveness of customer service questionnaires is not as good as it should be. The development of appropriate metrics is a key issue also for the package tourism industry and the knowledge about customers' value-creating processes should not be based solely on hard data (e.g. customer satisfaction data), instead, it should incorporate a deep understanding of customer experiences and processes (cf. Payne et al. 2008). In the scope of the thesis, various kinds of customer data was analyzed with different methods, including multivariate statistical analyses and structural equation modelling, which are not frequently used by companies. Evidently, tourism organizations collect and possess enormous amounts of information about their customers' tourism experiences but, the challenge is how to capture and utilize this knowledge effectively in order to improve the knowledge manage-

ment and its impact on co-creation (cf. Payne et al. 2008). Cooperation with the academics could be one solution for the tour operators to better benefit from customer data and, furthermore, a wider research cooperation with the industry would certainly contribute to the enhancement of the theoretical understanding of tourism experiences.

6.2 Managerial implications

Despite the increasing trend of do-it-yourself travel arrangements package tourism continues to be a significant form of outbound tourism in Northern Europe and many parts of Asia. Even though the package tourism product has remained almost surprisingly similar for the past decades (cf. Yale 1994), the industry needs to acknowledge that the package tourists of today are far more experienced travelers than tourists used to be and thus their needs and requirements are also different. Therefore, even though package tourism is not considered as a completely disappearing phenomenon, the tour operators need to adjust to the changing consumer needs in order to retain their competitive advantage. The challenge of the package tourism industry is clearly related to finding the balance between benefitting from the economies of scale and, at the same time, figuring out how to conform to the individual needs of the postmodern mass tourists.

The practical nature of the thesis offers various managerial implications. In creating prerequisites for experience formation, service providers self-evidently concentrate on the elements that they can influence, such as the quality of their products and services. These tangible elements are important but it is argued that the intangible elements (cf. Hellén & Gummerus 2013) and human interaction need to be emphasized in experience creation and management. The empirical analyses indicated that products and organizations have a rather limited ability to enhance the experience formation as it is individuals, not the systems, who create emotional experiences. To a large extent, these individuals, such as the tourists themselves, other tourists, or the local population, cannot be influenced by the service providers. However, the employees of tourism businesses also have a significant role in creating not only functional but also emotional environments and atmospheres that form the best possible prerequisites for experience creation. However, considering the intangible nature of tourism experiences from the perspective of the service providers, it seems that moving tourists' physical bodies is considerably easier than moving their minds. Therefore, the challenge of the tourism industry lies in how to effectively create and market tourism experience products that instead of active doing and learning focus on being

and feeling and, furthermore, how to make the tourists willing to pay for these emotional and abstract experiences.

On the other hand, it is also essential for the tourism industry to acknowledge that instead of passive agents reacting to stimuli, consumers are active producers of their own experiences (cf. Berry et al. 2002). Service providers, such as tour operators, offer opportunities for experiences but, in the end, the success of a tourism experience is a result of various elements, many of which are irrespective of the tour operator. This, however, does not imply that service providers cannot influence tourists' experiences. Thus, it is essential to manage the service encounters and ensure the best possible prerequisites for experiences even if successful tourism experiences do not necessarily emerge from mere customer satisfaction.

In package tourism experiences, the tour operators' destination services were found to form the most essential component of a package tour. As the tour leaders are, to large extent, responsible for the destination services, the tour operators should pay particular attention to the professional skills and attitudes of their employees (cf. Heung 2008). It is also important that tour leaders see themselves as experience enablers whose task is not to impose ready-made experiences but to concentrate on the consumers and empower them to experience whatever it is that they came to experience. In addition to their own service processes, tour operators are at least partly responsible for the performance of their partners, including hotels and airline carriers. According to this thesis, the partners that are especially important are the ones who operate in the tourism destination, such as hotels and local agents. In contrast, the role of the partners related to flight and airport services appeared to be more marginal.

The accommodation and tour leader services were seen as critical also in relation to the negative incidents that deteriorate package tourism experiences. As the customer base has become more experienced in traveling, the role of tour operators has changed and, consequently, also the mediating role of tour leaders (cf. Cohen 1985) in experience creation has changed. The popularity of package tours is partly explained by the lower risk level in comparison to individual tourism (Cavlek, 2002; Lepp & Gibson, 2008) as tourists can rely on the help and assistance of tour operators in case something goes wrong (Larsson Mossberg 1995; Yale 1995; Enoch 1996; Hanefors & Larsson Mossberg 1999; Bowie & Chang 2005). It can be argued that tour operators have become somewhat similar to insurance companies in that their services are seen as appealing partly due to the fear of possible negative incidents that could occur during the vacation. Therefore, one of the main tasks of tour operators and tour leaders should be preventing possible service failures, in

which case concentrating on the quality of accommodation services would seem to be especially important.

The analysis of service failures and the role of the tour leaders in these situations indicated that there are evident gaps between the expected and the actual content of the tour leaders' responsibilities and that dissatisfaction is often a result of differing views on what the tour leaders' tasks are. For example, some tourists were dissatisfied because the tour leader refused to recommend medicine in the case of illness but did not know that, most likely, the company policies forbid giving medicine or medical advice to the customers. In order to reduce similar discrepancies, tourists should be either better informed about the content of tour leaders' responsibilities or the tour leaders' tasks should be modified to better reflect the expectations.

Furthermore, in service failure situations, the tourists expected the tour leaders to take a more effective role in the recovery efforts. The challenging role of tour leaders between the dissatisfied customers and the tour operator (Adib & Guerrier 2001) needs to be acknowledged. More training is needed to manage these emotionally challenging service encounters in an empathetic yet effective way that results in customer satisfaction and enabling positive word-of-mouth behavior and repurchase intention. According to the analysis, the effect of concurrent service recovery by tour leaders on recovery satisfaction was weak – even weaker than the facilitation of the complaints. By contrast, the effect of the subsequent service recovery by the customer service department on satisfaction was much greater and, furthermore, also appeared to have a direct effect on positive word-of-mouth behavior and repurchase intention. Service recovery management is evidently one of the main tasks of the customer service department and the employees are trained and experienced in handling customer complaints and dealing with emotionally vulnerable customers. However, when the service recovery takes place subsequently, after the vacation, the experience has already been ruined and cannot be fully reimbursed by monetary compensation. Concurrent service recovery, in turn, plays a key role in resolving service failures and preventing dissatisfaction and customer complaints. An effective concurrent service recovery, however, requires resources to be invested in training the frontline employees as well as empowering them to make decisions concerning for example monetary compensation. One solution could be to oblige destination managers to handle all service recovery situations. This would also indicate that the matter has been taken seriously.

Finally, attention is drawn to the managerial effectiveness of customer data utilization, which is critical as the value of customer data is realized only when managers make data-driven decisions in order to improve processes, products, and services (Morgan et al. 2005; Garver & Williams 2009). Becoming a data-

driven company requires at least cultural buy-in, training, formal improvements, and valid data, but besides investing resources in data collection, more attention should be geared towards increasing the understanding and dissemination of the customer data in order to capitalize on the investments and fully benefit from it (Garver & Williams 2009).

6.3 Limitations and paths for future research

As with any study, the current thesis has some limitations. First, the study concentrated on the package tourism industry in Finland and mainly relied on the customer data of a single tour operator, which limits the extension of the findings to other contexts. In addition, the clear focus on the Western-type of package tourism limits generalization to the Asian context but as package tourism is a growing phenomenon especially in the Asian markets, it would be interesting to examine similar research themes as regards the Asian package tourism industry.

The use of secondary customer data caused various limitations in relation to for example operationalization, the use of single-item scales, and the lack of socio-demographic information on customers. These issues were addressed in the methodology section but, in addition, there were certain interesting issues that could not be examined within the scope of the current thesis, such as the relationship between experienced value and loyalty. Even though there are some studies that concentrate on the value–loyalty link, further research is needed to challenge the dominance of customer satisfaction in experience research.

The role of tour leaders in service failure situations was examined only based on customer complaints. Also, the survey data on service recovery included only the concurrent service recoveries which did not result in satisfactory recovery as that would obviously have removed the need of subsequent complaining. Therefore, the thesis evidently offers a biased view on tour leaders' actions in service failure and recovery situations. Research that focuses on situations in which tour leaders have effectively and satisfactorily managed the service recovery in the vacation destination is much needed in order to give a more holistic view of the issue.

The decline or even the death of package tourism has been debated for decades because of the changing consumer needs and preferences and, recently, especially due to the rapid development of information and communication technologies that enable do-it-yourself travel arrangements. Despite the fact that the share of package tours is declining also in Finland (Statistics Finland 2012), at least air-based package tours still attract a large

customer base (AFTA 2012). An evident question is why, in the era of more experienced tourists than ever before, is package tourism still preferred. In addition, the increasing use of information and communication technologies as well as for example social media platforms have evidently changed the interaction between tour operators and package tourists. Therefore studies combining ICT and tourism experiences should definitely be included in future research agendas.

Moving from package tourism experiences back to tourism experiences in general, the research suggested that also negative incidents can be or become extraordinary, emotional peak experiences and, therefore, more research on negative tourism experiences is needed. Additionally, longitudinal research focusing on how the passage of time influences memorable tourism experiences, both positive and negative, would offer interesting perspectives for future research.

Another important stream of research concentrates on the challenging measurement of experiences. More precise definitions and more widely agreed measures for consumer and tourism experiences are needed in order to guide tactic but also strategic decision-making processes in various organizations within the tourism industry. Theoretical approaches from different fields of research might contribute to the processes of experience creation, value enhancement, and innovation. It is clear that more research that combines the elements of the influential realm, i.e., physical and social aspects as well as products and services with the elements of the personal realm, i.e., knowledge, memory, perception, emotion, and self-identity, is needed in order to reveal what tourism experiences are really constructed from.

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Article 1

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Matkalla koettuja elämyksiä ja elettyjä kokemuksia
– Millainen on hyvä matkailukokemus?

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Matkalla koettuja elämyksiä ja elettyjä kokemuksia

Millainen on hyvä matkailukokemus?

Juulia Räikkönen

Talousmaantiede, Turun kauppakorkeakoulu

What are the components that constitute quality tourist experiences?

Experiences are seen as basic elements of tourism. Tourists are promised to gain experiences by tourism industry but in the end experiences are formed by tourists themselves. Research on tourist experiences has grown remarkably over the past years. However the components that constitute the tourist experience still remain somewhat unclear.

The aim of this study is to determine what kind of factors tourists mention when they describe their quality tourist experiences. This is done by examining narratives of tourist experiences on the basis of five existing theories concerning experiences. The data consists of 153 short narratives which took part in "A nice vacation" writing contest arranged by Helsingin Sanomat.

The analyses indicate that quality tourist experiences are emotional rather than functional, passive rather than active and consist of peak touristic experiences and supporting consumer experiences. Quality tourism experiences are influenced mainly by the product and the tourist him/herself and can be seen as contrast to daily routine experiences.

Kokemukset ja elämykset ovat matkailun keskeisintä sisältöä niin kuluttajien kuin matkailuyrittäjienkin näkökulmasta (Lüthje 2001, 11; Aho 2001, 32). Kuluttajille luvataan erityisiä kokemuksia ja elämyksiä, joihin liittyvät mielikuvat ja odotukset vaikuttavat ostopäätöksiin. Kokemus muodostuu tapahtumista ja tunteista, jotka tulevat esiin tapahtumaa, esimerkiksi matkaa, odotellessa, sen aikana ja jälkeensä muistoissa. Kokemukset vaikuttavat siihen, miten tyytyväisiä matkailijat ovat mat-

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kaansa (Lüthje 2001, 11; O'Sullivan & Spangler 1998). Onnistuakseen elämysten tarjoamisessa yritysten on ymmärrettävä kuluttajan "elämismatkaa" odotuksista aina kokemuksen arviointiin saakka. Vain siten ne voivat rakentaa yhtenäisen palveluketjun ja ylittää kuluttajien tarpeet ja odotukset (Berry, Carbone & Haeckel 2002, 85). Matkailuelinkeino siis tarjoaa matkailijoille mahdollisuuksia kokea, mutta kokemukset syntyvät aina matkailijan omasta tulkinnasta, joka voi olla aivan erilainen kuin mitä kokemuksen tuottaja oli tarkoittanut (Lüthje 2001, 11–12; Saarinen 2001a, 94).

Matkailuelämysten tutkimuksen yleistymisestä huolimatta edelleen on melko epäselvää, mistä osatekijöistä matkailuelämys itse asiassa koostuu. Esimerkiksi Niagaran putoukset on helppo mieltää matkailuelämyksen olennaiseksi osaksi, mutta Quanin ja Wangin (2004, 297) mukaan epäselvää ja kiistanalaista on esimerkiksi majoitus-, ravitsemis- ja kuljetuspalvelujen rooli eli miten kokemukset niistä vaikuttavat matkailukokemukseen.

Tässä tutkimuksessa pyritään selvittämään, millaisia asioita matkailijat painottavat ja nostavat esiin kertoessaan hyvistä matkailukokemuksistaan. Tutkimusaineiston matkailukokemuksia tarkastellaan valittujen kokemus- ja elämyksiä käsittelevien teorioiden valossa. Hyvän matkan sisältö ei välttämättä ole sidoksissa kokemuksiin tai elämyksiin, mutta tässä tutkimuksessa hyviä matkoja tutkitaan juuri näiden käsitteiden kautta. Pine ja Gilmore (1999) tarkastelevat kokijan osallistumisen astetta ja suhdetta elämykseen, kun taas Aho (2001) keskittyy kokemuksen ydinsisältöön ja sen aikaansaamiin vaikutuksiin kokijassa. Quan ja Wang (2004) esittävät, että matkailukokemus koostuu huippukokemuksista ja niitä tukevista kulutuskokemuksista. Nickersonin (2006) mallissa matkailukokemukseen vaikuttavat matkailijaan, tuotteen ja paikallisväestöön liittyvät tekijät ja Berryn, Carbonen ja Haeckelin (2002) mukaan tuotteet ja palvelut välittävät vihteitä, joista kokemus muodostuu. Tutkimuksessa käytetään siis ensisijaisesti olemassa olevia teorioita, mutta matkailun huippukokemuksia käsittelevän teorian yhteydessä muodostetaan tutkimusaineiston kertomusten pohjalta luokittelu matkailun huippukokemuksista.

Tutkimusaineisto: Oliko hyvä matka?

Tutkimuksen aineistona on 153 Helsingin Sanomien *Meno & Paluu* -toimituksen elo–syyskuussa 2006 järjestämään *Oliko hyvä matka?* -kirjoituskilpailuun osallistunutta kertomusta. Lukijoilta pyydettiin sadalla sanalla ja mahdollisella valokuvalla vastauksia kysymyksiin: Oliko hyvä lomamatka? Miksi se oli hyvä? Tekikö matkasta hyvän sään, onnistunut kohteen valinta vai jokin erityinen tapahtuma?

Kilpailuun oli mahdollista osallistua Helsingin Sanomien Internet-sivujen keskustelupalstalla, sähköpostilla tai kirjeellä. Internet-sivujen keskustelupalstalle vastauksia tuli 79. Niistä tutkimukseen otettiin 75, sillä kolmessa viestissä kommentoitiin toisten lähettämiä matkailukertomuksia ja yksi kertomus oli aineistossa kahteen kertaan. Sähköpostitse ja kirjeitse lähetettiin 78 kertomusta, jotka myös julkaistiin vastausajan

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umpeutumisen jälkeen keskustelupalstalla. Kaikki tutkimusaineiston kertomukset on siis julkaistu Internetissä (Helsingin Sanomat 2006a; Helsingin Sanomat 2006b). Keskustelupalstan kertomukset olivat keskimäärin hieman lyhyempiä (93 sanaa) kuin sähköpostilla tai kirjeellä lähetetyt kertomukset (113 sanaa).

Tutkimusaineisto sisälsi vain vähän taustatietoja vastaajista. Sukupuolen määrittely oli mahdollista niissä kertomuksissa, joissa vastaaja käytti omaa nimeään tai sukupuolen paljastavaa nimimerkkiä (esimerkiksi suklaatyttö tai äiti). Vastaajista 86 oli naisia, 30 miehiä ja 37 käytti nimimerkkiä, jonka perusteella sukupuolen tunnistaminen oli mahdotonta.

Tutkimusaineisto koostui varsin monenlaisista matkailijoista ja matkailun muodoista. Mukana oli sekä seuramatkailijoita että omatoimimatkailijoita. Osa matkusti yksin, mutta selvästi suurempi osa ystävän, puolison tai perheen kanssa, kaveriporukassa tai muussa ryhmässä. Majoitusmuodoista mainittiin muun muassa hotelli, oma tai vuokrattu mökki tai huvila, asuntoauto, vene, telta ja juna.

Matkailussa kokemukset ja elämykset tapahtuvat aina joissakin paikoissa, matkalla niihin tai niistä pois. Virtuaalimatkailussakin matkailija on itsensä ja tietokoneensa luomassa matkakohteessa, kokemuksellisessa tilassa (Saarinen 2001b, 35). Tutkimusaineistossa 135 kertomuksessa matkan kohdepaikka mainittiin ja 18 kertomuksessa se jätettiin mainitsematta. Selvästi suurin osa, 110 matkakohdetta, sijaitsi ulkomailla ja vain 35 kotimaassa. Neljässä kertomuksessa ulkomailla asuva suomalainen matkaili Suomessa ja neljästä kertomuksesta oli mahdotonta arvioida, koskiko se ulko- vai kotimaata. Tutkimusaineistossa ulkomaanmatkojen osuus on varsin huomattava, yli 70 prosenttia. Tilastokeskuksen Suomalaisten matkailu tutkimuksen mukaan suomalaiset tekivät vuonna 2005 kaikkiaan 32,7 miljoonaa vapaa-ajanmatkaa, joista noin 85 prosenttia oli kotimaan ja vain noin 15 prosenttia ulkomaan vapaa-ajanmatkoja. Tutkimusaineiston ulkomaanmatkojen suuri osuus voi selittyä sillä, että matkailukertomuksen lähettäneet ovat syystä tai toisesta ajatelleet, että kilpailuun halutaan nimenomaan ulkomaanmatkoja koskevia tarinoita. Kilpailun järjestäjät eivät kuitenkaan erikseen painottaneet ulkomaanmatkoja, joten saattaa olla, että kotimaanmatkailua ei ole mielletty tässä yhteydessä varsinaiseksi matkailuksi. On myös mahdollista, että ulkomaanmatkakokemuksilla tavoitellaan esimerkiksi arvostusta muiden silmissä tai kenties ulkomaanmatkojen matkailukokemukset ovat olleet kokijoilleen merkittävämpiä ja jääneet paremmin mieleen kuin kotimaanmatkat.

Kun tutkitaan matkakertomuksia, keskitytään puheeseen kokemuksista sen sijaan, että yritettäisiin selvittää, mitä matkailijat ovat "todella" tehneet ja kokeneet (Lüthje 2001, 12). Ahon (2001, 38) mukaan elämykset voivat olla introverteja tai ekstroverteja. Introvertit eli sisäisesti koetut elämykset kokija voi salata, mutta ekstrovertit eli ulospäin osoitetut elämykset kerrotaan muille, jolloin kokija voi myös valikoida, liioitella ja värittää elämyksiään. Aineistona käytetyt tarinat on kerrottu muille, joten subjektiiviset painotukset ovat mahdollisia. Puhemaailma on kuitenkin todellisuutta

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ja rakentaa matkailijana olemisen maailmaa, olivat kokemukset sitten “tosia” tai eivät (Lüthje 2001, 12).

Kertomus on ehkä yleisin käytetty keino antaa rakenne sarjalle tapahtumia. Kertomusrakenteet tarjoavat muodon, johon koetut tapahtumat voidaan järjestää ja tehdä niistä siten ymmärrettäviä, muistettavia ja kerrottavia. Kertomukset palvelevat ajattelua ja kertomusta voidaan pitää myös ajattelun muotona. Kertomus ei kuitenkaan ole vain tapahtuneiden tapahtumien heijastuma, vaan kulttuurinen rakennelma, johon tapahtumat on sovitettu. Kertomukset eivät kuvasta kokemuksia ja mielikuvia suoraan, vaan niissä on kyse myös tilannekohtaisesta kertojan ja kuulijoiden välisestä vuoro-vaikutuksesta sekä asioiden esittämisestä tietynlaisiksi tiettyjen vaikutusten aikaansaamiseksi (Lüthje 2005, 34).

Matkakokemusten hahmottaminen ja jäsentäminen matkailijoiden näkökulmasta auttaa ymmärtämään, miksi matkailijat toimivat niin kuin toimivat ja mitä he itse asiassa saavat matkailusta. Tämän avulla matkailuelinkeino voi tunnistaa niitä matkan elementtejä, joilla on matkailijoille suuri painoarvo. Lisäksi saadaan tietoa sellaisista tekijöistä, joita elinkeino ei voi kontrolloida, mutta jotka aiheuttavat kielteisiä kokemuksia (Lüthje 2001, 26).

Tutkimusaineistoa analysoitiin NVivo7 -tietokoneohjelmalla ja tutkimusmenetelmänä käytettiin kvantifiointia eli laadulliseen aineistoon sovellettua määrällistä analyysiä (ks. Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 165–175). Tutkimusaineiston luokittelulla pyrittiin selvittämään, mitkä seikat nousevat esiin hyvissä matkailukokemuksissa eli millaisina matkailijat kuvaavat hyviä matkailukokemuksiaan. Luokittelua helpottaa mahdollisimman selkeiden luokittelukriteerien ja tulkintasääntöjen laatiminen (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 167). Luokittelukriteerit määräytyivät kokemuksista ja elämyksistä käsittelevistä teorioista, joten tutkija ei varsinaisesti vaikuttanut luokittelukriteerien määrittelyyn. Sen sijaan tutkija valitsi ne teorit, joita aineiston analysoinnissa käytettiin, joten tutkijan rooli sekä luokittelukriteerien valinnassa että aineiston tulkinnassa on merkittävä. Valitut teorit esitellään tutkimuksen teoreettisessa viitekehyksessä ja yksityiskohtaisemmin analyysien yhteydessä.

Kokemuksia vai elämyksiä ja onko sillä väliä?

Matkakokemus on matkaan liittyvä koettu tapaus, elämys, tai kokemalla saatu matkustamiseen liittyvä tieto tai taito. Elämys on voimakkaasti vaikuttava kokemus tai tapahtuma (Nykysuomen sanakirja 1992) ja moniaistinen, muistijäljen jättävä, myönteinen, kokonaisvaltainen ja yksilöllinen kokemus (Lapin elämysteollisuuden strategia... 2002, 3). Elämys on siis yksi kokemuksen tyyppi, ja vaikuttavuutensa vuoksi matkailun kannalta erityisen mielenkiintoinen. Kaikkia elämyksiä voidaan pitää kokemuksina, mutta kaikista kokemuksista ei synny elämyksiä (Lüthje 2001, 14–15; Saarinen 2001a, 85).

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Elämyksen käsitteellinen haltuunotto on osoittautunut ongelmalliseksi, vaikka elämysten merkitys onkin matkailussa yleisesti tunnustettu (Aho 2001, 32). Määrittelyä hankaloittaa elämyksen ja sen englanninkielisen vastineen, *experience*-termin merkitysero. *Experience* on neutraali ja laveasisältöinen ja sillä viitataan kaikenlaisiin kokemuksiin riippumatta niiden henkisistä, tunne- tai muista yhteyksistä. Elämys (ruotsissa *upplevelse*, saksassa *Erlebniss*) on suppeampi ja selkeämpi. Se viittaa kokemuksen henkiseen (tai muuhun elämälle sisältöä antavaan) tunnesisältöön (Aho 2001, 32; ks. myös Saarinen 2001a, 86).

Matkailuelämykset rakentuvat siis pitkälti emotionaalisesti, kun taas kokemus ymmärretään usein tiedollisena ja jonkinasteista ennakkotietämystä edellyttävänä, pitkäkestoisempina prosessina. Matkailuelämys on luonteeltaan yksilöllisempi ja lyhytkestoisempi. Siinä missä kokemuksia voidaan vaihtaa, vertailla tai osoittaa joiltakin osilta oikeaksi tai vääräksi, elämykseen liittyvät tunteet ja aistimukset ovat kokijalleen aina oikeita ja todellisia muiden kokemuksista riippumatta (Saarinen 2001a, 86; Saarinen 2001b, 35).

