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MANAGING THE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION OF TOURISTS IN AN EXPERIENCE ECONOMY

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Managing the customer satisfaction of tourists in an experience economy

Abstract

Nowadays, the great importance of tourism and its impact on the wide range of aspects of progress and globalization, development and international relations promotion does not ask for argumentations. The responsibility of providing this impact lays on every company in the sector: in addition to making profit, enterprises are in charge of satisfying the customers. Furthermore, the key mean to reaching these goals is to be found in experiences that people are so keen on receiving. Consequently, companies representing the tourism industry must focus on creating the best possible experiences, which will ensure them satisfied visitors, who will be willing to return again, and again.

Theoretically the discussion is supported by the experience economy theory, which performs as a solid base to investigate the phenomenon of customer satisfaction. However, since the topic is multifaceted and should be analyzed appropriately, the study refers also to such notions as service quality, marketing destination and brand. Additionally, the issues connected to cross-cultural differences cannot be omitted while considering a company that belongs to tourism industry, and therefore serves the international flow of customers.

The study is devoted to the exploration of customer satisfaction in an entertainment park in Finland, with the focus on visitors from Russia. The goals and objectives of the research were possible to be realized by using interviews and observation as methods of the study. In total 16 groups of people (mostly families) participated in data collection. The questionnaire was structured around three main topics: expectations from holidays, experience in the Park and Finnish Lapland as a touristic destination, therefore enabled to form a detailed understanding of the four realms of the experience, service quality, destination brand and marketing. Thus, the data analysis allowed evaluating current customer satisfaction level in the organization and offering the recommendations for developing it in the future seasons.

The study contributes to customer satisfaction, tourism and cross-cultural research. The results of this research demonstrate the complexity of the analyzed phenomenon and endeavor to present the relation and mutual influence of the simultaneously considered notions. Thus, four realms of experiences appear to have different importance for the interviewed audience and therefore influenced the overall satisfaction accordingly. Next, service quality was planned to be measured on the base of expectations, but the insufficient amount of them led to the conclusion that it is not possible to rely only on expectations in this case. However, the ones that were discovered should be carefully followed in the developing of the services and customer satisfaction in general, in the future. Lastly, the insights about the perception of Lapland and opinion of the brand retrieved from the target group, can be used for improving the destination facilities, infrastructure and overall image, as well as correcting the destination marketing strategy.

Keywords
Customer satisfaction, experience economy theory, service quality, cross-cultural differences, marketing destination, destination brand, Lapland
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Theoretical and contextual background

The significance of tourism nowadays is not questioned, since its impact on progress, globalization, sustainable development and promoting of international relations is obvious for the society (Cut-Lupulescu, Dincu and Borlovan, 2014). The economic influence of tourism is not restricted by the incomes and new jobs that are created, but also covers wide range of interdependent issues in the macro-economic context. Among those there are for example, trade liberalization and distribution, pressure drop of the taxes on families and consequently on their welfare. In addition, foreign tourists are described as an important source of economic impact. The money spent improve the local economy as well as the economic activity of local community. (Marin, 2005)

Thus, every company of the tourism industry has much wider responsibilities than just making profit. Following the new tendencies of satisfying customers belongs to the key concerns as well. Commodities, goods and services used to answer this question, however, now a different issue comes to the picture: the experience era has arrived (Sidali, Kastenholz and Bianchi, 2015).