Knutsonin ja Beckin (2003, 24) mukaan elämyksen määrittelyä ja mittaamista hankaloittaaakin juuri sen yksilöllinen ja henkilökohtainen luonne. Elämys voi olla oma kokonaisuutensa, mutta se voidaan myös liittää tuotteeseen tai käyttää laajentamaan palvelua. Knutson ja Beck (2003, 24–25) nostavat esiin kaksi elämyksen keskeistä piirrettä. Ensinnäkin elämykset vaativat yksilön mukanaoloa ja osallistumista. Toiseksi elämykset ovat luonteeltaan kokijan sisäisiä ja sen vuoksi yksilöllisiä, mikä tekee elämysten markkinoinnista ja johtamisesta vaikeaa.

Saarisen (2001a, 94) mukaan “matkailussa elämykset ovat kaupallisesti tuotettu ja matkailukokemuksia”, siis tuotteita ja tuotteistamisen päämääriä, kuitenkin niin, että matkailuelinkeino tarjoaa mahdollisuuksia elämyksiin ja lopputulos on asiakkaasta riippuvainen. Matkailuelinkeinolle tällainen rajaus saattaa olla tarpeellinen, mutta matkailijan kannalta elämysten kaupallisuuden vaatimus vaikuttaa kyseenalaiselta, sillä matkailuelämyksiä voi kokea myös matkailuelinkeinon ulkopuolella.

Hetkellisen luonteensa vuoksi elämykset ovat kiinteästi sidoksissa tiettyyn tilaan ja toimintaan, joille annetaan merkitys esimerkiksi paikallisia tarinoita ja myyttejä hyödyntävällä kehyskertomuksella, joko keksityllä tai parhaassa tapauksessa aidosti kohteeseen kytkeytyvällä tarinalla (Saarinen 2001a, 94). Oli elämyksen tapahtumapaikka sitten luonnollinen tai lavastettu, niin keinotekoisia elämyksiä ei ole olemassakaan, vaan jokainen elämys on kokijalleen todellinen (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 36). Elämysten tuottamisen epäonnistuuksessa elämyksiä ei synny, mikä ei kuitenkaan välttämättä tarkoita kielteisten kokemusten muodostumista, vaan elämyksellisyyden puuttamista (Saarinen 2001a, 94–95).

Jenningsin (2006, 1) mukaan matkailututkimuksen monet koulukunnat, näkökulmat ja teoreettiset mielitykset tekevät matkailuelämyksen määrittelyn monimutkaiseksi. Määrittelyä vaikeuttaa myös aikaulottuvuus – mikä oli laadukasta eilen, ei välttämättä ole sitä tänään ja mikä on matkailuelämys huomenna, ei ehkä ole sitä kymmenen

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vuoden kuluttua. Näin ollen matkailukokemuksia pitäisi aina tulkita määritellyssä kontekstissa ja tietyn toimijan näkökulmasta. Lisäksi tulkinnan on heijastettava sen ajan puitteita, joissa matkailukokemus rakentuu (Jennings 2006, 1).

Tutkimusaineiston kirjoitukset kertovat matkakokemuksista, mutta ovatko ne elämyksiä? Elämys-sana mainittiin kertomuksissa kaikkiaan 13 kertaa ja kokemus-sana 16 kertaa. Aineistosta kävi ilmi, että kokemusta kuvattiin lähes aina jollakin adjektiivilla, esimerkiksi kaikkia aisteja hellivä, mieleenpainuva, positiivinen, jännittävä tai kutkuttava. Sen sijaan elämys esiintyi kertomuksissa myös ilman tarkentavaa adjektiivia. Elämys- ja kokemus-termejä käytettiin kertomuksissa toistensa synonyymeinä, eikä ollut havaittavissa, että niillä olisi ollut minkäänlaista merkityseroa esimerkiksi kaupallisuuden tai ajallisen keston suhteen. Elämyksenä kuvattiin yhtä lailla järjestettyä seikkailuretkä kuin eksyneen, janoisen taivaltajan löytämää lähdetä metsässä ja kokemuksena niin istumista ilta-auringossa saunan ja uinnin jälkeen kuin aikakauslehden lukijamatkaakin. Termien käytössä oli kuitenkin huomattavissa myös eroavaisuutta. Kaikki kertomuksissa esiintyneet elämykset olivat positiivisia, mutta yhdessä kertomuksessa kuvattiin myös negatiivisia, *“epätoivon ja silkan kauhun huumaavia kokemuksia”*.

Aineiston matkakokemukset ovat olleet kirjoittajilleen tärkeitä ja vaikuttavia, ovathan he halunneet jakaa ne Helsingin Sanomien lukijoiden kanssa. Jokainen kokemus on myös erilainen, kirjoittajansa näköinen subjektiivinen kuvaus tapahtuneesta. Kaikki kokemukset ovat jättäneet jonkinlaisen muistijäljen, koska ne on lähetetty kilpailuun. Kokemuksen ikimuistoisuutta ja unohtumattomuutta korostettiin erityisesti 20 kertomuksessa. Aineiston kokemuksista vanhin oli puolen vuosisadan takaa ja uusimmat viimeisen loman aikana kirjoitettuja, mutta useimmissa kertomuksissa tapahtumien ajankohtaa ei mainittu lainkaan.

Pääsääntöisesti kokemukset olivat myönteisiä, mutta muutamissa nostettiin esiin seikkoja, joiden vuoksi loma tai matka ei onnistunut. Lisäksi on huomattava, että myös negatiivinen kokemus voi olla ikimuistoinen ja vaikuttava, kuten lainaus *“Palo-miehen”* kertomuksesta osoittaa:

“Matkan kruunasi Liman vilkkaalla kadulla iskenyt ryöstäjä joka riuhtaisi kerralla vaimon korvista korvarenkaat. Itkusta huolimatta - ikimuistoinen tapahtuma sekin.”

Kuudessa kertomuksessa tuotiin esiin kokemuksen vaikutus kaikkiin aisteihin, esimerkiksi kuvaamalla kokemusta kaikkia aisteja helliväksi. Tämän lisäksi moniaistisuus kävi ilmi kertomusten sisällöistä, kun etsittiin eri aisteihin liittyviä mainintoja koko aineistosta. Selvästi useimmiten, 60 prosentissa kertomuksista eli 91 kertomuksessa (yhteensä 111 kertaa), mainittiin näköaistiin liittyviä asioita, esimerkiksi maisemia ja näköaloja. Tuntoaistiin liittyvien kokemusten tunnistaminen oli haastavampaa, mutta auringon paahteen ja hyvänolon tai fyysisen rasituksen tunteen kaltaisia

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mainintoja oli 46 prosentissa kertomuksista (71 kertomuksessa, yhteensä 79 kertaa). Makuaiistiin liittyviä, yleensä positiivisia makukokemuksia, esimerkiksi toscanalaisen keittiön antimia, Karpaattien rinteillä kypsyeitä viinejä ja muita paikallisia herkkuja, mainittiin joka kolmannessa eli 48 kertomuksessa (yhteensä 50 kertaa). Kuuloaistiin liittyviä kokemuksia, kuten tuulen huminaa, kosken pauhua tai musiikkia, mainittiin 26 prosentissa kertomuksista eli 40 kertomuksessa (yhteensä 44 kertaa). Selvästi vähiten, vain 12 prosentissa kertomuksista (18 kertomuksessa, yhteensä 22 kertaa), viitattiin erilaisiin tuoksuihin ja hajuihin, kuten tienvarsilla kasvavien anisten tuoksuun tai nenään puskevaan dieselin katkuun.

Osa aineistossa kuvatuista kokemuksista täyttää selvästi elämyksen tunnuspiirteet, osa lienee määritelmien mukaan pikemminkin kokemuksia. Tutkijan on mahdotonta erotella tarkasti elämykset ja kokemukset, eikä se ole tarpeellistakaan, sillä kertomusten kokemukset ovat joka tapauksessa kokijoilleen merkittäviä ja siksi mielenkiintoisia. Tässä tutkimuksessa mielenkiinnon kohteena ovat siis kokijoilleen merkitykselliset matkailukokemukset, kutsuttiin niitä sitten kokemuksiksi tai elämyksiksi.

Tutkimuksen teoreettinen viitekehys

Matkailun elämyksellisyyttä on laajasti tutkittu, tyypitelty ja jaoteltu niin kansainvälisessä kuin kotimaisessakin matkailututkimuksessa (ks. Aho, Honkanen & Saarinen 2001; Cohen 1979; Jennings & Nickerson 2006; Kylänen 2007a; Kylänen 2007b; Lüthje 2005; MacCannell 1976; Mossberg 2001; Ryan 1997; Saarinen 2002a; Urry 1990).

Matkailukokemusten ja elämysten tutkimus voidaan karkeasti jakaa yhteiskuntatieteelliseen (sosiologia ja kulttuurimaantiede) ja liiketaloudelliseen (markkinointi ja johtaminen) näkökulmaan. Yhteiskuntatieteellisessä elämystutkimuksessa matkailuelämykset nähdään selvästi arkielämän ja arjen kokemusten vastakohtina, eräänlaisina huippukokemuksina tai -elämyksinä. Liiketaloudellinen lähestymistapa sen sijaan huomioi huippukokemusten ohella myös niitä tukevat kulutuskokemukset. Matkailija nähdään kuluttajana, joka käy kauppa tuotteita ja palveluja tarjoavien yritysten kanssa. Siksi jopa huippukokemukset nähdään osana kulutuskokemusta, jota tutkitaan lähinnä kuluttajakäyttäytymisen näkökulmasta pyrkien tutkimustulosten hyödyntämiseen käytännössä (Quan & Wang 2004, 298–299).

Tämän tutkimuksen näkökulma on liiketaloustieteellinen, joten teoreettinen viitekehys rakentuu teorioista, jotka käsittelevät kokemuksia/elämyksiä pääosin liiketoiminnan lähtökohdista. Tutkimus pohjautuu pitkälti Pinen ja Gilmoren (1999) ajatukseen elämystaloudesta. Vaikka Alvin Toffler (1970, 226) ennusti jo vuosikymmeniä sitten, että kuluttajat jonakin päivänä keräävät kokemuksia ja elämyksiä yhtä tietoisesti ja intohimoisesti kuin tavaroita, vasta Pine ja Gilmore (1999) nostivat elämykset vahvasti sekä yleiseen että akateemiseen keskusteluun määrittämällä ne selvästi erottuviksi ja omalaatuisiksi taloudellisiksi mahdollisuuksiksi, jotka ovat viime aikoihin saakka

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olleet tuntemattomia ja tutkimattomia. He lähestyvät elämyksiä erityisesti liiketoiminnan näkökulmasta ja näkevät elämykset talouden hyödyke-tuote-palvelu -jatkumon neljäntenä vaiheena. Yritykset tarjoavat tai järjestävät elämyksiä palveluita jalostamalla. Samalla asiakkaan maksama hinta ja koettu arvo nousevat. Hyödykkeet, esimerkiksi kahvinpavut, ovat lähinnä halpoja raaka-aineita, joita jalostetaan aineellisiksi tuotteiksi, kaupassa kalliimmalla hinnalla myytäväksi kahvipaketeiksi. Kahvilassa palveluna ostettu kahvikuppi tuo asiakkaalle lisäarvoa, mikä näkyy myös hinnassa. Kahvilakokemus voi muuttua elämykseksi esimerkiksi Venetsiassa Pyhän Markuksen aukiolla perinteikkäässä Cafe Florian'ssa, kun orkesterin säestyksellä nautittu kahvi ja siitä maksettu hinta ja tunnelma muistetaan vielä pitkään (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 1–2).

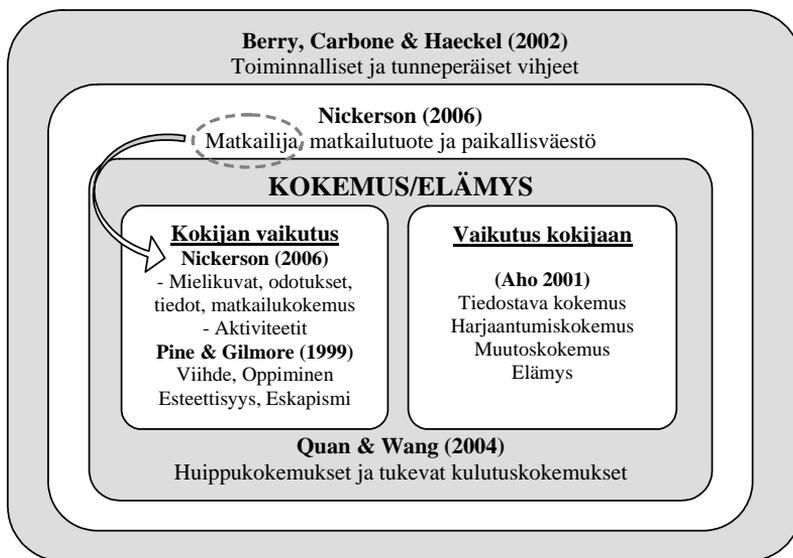
Matkailu on monien aineettomien elementtiensä vuoksi yksi elämystalouden malliesimerkeistä (Quan & Wang 2004, 297). Huomion kiinnittäminen elämyksiin liittyy matkailun muutokseen massaturismista kohti yksilöllisempää matkailua (ks. Poon 1993) ja laajemmin koko jälki-fordistiseen kulutusyhteiskuntaan (Saarinen 2002b, 8) tai elämisyhteiskuntaan (ks. Schulze 1997), jossa elämyksiä arvostetaan ja niiden tavoittelusta on tullut kulttuurinen itsestäänselvyys (Lüthje 2005, 35).

Koska kokemuksia ja elämyksiä käsitteleviä teorioita on lukuisia, tutkijan on pitänyt valita, minkä teorioiden pohjalta tutkimusaineistoa analysoidaan. Teorioiden valinta on tutkimuksen onnistumisen kannalta ensiarvoisen tärkeää, sillä teoriat määräävät aineiston luokittelukriteerit. Tässä tutkimuksessa analyysien pohjana on käytetty teorioita, jotka lähestyvät kokemuksia liiketaloustieteellisesti, mutta kuitenkin eri lähtökohdista. Valitut teoriat on koostettu kuvan 1 mukaiseksi malliksi, joka havainnollistaa tutkimuksen viitekehystä. Ahon (2001), Quanin ja Wangin (2004) sekä Nickersonin (2006) teoriat käsittelevät nimenomaan matkailukokemuksia, sen sijaan Pinen ja Gilmoren (1999) sekä Berryn, Carbonen ja Haeckelin (2002) malleissa elämyksiä käsitellään yleisemmin ja erityisesti markkinoinnin johtamisen kannalta.

Mallin ydin perustuu ajatukseen, että kokija vaikuttaa kokemukseen/elämykseen ja kokemus/elämys puolestaan vaikuttaa kokijaan jollakin tavoin. Kokijan rooli kokemuksen/elämyksen muodostumisessa on merkittävä. Hänen mielikuvansa, odotuksensa ja tietonsa sekä aikaisemmat kokemuksensa vaikuttavat paitsi kokemusympäristön valintaan myös aktiviteettien ja vuorovaikutuksen luonteeseen (Nickerson 2006, 229–230). Pine ja Gilmore (1999, 29–43) painottavat kokijan osallistumisen astetta ja suhdetta elämykseen ja esittävät, että elämys voi olla viihteellinen, opettavainen, esteettinen tai eskapistinen. Aho (2001, 35–36) puolestaan lähestyy kokemuksia sen mukaan, millaisia vaikutuksia ne saavat aikaan kokijassa. Kokemus voi saada aikaan esimerkiksi uusien tietojen tai taitojen oppimista tai harjaantumista, erilaisia tunnetiloja tai jopa pysyviä muutoksia elintavoissa.

Quanin ja Wangin (2004, 298–301) matkailukokemuksen rakenteellinen malli pyrkii yhdistämään yhteiskuntatieteellisen ja liiketaloustieteellisen näkemyksen elämyskokonaisuudeksi, joka koostuu matkailun huippukokemuksista ja niitä tukevista kulutuskokemuksista. Quan ja Wang (2004, 303) havainnollistavat käsitteellistä

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Kuva 1. Tutkimuksen teoreettinen viitekehys.

malliaan ruokaan ja ruokailuun liittyvien matkailukokemusten avulla, mutta korostavat sen laajempaa soveltuvuutta matkailukokemusten tutkimukseen.

Nickerson (2006, 227–233) yhdistää matkailukokemusten tutkimuksen monia näkökulmia ja koulukuntia mallissaan, jonka mukaan matkailukokemukseen vaikuttavat matkailijaan itseensä liittyvien tekijöiden lisäksi matkailutuotteeseen ja paikalliseen väestöön liittyvät tekijät. Matkailijaan liittyvillä tekijöillä viitataan paitsi matkailijan odotuksiin, mielikuviiin ja aktiviteetteihin, myös vuorovaikutukseen ympäristön ja muiden matkailijoiden kanssa.

Berry, Carbone ja Haeckel (2002, 85–89) lähestyvät kulutuskokemuksia vahvasti liikkeenjohdon näkökulmasta. Asiakas saa kokemuksen, joko hyvän, huonon tai yhdentekevän, aina asioidessaan yrityksessä. Kokemus muodostuu yrityksen tuotteen, palvelun ja ympäristön välittämistä toiminnallisista ja tunneperäisistä vihjeistä.

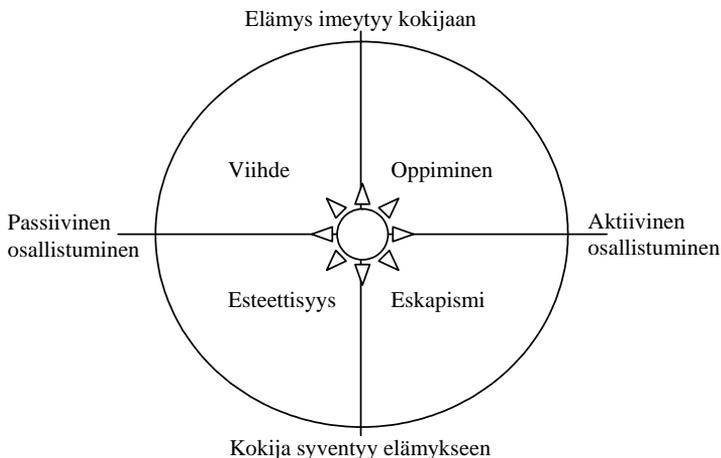
Seuraavaksi käsitellään tarkemmin valittuja teorioita ja analysoidaan tutkimusaineistoa kunkin teorian pohjalta. Analyysin tulokset esitellään kunkin teorian jälkeen ja johtopäätöksissä pohditaan matkailukokemusten luonnetta analyysien pohjalta.

Hyvässä matkailukokemuksissa osallistuminen on passiivista

Pine ja Gilmore (1999, 30) lähestyvät elämyksiä huomioiden kuluttajan osallistumisen asteen sekä hänen suhteensa elämykseen. Osallistumisen aste vaihtelee passiivisesta konsertin tai teatterin kuuntelusta ja katselusta aktiiviseen tekemiseen, esimerkiksi hiihtämiseen. Kokijan suhde elämykseen yhdistää asiakkaan tapahtumaan henkisesti tai fyysisesti, joko niin, että elämys imeytyy kokijaan, esimerkiksi televisiota katsellessa tai niin, että kokija syventyy elämykseen ja on joko fyysisesti tai virtuaalisesti osa elämystä, esimerkiksi hypätessään laskuvarjolla tai pelatessaan tietokonepeliä. Nämä kaksi ulottuvuutta yhdistämällä saadaan kuvan 2 mukaisen elämysmallin neljä kenttää, viihde, oppiminen, eskapismi ja esteettisyys, joiden yhdistelmä muodostaa kunkin ihmisen henkilökohtaisen kokemuksen (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 31).

Viihdettä tai viihtymistä ovat kokemukset, joissa passiivisesti otetaan vastaan elämyksiä eri aistien avulla, esimerkiksi teatteria katseltaessa tai musiikkia kuunneltaessa. Myös *oppimisessa* kokija vastaanottaa eteensä avautuvia tapahtumia, mutta aktiivisesti osallistuen. Tietojen ja taitojen sisäistäminen vaatii mielen ja kehon aktiivointia ja vaikka oppiminen onkin vakavaa toimintaa, oppimiskokemus voi olla myös hauska (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 31–32).

Eskapistisiin elämyksiin liittyy viihdettä ja oppimista voimakkaampi tekemiseen syventyminen ja osallistuminen. Huvipuistot, virtuaaliset keskustelupalstat ja paintball- eli värikuulapelit ovat esimerkkejä eskapistisista elämyksistä, joissa yksilöistä tulee kokemuksen kulkuun vaikuttavia näyttelijöitä. Nimestään huolimatta eskapismi ei



Kuva 2. Elämysten neljä tyyppiä (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 30).

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liity vain jostakin lähtemiseen, vaan myös matkaa johonkin tiettyyn, vaivan arvoiseen paikkaan tai tapahtumaan. Pelkän rannalla olon sijasta kokija haluaa esimerkiksi rullaluistella tai vuorikiipeillä. *Esteettisissä elämyksissä* kokija syventyy tapahtumaan tai ympäristöön, esimerkiksi ihailemalla nähtävyyksiä ja maisemia, käymällä museoissa tai istuskelemalla kahviloissa, mutta ei juuri pysty vaikuttamaan niihin. Kun oppimis-elämyksessä kokija haluaa *oppia*, eskapistisessa elämyksessä *tehdä* ja viihde-elämyksessä *tuntea*, niin esteettisessä elämyksessä hän haluaa ennen kaikkea *olla* (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 33–35).

Todellisuudessa eri elämystyyppien rajat hämärtyvät ja elämykset liikkuvat useamman ulottuvuuden alueella. Runsain elämys sisältää piirteitä kaikista neljästä ulottuvuudesta ja ne voidaan sijoittaa elämyskehikon keskiosaan (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 38–39).

Tutkimusaineiston kertomuksista etsittiin mainintoja Pinen ja Gilmoren (1999) eri elämysten tyypeistä ja niiden jakautuminen luokituksen mukaisiin tyypeihin on esitetty taulukossa 1.

Tutkimusaineistossa tuotiin selvästi eniten esiin esteettisiä kokemuksia, joita mainittiin 111 kertomuksessa eli yli 72 prosentissa kertomuksista. Tyypillisiä esteettisiä kokemuksia olivat esimerkiksi nähtävyyksien katselu, paikalliseen tunnelmaan uppoutuminen sekä henkisen yhteyden luominen luonnonympäristöön ja sen aikaansaama rauhan ja levollisuuden tunne. Viihteellisiin kokemuksiin ja viihtymiseen, esimerkiksi musiikki-tapahtumiin ja teatteriin sekä matkan hauskoihin tapahtumiin ja yleisesti viihtymiseen, viitattiin 85 kertomuksessa, mikä on yli 55 prosenttia aineiston kertomuksista. On kuitenkin todennäköistä, että viihdettä ja viihtymistä on koettu myös niissä kokemuksissa, joissa ei suoranaisesti tuotu esiin viihtymiseen liittyviä asioita. Eskapististen kokemusten tunnistaminen aineistosta oli huomattavasti yksinkertaisempaa ja erilaisia eskapistisia ”tekemisiä” mainittiin joka kolmannessa kertomuksessa eli kaikkiaan 51 kertomuksessa. Eskapistiset kokemukset olivat pääasiassa fyysisiä liikuntasuorituksia, esimerkiksi pyöräilyä, vaellusta, vuorikiipeilyä, laitesukellusta ja retkiluistelua, mutta myös Internetissä surffailu ja videofilmillä näyttelemisen mainittiin. Selvästi vähiten aineistossa esiintyi oppimiseen liittyviä kokemuksia, joita mainittiin vain noin 10 prosentissa kertomuksista. Oppimiskokemukset pitivät sisällään sekä tietojen että taitojen

Kokemuksen tyyppi	Kpl	Prosenttia
Esteettisyys	111	72,5 %
Viihde	85	55,6 %
Eskapismi	51	33,3 %
Oppiminen	16	10,5 %
<i>Matkailukertomuksia aineistossa yhteensä</i>	<i>153</i>	

Taulukko 1. Matkailukertomukset luokiteltuina Pinen ja Gilmoren (1999) kokemusten tyyppien mukaan.

kartuttamista, esimerkiksi kielen tai historian opiskelua ulkomailla ja avoimen yliopiston ja astrologian kursseille osallistumista, mutta myös avokanoottilla melomisen, tanssin ja ruuanlaiton opettelemista.

Analyysi osoittaa, että matkailukokemuksissa korostuu ennen kaikkea passiivinen osallistuminen, syventyminen ympäristöön ja tapahtumiin sekä viihtyminen matkakohteessa tai matkaseurueessa. Toissijaista näyttää olevan aktiivinen osallistuminen ja matkailijan vaikutus tapahtumien kulkuun. Matkalla halutaan siis pääasiassa olla ja tuntea, ei niinkään tehdä tai oppia. Todennäköisesti matkailusta etsitään vaihtelua arkielämän hektisyydelle ja kiireelle.

Hyvät matkailukokemukset ovat elämyksellisiä

Ahon (2001, 34) mukaan Pinen ja Gilmoren (1999) jaottelu ei kata kaikkia relevantteja elämystyyppejä matkailussa, vaan esimerkiksi tervehtyminen ja monet muut itsensä toteuttamisen aktiiviset muodot jäävät mainittujen teema-alueiden ulkopuolelle. Aho (2001, 35) jakaa matkailukokemusten ja elämysten ydinsisällöt tiedostaviin kokemuksiin, harjaantumiskokemuksiin, elämyksiin ja muutostokemuksiin, jotka voivat esiintyä vaihtelevassa määrin samanaikaisesti.

Tiedostavat kokemukset herättävät kiinnostuksen tarjolla olevan informaation tai muun ärsyksen pohjalta. Uuden oppiminen voi tapahtua joko tarkoituksellisesti esimerkiksi opintomatalla tai sattumanvaraisesti huvimatalla. *Harjoituksen saaminen* viittaa jonkin taidon, esimerkiksi kielitaidon tai fyysisen suorituksen osaamisen lisääntymiseen matkan aikana. Harjaantumiskokemukset kattavat hyvin laajan alueen erilaisista harrastuksista hyvinkin erikoistuneisiin ammatillisiin asioihin. *Elämyksillä* tarkoitetaan lyhyt- tai pidempikestoisten tunnetilojen aikaansaamista, mikä on tyypillistä huvimatkailusta saaduille kokemuksille. Elämyksille olennaista on niiden aiheuttama henkinen jälkivaikutelma, joka pysyy kokijan mielessä ainakin jonkin aikaa. Muistojen pysyvyys (muistijälkien pituus ja muuttumattomuus) tarjoaa perustan näiden vaikutelmien vahvuuden arviointiin. *Henkilökohtaiset muutokset* ovat kokijan mielentilan, fyysisen olotilan tai elämäntavan vähintään melko pysyviä muutoksia, joiden kokeminen on konkreettista terveystatkailussa. Inspiraation etsiminen (mielentilan muutos luovuutta edistävään suuntaan) on yleinen motiivi taiteilijoiden matkailussa, mutta henkilökohtaisia muutoksia voi tapahtua myös arkirutiineissa ja elämäntavassa. Harjaantumiskokemusten ja henkilökohtaisten muutosten välillä on selvä ero: harjaantuminen kehittää henkilön olemassa olevia elämäntapoja, kun taas muutostokemukset ovat rakenteellisia muutoksia henkilössä, hänen ajankäytössään tai elämäntavassaan (Aho 2001, 35–36).

Taulukossa 2 on kuvattu matkailukertomusten jakautuminen elämyksiin, tiedostaviin kokemuksiin, harjaantumiskokemuksiin ja muutostokemuksiin. Tutkimusaineiston kertomuksista 148, lähes 97 prosenttia, täytti luokittelun elämysten tunnusmerkit eli ne saivat aikaan tunnetiloja ja jättivät henkisiä jälkivaikutelmia kokijoilleen. Yhdeksässä

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Kokemuksen tyyppi	Kpl	Prosenttia
Elämys	148	96,7 %
Tiedostava kokemus	9	5,9 %
Harjaantumiskokemus	7	4,6 %
Muutuskokemus	5	3,3 %
<i>Matkailukertomuksia aineistossa yhteensä</i>	<i>153</i>	

Taulukko 2. Matkailukertomukset luokiteltuina Ahon (2001) kokemusten tyyppien mukaan.

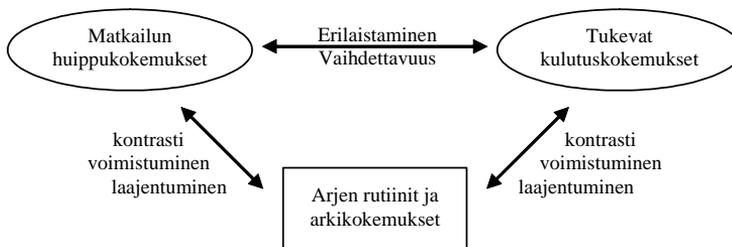
kertomuksessa tuotiin esiin uusien asioiden oppimista, esimerkiksi avokanootilla melomisen opettelua ja puukenkien valmistuksen seuraamista, joten niitä voidaan kutsua tiedostaviksi kokemuksiksi. Harjaantumiskokemuksia eli osaamisen lisääntymistä, esimerkiksi kielikursseille osallistumista ja tanssitaidon parantamista, kuvattiin seitsemässä tarinassa. Muutuskokemuksia tutkimusaineistosta löytyi ainoastaan viisi, esimerkiksi naimisiin meno ja sen mukanaan tuomat muutokset elämässä.

Tutkimusaineiston kertomukset jakautuvat Ahon (2001, 35–36) matkailukokemusten tyyppeihin hyvin epätasaisesti. Elämysten rajausta on varsin laava ja kattaa lähes kaikki kertomukset, kun taas oppimiskokemukset, joita kaiken kaikkiaan kuvataan vain harvoissa kertomuksissa, on jaettu kahteen luokkaan sen mukaan, opitaanko uusia asioita vai harjaannutetaanko jo olemassa olevia taitoja. Muutuskokemukset eroavat selvästi oppimiskokemuksista, mutta niidenkin määrä on varsin pieni. Kyseinen kokemusten tyypittely soveltuu todennäköisesti paremmin nimenomaan oppimiskokemusten luokitteluun. Toisaalta on varsin todennäköistä, että huomattavasti useammassa tutkimusaineiston matkailukokemuksissa on ollut oppimiskokemuksia, mutta niitä ei ole joko tiedostettu tai katsottu tärkeäksi tuoda kertomuksissa erikseen esiin.

Hyvät matkailukokemukset muodostuvat huippukokemuksista ja niitä tukevista kulutuskokemuksista

Quan ja Wang (2004) rakentavat kuvan 3 mukaisen kokonaisvaltaisen matkailukokemuksen mallin, jossa yhdistyvät matkailukokemuksen kaksi ulottuvuutta, matkailun huippukokemukset (peak touristic experiences) ja niitä tukevat kulutuskokemukset (supporting consumer experiences). Huippukokemukset ovat kohteen pääasiallisia vetovoimatekijöitä ja motivaatioita matkailulle, kun taas tukevilla kulutuskokemuksilla tarkoitetaan kuluttajan perustarpeita tyydyttäviä kokemuksia matkan aikana, esimerkiksi syömistä, nukkumista ja liikkumista paikasta toiseen (Quan & Wang 2004, 299–300).

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Kuva 3. Matkailukokemuksen käsitteellinen malli (Quan & Wang 2004, 300).

Huippukokemukset ja niitä tukevat kulutuskokemukset erotetaan toisistaan, sillä kokemuksen kokonaislaatu muodostuu niiden yhteisvaikutuksesta. Tukevien kulutuskokemusten laatu, esimerkiksi ensiluokkainen hotelli, ei korvaa pettymystä huippukokemukseen ja vastaavasti huonolaatuinen hotelli voi pilata myös onnistuneen huippukokemuksen. Toinen huomioitava seikka on kokemustyyppien vaihdettavuus. Kulutuskokemus voi matkan aikana muuttua huippukokemukseksi, esimerkiksi matkakohteen ruokakulttuuri saattaa kiehtoa matkailijaa niin voimakkaasti, että matkan etukäteen ajateltu huippukokemus, kuten nähtävyyksien katselu, jää taka-alalle (Quan & Wang 2004, 300).

Huippukokemuksia ja tukevia kulutuskokemuksia voidaan tarkastella myös suhteessa arjen rutiineihin. Matkailukokemukset voivat olla vastakohtaisia arjen rutiineille tai ne voivat joko voimistaa tai laajentaa arkikokemuksia. Pääsääntöisesti huippukokemukset ovat vastakkaisia arkikokemuksille, vaikka matkailu saattaa myös lisätä että voimistaa esimerkiksi kokijan omanarvontunnetta ja identiteettiä. Sen sijaan kulutuskokemukset usein laajentavat ja saattavat myös voimistaa arjen rutiineja, esimerkiksi kaukomatkojen vieraisissa kulttuureissa monet matkailijat kokeilevat paikallisia ruokia, mutta suosivat pääasiassa länsimaisia ravintoloita ja hotelleja (Quan & Wang 2004, 300–301).

Tutkimusaineiston matkailukertomuksista 114 sisälsi selvän huippukokemuksen. Monissa kertomuksissa oli erikseen eritelty, mikä lomalla tai matkalla oli parasta ja antoisinta, joissakin oli jopa nimetty huippukokemuksia ja kohokohtia. Myös sellaiset tarinat, jossa kerrottiin vain yhdestä kokemuksesta tai tapahtumasta, katsottiin huippukokemuksiksi. Tarinoissa, joissa oli tuotu esiin monia matkan elementtejä, mutta ei määritelty niiden arvoa tai paremmuutta, jätettiin luokittelun ulkopuolelle. Näistä tarinoista ei voitu eritellä myöskään tukevia kulutuskokemuksia.

Matkailukertomusten 114 huippukokemusta luokiteltiin kertomuksissa esiin tulleiden teemojen perusteella seitsemään luokkaan (taulukko 3), jotka ovat matkailutuote, ihana elämä, luonto, ystävälliset ihmiset, selviytyminen, viihtyminen matkaseurueessa ja unelman toteutuminen. Huippukokemusten luonteen vuoksi luokat ovat toisensa poissulkevia eli huippukokemus voi kuulua vain yhteen luokkaan.

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Huippukokemus	Kpl	Prosenttia
Matkailutuote	32	28,1 %
Ihana elämä	26	22,8 %
Luonto	19	16,7 %
Ystävälliset ihmiset	13	11,4 %
Selviytyminen	11	9,6 %
Viihtyminen matkaseurueessa	8	7,0 %
Unelman toteutuminen	5	4,4 %
<i>Yhteensä</i>	<i>114</i>	<i>100 %</i>

Taulukko 3. Huippukokemusten luokittelu.

Matkailutuotteeseen liittyviä huippukokemuksia, esimerkiksi tiettyjä matka-kohteita, nähtävyyksiä ja järjestettyjä retkiä, kuvattiin huippukokemuksissa selvästi eniten, noin 28 prosentissa eli 32 kertomuksessa. *Elämän ihanuutta* korostettiin 26 huippukokemuksessa, joissa keskeisenä sisältönä oli irtautuminen arjen rutiineista joko aktiivisesti tekemällä tai vain olemalla ja rentoutumalla. Aktiivisissa kokemuksissa aikaa itselle otettiin esimerkiksi vaellus- tai polkupyöräretkillä kun taas rentoutumista ja mielenrauhaa tavoiteltiin hiljaisuuden, levon ja ajattelun avulla. *Luontoon* liittyviä huippukokemuksia oli 19 eli 17 prosenttia huippukokemuksista ja niissä kuvattiin muun muassa merta, rantaa, aurinkoa, metsää ja maaseutua. *Ystävälliset ihmiset*, joko matkakohteen paikallisväestö tai muut matkailijat, nostettiin huippukokemukseksi 13 tarinassa eli reilussa 10 prosentissa huippukokemuksista. *Selviytymiskokemuksia* oli 11 ja ne pitivät sisällään esimerkiksi haasteista, vaikeuksista ja fyysisistä suorituksista selviytymistä sekä itsensä koettelua ja ennakkoluulojen voittamista. *Matkaseurueessa viihtyminen*, huumori ja nauru nostettiin esiin keskeisimpänä asiana kahdeksassa huippukokemuksessa ja viidessä huippukokemuksessa kuvattiin pitkäaikaisen *unelman toteutumista*, esimerkiksi Niagaran putousten näkemistä ja moottoripyörämatkaa Yhdysvaltojen halki.

Tarinoista, joissa oli huippukokemus, voitiin tunnistaa myös huippukokemusta tukevia kulutuskokemuksia, joita löytyi 66 tarinasta. Tukevat kulutuskokemukset olivat pääasiassa juuri Quanin & Wangin (2004, 299–300) mainitsemissa perustarpeita tyydyttäviä palveluja. Majoitus-, ravitsemis- ja kuljetuspalvelujen lisäksi mainittiin kuitenkin myös esimerkiksi hyviä ostosmahdollisuuksia, nähtävyyksiä, tapahtumia ja järjestettyjä retkiä. Huippukokemusten ja niitä tukevien kulutuskokemusten vaihdettavuutta ei voitu analysoida, sillä matkailukertomuksissa ei määritelty, mitä matkalta pääasiassa odotettiin ja mikä lopulta muodostui matkan huippukokemukseksi.

Matkailukokemuksia rinnastettiin arjen kokemuksiin 26 tarinassa, joissa pääasiassa korostettiin matkailukokemusten vastakohtaisuutta arkikokemuksiin verrattuna. Aikatauluttomuus, vapaus, pako arjen rutiineista ja työasioiden unohtuminen nähtiin pääasiassa positiivisena asiana, vain yhdessä tarinassa säännöllisen rytmien puute harmitti. Vaikka suurin osa maininnoista keskittyi juuri matkailijan olotilaan, nostettiin esiin

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myös lomaympäristön ja arkiympäristön maisemien, palvelualltiuden ja yhteiskunnallisten olojen eroavaisuuksia. Arkirutiinien voimistumista ja laajentumista oli kertomuksissa huomattavasti vähemmän, kuitenkin muutamissa kokemuksissa ruuanlaittoon käytettiin erityisen paljon aikaa, huolellisuutta ja tuoreita raaka-aineita, joita oli joko ostettu erityisistä paikoista tai itse pyydystetty.

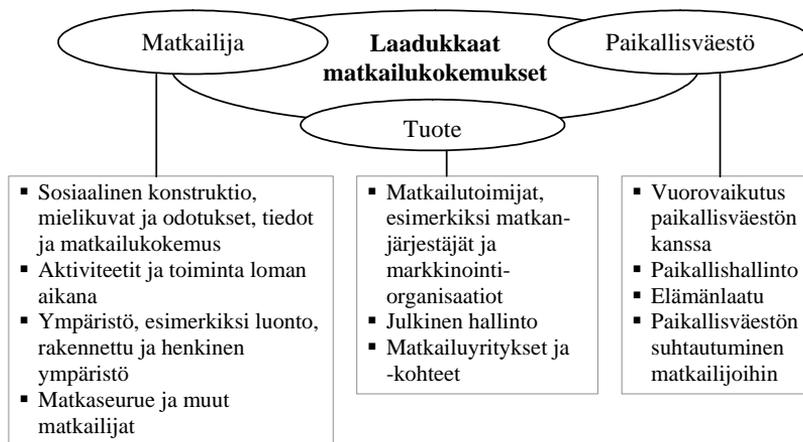
Quan ja Wang (2004, 300) näkevät huippukokemukset kohteen pääasiallisena vetovoimaisuutena ja tukevat kulutuskokemukset kuluttajan perustarpeita tyydyttävinä palveluina. Huippukokemuksia ja niitä tukevia kulutuskokemuksia voidaan verrata matkakohteen ydin- ja kehysvetovoimaan (ks. Aho 1994, 179–181). Ydinvetovoimaisuudella tarkoitetaan matkakohteen keskeisintä sisältöä ja ydinvetovomatekijöitä voidaan tunnistaa esimerkiksi kävijämäärien perusteella. Kehysvetovoimaisuus koostuu erilaisista palvelutyypeistä, joilla pyritään helpottamaan vierailuja kohteessa että korostamaan kohteen ydinvetovoimaa. Liikenne-, majoitus- ja ravitsemispalvelut ovat tyypillisiä kehysvetovomatekijöitä (Aho 1994, 179–180).

Ahon (1994) malli matkailukohteen ydin- ja kehysvetovoimaista on tarkoitettu tietyn matkailukohteen vetovoimaisuuden arvioinnin ja mittaamisen apuvälineeksi kun taas Quanin ja Wangin (2004) tarkoituksena on tarkastella matkailukokemuksia ja niiden muodostumista yleisellä tasolla. Matkailun huippukokemukset on kuitenkin kytketty tiiviisti kohteen vetovoimaisuuteen, joten malli jättää huomioimatta, että matkailun huippukokemus voi olla myös matkakohteesta riippumaton, vahvasti tunteisiin liittyvä ja tapahtua pääasiassa kokijan pään sisällä. Vaikka tutkimusaineiston huippukokemuksista lähes kolmannes liittyi matkailutuotteeseen, tiettyyn kohteeseen, nähtävyyteen tai retkeen, niin useissa erityisesti elämän ihanuuteen, selviytymiseen, ihmisten ystävällisyyteen ja matkaseurueessa viihtymiseen liittyvissä huippukokemuksissa matkakohde ja sen vetovoimaisuus olivat toissijaisia tai niitä ei mainittu lainkaan. Sen sijaan tukevat kulutuskokemukset olivat selvästi sidoksissa matkakohteen vetovoimaan ja palveluihin.

Matkailijan, tuotteen ja paikallisväestön vaikutus hyvään matkailukokemukseen

Nickersonin (2006, 227–235) mukaan matkailukokemuksen laatuun vaikuttavat *matkailijaan, tuotteeseen ja paikalliseen väestöön* liittyvät tekijät. Kuvan 4 mukainen malli on koostettu useiden eri tutkijoiden kirjoitusten perusteella. Malli siis vetää yhteen matkailukokemusten tutkimuksen monia näkökulmia, koulukuntia sekä tutkimusmenetelmiä. Mallia arvioitaessa on kuitenkin pidettävä mielessä, ettei se sisällä kaikkia mahdollisia matkailukokemukseen vaikuttavia tekijöitä, vaan kokoa yhteen tiettyjä näkemyksiä matkailukokemuksista. Lisäksi laadukas matkailukokemuksen on aina subjektiivinen käsite: mikä on laadukas matkailukokemus yhdelle, ei välttämättä ole sitä toiselle (Nickerson 2006, 227–229).

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Kuva 4. Matkailukokemukseen vaikuttavat tekijät (Nickerson 2006, 228).

Matkailijaan kohdistuvat vaikutukset määrittävät laadukasta matkailukokemusta. Jo ennen matkalle lähtöä matkailija on muodostanut mm. tiedotusvälineiden avulla matkakohteesta sosiaalisen konstruktion, jonka avulla hän muodostaa odotuksia ja mielikuvia kohteesta. Myös matkailijan tiedot kohdealueesta ja aikaisempi matkailukokemus vaikuttavat elämyksen laadun arviointiin (ks. Beeton, Bowen & Santos 2006; Bowen & Santos 2006). Matkailukokemukseen vaikuttavat oleellisesti myös aktiviteetit, joihin matkailija osallistuu, ja vuorovaikutus sekä muiden ihmisten että luonnon- ja hengellisen ympäristön kanssa (Nickerson 2006, 229–230). Andereckin, Brickerin, Kerstetterin ja Nickersonin (2006, 85) mukaan “aktiviteetit, joihin osallistuin” mainitaan usein matkailukokemusten kohokohtina. Keskustelu muiden matkailijoiden kanssa vaikuttaa aktiviteettien valintaan ja omien kokemusten arviointiin. Muiden matkailijoiden kokemuksille annetaan arvoa, sillä heitä ei pidetä matkailuyritysten kävelevinä mainoksina. Muiden matkailijoiden ohella myös muut ihmiset vaikuttavat matkailukokemuksen onnistumiseen. Huono palvelu voi pilata laadukkaana kokemuksen ja hyvä palvelu voi johtaa elämykseen (Nickerson 2006, 229–230).

Myös itse matkailutuotteeseen liittyvät seikat, esimerkiksi hotellin tai kuljetusvälineiden varustelu- ja palvelutaso, vaikuttavat matkailukokemuksen laatuun. Nickerson (2006, 230) nostaa esiin myös alueen *matkailutoimijat*, esimerkiksi matkaoppaat ja markkinointiorganisaation työntekijät, *matkailuyritysten* edustajat esimerkiksi kuljetus-, majoitus- ja ravitsemisaloiilla sekä *julkisen hallinnon*. Paikallinen, alueellinen ja kansallinen julkinen hallinto luo edellytykset laadukkaalle matkailukokemukselle (ks. Daniels & Pennington-Grey 2006) ja matkailualan työntekijät vastaavat henkilökohtaisesta ja laadukkaasta palvelusta (ks. Jennings & Weiler 2006). Yhteistä näille virallisille välittäjille (formal broker) on se, että matkailijat pitävät heitä

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asiantuntijoina, joiden tehtävänä on auttaa niin matkan suunnittelussa kuin itse matkailukokemuksen onnistumisessa (Nickerson 2006, 230–231).

Paikallisen väestön rooli matkailukokemuksen muodostumisessa on myös oleellinen. Paikallisväestön positiivinen tai negatiivinen suhtautuminen matkailuun välittyy matkailijalle (informal brokering) (ks. Jennings & Weiler 2006). Vahva kotipaikkarakkaus ja pelko matkailun ikävistä vaikutuksista voi heijastua negatiivisena suhtautumisena matkailijoihin. Paikallisväestön hyvä elämänlaatu (ks. Carmichael 2006; Andereck & Jurowski 2006), kestävä matkailukehitys sekä paikallisväestön osallistuminen julkisen hallinnon suunnittelutyöhön (ks. Bricker, Daniels & Carmichael 2006) ja hyötyminen matkailun taloudellisista vaikutuksista (ks. Jurowski, Daniels & Pennington-Grey 2006) saavat aikaan molemminpuolista hyväksyntää ja laadukkaita matkailukokemuksia (Nickerson 2006, 232–233).

Tutkimusaineistoa tarkasteltiin myös Nickersonin (2006, 227–235) teorian valossa ja analyysin tulokset on esitetty taulukossa 4. Luokituksen matkailijaan liittyvät tekijät pitävät sisällään hyvin monenlaisia asioita, kuten odotuksia ja mielikuvia, aktiviteetteja ja vuorovaikutusta sekä ympäristön että muiden matkailijoiden kanssa. Niinpä jokaisessa kertomuksessa oli joitakin matkailijaan liittyviä mainintoja. Matkailijaan itseensä sekä ympäristöön liittyviä mainintoja oli lähes kaikissa kertomuksissa ja muita matkailijoita, joko omaan matkaseurueeseen kuuluvia tai matkalla tavattuja muita matkailijoita, nostettiin esiin erityisesti 64 prosentissa kertomuksista. Tuotteeseen liittyviä mainintoja oli lähes 85 prosentissa kertomuksista. Monissa kertomuksissa mainittiin kuitenkin useampia matkailutuotteita, joten koko aineistossa matkailutuotteisiin viitattiin 163 kertaa. Paikallisväestöä käsiteltiin 44 kertomuksessa eli lähes 30 prosentissa kertomuksista.