Experience is the most valuable issue that one can get. People therefore are keen on receiving the new unforgettable impressions and make the experience happen (Argenton, 2015). One of the best way to find an experience is travelling. It is both the opportunity and responsibility of tourism companies to arrange the acquiring of different experiences. In other words, if there is a demand in experience, the main thing to be done is to create the best possible one in the industry. Undoubtedly, there are many factors influencing the experience that companies aim to provide, and the one customers actually receive. It certainly affects the customer satisfaction and consequently the amount of returned customers and new visitors. Hence, the task is to study the current customer satisfaction together with accompanying concepts and establish the recommendations how to possibly raise its level.
In this paper, the discussion will be based on the experience economy theory, since it not only proves that both services and goods are important nowadays, but also illuminates the fact that, the better the experience which is provided in the tourism place, the greater the chances of satisfying the visitor. This study has a goal to examine which factors can influence tourist experience. For example, service quality appears to have a significant impact on the experience, so the exact connections between the notions are to be explored. Next, marketing destination and brand also have a direct impact on the tourist flow, as well as each and every company in the industry influences the brand and destination image (Rakita and Šipragić, 2014). Finally, since the focus of the current research is on Russian customers, there is an issue that cannot be underestimated – cross-national differences. According to Kozak, Bigné, and Andreu (2004), all the attempts to explore customer satisfaction in tourism have to be followed by cross-cultural differences. Certain specific features of national culture and mentality of Russian visitors could explain why some incentives of the service providers would be appreciated, while others would not be.

As it will be described later, the method of this study is interviewing the customers which is complemented with the observation. The field work was organized during the winter season of 2015-2016 in Santa Park. Russian visitors were interviewed with the set of questions, which were combined around the topics of the study interest. The interviewing results as well as the observations insights are depicted in the second chapter. The analysis of the data allowed to evaluate the customer satisfaction level in the organization and offer the recommendations for developing the customer satisfaction in the theme entertainment park.

1.2 Aim, research objectives and questions

The research aims to examine the customer satisfaction in a theme park. Thus by exploring the issue in the context of tourism, the paper can contribute both to the customer satisfaction and tourism research. In addition, since the case company belongs to the category of theme entertainment parks, the study also attempts to expand the previous studies through applying the theories on a new empirical example.
Since the customer satisfaction is a wide notion, more fruitful examination is asking for going through the certain amount of aspects that are expected to be influential. The primary research question deals with the possible ways to satisfy the Russian visitors of the company. The main research question proceeds as following:

“How Santa Park as a tourist firm can satisfy its Russian customers in the current experience economy age?”

Answering the main research question is supported by proposing the set of sub questions. It is necessary to split the main question into sub questions since it assists to provide reasonable ground to the main one and forwards the discussion in a logical way. First sub question’s focus is on the experiences that are offered and the level of visitors’ perception. The question aims to show the dependence of the dimensions of an experience on the customer satisfaction. The first sub question proceeds as following:

“How do the experiences perceived affect the customer satisfaction?”

Next, since one of the most influential aspects in this field is cross-cultural difference, the attention has to be paid to distinguishing features of the researched audience. Customers with different backgrounds arrive with their heterogenic needs that should be followed in order to please them (Kozak, Bigné, and Andreu, 2004). Thus, the next sub question attempts to deal with preferences of Russian tourists based on cultural reasons:

“What due to the cultural characteristics attracts Russian customers mostly and what decreases their satisfaction in Santa Park?”

As it was mentioned, customer satisfaction is a wide phenomenon and involves several aspects that must be considered to ensure deeper research on the topic. Therefore, next issue to focus on are services that should be developed, since providing the high quality services leads to customer commitment and business success in a long-term (Sahin & Ergun, 2015). Thus, next aspect to cover comes from the following sub question:
“Which services of an entertainment park are able to raise the customer satisfaction?”

This question could establish the base for understanding the correlation between services offered to customers and their satisfaction. The results of the analysis are expected to bring the insights to the service providers about the offerings that are in demand and should be added or improved and those, which are less appreciated by the visitors.

However, consumer satisfaction is dependent not only on individual attributes of the service, but more on the course of the whole experience. In addition, customers could come with certain expectations and requirements that also must be met as the definition of service quality suggests (Morgan, Elbe and Curiel, 2009). Thus, the last sub question is as follows:

“How can matching visitors’ expectations with the offered facilities be connected to the service quality?”

The research objective is to build understanding about managing the customer satisfaction in a theme park with the orientation on Russian customers.

This study is both explorative and inductive. However, the empirical data will be linked to the theoretical framework in terms of customer satisfaction and service development. The main attention is to be devoted to the competitive advantages of the company, service quality, place marketing, tourism destination, and cross-cultural aspects.