Tyypillisiä matkailijaan itseensä liittyviä asioita olivat rentoutuminen, rauha, mahdollisuus saada aikaa itselle ja ajatuksille, pako arjesta sekä matka omaan itseensä. Lisäksi mainittiin muun muassa itsensä voittaminen, matka omille rajoille, päämäärän saavuttaminen ja pitkäaikaisen haaveen toteutuminen. Muita matkailijoita käsiteltiin esimerkiksi matkaseurueessa viihtymisenä, matkaseurueen välien lähentymisenä, kau-

Kokemukseen vaikuttavat tekijät	Kpl	Prosenttia
Matkailija	153	100 %
matkailija itse	150	98,0 %
muut matkailijat	98	64,1 %
ympäristö	150	98,0 %
Tuote	128	83,7 %
Paikallisväestö	44	28,8 %
<i>Matkailukertomuksia aineistossa yhteensä</i>	<i>153</i>	

Taulukko 4. Matkailukertomukset luokiteltuina matkailukokemuksiin vaikuttavien tekijöiden mukaan (Nickerson 2006).

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kaisten sukulaisten ja ystävien kohtaamisena sekä uusien ystävien saamisena. Muutamissa kertomuksissa nostettiin esiin myös muiden matkailijoiden epäkohteliaisuus tai huono käytös. Ympäristöön liittyvät maininnat olivat pääasiassa luontoon tai rakennettuun ympäristöön liittyviä, mutta joissakin kertomuksissa kuvattiin myös henkistä yhteyttä ympäröivään maailmaan. Esimerkiksi Kaarina Hakkarainen kirjoittaa:

“Askel kerrallaan astun alemmas, syvemmälle, sisemmäs. Omaan itseen. Hiljaisuus ympäröi minua. Ja sanoinkuvaamaton rauha. Olen vain, lepään vain. Hengitän tätä hetkeä. Sisimmässäni säie valosta”.

Matkailutuotteisiin liittyvät maininnat sisälsivät viittauksia erilaisiin matkailutuotteisiin, esimerkiksi etelänmatkoihin, laivaristeilyihin ja vuokrattuihin lomamökkeihin, majoitus-, ravitsemis- ja kuljetuspalveluihin sekä nähtävyyksiin ja matkakohteisiin.

Paikallisväestöä käsittelevissä maininnoissa nostettiin esiin ennen kaikkea paikallisten ihmisten ystävällisyys ja positiivinen suhtautuminen matkailijoihin, mitä kuvaa hyvin Riitta Liljanderin kommentti:

“Parasta olivat indonesialaiset ihmiset! Jäämme sellaiseen kiitollisuudenvelkaan, mitä emme ikinä pysty korvaamaan. Muuta kuin menemällä uudelleen”.

Lisäksi paikallisväestön arkipäivän askareiden ja toisaalta juhlien seuraaminen koettiin mielenkiintoiseksi. Joissakin kertomuksissa paikallisia ihmisiä kuvattiin myös osana matkakohteen maisemaa.

Hyvissä matkailukokemuksissa on tunneperäisiä ja aistittavia vihjeitä

Berryn, Carbonen ja Haeckelin (2002, 86) mukaan kuluttajan kokemus muodostuu yrityksen tuotteesta tai palvelusta välittämistä vihjeistä. Kaikki, mitä voidaan havainnoida tai tuntea, tai minkä puute voidaan huomata, kuuluu vihjeisiin. Tuote tai palvelu itsessään antaa vihjeitä, mutta myös fyysinen ympäristö ja työntekijät ilmeineen, eleineen ja kommentteineen välittävät vihjeitä. Jokainen vihje viestittää jotakin asiakkaalle ja kaikki vihjeet yhdessä muodostavat asiakkaan kokemuksen (Berry et al. 2002, 86).

Vihjeet voidaan jakaa kahteen kategoriaan. Ensimmäinen pitää sisällään tuotteen tai palvelun varsinaisen toiminnan. Vuokra-auton käynnistyminen startatessa on *toiminnallinen vihje*, joka lisäksi antaa vihjeen, että myös esimerkiksi ilmastointi tai GPS-laite saattavat olla toimintakunnossa (Berry et al. 2002, 86). Toinen vihjekategoria

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liittyy *tunteisiin ja aisteihin* ja sisältää tuotteeseen tai palveluun liittyvät tuoksut, äänet, näkymät, maut ja koostumukset sekä ympäristön, jossa se tarjotaan. Nahkaverhoilun tuntu tai asiakaspalvelijan äänensävy kietoutuvat tiukasti tuotteen tai palvelun toiminnallisiin ominaisuuksiin. Tunteisiin liittyvät vihjeet vetoavat kuluttajan tunteisiin, eivät niinkään järkeen (Berry et al. 2002, 86).

On varsin selvää, että toiminnalliset vihjeet ovat ensiarvoisen tärkeitä. Jos tuote tai palvelu havaitaan huonolaatuiseksi, sitä ei osteta. Sen sijaan huonommin on tiedostettu se, että tunneperäiset vihjeet ovat kuluttajan kokemuksen kannalta aivan yhtä tärkeitä kuin toiminnalliset vihjeet ja toimivat niiden kanssa yhdessä (Berry et al. 2002, 86).

Tutkimusaineistosta analysoitiin matkailukokemusten toiminnallisia ja tunneperäisiä vihjeitä etsimällä niihin liittyviä mainintoja. Matkailutuotteen moninaisuuden vuoksi toiminnallisten ja tunteisiin liittyvien vihjeiden erottelu oli paikoin vaikeaa; maistuvan ruoka-annoksen tuottaminen on ravintolan varsinaista toimintaa ja samalla makukokemus antaa myös tunteisiin liittyvän vihjeen. Aineiston kertomuksista 76 eli lähes puolet (yhteensä 82 mainintaa), toi esiin matkailutuotteiden, esimerkiksi kuljetusvälineiden, majoitus- ja ravitsemispalveluluiden tai matkanjärjestäjien palveluiden toimivuutta. Toiminnallisia vihjeitä (82 mainintaa) on selvästi vähemmän kuin viittauksia matkailutuotteisiin (163 mainintaa), sillä toiminnallisiksi vihjeiksi katsottiin nimenomaan tuotteen toiminnallisuuden arviointi. Esimerkiksi ”keke” tuo esiin melojille järjestettyjen palvelujen toimivuutta:

“Hatunnostomme alueen kunnille joiden toimesta melojille on järjestetty rantautumis- ja yöpymispaikkoja”.

Tunteisiin liittyviä vihjeitä oli aineistossa huomattavasti enemmän, kaikkiaan 147 kertomusta eli 96 prosenttia kertomuksista (yhteensä 236 mainintaa) viittasi erilaisiin tuntemuksiin. Jos lasketaan erikseen aineiston kaikki aisteihin liittyvät maininnat, saadaan tuotteisiin, palveluihin ja ympäristöön viittaavia tunteellisia vihjeitä vieläkin enemmän, yhteensä 306 kappaletta. Varsin hyvä esimerkki erilaisten tunteiden merkityksestä matkailukokemuksessa on lainaus ”Wilman” kertomuksesta ”Taivas Väli-merellä”:

“...Täällä ymmärsin ensimmäistä kertaa, miten ihanaa elämä parhaimmillaan on. Jokainen aamu lomalla voi herätä miellyttävään varmuuteen siitä, että tiedossa on kaikkia aisteja helliviä kokemuksia. Cap Ferrat niemen karu kauneus, männyn ja meren tuoksu, välimerellinen oliiviöljyn ja yrttien kruunaamat maku-elämykset, pienten boulangerien taidokkaat leivonnaiset ja ranskalaisittain ystävällisimmät ihmiset...”

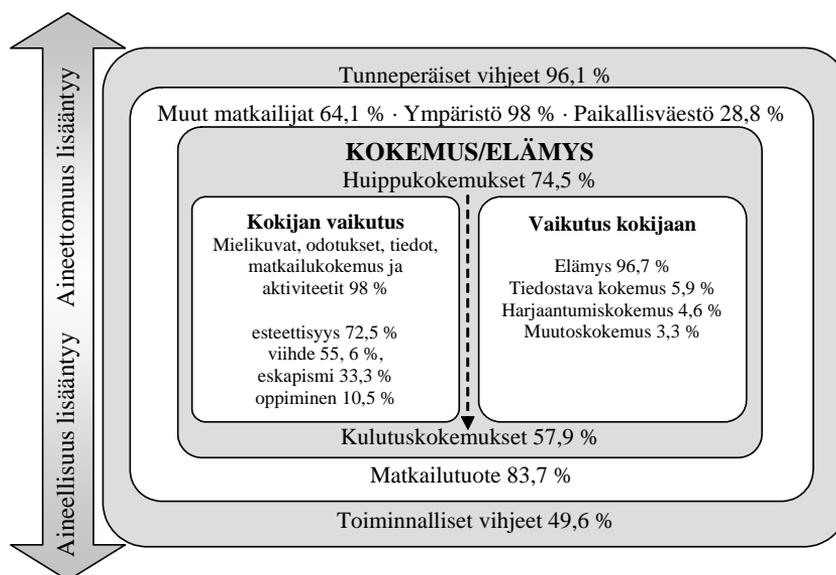
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Tutkimusaineiston kertomuksissa tunteisiin liittyvien vihjeiden määrä on huomattavan suuri ja kertoo hyvien matkailukokemusten moniaistisuudesta. Tunteisiin liittyvät vihjeet näyttävät myös jättävän pysyvemmän muistijäljen kokijan mieleen kuin toiminnalliset vihjeet, ainakin jos matkailutuotteet, esimerkiksi majoitus- ja kuljetuspalvelut, ovat riittävän korkeatasoisia.

Tällainen oli hyvä matka

Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli selvittää millaisia asioita *Oliko hyvä matka?* kirjoituskilpailun 153 matkailukertomuksessa nostettiin esiin. Tutkimusaineistoa analysoitiin viiden kokemuksiä ja elämyksiä käsittelevän teorian pohjalta. Kuvaan 5 on koottu analyysien perusteella tutkimusaineiston kertomuksissa esiintyneitä kokemusten ja elämysten elementtejä.

Kokijan vaikutus kokemukseen/elämykseen tuli esiin varsin selvästi. Lähes jokaisessa kertomuksessa tuotiin esiin joitakin matkailijaan liittyviä seikkoja, esimerkiksi mielikuvia ja odotuksia ennen matkaa sekä aktiviteetteja matkan aikana. Tutkimusaineiston matkailukokemuksissa korostui matkailijoiden passiivinen osallistuminen, sillä esteettisiä ja viihteellisiä kokemuksia tuotiin esiin huomattavasti useammin kuin aktiivista osallistumista vaativia eskapistisia kokemuksia ja oppimiskokemuksia.



Kuva 5. Kokemusten ja elämysten elementit kertomuksissa.

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Tarkasteltaessa kokemuksen/elämyksen vaikutusta kokijaan Ahon (2001) kokemusten tyyppien mukaan, matkailukertomuksissa korostui selvästi elämyksellisyys. Sen sijaan Ahon tyypittelyssä korostuvia itsensä toteuttamisen muotoja, uusien tietojen ja taitojen oppimista, osaamisen harjaannuttamista tai pysyviä muutoksia matkailijan mielentilassa tai elämäntavassa, tuotiin kertomuksissa esiin hyvin vähän.

Kokemus- ja elämysteooriat huomioivat kokemukseen vaikuttavia elementtejä, joiden aineettomuuden aste vaihtelee. Kuvan 5 alaosassa olevat elementit, matkailutuote ja tuotteiden ja palvelujen toiminnalliset vihjeet ovat konkreettisempia ja aineellisempia kuin kuvan yläosassa olevat elementit, muiden matkailijoiden, ympäristön ja paikallisväestön vaikutus kokemukseen sekä tuotteiden, palveluiden ja ympäristöjen välittämät tunneperäiset vihjeet. Erilaisia matkailutuotteita mainittiin useimmissa matkailukertomuksissa, mutta niiden toimivuutta tai laatua arvioitiin selvästi harvemmin. Matkakohteen ympäristöä kuvattiin lähes jokaisessa kertomuksessa ja matkaseurueeseen tai muihin matkailijoihin viitattiin myös usein, mutta paikallisväestöön liittyviä mainintoja oli kertomuksissa huomattavasti vähemmän. Matkailukertomuksissa tuotiin huomattavan paljon esiin kokemuksiin liittyviä tunneperäisiä tai aistittavia vihjeitä.

Myös huippukokemusten ja niitä tukevien kulutuskokemusten aineellisuudessa oli eroja. Vaikka osa huippukokemuksista käsittelee matkailutuotteita tai pitkäaikaista unelmaan nähdä tai kokea tietty kohde, selvästi useammin huippukokemus liittyy erilaisiin aineettomiin elementteihin, luonnonympäristöihin ja maisemiin, tunnetiloihin, selviytymiseen, ihmisten ystävällisyyteen tai viihtymiseen matkaseurueessa. Sen sijaan huippukokemuksia tukevissa kulutuskokemuksissa matkailutuotteiden rooli oli hyvin merkittävä.

Analyysien perusteella hyvä matkailukokemus on tunteellinen ja aistittava, enemmän passiivinen kuin aktiivinen, elämyksellinen enemmän kuin oppimiseen liittyvä tai elämää muuttava, huippukokemuksista ja niitä tukevista kulutuskokemuksista muodostuva arkirutiininen vastakohta, johon vaikuttavat lähinnä matkailutuotteeseen ja matkailijaan itseensä liittyvät tekijät.

Yhteenveto

Monet tutkijat ovat nähneet paljon vaivaa määritellä matkailukokemuksia ja elämyksiä sekä etsiessään käsitteiden yhtäläisyyksiä ja eroavaisuuksia. Käsitteiden määrittely on tärkeää, jo siksi, että tutkijat puhuisivat samoista asioista. Kokemusten ja elämysten luonne, esimerkiksi subjektiivisuus, emotionaalisuus sekä tilanne- ja aikasidonnaisuus, tekevät käsitteiden määrittelystä kuitenkin niin haastavaa, että ”vaikka matkailuelämyksiä jatkuvasti jäsennellään ja tulkitaan, parhaimmillaankin voidaan selvittää vain elämysten yhteisiä teemoja ja termin lopullinen määrittely jää saavuttamatta” (Jennings 2006, 2). Tarkkaan määritelmään pyrkimisen sijasta oleellista on keskittyä siihen, millainen hyvä ja mieleenpainuva matkailukokemus on, kutsuttiin sitä sitten kokemukseksi tai elämykseksi. Tutkimusaineiston matkailukokemukset olivat joka

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tapauksessa muistiin jääneitä, subjektiivisia ja kokijoilleen merkittäviä, pääasiassa positiivisia, mutta mahdollisesti myös negatiivisia, vaihtelevassa määrin emotionaalisia ja moniaistisia, erityisesti näkö- ja tuntoaistin, mutta myös maku-, kuulo- ja hajuaistin avulla koettuja tapahtumia, tuotteita, tunnelmia tai olotiloja.

Matkailumarkkinoinnissa elämyksellisyys liitetään vahvasti aktiviteetteihin ja seikkailuihin (Tuohino & Pitkänen 2002, 36; Saarinen 2001a, 92–93). Siksi onkin mielenkiintoista, että tutkimusaineiston kertomuksissa korostui varsin selvästi matkailijoiden passiivinen osallistuminen eli esteettiset ja viihteelliset kokemukset, joissa matkailija seuraa tapahtumia sivusta sen sijaan, että on itse aktiivinen toimija. Lomamatkalla halutaan siis pääasiassa olla ja tuntea, ei niinkään tehdä tai oppia. Matkailutoimijoiden haasteena onkin, miten tuotteistaa ja markkinoida oleminen ja tunteminen houkutteleviksi elämyksiksi, joista matkailija on valmis maksamaan.

Esteettisten kokemusten merkitystä korostaa myös se, että matkailijat tuovat kertomuksissaan huomattavan paljon esiin erilaisia aineettomia tekijöitä, esimerkiksi tunneliloja ja tunnelmia, joiden vaikutus matkailukokemuksen onnistumiseen on merkittävä. Tämä saattaa johtua esimerkiksi siitä, että matkailupalveluilta odotetaan riittävää laatu-astoa, jonka ylittyessä matkailijat voivat keskittyä matkailupalveluiden sijasta nauttimaan tunnekokemuksista ja erilaisista tunnelmista. Toisaalta on myös mahdollista, että matkan aikana koetut aistimukset jättävät pysyvemmän muistijäljen kuin matkailutuotteiden, esimerkiksi hotellin tai vuokra-auton, toiminta ja laatu.

Quanin ja Wangin (2004) teoriaa matkailun huippukokemuksia ja niitä tukevia kulutuskokemuksia laajennettiin luokittelemalla matkailukertomusten huippukokemukset seitsemään huippukokemustyyppiin, jotka olivat matkailutuote, ihana elämä, luonto, ystävälliset ihmiset, selviytyminen, viihtyminen matkaseurueessa ja unelman toteutuminen. Huomattavaa oli, että huippukokemus ei välttämättä liittynyt vahvasti matkakohteeseen tai sen vetovoimaan, kuten Quanin ja Wangin (2004) malli antaa ymmärtää. Kertomuksissa saatettiin kertoa laajasti matkailukohteista ja aktiviteeteista loman aikana, mutta kuitenkin päätyä siihen, että parasta lomalla oli matkaseura tai vapaus ja aikatauluttomuus. Osa kertomuksista keskittyi täysin tunnetilojen kuvailuun, eikä matkakohdetta aina edes mainittu. Huippukokemuksia tukevat kulutuskokemukset sen sijaan liittyivät selvemmin matkakohteen vetovoimaan ja olivat pääasiassa majoitus-, ravitsemis- ja kuljetuspalveluja, ostosmahdollisuuksia sekä nähtävyyksiä ja tapahtumia.

Matkakohteen erilaisia ympäristöjä, esimerkiksi luontoa, kaupunkeja tai kulttuuriympäristöä, kuvattiin lähes kaikissa kertomuksissa. Ympäristö luo puitteet kokemukselle. Myös muiden matkailijoiden, erityisesti oman matkaseurueen jäsenten, vaikutus kokemukseen oli huomattava. Sen sijaan paikallisväestöön liittyviä mainintoja oli kertomuksissa yllättävän vähän, vaikka valtaosa kertomuksista koski ulkomaanmatkaa. Tämä saattaa johtua esimerkiksi vähäisestä vuorovaikutuksesta paikallisväestön kanssa. Kaikki paikallisväestöä koskevat maininnat olivat sävyltään positiivisia. Mielen-

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kiintoista olisi tutkia, miten paikallisväestön kielteinen asenne tai häiritsevä käyttäytyminen matkailijoita kohtaan vaikuttaa matkakokemukseen.

Matkailuyritykset voivat vaikuttaa tuotteidensa ja palveluidensa laatuun ja henkilökuntansa asiakaspalveluun sekä palveluympäristöön. Sen sijaan vaikutusmahdollisuudet matkakohteen ympäristöön ja muiden matkailijoiden sekä paikallisväestön käyttäytymiseen ovat huomattavasti rajallisemmat. Tarjotakseen asiakkailleen mahdollisimman hyvät puitteet matkailukokemusten syntymiselle, matkailuyritysten on toiminnassaan huomioitava myös kohdeympäristön, muiden matkailijoiden ja paikallisväestön rooli hyvien matkailukokemusten muodostajina. Mutta vaikka matkailutoimijat voivat luoda otolliset olosuhteet hyvien matkailukokemusten muodostumiselle, tuntemuksia, tunnetiloja ja tunnelmia lienee hankalampi myydä ja ostaa.

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Research Paper

Does satisfaction with package tours lead to successful vacation experiences?

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ABSTRACT

Tour operators play a key role in the creation of destination experiences by assembling and distributing package tourism products. This study examines how satisfaction with the components of a package tour affects the success of a vacation experience by analyzing customer satisfaction data ($n=38,153$) from the largest tour operator in Finland. A principal component analysis identified six dimensions of a package tour, of which a regression model indicated that tour operator's destination services and accommodation services were the key factors in explaining the success of the vacation experience. Pre-tour services and environmental issues were also essential, whereas flight and airport services were the least important. However, these six components explained only 34% of the variance in the success of an experience. Therefore, it is argued that satisfaction with tour operators' services has only a limited impact on the success of a package tourism experience. This strengthens the idea that hybrid and complex tourism experiences are influenced by various factors and actors, many of which are irrespective of the tour operator.

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1. Introduction

The tourism industry exists in order to offer tourists extraordinary, satisfactory, valuable, and memorable experiences (e.g. Pizam, 2010; Tung & Ritchie, 2011; Walls, Okumus, Wang, & Kwun, 2011). Nevertheless, as experiences are subjective and internal in nature, they cannot be produced by the tourism industry. Tourism organizations can create favorable prerequisites, circumstances, and environments for experience formation, but the outcome still depends on how a tourist reacts to the interaction with the event, and may differ tremendously from what was intended by the service provider (Komppula, 2005; Komppula, 2006; Mossberg, 2007).

Similar to experience, value is also an elusive concept (Carù & Cova, 2003) determined by the customer (e.g. Grönroos, 2000; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Thus, measuring a vacation experience is challenging (Hosany & Gilbert, 2010; Jennings, 2010; Neal & Gursoy, 2008; Oh, Fiore, & Jeoung, 2007). Generally, satisfaction is considered as an outcome of an experience, even though tourists do not travel to achieve satisfaction, but to gain experiences that fulfill their needs and wants (Quinlan Cutler & Carmichael, 2010). Despite the increasing research interest in tourism experiences (e.g. Morgan, Lugosi, & Ritchie, 2010), it is still somewhat unclear which components constitute a tourism experience per se and

how to define the roles of, for example, eating, sleeping, and transportation, which are necessary for the journey (Quan & Wang, 2004).

On a general level, tourism experiences are influenced by elements both outside of and within an individual (Quinlan Cutler & Carmichael, 2010), and by factors related to the travelers, local populations, and the products (Nickerson, 2006). Focusing more closely on the service environment or "the experiencescape", tourism experiences are affected by the physical environment, personnel, other tourists, products/souvenirs, and the theme/story (Mossberg, 2007).

There is, however, a need for closer investigation into how, and to what extent, these different factors influence the success of a tourism experience. For instance, Quinlan Cutler and Carmichael (2010, p. 22) noted that tourism experiences need further investigation, particularly into: how experiences are influenced by (i) physical and social settings, and (ii) product/service attributes; (iii) whether satisfaction is an appropriate measurement of experience; and (iv) what the importance of internal and external factors is, in influencing quality tourism experiences. Furthermore, (Walls et al., 2011, p. 20) stated that research is needed to verify or falsify the general assumption that experience factors carry equal weight in experience formation, and to determine whether a weighting system could be used to measure the importance of the different factors involved in experience formation.

This study responds to these research gaps by focusing on the role of the tour operator in the creation of package tourism experiences. The purpose is to examine how satisfaction with

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the different elements of a package tour affects the success of a vacation experience. The study contributes to academic research by enhancing understanding on package tourism experiences, and provides managerial implications to facilitate experience creation efforts within tourism destinations and tour operator businesses.

The literature review begins by characterizing the package tourism market and summarizing previous research on package tours. Tourism products and their influence on tourism experiences are then discussed, and attention is drawn to the evaluation of these package tourism experiences. In the methodology section, the research design, data, and analyses are described, after which, the results of the study follow. In the last section, the conclusions and contribution of the study are presented and discussed in relation to previous and future studies. Finally, managerial implications are suggested.

2. Literature review

2.1. Package tourism

This study approaches destination experiences through package tourism, which is a predominant form of outbound leisure tourism in Europe (Bastakis, Buhalis, & Butler, 2004; Buhalis & Laws, 2001). However, during the past years European tour operators have had to respond to the presumed crisis in traditional package travel by creating more individualized, diversified, and flexible packages (Bastakis et al., 2004; Bramwell, 2004; Buhalis & Laws, 2001; Casarin, 2001; Shaw & Williams, 2004). In Asia, by contrast, an increasing tourism demand has accelerated the rapid growth of the package tourism market (Chen & Hsu, 2012; Wong & Lee, 2012). Consequently, research on package tourism and tour operators seems to be currently dominated by Asian viewpoints (e.g. Chang, 2009; Heung, 2008; Huang, Hsu, & Chan, 2010; Jin, He, & Song, 2012; Wang, Hsieh, Chou, & Lin, 2007; Wang, Jao, Chan, & Chung, 2010; Wong & Lee, 2012; Wong & Wang, 2009) over Western viewpoints (e.g. Alegre, Cladera, & Sard, 2012; Campo & Yagüe, 2008; Davies & Downward, 2007; Koutoulas, Tsartas, Papatheodorou, & Prountzou, 2009; Rewtrakunphaiboon & Oppewal, 2008; Rosselló & Riera, 2012; Trunfio, Petruzzellis, & Nigro, 2006).