1.3 Context and description of the research task and goal

Tourism is one of the most popular and extraordinary human activity. Companies that have chosen to be a part of tourism industry are definitely in a right path – travelling is something that would never get useless or unattractive. In terms of developing the company that belongs to this field, there are diverse issues to be aware of, but one of the most important are customer satisfaction aspects.
This study is focused on ways to manage customer satisfaction and stable development of a theme park.

The research task is to explore the customer satisfaction on an example of the real company.

The thesis is addressed to a company that represents the tourism industry of Finnish Lapland. The focus is to be placed on Russian guests as one of the biggest target group. In terms of a rapidly changing business environment conditions and unstable situation on the mentioned market, the effective recommendations that would be provided after approaching the data directly from customers are seen as highly demanded. Another advantage is that the research is to be arranged at the high peak of Christmas season so the significant and reliable diverse data is expected to be reached.

The motivation of the research is explained by the significance of the explored phenomena and the worldwide attention to the customer satisfaction. The reason to focus on particular group of customers is characterized by the fact that the tourists’ expectations and needs from a specific destinations varies between the different nationalities (Kozak, Bigné, and Andreu, 2004). According to BarentsObserver.com (2013), by their arrivals, Russians compensated the crisis in Eurozone and sharp decline of tourists flow (Nilsen, 2013). From year 2005 to 2013, the overnight stays in hotels of Lapland was increasing consistently from about 50,000 to over 155,000 (barentsinfo.org). 2015-2016 was characterized by steep drop-off in visitors from Russia, reposts Yle (2016). This tendency has to be changed, and it is the responsibility of each and every company from the tourism industry to overestimate their strategies, become more client-oriented and address maximum efforts to understand the customers’ needs. Thence, Russians as one of the biggest group of visitors definitely should be analyzed more precisely, so the study attempts to recommend the ways to raise the flow of tourists through exploring their satisfaction in the considered theme park and recommending the needed modifications in the offered services.
According to several studies, when the talk is about tourism destinations, considering only one specific group of customers does not seem reasonable, since it prevents the comparative analysis between groups (Kozak, Bigné, and Andreu, 2004). However, it is not clear yet which differences are the most influential – cultural or national? There is also an option that each country represents unique culture that distinguishes it from others. That is why focusing on Russian customers as one of the biggest target segment seems logical and beneficial in terms of customer satisfaction research.

Another reason is the researcher’s particular interest to the topic that is explained partly by the working experience in the related industry and concretely in the studied company. The idea to explore the topic has aroused in the course of daily work as a customer service representative in the researched organization. Hardly a day passes without noticing the specific features of customers’ behavior and the instantaneous ideas of the ways to use the observations in the improving the customer service.

The opportunity to be in the center of most important time for the company – Christmas season - also is assumed to be a good chance to immerse in the interactions with the customers, observe the environment in details and investigate the topic in a most itemized way.

Companies that deal with tourists are always seeking for solutions of attracting more clients and serving them in a more professional way. Russians as representatives of a big travelling nation are seen as a coveted target group in most of the places, that is why the study that will provide the directions of enhancement the customer service level would be beneficial worldwide. In particular, since the research is based on Finnish Lapland, which is the face of the country as a tourism destination, the results would be advantageous for the whole country in a bigger perspective and for any tourism company in a closer look.

In addition, even though Russian-Finnish trade and specify of business processes has been researched, current economic situation is not stable enough that certainly affects the tourism industry as well. However, tourists from Russia would come to Lapland despite of the economic situation, because it is an attractive place for holiday and a
good chance to “experience the north” (Finlandtimes, 2015). Analysts have estimated 20% decrease of tourists amount in this year (tass.ru). Due to these conditions, it is important to timely measure the customer satisfaction in order to remain competitive and keep the flow of tourists. Thus, the clear directions on the current interest are needed, that also explains the necessity of new scientific knowledge.