Furthermore, in the Asian context the term “group package tour” (Wang, Hsieh, & Huan, 2000; Wang et al., 2007) is used to highlight the intense interaction between a group of tourists and their tour leader (Lee, Wilkins, & Lee, 2011). In contrast, a characteristic of the European “package tours” (Hanefors & Mossberg Larsson, 1999) or “charter tours” (Mossberg Larsson, 1995) is that tourists are left to enjoy their vacation quite independently as tour leaders are present only occasionally (e.g. during transfers and excursions). However, terms like “guided package tour” (Bowie & Chang, 2005) or “inclusive tour” (Bowen, 2001) are used in the European context to describe roundtrip-type package tours.

Adopting the European perspective, a package tour is here understood as a pre-arranged combination of accommodation, transportation, and/or other significant tourist services (Council Directive 90/314/EEC, 1990). In Europe, the package tourism market is highly concentrated, and the Northern-European tour operators in particular have developed into massive organizations (see Budeanu, 2005) by integrating transportation services and travel retailing into their core tour-operating business (Bastakis et al., 2004). In recent years this integration has also reached tourism destination areas where tour operators have become key players by acquiring accommodation establishments and incoming tour and coach operators (Bastakis et al., 2004). At an individual business level, the tour operators’ market power causes problems

and conflicts, such as low prices and profit margins. However, destinations as entities are considered to benefit from tour operators, for example through the increased accessibility offered by charter flights, support for marketing and promoting the destination area, and expansion of the tourism season. In addition, tour operators often monitor the performance of the entire tourism industry, and raise issues with destination management organizations towards the improvement of the quality of destination experiences (Bastakis et al., 2004; Trunfio et al., 2006).

In Scandinavia, the competition in the package tourism market has long been fierce, and different tour operators’ customers may even end up travelling on the same flight and staying in the same hotel (Mossberg Larsson, 1995; Roper, 2005). In Finland, package tourism is a common way of distributing outbound tourism (1.6 million package tours in 2010), even though the market share has decreased from 55% at the beginning of the century to 41% (Statistics Finland, 2010). Despite the stereotyped conception of the package tourist as a lower middle-class individual (Smith, 1977), a package tour is chosen for a variety of reasons (see Bastakis et al., 2004; Enoch, 1996; Laws, 1997; Sheldon & Mak, 1987; Wickens, 2002) and Finnish package tourists in fact come from all social classes (Selänniemi, 1996).

Notably, due to the development of information and communication technologies (ICT) the role of the travel agents and tour operators alike has changed considerably from providing advisory functions and transaction processing to the provision of consultative services (Cheynel, Downes, & Legg, 2006). In the current trend of “do-it-yourself” travel arrangements, the opportunities of tour-operating business seem to lie in concentration on certain markets and tailor-made services instead of providing mere scale economies.

2.2. Experiencing tourism products

In experiential consumption and marketing, the interaction between customers and companies is central (e.g. Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Schmitt, 1999, 2003). According to Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) in the “second generation” experience economy value is based on the co-creation experiences. Carù & Cova (2007), in turn, outlined a continuum based on the role of customers and companies in creating experiences. Finnish package tours are likely to fall into the middle of this continuum, as tour operators provide an experiential platform by assembling the packages (e.g. Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007), but eventually customers construct their own experiences by choosing which services they wish to use. Notably, the more service encounters the tourists have, the more possibilities there are for tour operators to influence their experiences (Hanefors & Mossberg Larsson, 1999; Mossberg Larsson, 1995).

Tourism experiences¹ take place in phases (Neal & Gursoy, 2008; Tung & Ritchie, 2011). This is acknowledged also in Quinlan Cutler and Carmichael’s (2010) profound conceptual model of influences and outcomes of a tourism experience (Fig. 1) which thus forms a solid basis for analyzing package tourism experiences.

The influential realm refers to the external elements that have an impact on the tourism experience (Quinlan Cutler & Carmichael, 2010). Physical aspects are related to physical settings, spatial characteristics, and geographical features, which are all important in understanding tourism experiences (e.g. Mossberg, 2007; Ryan, 2002). Social aspects include various social influences such as social settings, personal relationships, and interactions

¹ For consistency, the term “tourism experience” (e.g., Tung & Ritchie, 2011; Nickerson, 2006) is used here, even though “tourist experience” also often appears in the literature (e.g., Komppula, 2006; Mossberg, 2007; Quinlan Cutler & Carmichael, 2010; Quan & Wang, 2004; Ryan, 2002).

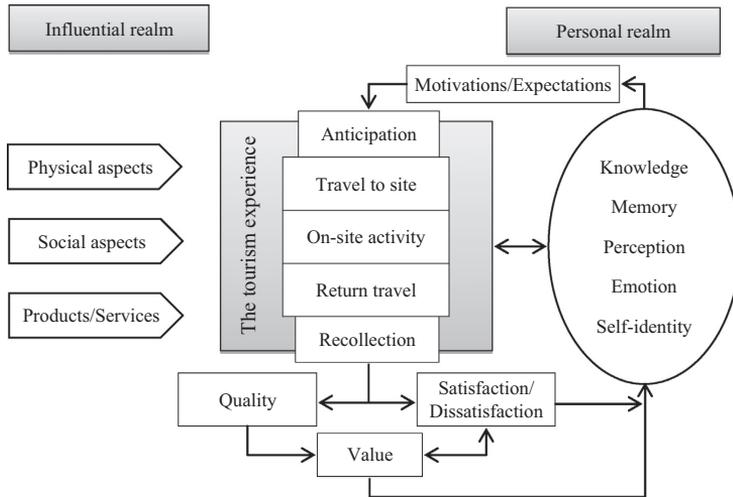


Fig. 1. Conceptual model of a tourism experience (modified from Quinlan Cutler & Carmichael, 2010).

with personnel, other tourists, and the host population. In addition, products and services, which are at the center of this study, heavily influence the tourism experience (Quinlan Cutler & Carmichael, 2010).

A product consists of a commodity, a service, or a combination of both. It is “the result of a production process in which added value is created” (Edvardsson, 1997, p. 33). The concept of service refers to the customer’s perceptions of the process and outcome that constitute the service, form the perception of quality, and determine customer satisfaction (Edvardsson, 1997, p. 34). Instead of services, companies provide prerequisites for various services, by which (Edvardsson, 1997, pp. 35–40) refers to a proposed offer based on the service concept (what is to be done for the customer), service process (activities needed to produce the service), and service system (resources required to implement the service concept and process).

Komppula (2006) applied the idea of prerequisites for services to the tourism context, and described the tourism experience product as a service package. The core of this product is the service concept, and various activity modules, such as accommodation and transportation, form the service process. The tour operators’ role is to provide the best possible prerequisites for the experience: an attractive idea and description of the product, a successful service process, and a reliable, functioning service system (Komppula, 2006, p. 136).

The challenge of package tourism is that even though tour operators bundle the experience products, tourists still use services offered by multiple individual service providers. Ideally, each service is a value-adding entity, leading to increased satisfaction with the overall vacation experience (Komppula, 2006; Neal & Gursoy, 2008). To ensure this, companies must endeavor to control their service process in its entirety, even if they do not have direct control over all parts of it (Edvardsson, 1997).

The customer experiences the product within the service environment, and filters it through expectations and previous mental images of the company and corresponding products (Komppula, 2006). In the model of Quinlan Cutler and Carmichael (2010) these aspects fall into the personal realm, referring to the elements within an individual that shape the experience, e.g. knowledge, memory, perception, emotion, and self-identity. This personal realm feeds into motivation and expectations for future experiences, providing a

cycle of motivation/expectation, experience, and outcome (Quinlan Cutler & Carmichael, 2010).

Walls et al. (2011, p. 18) stated that a consumer experience actually is the multidimensional takeaway impression or outcome, which is affected by physical and human interaction dimensions and formed by encounters with products, services, and businesses influencing consumption values (emotive and cognitive), satisfaction and repeat patronage. According to Komppula and Gartner (2013) this impression or outcome refers to customer value, which runs parallel to and is a major contributor to the construct of customer experience (Palmer, 2010). In Quinlan Cutler and Carmichael’s (2010) original model, however, an experience is evaluated purely through satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Therefore, the complementary yet distinct concepts of quality and value are here added to the model (Fig. 1) and discussed next in more detail.

2.3. Evaluating package tourism experiences

According to the common definition of service quality a “service should correspond to the customer’s expectations and satisfy his needs” (Edvardsson, 1997, p. 33). The close relationship between quality and satisfaction is evident; customers are satisfied when their judgment of the service they have received equals or exceeds what they expected (Oliver, 1980).

The debate on the conceptual distinction of quality and satisfaction still continues. So far, the literature has recognized that satisfaction and quality are both subjective evaluations of a service experience, based on the comparison between perceived performance and some standard reference point (Orsingher & Marzocchi, 2003, p. 202). Satisfaction, however, is a psychological outcome emerging from a specific experience, and is at least partially linked to emotional feelings (cf. personal realm), whereas service quality, which does not necessarily imply a personal experience, is more concerned with the attributes of the service itself and results mainly from a cognitive process (cf. influential realm) (Crompton & MacKay, 1989; Orsingher & Marzocchi, 2003).

Recent years have witnessed a growing interest in consumer value, partially replacing the more narrow concepts of quality and satisfaction (e.g. Gallarza & Gil, 2008; Gallarza & Gil Saura, 2006; Sánchez-Fernández, Ángeles Iniesta-Bonillo, & Holbrook, 2009). Holbrook (1999, p. 5) defined consumer value as “an interactive

relativistic preference experience” which refers to: (1) the interaction between a consumer and a product; (2) the simultaneously subjective, comparative, and situational nature of value; (3) preference judgments or evaluations; and (4) consumption experiences rather than mere purchasing (Holbrook, 1999, pp. 5–9; Gallarza & Gil, 2008). Academics seem to agree that quality is an antecedent of both satisfaction and value yet there are distinct viewpoints on whether satisfaction influences value or vice versa (e.g. Gallarza & Gil Saura, 2006, Sánchez, Callarisa, Rodríguez, & Moliner, 2006).

According to Komppula (2006, p. 139) tourists’ perceptions of value result from a variety of quality-related perceptions and experiences with the service provider over a period of time. Based on the ideas of Woodruff (1997), Komppula (2005) distinguished three stages of value. *Expected value* refers to the needs, goals, and purposes that underlay tourism motivations, while *perceived value* reflects perceptions and experiences before and during the service is actually being performed. Finally, *experienced value* is formed during and after the service process and reflects customer satisfaction with the received value, which is evaluated against the customer’s goals and purposes. According to Komppula and Gartner (2013), the experienced value refers to the multidimensional outcome of the trip that the traveler constructs after returning back home (Walls et al., 2011), which in this study is measured by the success of a vacation experience.

There are several studies that address the evaluation of package tourism products (e.g. Bowen, 2001; Bowen, 2002; Bowie & Chang, 2005; Chang, 2009; Geva & Goldman, 1991; Heung, 2008; Huang et al., 2010; Hudson, Hudson, & Miller, 2004; Hudson & Shephard, 1998; Mossberg Larsson, 1995; Neal & Gursoy, 2008; Quiroga, 1990; Wang et al., 2007; Wang et al., 2000; Zhang & Chow, 2004). The majority of these, however, concentrate on the role of a tour leader or tour guide in determining the quality of, or satisfaction with, the package tour. For example (Huang et al., 2010, p. 29) suggested that “as package tourists stay in the ‘bubble’ environment created by tour operators, their satisfaction with tour experience depends to a great extent on tour guiding and tour operator services”. Nevertheless, none of these studies explicitly define how the different components of a package tour affect the evaluation of the success of a tourism experience.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

This study takes a quantitative approach in examining how satisfaction with the different elements of a package tour affects the success of a vacation experience. Customer satisfaction is one of the most frequently examined topics in tourism research (Neal & Gursoy, 2008). The main instruments for measuring satisfaction are IPA (Martilla & James, 1977), an analysis focusing on both importance and performance; SERVQUAL (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985), which is based on the expectation-disconfirmation paradigm; and SERVPERF (Cronin & Taylor, 1994) measuring “performance only”.

According to Hudson et al. (2004) all three methodologies can be used in the tour-operating sector since they did not produce statistically different results in a methodological comparison. However, as the SERVQUAL dimensions (assurance, empathy, reliability, responsiveness, and tangibles) seem to be inappropriate for measuring package tours (see also Wang et al., 2007) they instead examined attributes divided into dimensions reflecting various aspects of the vacation experience. Similarly, Neal and Gursoy (2008) suggested that each stage in which the tourism industry and tourists interact should be analyzed, as overall

satisfaction results from satisfaction with pre-trip services, services at the destination, and return trip services.

The design of this study is similar to Hudson et al. (2004) and Neal and Gursoy (2008). The SERVPERF approach is applied but instead of the original service quality dimensions, the attributes were related to pre-tour services, tour operator’s destination services, accommodation, environmental issues, and flights.

3.2. Data

The data was collected through a self-administrated survey questionnaire (38,153 respondents). The research population was formed by customers of the largest Finnish tour operator, Suntours Ltd, during the summer season of 2005 (167,928 customers). The questionnaires were distributed to the customers at the end of the vacation by tour leaders. A questionnaire was handed out to each customer who was willing to accept it, preferably at least one questionnaire per hotel room. Participation was encouraged by granting two gift vouchers worth 200 euro to two random respondents every month. Due to the lack of the exact number of distributed questionnaires, the response rate (23%) is here calculated by the total number of customers. It is noted, however, that this number also includes customers under 18 years old.

In the tour-operating sector, customer feedback is often collected through customer service questionnaires (Hudson et al., 2004). Even though these methods provide information about the customer’s actual vacation experiences (Hudson et al., 2004), they are widely criticized for only providing a superficial understanding (Bowen, 2002), as well as for tour leader interferences, and shortcomings in the questionnaire design (Wang et al., 2007). In this study, the tour leader interference was reduced by advising customers to return the questionnaires after the vacation. The questionnaire, in turn, is presented next and discussed in relation to similar studies.

The questionnaire opened with questions about the respondent’s demographics. The majority of the respondents were female (72%). Respondents between 45 and 54 years old formed the largest age group (26%), followed by 35–44 year-olds and 55–64 year-olds, both at 22% of the respondents. The youngest (under 25 years) and the oldest age groups (over 65 years) both represented 8% of the sample. The most common occupation among the respondents was official (32%), but 25% of the respondents were workers, and 14% retired. Entrepreneurs, managers, students, and the group labeled “other” each represented about 7% of the sample. In addition, a clear majority of the respondents (88%) were on a beach vacation, 11% on a city vacation, and 1% on a roundtrip.

The questionnaire then concentrated on the success of the vacation experience and satisfaction with the package tour. Some questions, such as satisfaction with the children’s club, were related to certain customers only and thus left out of the analysis. Finally, the questionnaire ended with questions about respondents’ future behavior (e.g. recommendations and future vacation interests).

The attributes included in the analysis are presented in Table 1. These attributes were rated with a five-point Likert scale (1 = poor, 5 = very good.), which is considered suitable for evaluating tourism experiences as it provides an effective measure for consumer attitudes, and is easy to construct and manage (Hudson et al., 2004, Yuksel, 2001).

The attributes of this study shared common ground with similar studies (e.g. Andriotis, Agiomirgianakis, & Mihiotis, 2008; Hudson & Shephard, 1998; Hudson et al., 2004; Neal & Gursoy, 2008), yet there were also distinctions as none of these studies were focused on a single tour operator. Hudson and Shephard (1998) measured service quality at a ski resort with 97 attributes,

Table 1
Descriptive statistics of attributes related to tour operator's services.

Attributes	n	Mean	Std. Dev.
Reception and transfer	37,870	4.53	0.64
Booking service	32,763	4.49	0.65
Tour leader service	35,423	4.47	0.71
Return day arrangements and transfer	37,240	4.46	0.73
Availability of tour leaders	31,485	4.45	0.71
Information accuracy of salesperson	31,949	4.40	0.72
Check-in (outbound)	37,895	4.39	0.82
Location of accommodation	37,767	4.37	0.81
Vacation information folder	36,061	4.32	0.72
Information accuracy of brochure	36,845	4.31	0.71
Accommodation service (staff)	37,618	4.29	0.81
Destination information (tour leaders)	37,047	4.28	0.79
Cleanliness of accommodation	37,810	4.26	0.89
In-flight service from destination	35,339	4.19	0.78
In-flight service to destination	37,618	4.18	0.76
Accuracy of hotel description	37,010	4.16	0.86
Check-in (inbound)	36,130	4.12	0.95
Excursion supply	30,336	4.10	0.86
Beaches and swimming conditions	31,828	3.93	0.84
Environmental activities of hotel	31,305	3.80	0.87
General state of environment	37,294	3.74	0.90
In-flight catering from destination	35,049	3.70	1.01
Waste management	34,553	3.62	0.99
In-flight catering to destination	37,681	3.53	1.03
Traveling comfort	37,093	3.43	1.00

and Hudson et al. (2004) compared measurement instruments with 146 attributes divided into 13 dimensions of experience. Andriotis et al. (2008), in turn, examined vacation experiences in Crete, and included 38 attributes, while Neal and Gursoy (2008) included nine attributes in their analysis of satisfaction with pre-trip services, services at the destination, and transit route services. The study of Wang et al. (2007), on the contrary, did concentrate on package tours and tour operators, yet only in the context of Asia. They developed an instrument with 22 attributes for measuring package tours which, however, is not directly applicable to the European context. A detailed comparison of attributes used in this study and in similar studies is presented in Appendix 1.

3.3. Analyses

The data was analyzed with the statistical software SPSS 17.0. First, a principal components analysis (PCA) with Varimax rotation was conducted. The aim was to summarize the information of 25 original variables into a smaller set of new composite dimensions, and to define the fundamental constructs assumed to underlie the original variables (see Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001, pp. 612–615). Since imputation for missing values was not conducted, the amount of respondents declined substantially, but was still considered adequate ($n=15,057$).

As the relationship between the dimensions of the package tour and perceived success of the vacation experience was to be examined, the component points were then analyzed in relation to the question "How successful was your Suntour as a whole?" In the questionnaire this question was placed under the heading "Success of the vacation" and also rated with a five-point Likert scale. A regression analysis was then conducted, as it is one of the most popular methods to analyze the relationships between a single continuous dependent variable and several continuous independent variables (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2006).

The success of the vacation was here measured with a single item, which can be considered as a limitation of the study. It is acknowledged that the use of multi-item measures is highly recommended in marketing research (Churchill, 1979), yet recent research (Berqvist & Rossiter, 2007) also suggests that single-item

marketing construct variables can achieve equal predictive validity to multi-item measures.

4. Results

In PCA, variables with loadings greater than 0.50 were included, and all components with an eigenvalue greater than one were retained in the solution. As a result, six clear components were identified and named according to their content (Table 2). Together, these components accounted for 62% of explained variance. To assess reliability Cronbach's alpha was calculated for the variables retained in each component and all components were considered acceptable as coefficients exceeded 0.60.

The first component, "Destination services", clearly emphasized the tour operator's services in the vacation destination, and "Flight services" described the services during the flight. The third component, "Environment", had an emphasis on issues concerning the state of the environment in the destination, while

Table 2
Components of a package tour: principal component analysis.

Components	Loading	Eigenvalue	Variance explained (%)	Alpha
Tour operator's destination services		3.698	14.792	0.855
Tour leader service	0.795			
Destination information (tour leaders)	0.779			
Availability of tour leaders	0.765			
Holiday information folder	0.686			
Excursion supply	0.589			
Reception and transfer	0.560			
Return day arrangements and transfer	0.521			
Flight services		2.799	11.196	0.804
In-flight catering to destination	0.847			
In-flight catering from destination	0.846			
In-flight service from destination	0.626			
In-flight service to destination	0.615			
Traveling comfort	0.547			
Environment		2.743	10.972	0.823
General state of environment	0.830			
Waste management	0.830			
Beaches and swimming conditions	0.732			
Environmental activities of hotel	0.673			
Accommodation services		2.344	9.376	0.774
Cleanliness of accommodation	0.761			
Accommodation service (staff)	0.730			
Accuracy of hotel description	0.671			
Location of accommodation	0.514			
Pre-tour services		2.081	8.323	0.758
Information accuracy of salesperson	0.824			
Booking service	0.761			
Information accuracy of brochure	0.624			
Airport services		1.842	7.368	0.660
Check-in (outbound)	0.633			
Check-in (inbound)	0.712			

Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure of sampling adequacy=0.914
Bartlett's Test of sphericity=155,948.036; $p < 0.001$.

“Accommodation services” consisted of features related to the hotel, e.g. staff and cleanliness. The fifth component, “Pre-tour services”, focused on booking and accuracy of information provided by the salesperson and brochure, and finally “Airport services” included check-in services at the airport both in the tourists’ home region and the vacation destination.

Six new variables were created from the component points, and named according to the components. All variables had $n=15,057$, a mean of zero and a standard deviation of 1.00. These variables were analyzed in relation to the dependent variable “the success of the vacation”, the mean of which was 4.40, standard deviation 0.65, and $n=14,981$. A multiple OLS-regression was chosen as a method. The unstandardized (B) and standardized coefficients (β) of the regression equations and semipartial squared correlation (sr^2) were calculated and are presented in Table 3 along with the descriptive statistics of the dependent and independent variables and correlations.

The results of the regression model ($n=14,981$) showed that R for regression was significantly different from zero ($F=1259.6$; $df=6$; $p<0.001$). All regression coefficients statistically differed significantly from zero, and contributed significantly to the prediction of perceived success of the vacation experience. Since independent variables were not correlated with each other, the variables did not jointly contribute to R^2 but had only unique effects. Therefore, R^2 had

the same value as adjusted R^2 . Semipartial squared correlation (sr^2) was chosen as the measurement of an effect size, indicating the amount by which R^2 would be reduced if an independent variable was omitted from the equation.

Together, these six components explained 34% of the variance in the perceived success of the vacation experience (Fig. 2). The components that explained the success of the vacation most, based on semipartial squared correlations, were the destination services (13%) and the accommodation services (10%). The pre-tour services explained 5%, and the environmental issues 4%, of the variance. The flight services (1%) and the airport services (1%) explained the variance the least.

According to this study these six components of a package tour had a limited impact on the success of the package tourism experience. A total of 66% of variance in success of the vacation was left unexplained, which implies that a package tourism experience is composed of many elements, irrespective of the tourism product or the tour operator.

5. Conclusions and discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine how satisfaction with the different elements of a package tour affects the success of a

Table 3
Success of a vacation experience: adjusted main effect regression model.

	Succ	Dest	Flight	Envir	Hotel	Pre-tour	Airp	B	β	sr_i^2
Dest	0.35							0.23***	0.35	0.13
Flight	0.11	0.00						0.07***	0.11	0.01
Envir	0.19	0.00	0.00					0.13***	0.19	0.04
Hotel	0.31	0.00	0.00	0.00				0.21***	0.31	0.10
Pre-tour	0.23	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00			0.15***	0.23	0.05
Airp	0.10	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00		0.06***	0.10	0.01
							Intercept	4.40***		
Means	4.40	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00		$R=0.58^{***}$	
Std. Dev.	0.65	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00		Adj. $R^2=0.34$	

*** $p < 0.001$.

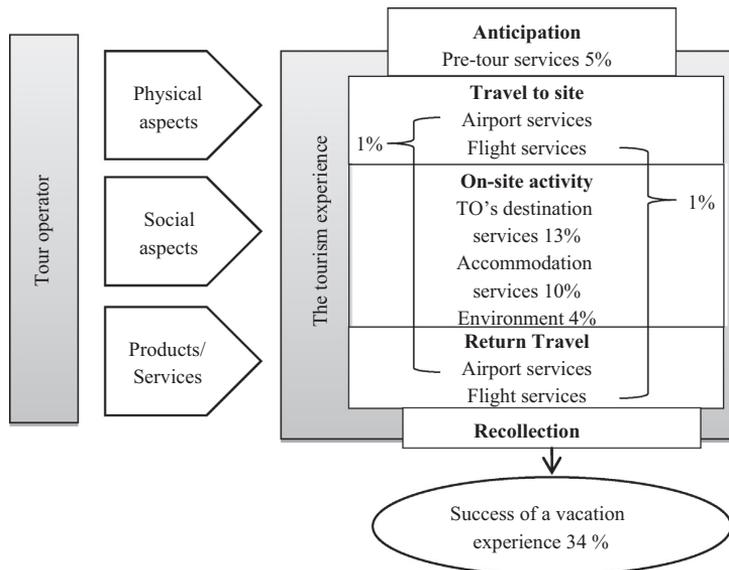


Fig. 2. Effects of package tour components on the success of a vacation experience.

vacation experience. A package tour product was found to consist of at least the following components: tour operator's destination services, flight services, environment, accommodation services, pre-tour services and airport services. From these components, the tour operator's services at the destination and the accommodation services were the most important individual factors in explaining the success of a vacation experience. Also, the tour operator's pre-tour services and environmental issues seemed to be essential, but the analysis suggested that flight and airport services were the least important in explaining the success of a package tourism experience.

This study strengthened the idea that package tourism experiences are hybrid experiences that take place in phases and that satisfaction with different modules of a package tour affects the success of a vacation experience (cf. Neal & Gursoy, 2008). The main contribution, however, was that the role of a tour operator in the creation of a successful package tourism experience is limited.

Walls et al. (2011) requested more research on whether different experience factors carry equal weight in experience formation. This study proposed that in terms of geographical settings (cf. Leiper, 1979) and phases of an experience, the modules taking place in the tourist destination region (on-site activity) are far more important than services within the tourist generating region or transit routes. The tourists purchased package tourism products for the sake of the destination, where the actual experiences would take place. Furthermore, the different components of a package tour product were not equally important for the success of a vacation experience. Therefore, in experience formation and resource allocation, tour operators' destination services and accommodation services should be emphasized. The flight and airport services, by contrast, did not seem to influence the success of a vacation experience to a great extent, which is somewhat contradictory to previous studies (e.g. Martín-Cejas, 2006).

Quinlan Cutler and Carmichael (2010), in turn, raised questions about whether satisfaction is an appropriate measure of experiences, and the level of importance of internal and external factors in influencing tourism experiences. In previous research, Wang et al. (2010) argued that satisfaction with the tour experience depends to a great extent on tour guiding and tour operator services. Instead of satisfaction with the experience, this study concentrated on the success of a vacation experience, the variance of which was only partly explained by satisfaction with the components of a package tour. Therefore, it is suggested that focusing on satisfaction and mere external factors might not be adequate to measure the success of tourism experiences. Satisfaction is a prerequisite of experienced value but not sufficient on its own. Even if a tourist is perfectly satisfied with the tourism product and the destination, the vacation experience might still end up being unsuccessful. The experienced value seems to be more multidimensional construct than satisfaction and, therefore, future research should further examine the relationship of satisfaction and value in experience evaluation.

According to this study, the success of a vacation experience is, beside the tourism experience product, a result of various other factors and actors. These might be other services, e.g. restaurants or shopping facilities, which in some studies (e.g. Wang et al., 2000; Bowie & Chang, 2005) have been included in the package tour itself. In addition, the success of a vacation might often be removed from the product, and instead related to the traveler and the local population (Nickerson, 2006), or to something as unpredictable as the weather (Gómez Martín, 2005). Additionally, an interesting aspect of tourism experiences is the degree of intimacy proposed by Trauer and Ryan (2005, p. 490) who stated that vacations are indeed commercial products, but what perhaps is really being purchased is time with significant others. In any case, it is clear that research that combines the elements of the

influential realm (physical and social aspects, products/services) with the elements of the personal realm (knowledge, memory, perception, emotion, and self-identity) is needed in order to reveal what tourism experiences are really constructed from.

It should be further noted that another limitation for this study is that the data was collected in 2005, after which some major changes have taken place. Most significantly, the Internet has dramatically changed the market conditions of tourism organizations by supporting interactivity, and reengineering the process of developing, managing, and marketing tourism products and destinations (Buhalis & Law, 2008). The ever-increasing use of information and communication technologies impacts every phase of the experience, and thus research combining ICT and tourism experiences should be included in future research agendas.

6. Managerial implications

This study also provided some interesting managerial implications. It is essential for the package tourism industry to acknowledge that instead of passive agents reacting to stimuli, consumers are active producers of their own experiences (cf. Berry, Carbone, & Haecckel 2002). Even though tour operators offer opportunities for experiences, and try to manage these events as well as possible, in the end the success of a vacation experience results from various elements, many of which are irrespective of the tour operator.

This, however, does not mean that tour operators cannot influence the success of vacation experiences. On the contrary, it is essential to strive for managing and controlling every service encounter in order to ensure the best possible prerequisites for experiences. It is, however, important for tour operators to understand that successful vacation experiences do not necessarily emerge from satisfaction with the components of the package tour. Instead, the services of the tour operator should be viewed as circumstances that enable the experience formation.

Destination services form the most essential component of a package tour. As the tour leaders are to a large extent responsible for these destination services, tour operators should pay particular attention to the professional skills and attitudes of their employees (cf. Heung, 2008). It is also important that tour leaders see themselves as experience enablers, whose task is not to impose ready-made experiences, but instead to concentrate on consumers and empower them to experience whatever it is that they came to experience for.

Besides their own service processes, tour operators are at least partly responsible for the performance of their partners, including hotels and airline carriers. According to this study, it seems that the partners who are especially important are those who operate within the tourism destination, e.g. hotels and local agents. In contrast, the role of the partners related to flight and airport services appears to be more marginal.

Tour operators' customer satisfaction questionnaires and methods of analysis have previously been criticized. For example Wang et al. (2007) stated that the managerial effectiveness of customer service questionnaires is not as good as it should be. This study implied that satisfaction with certain services of the tour operator might still not reveal much about the success of a vacation experience. However, tour operators possess enormous amounts of information on their customers' vacation experiences. Ideally, cooperation between tour operators and academics could lead to both enhanced understanding of tourism experiences and improvements of the research methods and usage of customer satisfaction information (see Morgan, Anderson, & Mittal, 2005) within tour-operating businesses and tourism destinations.

Table A1
Attribute comparison.

Attributes of this study	Relevant attributes used in similar studies
Pre-trip services	Hudson and Shephard (1998)
● Booking service	Information received before travelling; Accuracy of brochure
● Information accuracy of salesperson	Hudson et al. (2004)
● Information accuracy of brochure	Waiting to go; Brochure Neal and Gursoy (2008)
Tour operator's destination services	Service quality of travel and tourism professionals (e.g. travel agents, ticket agents, hotel reservation clerks); Problem-free travel and accommodation arrangements (e.g. travel agents were knowledgeable, I was not put on hold for long periods of time)
● Reception and transfer	Hudson and Shephard (1998)
● Destination information (tour leaders)	Transport to resort; Knowledgeable staff; Informative staff; Accessible staff; Guiding services; Friendly staff; Efficient staff Hudson et al. (2004)
● Vacation information folder	Meeting the representative; Transfer to accommodation; Arrival at the accommodation; Resort activities; Departure; Transfer to the airport
● Availability of tour leaders	Neal and Gursoy (2008)
● Tour leader service	Comprehensive and of high quality tourist services (e.g. regarding activities, tourist attractions, restaurants, hotels); Services made the trip a richer experience; Problem-free tourist services (e.g. the hotel room reserved was available at the check-in-time, the food was acceptable)
● Excursion supply	Wang et al. (2007)
● Return day arrangements and transfer	Tour leader: Presentation ability; Sense of responsibility; Friendliness; Interpretive ability; Professional ability; Coordination ability; Descriptions of optional tours Hudson and Shephard (1998)
Accommodation	Quality of accommodation; Quality of staff; Information of accommodation; Structure of accommodation; Views; Atmosphere; Accessibility
● Accommodation service (staff)	Hudson et al. (2004)
● Cleanliness of accommodation	Accommodation
● Accuracy of hotel description	Neal and Gursoy (2008)
● Location of accommodation	Problem-free tourist services (e.g. the hotel room reserved was available at the check-in-time, the food was acceptable) Andriotis et al. (2008)
Environmental issues	Quality standards of accommodation; Cleanliness of accommodation; Level of hygiene and sanitation Wang et al. (2007)
● General state of environment	Hotel arrangement; Good facilities; Sanitary environment; Comfortable environment Andriotis et al. (2008)
● Beaches and swimming conditions	Environmental quality; Attractiveness of natural environment; Cleanliness of beaches and sea
● Waste management	
● Environmental activities of hotel	
Flight	Neal and Gursoy (2008)
● Check-in (outbound)	Quality of services (e.g. flight attendants, cabin stewards, bus drivers, ticket agents); Problem-free travels (e.g. the plane seats were as reserved and comparable, we returned on time)
● Check-in (inbound)	Andriotis et al. (2008)
● In-flight catering	Speed of check in and check-out at the destination airport
● In-flight catering (return)	
● In-flight service	
● In-flight service (return)	
● Traveling comfort	

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Appendix A1

See Table A1

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Article 3

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Tour leaders in customer complaints

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Tour leaders in customer complaints

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Introduction

Finnish residents made 3,2 million leisure trips abroad with at least one overnight stay in the destination country in 2007 (Statistics Finland, 2008). According to data from the Association of Finnish Travel Agents (AFTA, 2009), in 2008 nearly a million Finnish tourists travelled abroad on a package tour. 70% of the destinations were in Europe while the most popular long-distance destination was Thailand, with 93 000 tourists, and a 12% growth from the previous year. These figures show that Finns are eager travelers, as Finland has a population of just over 5 million. It is also clear that in Finland, a package tour is a common way to travel abroad for a vacation. According to Selänniemi (1996, 225-226) Finnish package tourists come from all social classes and it is not possible to distinguish a certain type of tourists who use package tours.

The European Union's Council Directive on package travel defines a package as a pre-arranged combination of at least two of the following: accommodation, transport and ancillary services. Furthermore these must be offered or sold to the customer at an inclusive price. (Council Directive 90/314/EEC.) This study is based on package tours, which include accommodation, flight and tour leaders' services at the destination.

In Scandinavia, the competition on the charter-tour market is fierce and tour operators offer very similar products. The different tour operators' customers may even end up travelling on the same flight and staying at the same hotel. Hence, the crucial competitive advantages for the tour operator can be the tour leader. The tour leader's performance within the service encounter has an effect on company image, customer

loyalty and worth-of-mouth communication. It may also be the factor that differentiates the product from the competitors' products (Larsson Mossberg, 1995, 437).

This requires an understanding of what happens during the service encounter between the tourist and the tour leader. Within the package tour context, service satisfaction or dissatisfaction can be evaluated for specific service encounters, or for the whole tour. In this study service encounter satisfaction is used. It reflects the customer's feelings about discrete encounters with the personnel, and is a result of the customers' evaluation of the events that occur during a definable period of time, such as a package tour (Hanefors & Larsson Mossberg, 1999, 188).

Customer complaints enable researchers to study how interactions with the customer are handled by the service provider. Single customer complaints offer detailed accounts of the sources of customer dissatisfaction, as well as give indications about the actions the customer is considering taking to express this dissatisfaction (Edvardsson & Roos, 2001, 271-273).

The purpose of this study is to examine dissatisfaction and tour leaders in customer complaints. First the sources of dissatisfaction on a package tour are briefly presented. The main focus of the study will be on answering the research question of what the sources of dissatisfaction are in relation to the tour leaders. The article begins by a discussion on dissatisfaction and customer complaints and how these are related. This is followed by a presentation of the theoretical framework upon which the study is based. The fourth section is concerned with the data and the methodology used, after which the findings of the study are presented. In the concluding section some managerial implications of the findings are discussed.

The data of this study consists of 84 customer complaints filed to Suntours by customers of one destination in Thailand during the winter period of 2006-2007. In these complaints, 56 critical incidents related to tour leaders were identified and analysed. Tour leaders were defined as the employed tour leaders of Suntours at the destination. Suntours was chosen because it is the largest Finnish tour operator.

Package tours and customer dissatisfaction

The package tour product

A tourist product can be described as a service package, which consists of different molecules (see Shostack, 1977) or modules, as they are often

called. The core of the product is formed by the service concept, i.e. a description of customer value. Various activity modules, for instance accommodation and transportation, form the service process. The service process is a chain of services produced by one or several companies (Komppula & Boxberg, 2005, 24-25.) In the light of this, the package tour product (Figure 1) can be argued to consist of at least the following service modules: destination services, flight services, environment, accommodation services, pre-tour services and airport services. The outer circle of the figure describes the elements and actors involved in providing and affecting the realisation of the core value through the service modules. This constitutes the service delivery system, in this case the system built by the tour operator to deliver the service to the tourist. Also other service modules might naturally influence the package tour product. For example restaurants and shopping facilities at the destination are considered as part of the package tour in some studies (Wang, Hsieh & Huan 2000; Bowie & Chang 2005).

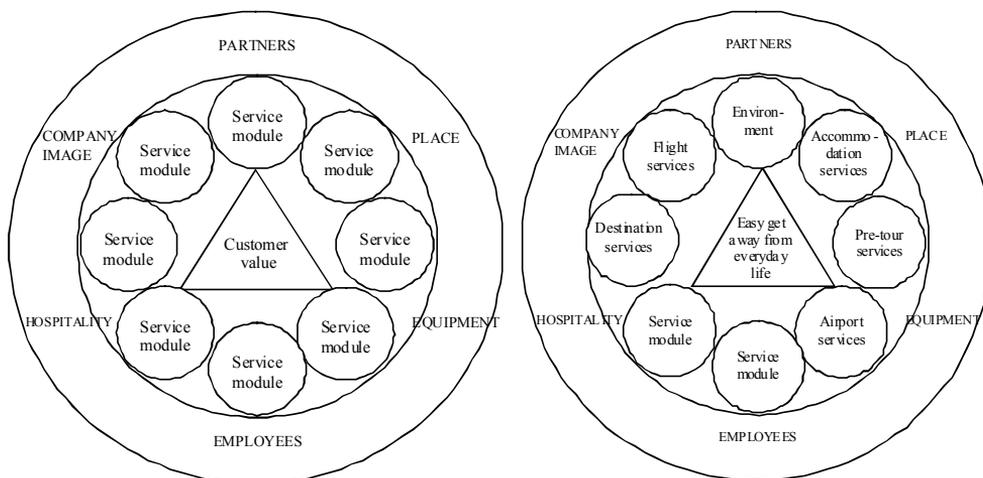


Figure 1. Package tour product (modified from Komppula & Boxberg, 2005)

The customer value of the package tour can be defined as the “easy get away from everyday life”, as the tour operator has constructed the product on behalf of the tourist. The customer experiences the product within the service environment and the framework of the service provider and filters the experiences through expectations and previous mental images of the company and corresponding products (Komppula & Boxberg, 2005, 24-25).

The package tour product is constructed by the tour operator, but the separate modules can be produced by various companies chosen by the tour operator. Ideally, each module and process in the service delivery system should bring added value to either the service or the experience. Tourists feel they are getting added value by not having to pay attention to details, allowing them to instead focus on enjoying their holiday. (Komppula & Boxberg, 2005.) However, if some part of the package tour product does not provide the promised and expected service satisfactorily, it may decrease the overall value of the experience and even lead to dissatisfaction (Neal & Gursoy, 2008, 59-60).

Bowie and Chang (2005, 304) further define a package tour as a very labour intensive and synthetic multitude of components. It contains all the special “soft” characteristics of services such as seasonality, perishability, inseparability, intangibility and simultaneous production and consumption, while also containing tangible “hard” elements such as hotel rooms and airplane fares.

Tour leaders as mediators

Tour leaders' at the destination have many tasks. The main job of the tour leader is to act as a mediator between the tourist and the destination. Mediating is defined as any active attempt by an individual to arbitrate the tourist experience of another individual. A mediator, also called a broker, is someone who assists in sense-making and in the tourist's (re) constructions of his or her experience as well as the (re)presentation of that experience (Jennings & Weiler, 2006, 58). The mediating starts at the airport, where the tour leaders meet the arriving tourists. In the transfer coach the tourists are given a first introduction to the destination. At arrival to the hotel, the tour leader is present at the reception to make sure the tourists are cared for. The tour leaders also provide additional information about the destination at a welcome reception at the hotel and in a file located in the hotel lobby. To further mediate the tourists' experience, the tour leaders are constantly on call in case of emergencies. When it is time for the tourists to leave the destination, the tour leaders are present in the transfer coach and make sure the airport formalities run smoothly (Yale, 1995, 160-161).

The tour leaders are the tour operators' public face at the destination (Yale, 1995, 160). Tour leaders face tension in cases of service failures. This tension results from different demands on their actions from the tourists and the tour operators. The tour leaders must provide emotional support to the tourists in difficult circumstances, while also trying to influence their perceptions of the tour operator in order to protect the company (Guerrier & Adib, 2000, 350).

Satisfaction and dissatisfaction

The relationship between satisfaction and dissatisfaction is complex. Customers might view the overall tourism experience as satisfactory although they file a complaint about some certain aspect of it. Likewise, even if no part of the service delivery system has failed the customer might still be dissatisfied with the experience (Johnston, 1995, 64-65). Satisfaction and dissatisfaction are not necessarily mirror images of behaviour, although the underlying reasons are often the same. An event which, if handled poorly, causes great numbers of dissatisfied responses does not necessarily create the same amount of satisfied reactions when executed well (Bitner, Blooms, Tetreault, 1990, 81). For example, getting ones luggage at the airport quickly does not lead to satisfaction, but having to wait for it leads to dissatisfaction (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2001, 84).

Customer satisfaction is not the only criteria in deciding future purchases. Trust towards the service provider and previous experiences also affect the decision (Liljander & Roos, 2001, 16). A long service relationship with the service provider may either decrease the effects of a service failure, or even make matters worse if the customer feels cheated and let down by the service provider. Customers who are dissatisfied or feel let down by the service provider are more likely to switch to another service provider, spread negative information and seek compensation through third parties (Bolting, 1989, 5).

Customer complaints as measures of dissatisfaction

Customer complaints are only one of several ways for customers to express dissatisfaction. Other modes are badmouthing the service provider to others, boycotting the service provider, switching service providers, and seeking compensation through a third party (Singh, 1990, 78). It is clear that not all dissatisfied customers file an official customer complaint to the service provider. Hence, the amount of customer complaints a company receives cannot be taken to directly correspond with the absolute number of dissatisfied customers (Bolting, 1989, 5).

The reasons for not filing an official customer complaint with the service provider might be that the customer feels it requires too much effort or he/she feels that the possible compensation might not be worth the effort. Also the customer's personality type plays a role in deciding the channel for venting their dissatisfaction. Angry customers are most likely to file complaints with the service provider, while timid customers are more likely to use one or more of the other channels of expressing dissatisfaction (Chebat, Davidow, & Codjovi, 2005, 340).

According to the Finnish general terms for package tours §14.4., the tourist may not allege a breach of contract unless he informs the tour

operator of the breach within a reasonable time. Furthermore, a breach which can be rectified at the destination must be reported to the tour leader or some other representative of the tour operator as soon as possible. However, the tourist may allege a breach of contract if the tour organiser or some other trader upon whom the tour organiser has called, has acted dishonourably or with gross negligence in performance of the contract. (Consumer Agency, 2009.) In general the customer is expected to file the complaint within two months of returning home from the package tour (Verhelä, 2000, 33).

Sources of dissatisfaction in service encounters

A service encounter can be defined in various ways. It may refer to a single interaction between the customer and an employee, where that interaction has a large influence on the customers' perception of the quality of the service offered (Moscardo, 2006, 236). A service encounter can also be used to signify a period of time during which the customer is indirectly in contact with the service provider (Bitner et al., 1990, 72). In this study the first interpretation of the term service encounter is adopted.

Usually dissatisfying service encounters are results of failures in the core services of the service delivery system. Such failures are for example shortcomings in cleanliness of the facilities, negligence in safety issues or poorly executed maintenance works (Moscardo, 2006, 270). Other reasons for dissatisfaction include insufficient or misleading information about a service, high prices, and inconsistent changes in quality (Johnston, 1995, 57). However, often the tangible elements of a package are less significant to the tourist than the experiences they gain. The traveller is partaking in the production of the package and hence the tourists' previous experiences, expectations and even moods can greatly influence how the package is perceived and evaluated. Thus, different customers can evaluate and experience the same event in different ways. Even the same customer can perceive the same event differently at different times (See for example Huovinen, 1999, 14; Komppula & Boxberg, 2005, 11). According to Bowie and Buttle (2004, 255), typical hospitality service failures include unavailable services that have been promoted; disappointing physical environment; slow service; and employees who do not care about, or are rude to, the customers.

Customers' perceptions about the severity of service delivery system failures are mostly influenced by how the contact employee handles the complaint situation. The most common reason for dissatisfaction is that the customer is not offered any kind of an apology, compensation or explanation for the failure. Also treating the customer inconsiderately

and failing to offer help rectifying the service failure causes dissatisfaction in the customers (Bitner et al, 1990, 81).

Analysis and results

Research data

The data of this study consists of 84 customer complaints filed to Suntours by customers during the winter period of 2006-2007. Due to the confidential nature of the complaints all demographic information had been removed by the company before the material was handed over to the researchers. Due to this the data was not analysed with respect to any demographic factors such as age, gender or socio-economic status. The complaints were varied and rich in both content and appearance and varied from a few lines sent over the Internet to hand written letters.

Reasons for the complaints could be found in all modules of the package tour product. However, for this study only incidents related to tour leaders were analysed. A careful classification produced 56 critical incidents related to tour leaders. Tour leaders were defined as the employed tour leaders of Suntours at the destination. Hence, sales personnel at travel agencies, flight attendants and other pre- or post-tour personnel were not regarded as tour leaders, although they definitely influence the packaged tourism experience.

Some quotations from the customer complaints will be presented where appropriate to illustrate both the conclusions of the researcher as well as the use of language in the customer complaints. However, since the data is originally in Finnish, the quotations have been translated by the authors. This might unintentionally have changed their original meaning.

Critical Incidents Technique in service encounters

Bitner et al. (1990) conducted a study of critical service encounters to isolate the events and related behaviours of contact employees that cause customers to distinguish very satisfactory service encounters from very unsatisfactory ones. They identified three categories of employee behaviour, which accounted for all incidents. These categories were: employee response to service system failures, employee response to customer requests and needs, and unprompted and unsolicited employee actions. In the first category all incidents were related to a failure in the core service (product defects, such as cold food or unhygienic facilities, and slow or unavailable service). The factor determining the customers'

evaluation of the incident was the contact employees' way of responding to and handling of the failure. The second category arose from situations where the customer asked the contact employee to adapt the service to suit the customers' unique needs. In the third category events and employee behaviours were truly unexpected from the customers' point of view. Unsatisfactory incidents comprised of employees behaving in an unacceptable manner, such as lying or being rude. However, the behaviour could not be triggered by a failure in the service delivery system nor the result of a customer request.

Also Hoffman, Kelley, & Rotalsky (1995) examined employee recovery efforts related to service failures. They based their study on the service encounter classification identified by Bitner et al. (1990) but adapted their classification to the restaurant industry. The first category, employee responses to service delivery system failures, included product defects, slow or unavailable service, facility problems, unclear customer policies, and out of stock conditions. In the second category, employee response to customer requests and needs, dissatisfaction was created by food not being cooked to order and problems related to seating arrangements. Dissatisfying incidents related to unprompted or unsolicited employee behaviour was due to inappropriate employee behaviour. Some similarities between the subgroups of both studies can be found. For example, both studies include categories focusing on slow or unavailable service and employee behaviours. The differences between the subgroups are due largely to the industry-specific focus taken in the latter study.