1.4 Existing research and research gap

Consumer satisfaction topic is settled in the “heart of marketing theory and practice” (Kim, Magnusen, and Kim, 2014: 338). It plays a dominant role in marketing practice (Haumann et al., 2014) and is recognized as a “strategic imperative” (Mittal and Kamakura, 2001: 131). Finland, as a developed market, has to see customer satisfaction as a strong determinant of customer loyalty (Morgeson, Sharma and Hult, 2015). The importance to keep the old customer is obvious, especially when comparing it with the price of attracting the new one. According to Hill, Self and Roche (2002) and Naumann, Williams and Khan (2009), there is a strong linkage between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty and company profitability. However, in industries with high competition, as Anderson, Fornell and Mazvancheryl (2004) claim, the link is weaker that results in customers’ sharper price sensitiveness and difficulties to retain. Tourism industry belongs to the competitive environments, thus there is a strong demand in finding the new ways to build the stable relationships with customers.

In order to reach competitiveness in tourism industry, it is suggested to concentrate on providing experiences instead of services and goods. This approach was depicted in the experience economy theory (Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Song et al., 2015) and seems as one of the best theoretical framework of the current study.

There is a considerable amount of issues, concepts and factors that have to be defined in order to understand the phenomena of customer satisfaction and produce valid recommendations. Among these issues, there are for example marketing destination, tourism service quality, satisfaction determinants, values, cross-national differences. The theoretical framework is to be contributed with describing the concepts of tourism industry, perspectives of tourism product development.
Nowadays due to the high relevancy of the topic, customer satisfaction issues attracted the attention of leading business researchers. However, the research on the issue was concentrated mostly in banking services, luxury hotels, food services, airline/automotive industries, neglecting the other type of organizations (Cotiu, 2013). As Chang and Lin (2015) mentioned, customer experiences have been studying on the example of cruisers by Hosany and Witham (2010), in the festivals and museums (Brunner-Sperdin & Peters, 2009; Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011). All the studies were based on the four dimensions of the experience [the experience economy theory] and proved that the assessment of tourists’ experiences on the base of this theoretical framework can be arranged perfectly. Mehmetoglu and Engen (2011) also pointed out that the overall experience is very meaningful. Thus, analyzing the customer satisfaction determinants in the amusement theme park will contribute the current research interest and expand the amount of examples.

Santa Park is the organization that serves customers from over 40 countries around the world (Santa Park Concept introduction, 2014), therefore, it should distinguish different markets and offer services according to visitors’ specific values, attitudes etc. While talking about the ways that Finnish company interacts with Russian customers, cross-cultural aspects arouse, meaning that due to the different perception of “good services” the expectations of customers could get unaligned with the offers.

Russians are important customers for the considered company, since there is even so-called “Russian season” in Santa Park, which is from catholic Christmas to the orthodox one. This is the period when lots of families and groups are arriving, so the Park is surrounded mostly by Russian clients. Warwick and Osherson (1973) suppose that the importance of the same issues for different nationalities could be different. Therefore, the needs and preferences of representatives of Russia could not be estimated on the base of analyzing the indices of any other representatives. Thus, in terms of destination management, the profile of Russian tourist has to be carefully learnt, his values and behavior have to be explored. This is the way to implement effective positioning and market segmentation strategies (Reisinger and Turner 2003). As Kozak, Bigné, and Andreu (2004) noticed, one group indeed could perceive a set of attributes to be better or have stronger initial motivation to visit the
destination than another. However, it is not clear enough what exactly should be
done in this situation. This research attempts to fill this gap.

The thesis begins with introduction, opens with the theoretical background that
includes the main theory that performs as a base of the study, and concepts,
connected to the customer satisfaction research in tourism. Next, the methodology of
the study will be described, that includes the presentation of the interview and
observation as a research method, data collection process, interviews structure.
Further, the empirical findings and analysis will be presented and followed by results
and conclusions.
2 TOURIST EXPERIENCE

2.1 The experience economy theory

Over the time the economic value has walked the long way, progressing from the companies’ goal to extract commodities, replaced to making goods, later changed to deliver services and finally to stage experiences. Thus, experience is what everyone needs, consequently, it is to be created, designed and promoted. Services and goods nowadays are replaced by this last stage of economic value, which are named as distinct economic offerings (Pine and Gilmore, 1999). It is however does not mean that no goods nor services are needed anymore, but that smart companies should wrap experience around their traditional offerings. The era of so-called “post-service economy” which was later labeled as “experience economy” has come (Sidali, Kastenholz and Bianchi, 2015).