Research methods

The purpose of this study is to examine the sources of dissatisfaction on a package tour in general and especially related to tour leaders. The first research question, what causes dissatisfaction on a package tour, is analysed by categorising the data into primary and secondary complaint reasons.

To answer the second research question, what are the sources of dissatisfaction in relation to the tour leaders, content analysis using critical incidents is used. Critical incidents are identified from the data using the following criteria (see Bitner et al 1990 for more discussion about the selection criteria).

- Each incident involved interaction between the customer and the employee, in this case the tour leader. Complaints about other personnel (hotel staff, waiters at restaurants) were ignored.

- Each incident had to have been very dissatisfying from the customers' point of view. This was embedded in the data since customers do not complain in written form to the company unless the incident has been very critical.
- Each incident was a discrete episode. Hence, a complaint could contain more than one incident.
- Each incident had to contain sufficient detail for the researcher to be able to visualise it.

The incidents were grouped according to the reason that had triggered the dissatisfaction towards the tour leaders' behaviour. The grouping follows that of Bitner et al's (1990) study with the exception that information sharing, helping and guiding are seen as part of the core service. In the first categorisation all incidents were grouped into one of the three main categories. After that the incidents in each category were compared to ensure that similar issues were categorised in the same way. An independent but informed associate was also asked to read through and verify the results of the first categorisation.

Limitations

CIT has been criticized for relying too heavily on participants' memories of possibly ancient incidents, and the recounts of the incidents may be inaccurate and distorted by time (Wils-Ips, van der Ven, & Pieters, 1998, 289). The incidents chosen and retold by the participants might also be distorted because they seek social approval from the researcher (Edvardsson & Strandvik, 2000, 84). In this study the above mentioned problems have been solved by using actual customer complaints filed to the company shortly after the incident. The descriptions are, however, subjective interpretations of the dissatisfying events, not objective accounts. The data is also biased since it only focuses on the negative critical incidents. Furthermore, the data has neither been collected specifically for this study nor been collected by interviews conducted by the researcher. Hence the interpretations made during the analysis were not verified by the research subjects.

Sources of dissatisfaction on a package tour

The customer complaints were given a primary and secondary (where applicable) complaint reason. Not all complaints contained more than one reason while some complaints contained more than two reasons. For these, only the two main reasons were recorded. The results are not statistically significant since the aim of the study is to give a qualitative overview of the material. The results are presented below in table 1.

Table 1: Primary and secondary causes of dissatisfaction

Source of dissatisfaction	Primary	Secondary	Total
Accommodation	39	14	53
Tour leaders at destination	17	25	42
Flight	19	7	26
Pre-tour services	9	18	27
No secondary reason		20	20
Total	84	84	148

The primary reason behind the complaint was the reason that was most emphasised. From the above table it can be seen that accommodation was clearly the most frequently mentioned primary complaint reason. Service failures related to the flight and tour leaders at the destination received roughly the same amount of primary complaints. However, when looking at the reasons for the secondary complaints, the tour leaders' actions at the destination are clearly the largest source of dissatisfaction.

From this categorisation a picture of a dissatisfying tour package product emerged. This is presented below in Figure 2. The core value of dissatisfaction is “easy get-away from everyday life”. This is the same value as is used to describe the package tour product in Figure 1 (See Kompula & Boxberg 2005 for discussion).

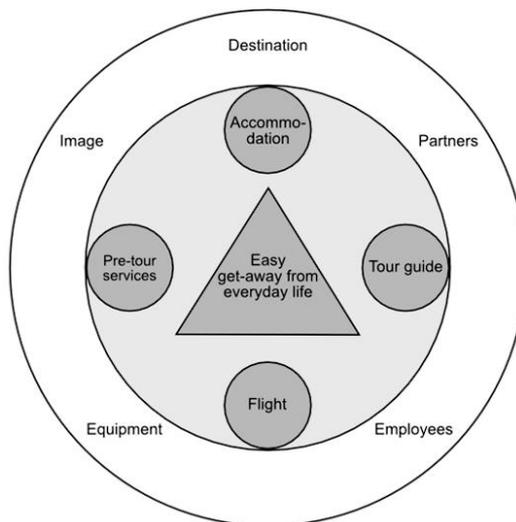


Figure 2. Causes of dissatisfaction on a package tour (modified from Kompula & Boxberg 2005.)

The core value is the value the customers feel they did not achieve related to some or all of the modules of the package tour product. The other parts of the dissatisfying package tour product consist of the tour organiser's pre-tour services at the home country, flights to and from the destination, accommodation at the destination and tour leaders' services at the destination. The outer layer of the figure consists of the tour organiser's image, partners, employees and equipment, as well as the destination itself.

Accommodation received the most mentions in the customer complaints. The hotel rooms were too small or dark, the view from the room was not what the tourist had expected or the room was unclean or damp. Many tourists complained about the hotel staff lacking language skills and service attitude. Also ongoing construction work at the hotel caused dissatisfaction.

The complaints related to the tour leaders are presented in more detail in the following section. The main causes for dissatisfaction with regard to tour leaders were a perceived lack of information, failure to help the tourists when problems arose, problems with separately purchased tours and the tour leaders' unfriendly behaviour.

Dissatisfaction related to flights to and from the destination was caused by delays, impolite flight attendants or discomfort during the flight. In some instances the flight delays also led to unexpected layovers at destinations where there were no tour leaders. In these instances tourists felt they were not properly informed about the changes in schedule.

In the group pre-tour services complainants were mainly dissatisfied with issues related to information and sales activities. The tourists complained about inaccuracies and discrepancies in the information on the tour operators Internet pages and brochures. For example, if the customers were not informed about planned construction works at the hotel already when they purchased the trip this caused dissatisfaction. Sales activities were related to unclear policies regarding the tour operators' customer loyalty programs as well as with impolite sales personnel.

Dissatisfaction with the tour leaders

In the first category (employee response towards service delivery system failure) customers expressed dissatisfaction because the tour leader had not helped them, had not informed them properly or because the service had been slow. In the second group (employee response to customer needs and requests) the main reasons for dissatisfaction were that the tour leaders did not adjust the service according to the tourists wished

and needs. The third category (unprompted and unsolicited employee actions) contained the most varied reasons for dissatisfaction.

In the first group, employee response towards service delivery system failure, customers were dissatisfied with the tour leaders' reaction to, or way of handling a failure in the core service. The dissatisfying incident began with a failure in some part of the core service, but the tour leader's reaction to this failure strengthened the customer's dissatisfaction.

The most frequently mentioned incident leading to dissatisfaction was the lack of help from the tour leader when a significant failure in the room or hotel occurred. Also slow service was a source of dissatisfaction. In some instances the customer had to wait for days before getting the tour leaders' attention and help. Especially in instances where the customers had to change hotels during the vacation they felt they would have needed the tour leaders' help and expertise. The tour leaders are expected to know the area and its accommodations, and failing to disclose this information to the customers created dissatisfaction. This strengthens Jennings and Weiler's (2006, 59) notion that the tour leaders act as mediators at the destination.

Again we had to change rooms, this time to a different hotel. The tour leader was nowhere to be seen and we had to take a tuk-tuk and find the new hotel and deal with all the check-in formalities with the staff, who barely spoke English.

The customers expected more personal interaction in notifications regarding unusual circumstances such as flight delays. Dissatisfaction was caused by customers feeling neglected and not receiving enough information about the changes. Unfriendly answers to the customer's questions and concerns and leaving the customer in a hurry were experienced as particularly hurtful actions. In some customer complaints the tour leaders' words were colourfully recited and accounts accentuated with exclamation marks and capital letters, showing how deep a negative impact the encounter had made on the customer.

...the floor of our bathroom was constantly flooded... When we, once again, mentioned this to the tour leader the reply was "Go to the supermarket and buy a floor scrape, it shouldn't cost more than a Euro. Although I'm not sure they have any in the market, but you can search

The quality of information was another source of dissatisfaction, as both lack of information and giving misleading or inaccurate information to the customer were mentioned. The tour leaders' impatient or unfriendly attitude often heightened the customer's dissatisfaction. In many complaints the customer pointed out that the original failure in the core

service would not have prompted them to file a complaint had the tour leader handled the situation in a more appropriate way. People who go on package tours buy time for themselves and their spouses and families, as much as they buy a place to visit (Selänniemi, 1996, 268). The time the tourist has to spend coping with a failure in the service delivery system is time away from this.

The tour leaders working at the office at that time [when the unsuitable day trip was sold] said that they'd never participated in the trip in question. --How can you have employees recommending and selling things they are not even familiar with??

The second group, employee response to customer needs and requests, described dissatisfaction resulting from the customer asking the tour leader for something outside the scope of the core service. Dissatisfaction resulted if the customer did not feel the tour leader accommodating these special requests. Dissatisfaction was even stronger in instances where the tour leader had first promised something outside the normal scope but failed to fulfil that promise. These empty promises left tourists feeling frustrated and angry.

The tour leader was satisfied when I told him that the matter had been taken care of and I also told him that I didn't think Suntours was really responsible for this. However I did expect more in terms of aftercare, but apparently your interest faded when I took care of the matter myself. --If you promise to contact me regarding this matter, is there any reason not to?

The other special need not accommodated according to the tourists was related cases of sudden illness. The tourists expected the tour leaders to help them if they fell ill during the tour. Customers expressed dissatisfaction over both the tour leaders not offering to help them at the hospital, as well as not advising the customers about medication. Tour leaders were also expected to offer the tourists certificates for insurance companies to prove illness during the vacation.

When I asked the tour leader for help on that second day at the hotel, that if she knew the name of some medicine that I could have picked up at the pharmacy, she said that she doesn't know anything about medicines! – I got the address to the doctor's office but nobody asked me if I would need help?

The third category is unprompted and unsolicited employee actions, in which critical incidents arose from the tour leader behaving in a way not seen suitable for a tour leader. Furthermore, the behaviour was not triggered by a failure in the service delivery system nor as a result of a customer need or request. Customers were dissatisfied by tour

leaders spending time with each other while ignoring the tourists at the destination or on tours. Inefficient action in handling the group of travellers, resulting in delays or other discomfort for the travellers was also mentioned. Surprisingly, this category also contained some positive remarks about the tour leaders. A few instances were recorded in the customer complaints about tour leaders offering to do something for the customers so they could enjoy themselves while on a day trip.

But now that we arrived at the airport we didn't get on the buses but had to stand outside in the pouring rain with all our luggage while the tour leaders, amongst themselves, were pondering how to arrange the people into lines.

Lessons to be learned from customer complaints

The research questions for this study were what the sources for dissatisfaction are on package tours, and what the sources of dissatisfaction are in relation to the tour leaders. The data consisted of customer complaints filed to a Finnish tour organiser during the winter period 2006-2007. Qualitative research methods were used to answer the research questions.

The sources of dissatisfaction were analysed by looking at the primary and secondary reasons for dissatisfaction given in the complaints. When looking at primary complaint reasons it was seen that dissatisfaction is most frequently caused by failures in the core service of the package tour product. Four main categories emerged from the data. These were dissatisfaction with pre-tour services, the flights to and from the destination, the accommodation, and tour leaders at the destination. However, when looking at the combined primary and secondary complaint reasons, it can be seen that the behaviour of the tour leader at the destination was a significant reason for filing the customer complaint. In most customer complaints the failure of a tangible service element was merely the starting point of the dissatisfying event.

Dissatisfaction with the tour leaders was analysed in more detail using critical incidents technique. The dissatisfying incidents fell in to three main categories. In employee response towards service delivery system failure, dissatisfaction was caused by the tour leaders' unwillingness or inability to help the tourist, especially related to changing accommodation. Slow service, giving information of poor quality, insufficient personal interaction, and an impatient or unfriendly attitude towards the tourist were other dissatisfying behaviours. In employee response to customer needs and requests tourists complained about the tour leaders not fulfilling the promises they had made to the tourists, as well as not helping

them if they fell ill during the holiday. In the last category, unprompted employee response, tourists felt that the tour leaders ignored them or took insufficient action in guiding the group of tourists.

It can be seen from the customer complaints that there are some discrepancies between the expected and the actual content of the tour leaders' responsibilities and services offered on a group package tour. Most cases of dissatisfaction are caused by the service encounter not meeting the customers' expectations (Reynolds & Harris, 2005, 331). This is usually due to a difference of opinion about what constitutes the core service with regard to tour leaders on group package tours. Possible solutions to reducing this discrepancy are either to better inform the tourists about the content of tour leaders' services on the group package tour, or modifying the service to better comply with customers expectations. Special attention should be paid to information distribution in the event of a service delivery system failure, and providing additional help in these instances.

This information discrepancy has more far-reaching implications. As customers engage in reminiscing about memorable, critical, incidents with their friends and family after returning home, they inevitably shape the expectations and attitudes of these potential customers towards both tour leaders and group package tours. Hence group package tour organisers need to pay even more attention to satisfying their customers and eliminating sources of dissatisfaction. The fact that tourists have such varying expectations and needs with regard to mediation makes it more challenging for the tour operator to implement appropriate mediation, training and evaluation.

Tour operators need to pay special attention to enabling the tour leaders at the destination to react to failures in the service delivery system in a clear and coherent manner. On a package holiday the customer should get standardised service and this should include the tour leaders' services. This means that every tour leader should react to the customer's wishes and concerns in the same, friendly, way. Services are largely dependent on personal interactions between the customer and the contact employee. Due to the subjective nature of experiences, these interactions are very difficult to standardize and quality control is nearly impossible. (Bowie & Chang 2005; Komppula & Boxberg, 2005.) Thus, special attention should be paid to this aspect both during training and when designing tools for the tour leaders. Tour operator's internal blogs and discussion forums for tour leaders might offer some additional means for this. The customers should also feel that the tour leader is on their side no matter what. Hence, it might be beneficial for the tour operator to empower and give the necessary tools to the tour leaders to perform quality control of local service providers if customers require this.

The data in the customer complaints is rich and would lend itself to further studies. Using varied qualitative and quantitative research methods more information could be extracted from the data. It would, for example, be interesting to examine the relation between the source of dissatisfaction and the preferred mode of compensation. Also variations in country-specific customer complaints might add useful insight to the current debate about the role of tour leaders in creating tourist experiences.

Group package tours and mass tourism change and evolve over time. Traditionally tour leaders have acted as mediators between the tourist and the destination, ensuring a smooth transition to a foreign culture and place. Recent technical and educational developments have, however, made it easier and less expensive for people to organise, and even mediate, their own holidays. This puts additional emphasis on how the tour leader is seen and treated by both tour operators and customers. If tourists feel the tour leader is genuinely there to help them, this could easily be the tour organiser's most critical selling point, as illustrated by below comment from one of the customer complaints analysed for this study.

I rarely travel on package tours anymore, but I have been under the impression that the strength of group package tours is the fact, that the tour leaders are pillars on whom one can lean on when in trouble.

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Article 4

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Concurrent versus subsequent service recovery in package tourism
– Implications on satisfaction and loyalty

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Concurrent versus Subsequent Service Recovery in Package Tourism

– Implications on Satisfaction and Loyalty

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ABSTRACT

The study focuses on service recovery in package tours and examines survey data (n=220) by analyzing how concurrent versus subsequent service recoveries affect recovery satisfaction and loyalty. The effects of compensation and subsequent service recovery on satisfaction were the strongest, and even facilitation had a greater effect than concurrent service recovery, indicating that the tour leaders had a limited ability to manage service failures. Recovery satisfaction affected loyalty (WOM and repurchase intention) and, furthermore, subsequent service recovery had a direct effect on loyalty. The study contributes to the academic literature by providing a holistic view on service recovery and offers valuable information to tour operators striving for efficient recovery processes.

Keywords: Service failure, Service recovery, Package tour, Tour operator

1 INTRODUCTION

Service recovery is an evolving area of academic investigation due to its critical impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty, and is particularly relevant for the tourism industry, which is characterized by a high frequency of employee interaction with consumers (Bitner et al., 1990; Swanson & Hsu, 2009; Weber, 2009). This study examines service recovery in the context of package tourism, which is still a common phenomenon in Europe (Buhalis & Laws, 2001; Bastakis et al., 2004; Räikkönen & Honkanen, 2013) and even more so in Asia, where the

growing economic affluence has caused a rapid growth of the market (Chen & Hsu, 2012; Wong & Lee, 2012). The popularity of package tours is often explained by the lower risk level of package tourism in comparisons to individual tourism (Cavlek, 2002; Lepp & Gibson, 2008) as tourists can rely on the help and assistance of tour operators in case something goes wrong (Yale 1995; Larsson Mossberg, 1995; Enoch, 1996; Hanefors & Larsson Mossberg, 1999; Bowie & Chang, 2005).

Package tours are vulnerable in many ways as they are subject to various shortcomings and negative incidents, some of which might be entirely out of the tour operator's control (Bowie & Chang, 2005). The highly labor-intensive service encounter is difficult to manage and standardize, which leads to an unpredictable service quality and, therefore, the frontline employees (i.e. tour leaders and representatives) are essential for a successful business and satisfied customers (Yale, 1995; Bowie & Chang, 2005). The tour leaders are the public face of the tour operator (Yale, 1995) and considered as a crucial competitive advantage as their behavior has an impact on, for instance, company image and customer loyalty (Larsson Mossberg, 1995; Hanefors & Larsson Mossberg, 1999). Tour leaders ensure that the customers' vacations run smoothly (Bowie & Chang, 2005) and are especially crucial when tourists for example lose their passports, are robbed, or suddenly fall ill (Yale, 1995). Tour leaders are important also in the organizational service recovery, as they are the first to receive most customer complaints caused by service failures of the tour operator itself as well as those caused by airlines, ground handling agents, or hoteliers (Yale, 1995). This makes tour operators somewhat comparable to strategic alliances or other business networks in which service recovery is a more complicated process than in a single service provider setting (Weber & Sparks, 2010). Ideally, tour leaders sort out problems already in the vacation destination, or at least prevent them from getting worse, so that the tour operator can avoid paying excess compensation and receiving bad publicity (cf. Yale, 1995). In reality, however, the frontline employees seem to have limited problem-solving abilities, as 70% of package tourists who filed a complaint subsequently, after their vacation, were of the opinion that the problem should have been solved concurrently, during the vacation (Räikkönen & Cortez Monto 2010).

Service recovery is addressed in various contexts, yet few studies focus on package tourism (Wang et al., 2000; Schoefer & Ennew, 2004; Bowie & Chang, 2005; Park et al., 2008). In general, the importance of frontline employees is well acknowledged (Karatepe, 2006; Joireman et al., 2013). Still, previous studies examine either concurrent or subsequent service recovery, but do not combine or compare these even though both affect post-complaint customer behavior (Bowie & Buttle, 2004). Furthermore, it is common that service failures and recoveries are examined based on scenarios instead of real experiences, which allows the

operationalization of difficult manipulations but can also be considered a weakness in recovery research as the respondents are not necessarily able to project how they actually would react in a given situation (McCollough, 2009).

This study focuses on customers' real perceptions of the service recovery efforts of the tour operator after a service failure has occurred. In the analysis, i) concurrent service recovery in the vacation destination versus ii) subsequent service recovery after the vacation are examined and their influence on the tourists' recovery satisfaction and loyalty are measured. The analysis is based on survey data (n=220) collected from customers who had filed a customer complaint to the largest Finnish tour operator concerning a package tour in the winter season of 2006–2007. The study contributes to the academic understanding of service recovery by providing a holistic view on service recovery. Furthermore, it offers valuable information to tour operators who strive for efficient and satisfactory recovery processes in order to retain their customers despite a service failure.

In the following, the theoretical basis of the study is discussed after which the methodology i.e. data and analyses are presented. Then, the results of the study are presented after which discussion and managerial implications follow. Finally, the limitations of the study are discussed and some paths for future research suggested.

2 SERVICE FAILURE AND RECOVERY

Service failure occurs when the service experience does not match the customer's expectation (Bowie & Buttle, 2004). Service providers may strive towards a "zero defects" service but eventually failures happen due to the inherent heterogeneity in service provision and the limitations in the service providers' control over their interactions with consumers (Bowie & Buttle, 2004; Schoefer & Ennew, 2005; Swanson & Hsu, 2009). Service failures decrease customers' confidence in the company (Cranage, 2004), create lower levels of i) general satisfaction (McCollough, 2000), ii) satisfaction with the particular experience, and iii) likelihoods of repurchase or making positive recommendations (Garlick, 2005) even if the recovery exceeds the customer's expectations (Swanson & Hsu, 2009).

As service failures cannot be eliminated, organizations should have a strategy for handling failures and complaints effectively (Bowie & Buttle, 2004; Schoefer & Ennew, 2004; 2005). Service recovery refers to the actions that an organization takes in response to a service failure (Grönroos, 1988; 1990) to

resolve the problem, alter negative attitudes, and ultimately retain the dissatisfied consumers (Miller et al., 2000). On a broad level, service recovery policies include for example encouraging customer complaints to improve service quality and striving to treat the customers as fairly as possible (Bowie & Buttle, 2004). More precisely, however, organizational response is related to timeliness, accountability, redress, facilitation, and personal interaction (Davidow, 2003a) and include such strategies as acknowledging the problem, providing an explanation, offering discounts, coupons, or a replacement service, and following up on the recovery progress (Bradley & Sparks, 2009). Surprisingly, according to Swanson and Hsu (2009), in over one third of the reported service failure incidents within the travel and tourism sector, the service provider made no attempt to recover from the failure. When service recovery, however, did take place, the most common strategy was service correction (23.2%), followed by various forms of compensation, e.g., refunding the money (12.9%), correction plus discount or refund (12.4%), credit for future services (10.3%), free addition (9.9%), management intervention (9.0%), failure escalation (8.6%), discount (6.9%), and apology (6.9%).

Service failure and recovery are related to all phases of a tourism experience; expectations are formed already in the pre-experience phase but the service failure itself often occurs during the actual experience, and service recovery takes place either during the actual experience or in the post-experience phase. In this study, *concurrent service recovery* refers to the organizational responses taking place in the vacation destination and allowing the employees the possibility for responding and rectifying the problem. *Subsequent service recovery*, in turn, takes place when dissatisfied customers file a complaint after the vacation. Even though the service failure itself cannot be corrected or replaced subsequently, the company still has the opportunity to retrieve the situation and win back the customer (cf. Bowie & Buttle, 2004). In Finland, concurrent complaining is encouraged by legislation, as according to the Package Travel Act (1079/1994), a failure that can be rectified at the destination must be reported to the tour leader as soon as possible. If the complaint is filed subsequently, it is required that the tourist has informed the tour organizer about the service failure within a reasonable time which according to Verhelä (2000) means two months upon returning home from the package tour.

There are two important theoretical paradigms prevalent in service recovery research: i) disconfirmation theory, which takes into account the difference between expectations and perceptions and ii) equity theory, which points to individuals' perceptions of the fairness of a situation or a decision (McCole, 2004). The latter seems to be more common as there is a growing literature demonstrating the links between justice considerations and customer evaluations of service delivery and recovery (Tax et al., 1998; Bowen et al. 1999; McColl-

Kennedy & Sparks 2003; Wirtz & Mattila, 2004; Bradley & Sparks, 2009). According to justice theory (e.g. Bies & Moag, 1986), service failure and recovery attempts can be predicted to alter the customers' sense of whether they have been treated fairly. Perceived justice is generally divided into *distributive justice* related to the fairness of the decision outcome, *procedural justice* related to the fairness of the decision-making process, and *interactional justice* referring to the fairness of the interpersonal behavior in the complaint-handling (Davidow, 2003a). However, some authors (e.g. Colquitt, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001) further divide interactional justice into interpersonal and informational justice (Bradley & Sparks, 2009). Service recovery should be considered as a service encounter in its own right (Bitner et al., 1990; Bhandari et al., 2007; Swanson & Hsu, 2009), leading to complainant satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Davidow, 2003a; Karatepe, 2006) and loyalty which is often divided to attitudinal loyalty, i.e., the likelihood to recommend, repurchase, or revisit, and behavioral loyalty, i.e., actual behavior which can be directly linked to revenues and profitability (Kumar et al., 2013). Satisfaction and loyalty are also affected by situational contingencies, such as the importance of the product or the situation, the attribution of blame, the attitude towards voicing a complaint (Davidow, 2003a), and the criticality of the consumption experience (Sparks & Fredline, 2007).

The current study examines customers' perceptions of the service recovery efforts of the tour operator after a real service failure has occurred. The focus is not, however, directly on the perceptions of justice but, instead, the service recovery process is examined in relation to the temporal dimension and divided into concurrent service recovery (in the destination by the tour leaders) and subsequent service recovery (after the vacation by the customer service department).

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Data Collection

The data of the study consist of an online survey to customers of the largest Finnish tour operator – Suntours Ltd – who had made a written complaint to the company in winter season 2006/2007. The survey was carried out in November 2007, so the service failure had occurred six to twelve months before, depending on the respondent. In the winter season 2006/2007, Suntours received a total of 1021 customer complaints. The survey was sent to all 456 valid email addresses included in the complaints and 304 responses were received. The high response

rate of 67% was achieved by offering a gift certificate worth 200 € to one randomly selected respondent and by sending a reminder email. The high response rate indicates that the complainants were willing to share their opinions about the service recovery efforts of the company. As the purpose of this study was to compare the concurrent and subsequent service recovery of the tour operator, only those customers who complained both concurrently and subsequently, were included in the analysis (n=220).

3.2 Survey Design

The survey design was based on various studies related to service failure, service recovery, and customer complaints (Table 1) and the questions were related to the causes of the service failure, opinions on the service recovery efforts of the employees both in the vacation destination and afterwards in the customer service department, post complaint consumer behavior, and attitudes towards the company. The questionnaire mainly consisted of multiple-choice questions but also included some open-ended questions. Concurrent and subsequent service recovery, satisfaction, and loyalty were measured with multiple item scales which were adopted from previous studies (Bolfing, 1989; Blodgett et al., 1993; Blodgett et al., 1997; Smith et al., 1999; Mattila, 2001; Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002; Davidow, 2003b; Karatepe, 2006), yet slightly modified to suit the context of package tourism. In most of the questions, a five-point Likert scale was used, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. However, for item “*Compared to what I expected the compensation was*”, a scale ranging from “much less than expected” to “much more than expected” was used and in item “*Consider the service failure you perceived and the way in which Suntours handled the situation. How satisfied you are with Suntours?*” the scale ranged from “extremely unsatisfied” to “extremely satisfied”. Before the analysis, the scales of three items marked with (R) in Table 1 were reversed and an imputation for missing values was conducted with an Expectation-Maximization algorithm.

Table 1 Construct measurements

Variables	References
Concurrent service recovery The tour leader encouraged the customers to inform about perceived problems I was content with the tour leader's actions in solving the problem It was easy to inform the tour leader about deficiencies The tour leader sincerely apologized for the service failure The tour leader did everything possible to solve the problem The tour leader solved the problem fast enough The tour leader was polite The tour leader gave me an explanation of the reasons for the service failure	Karatepe, 2006
Subsequent service recovery The contact information was easy to find It was difficult to know how to make a complaint to Suntours (R) The complaint was not handled fast enough (R) Suntours did everything to solve the problem I received polite service The employees of Suntours treated me with respect My problems were taken seriously The employee of Suntours was genuinely sorry for the service failure I received a proper explanation for the service failure It was pleasant to deal with Suntours The interaction with the employees of Suntours was reasonable The compensation I received from Suntours was fair The employees of Suntours handled my complaint appropriately I felt that it was worth filing a complaint Compared to what I expected the atonement was...	Karatepe, 2006; Davidow, 2003b; Blodgett et al., 1997
Satisfaction Consider the service failure you perceived and the way in which Suntours handled the situation. How satisfied are you with Suntours? My satisfaction with Suntours has increased I'm satisfied with the way Suntours responded to my complaint	Karatepe, 2006; Smith et al., 1999
Word of mouth behavior I encourage friends and relatives to use Suntours' services I have advised my friends and relatives to avoid Suntours (R)	Karatepe, 2006; Blodgett et al., 1997
Re-purchase intentions I have a positive attitude toward Suntours I consider ST my first choice when choosing a tour operator I intend to use ST's services in the future	Karatepe, 2006; Mattila, 2001; Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002

3.3 Construct Definition and Hypotheses

As no previous studies had compared concurrent service recovery to subsequent service recovery, the analysis was conducted as a two-phase process. First, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted to discover the underlying structure of the exogenous variables concerning concurrent and subsequent service recovery. In the second phase, a path analysis was used to test the predicted relationships between these exogenous constructs resulting from the exploratory factor analysis and the endogenous constructs (satisfaction, word-of-mouth behavior, and repurchase intention) derived from previous studies.

An exploratory factor analysis (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, version 21) with variables related to concurrent and subsequent service recovery was conducted and the principal component method and Varimax rotation were employed. All 23 variables were included in the analysis as their loadings exceeded 0.50. One variable, “*The compensation I received from Suntours was fair*“, had a loading greater than 0.5 on two factors (0.501 and 0.720), but only the higher loading was taken into account. All factors with an eigenvalue greater than 1 were retained in the solution and the analysis resulted in a four-factor solution accounting for 69.4% of explained variance (Table 2). The identified factors were named according to their content: Subsequent service recovery, Concurrent service recovery, Compensation, and Facilitation. To assess reliability, Cronbach’s alpha was calculated for the variables retained in each factor. All factors were considered acceptable as coefficients exceeded 0.60 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Hair et al., 2014).

Table 2 Exploratory factor analysis

Factors	Cronbach’s alpha	Eigen-value	% of variance	Loading
Subsequent service recovery	0.956	6.877	29.899	
The employees of Suntours treated me with respect				0.904
I received polite service from Suntours				0.893
It was pleasant to deal with Suntours				0.881
The employee of Suntours was genuinely sorry for the service failure				0.860
My problems were taken seriously				0.845
Interaction with the employees of Suntours was reasonable				0.785
The employees of Suntours handled my complaint appropriately				0.774
Suntours did everything to solve the problem				0.743
I received a proper explanation for the service failure from Suntours				0.556
Concurrent service recovery	0.915	5.095	22.150	
The tour leader did everything possible to solve the problem				0.878
I was content with the tour leader’s actions in solving the problem				0.874
The tour leader sincerely apologized for the service failure				0.837
The tour leader was polite				0.775
The tour leader encouraged the customers to inform about perceived problems				0.773
It was easy to inform the tour leader about deficiencies				0.771
The tour leader gave me an explanation of the reasons for the service failure				0.652
The tour leader solved the problem fast enough				0.641
Compensation	0.786	2.124	9.236	
Compared to what I expected the compensation was				0.757
The compensation I received from Suntours was fair				0.720
I felt that it was worth filing a complaint				0.550
Facilitation	0.662	1.864	8.102	
It was difficult to know how to make a complaint to Suntours				0.834
The contact information was easy to find				0.799
The complaint was not handled fast enough (R)				0.549

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. n =1637; Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy=0.920; Chi-Square=3964.337; Bartlett’s test of sphericity p<0.001

The endogenous constructs, in turn, were derived from previous studies (Blodgett et al., 1997; Smith et al., 1999; Mattila, 2001; Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002; Karatepe 2006). Recovery satisfaction and also repurchase intention were measured with a three-item scale while a two-item scale was used for word-of-mouth behavior (see Table 1).

The measures were subjected to confirmatory factor analyses in order to provide support for issues of dimensionality as well as convergent and discriminant validity. Due to low standardized loadings (<0.50), four items were omitted from the analysis at this stage (“*The tour leader encouraged the customers to inform about perceived problems*”; “*It was easy to inform the tour leader about deficiencies*”; “*I felt that it was worth filing a complaint*”; “*The complaint was not handled fast enough*”). The rest of the loadings ranged from 0.555 to 0.896 out of which the majority exceeded 0.7. The convergent validity was analyzed by measuring the average variance extracted (AVE), which is the grand mean value of the squared loadings of the indicators associated with the construct (e.g. Hair et al., 2014). The average variance extracted for each construct, excluding Facilitation (0.490), was higher than 0.5, indicating that the constructs explain more than half of the variance of their indicators and providing support for convergent validity (Table 3).

Table 3 Validity and reliability of the constructs

Construct	AVE	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability
Concurrent service recovery	0.518	0.893	0.862
Subsequent service recovery	0.681	0.956	0.950
Compensation	0.610	0.847	0.756
Facilitation	0.490	0.630	0.658
Recovery satisfaction	0.605	0.890	0.820
Word-of-mouth	0.547	0.700	0.704
Repurchase intention	0.619	0.877	0.829

Discriminant validity, in turn, was analyzed based on the Fornell-Larcker criterion, i.e., comparing the square root of the AVE values with the latent variable correlations (Hair et al., 2014). In the case of concurrent and subsequent service recovery, compensation, and facilitation, the values were greater than the highest correlation, yet it needs to be noted that recovery satisfaction, word-of-mouth, and repurchase intention were highly correlated. The process showed that confirmatory factor analysis produced better fitted statistics for a three-factor solution than for a one-factor solution, suggesting that each set of items represents a single underlying construct (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; cf. Karatepe, 2006).

Furthermore, internal consistency reliability was measured using Chronbach's alpha values based on the inter-correlations of the variables as well as by

calculating the composite reliability based on the outer loadings of variables (Hair et al., 2014). As illustrated in Table 3, the constructs of this study seemed internally consistent, as in both cases, the values exceeded 0.60, which is considered acceptable (Nunally & Bernstein, 1994; Hair et al., 2014).

For the second phase of the analysis, composite scores for the variables were calculated. The correlations, mean values, and standard deviations are presented in Table 4. Correlations between the variables ranged from statistically insignificant (0.032) between concurrent service recovery and facilitation to 0.825 between subsequent service recovery and recovery satisfaction.

Table 4 Intercorrelations of composite scores of the variables

Variables	CSR	SSR	COM	FAC	RS	WOM	RI
Concurrent service recovery CSR	1.000						
Subsequent service recovery SSR	0.344***	1.000					
Compensation COM	0.155**	0.679***	1.000				
Facilitation FAC	0.032 ^{n.s.}	0.306***	0.281***	1.000			
Recovery satisfaction RS	0.330***	0.825***	0.768***	0.291***	1.000		
Word-of-mouth WOM	0.279***	0.629***	0.569***	0.241***	0.716***	1.000	
Repurchase intention RI	0.300***	0.561***	0.473***	0.225***	0.724***	0.765***	1.000
Mean	3.017	3.548	2.803	4.072	3.283	3.654	3.593
Standard deviation	1.017	0.924	1.061	0.769	1.019	0.970	0.939

p<0.01; *p<0.001

The hypotheses were developed on the examination of the results of the exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses in relation to the existing literature. Evidently, compensation was parallel to distributive justice and facilitation to procedural justice while concurrent and subsequent service recoveries resembled the dimensions of interactional justice. The empirical findings of previous studies clearly suggest that atonement or compensation is the most important recovery dimension associated with distributive justice and a remedy for satisfaction and loyalty (Tax et al., 1998; Bowen et al., 1999; Karatepe, 2006, Kim et al., 2009). Facilitation and promptness (Karatepe, 2006), the speed of complaint handling (Tax et al., 1998) and a quick recovery response (Mattila & Mount, 2003) are dimensions of procedural justice affecting also satisfaction and loyalty, while apology, explanation, attentiveness, and effort, are positively related to perceptions of interactional justice, satisfaction, and loyalty (Blodgett et al. 1997;

Tax et al. 1998; Davidow 2003a; Karatepe 2006; Bradley & Sparks, 2009). Based on these studies, the following hypotheses were proposed (Figure 1):

Hypothesis 1a.

Concurrent service recovery has a positive effect on recovery satisfaction.

Hypothesis 1b.

Facilitation has a positive effect on recovery satisfaction.

Hypothesis 1c.

Subsequent service recovery has a positive effect on recovery satisfaction.

Hypothesis 1d.

Compensation has a positive effect on recovery satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2.

Recovery satisfaction has a positive effect on word-of-mouth behavior.

Hypothesis 3.

Recovery satisfaction has a positive effect on repurchase intention.

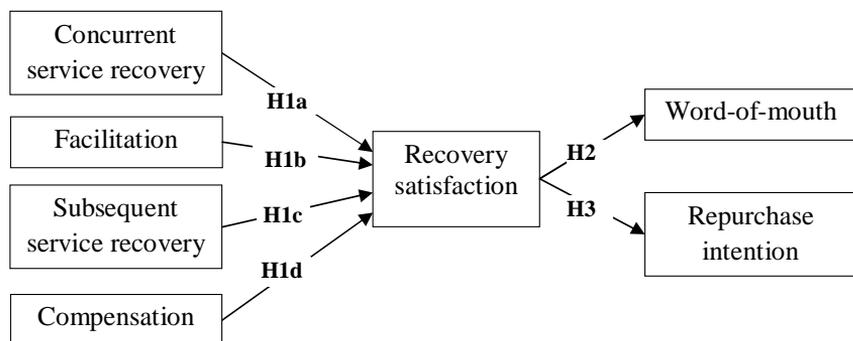


Figure 1 Hypotheses

4 RESULTS OF THE STUDY

4.1 The Profile of the Respondents

The questionnaire included some questions about the respondents' socio-demographic backgrounds and the respondents' profile is summarized in Table 5. Over 60% of respondents were female and the largest age groups were the 45–54 year-olds (29.2%) and the 35–44 year-olds (27.4%). Notably, the level of education and household income of respondents was relatively high. Over 40% of respondents had a university degree and nearly half were employed as officials, over 10% were managers and less than 15% workers. Nearly half of the respondents had an annual household gross income of over 56,000 euros.

Table 5 The socio-demographic profile of the respondents

Sex		Occupation	
Male	38.4%	Entrepreneur	11.4%
Female	61.6%	Manager	11.4%
		Official	47.4%
Age		Worker	14.6%
under 25 yrs.	2.3%	Retired	10.5%
25–34 yrs.	13.2%	Student	2.3%
35–44 yrs.	27.4%	Other	2.3%
45–54 yrs.	29.2%		
55–64 yrs.	23.4%	Annual household income	
Over 65 yrs.	4.1%	under 13,000 €	1.4%
		13,000–23,999 €	6.3%
Education		24,000–36,999 €	18.4%
Junior high school	9.6%	37,000–55,999 €	24.6%
Secondary education	9.6%	56,000 € or over	49.3%
Vocational education	9.6%		
College	28.0%		
University of applied sciences	16.1%		
University	27.1%		

4.2 The Causes of the Complaints

Table 6 summarizes the causes of services failures, which were examined in two ways. First, an employee of the tour operator classified the complaints according to the primary cause of the complaint. In case the main cause could not be defined, a category of “many causes” was used. Second, in the survey, the respondents themselves chose one or several factors, which caused the service failure, from the given alternatives, or if not listed, defined the cause in an open question.

Table 6 The causes of complaints

	Primary cause of complaint (only one alternative)	“The complaint was related to...” (one or several alternatives)
Accommodation services	67.7%	72.7%
Flight services	7.3%	12.7%
Tour operator’s destination services	8.2%	15.5%
Tour leaders	3.2%	23.6%
Car rental services	1.4%	2.3%
Sales and	0.5%	6.4%
Other	5.0%	13.2%
Many causes	6.4%	

The clear majority – about 70% – of complaints was caused by service failures in the accommodation services, and about 10% of the complaints were caused by the flight services. Interestingly, the tour leaders were the primary reason of only 3.2% of complaints, but even 23.6% of respondents related the cause of complaint to the actions of the tour leaders. Respectively, also the tour operator’s destination services as well as the sales and marketing were seldom primary reasons for complaints, but still often partly responsible for the service failures. This result clearly indicates that in the service failure situations, the tour leaders’ concurrent recovery actions cause dissatisfaction and complaints, even though their intention is the opposite.

4.3 Path Analysis

A path analysis (Mplus, version 6) was performed to test the predicted relationships among exogenous and endogenous constructs. In the analysis, MLR estimation was used and the fit of the solution was assessed with the criteria (SRMR and RMSEA < 0.08; CFI and TLI > 0.90 indicating a reasonable fit to the data) suggested by Hu and Bentler (1998). In the first structural solution, the overall fit of the model to the data resulted in the statistics $X^2 (df) = 57.227 (8)$; normed $X^2 = 7.153$; RMSEA=0.167; SRMR=0.062; CFI=0.904; TLI=0.821. As a reasonable fit was not achieved, the proposed model modification indices were considered and a second model was tested with additional direct effects from subsequent service recovery to both word-of-mouth behavior and repurchase intentions as well as from facilitation to word-of-mouth behavior. The results of the second structural model are presented in Figure 2. Now, the overall fit of the model to the data was reasonable as the statistics were $X^2 (df) = 6.484 (5)$; normed $X^2 = 1.296$; RMSEA=0.073; SRMR=0.020; CFI=0.997; TLI=0.991.

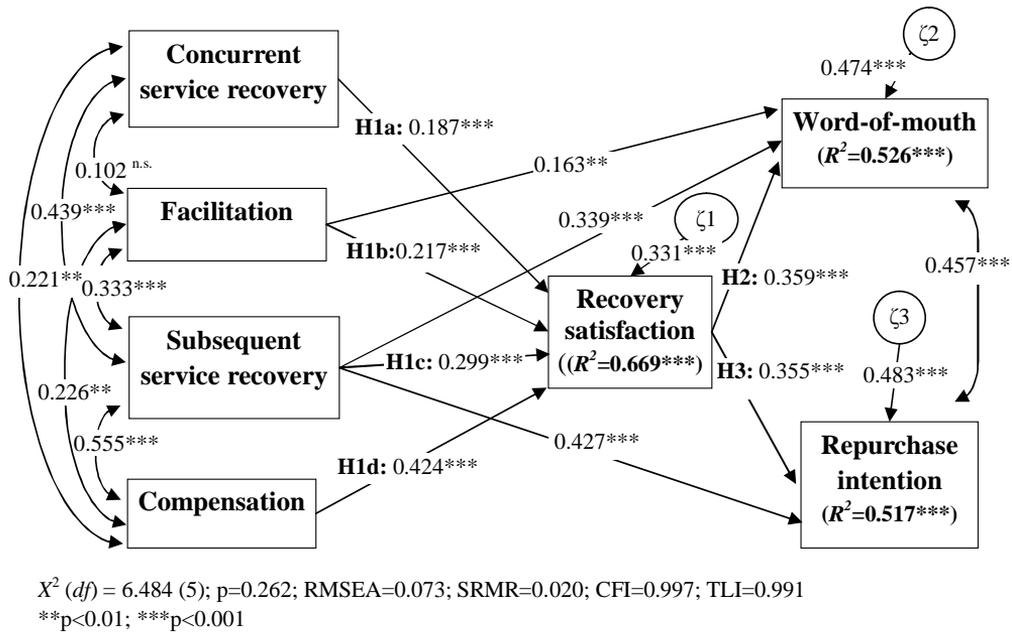


Figure 2 Results of the path model

All structural paths were consistent with the signs of the hypothesized relationships among the constructs and all proposed hypotheses were supported. Concurrent service recovery (0.187), facilitation (0.217), subsequent service recovery (0.299), and compensation (0.424) all had a significant influence on recovery satisfaction. The effect of compensation seemed to be the strongest while, interestingly, the effect of concurrent service recovery was the weakest. It needs to be noted that the data consisted of customers who complained both concurrently and subsequently, and therefore, those customers whose service failure was resolved successfully in the destination, were excluded. Still, even the facilitation of complaint handling had a greater effect on recovery satisfaction than concurrent service recovery did. Subsequent service recovery, in turn, had a relatively great influence on recovery satisfaction. Furthermore, subsequent service recovery had a significant direct effect on word-of-mouth behavior (0.339) and an even greater effect on repurchase intention (0.427). Facilitation (0.163), in turn, had a direct effect on word-of-mouth behavior. Also, as hypothesized, recovery satisfaction influenced both word-of-mouth behavior (0.359) and repurchase intention (0.355).

5 DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study examined service failure and recovery in the context of package tourism and concentrated particularly on concurrent service recovery in the vacation destination versus subsequent service recovery after the vacation by analyzing their influence on recovery satisfaction and loyalty. The study accentuates the limited ability of front-line employees in managing service recoveries and provides some interesting managerial implications.

The results of the study underline the effect of compensation on recovery satisfaction, which is a finding consistent with the previous literature (Tax et al., 1998; Bowen et al., 1999; Karatepe, 2006; Kim et al., 2009), and highlight the importance of subsequent service recovery on both recovery satisfaction and loyalty. The analysis also clearly indicates that the concurrent service recovery actions of the tour leaders are not sufficient. Even though previous studies have emphasized the importance of frontline employees in service recovery situations, in reality, the tour leaders' abilities to manage service recoveries in a way that creates satisfaction are rather limited.

Service recovery management is evidently one of the main tasks of the tour operators' customer service departments and the employees are trained and experienced in handling customer complaints and dealing with emotionally vulnerable customers. However, when the service recovery takes place subsequently, after the vacation, the experience has already been damaged and cannot be replaced or fully compensated for. Therefore, the immediate recovery actions by the tour leaders are vital for the successful recovery. Concurrent service recovery plays a key role as various procedures can be done in the vacation destination to rectify the service failure, prevent dissatisfaction and customer complaints and, most importantly, guarantee the success of the vacation. Effective concurrent service recovery, however, cannot be taken for granted and requires significant investments from the tour operator.

As the popularity of package tours is partly explained by the fact that tourists can rely on the help and assistance tour leaders in case something goes wrong, preventing service failures and managing service recoveries should be one of the main tasks of tour operators. As about 70% of the service failures were related to accommodation services, concentration on the quality of accommodation is crucial. Furthermore, even though tour leaders' customer service is seldom the primary reason for complaints, nearly every fourth respondent connected the complaint partly to the actions of the tour leader.

Subsequent service recovery, in turn, seems to be quite effective, but takes place far too late as the experience has already been ruined and cannot be fully reimbursed even by excellent customer service or monetary compensation.

Therefore, concurrent service recovery should be emphasized and resources need to be invested in both training the frontline employees as well as empowering them to make immediate decisions concerning the recovery procedures such as monetary compensation.

The large number of tour leaders, their high turnover as well as their inexperience in handling service failures cause challenges for managing service recoveries. Training the frontline employees is, however, an essential requirement for successful service recovery. Another solution could be the obligation of destination managers to handle all service failure and recovery situations. This would centralize the responsibility and also indicate that the matter is taken seriously.

6 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

As with any study, there are various limitations that need to be addressed. First, the study concentrated on the package tourism industry in Finland and relied on the customer data of a single tour operator, which limits the extension of the findings to other contexts. In addition, the clear focus on the Western-type of package tourism limits generalization to the Asian context but as package tourism is a growing phenomenon especially in the Asian markets, it would be interesting to examine similar research themes as regards the Asian package tourism industry.

The survey data acquired from actual service recovery experiences of package tourists can be considered as a strength of the study, especially as service recovery research mainly relies on the use of scenario data. However, the data also caused some limitations as it concentrated on consumers who had complained both concurrently and subsequently. Thus, it did not account for the service failures which tour leaders manage effectively so that subsequent customer complaints were not needed. Thus, the data offered a biased view which partly explains the low effect of the concurrent service recovery on the recovery satisfaction. It is, therefore, suggested that research focusing also on successful service recoveries in the context of package tourism is much needed in order to fully understand the influence of tour leaders on recovery satisfaction and loyalty.

Additionally, it needs to be noted that the service failures had occurred from six to twelve months prior to the survey, and therefore, the role of memory influences the results as, for example, Kim et al. (2012) have proved that individuals tend to recall positive experiences more easily than negative ones.

However, due to the high response rate (67%) and the fact that all respondents had filed a written complaint to the tour operator, it can be assumed that the respondents considered the study worthwhile and recalled the incidents related to the service failure and recovery relatively well.

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