No questions arise to believe in the importance of the experience, but the ones about the ways to create experiences appear instead. In general, customer gets the experience every time he or she is engaged in a way that memorable event is created. In contrast to commodities and services, experience is inherently personal, so it is always unique and depends on each individual’s state of mind. (Pine and Gilmore, 1999)

Experience economy is an extensive global tendency nowadays. The experience economy theory is described by Sidali, Kastenholz and Bianchi (2015) as one of the main approaches to analyze the consumption of the tourist product. The concept has close relation to tourism both in its origin and in implications (Morgan, Elbe and Curiel, 2009). The creation of pleasant experiences that tourists would remember is important, since it is the direct way towards higher customer satisfaction (Chang & Lin, 2015). Tourist experience is proposed as the meeting point of tourism consumption and tourism production, as well as the value creation and the resources consumption (Andersson, 2007). It is assumed that the main goal of a tourist is to yield a positive experience. Tourists combined the acquired resources under this purpose. Therefore, providing the experiences should be also the central goal of
businesses, especially in tourism industry. Be it a good or service, the “ultimate output” and the “final purpose” is anyways the experience. (Andersson, 2007)

The experience economy theory assumes that the time when goods and services were in demand has changed to time when customers are willing to get experience. Management and marketing strategies in tourism destinations regions are advised to be based on the concept of experience economy (Morgan, Elbe and Curiel, 2009). The task of delivering experiences is a must for Santa Park not just because of it self-positioning, but also as for the company that is a representative of tourism and entertainment industry. Santa Park does charge the admission fee, so by Pine and Gilmore’s (1999) pretends to sell the experience. Surely, business profitability is also reached through sales of goods (souvenirs, mostly) and restaurant sales, for example (Santa Park concept introduction, 2014). Despite this, experience is seen as a separate product, so this is to be designed and offered to the customers nowadays. Companies’ need is to find out the ways of creation and adding the emotional value to tourists’ experiences, because in it there is a key to gain the competitive advantage. (Song et al., 2015)

Now the question is what is the best experience to offer and to meet the customers’ needs. Pine and Gilmore (1999) are discussing the distinct qualities and characteristics of experience, and dimensions to think about them. First is the type of participation – passive or active – depends if customers just observe and listen or play an actual role. Second is the connection – absorption or immersion – the way that the visitor unites with the place. Ideally, the customer should actively participate in the happenings and immerse in the place.

Following Pine and Gilmore (1999), Chang, Yuan and Hsu (2010) show that in order to endow the product with the features of the highest economic value, one needs to change its product to the experience product. The key element here is the personalization, thus the higher level of it is created, the bigger is the customers’ willingness to pay. Santa Park can be defined as an experience product, because it includes all three factors that experience products are associated with. First, meeting inner needs of consumers (get acquainted with Finnish Lapland and its Christmas features), delivering positive emotions (meeting Santa, elves, enjoying decorations,
etc.), and encouraging consumers to physically participate or get involved in the experience (participating in activities). (O’Sullivan and Spangler, 1998)

Since the study is conducted on an example of the company that represents the entertainment business, experience as the heart of this industry is definitely the aspect to explore. Santa Park states creating the unforgettable Christmas experience as its mission and defines it as “unique and comprehensive Christmas themed magical experience for the whole family that promotes active participation, learning, creativity and shares the universals values of hope, love, caring and happiness” (Santa Park concept introduction, 2014). According to this description, the studied company promises to offer all types of experiences that will be characterized further. The company also seems to be successful in following the key elements of Schechner’s (1988) Performance Theory that were drawn in Pine and Gilmor’s ideas (1999). According to the scholars, “the drama is the business strategy, the scripts are the processes, and the performance is the delivery of the product to the customer, which needs to be stage-managed as carefully as any theatrical show” (Morgan, Elbe and Curiel, 2009: 204).

According to Schmitt (2003) customer experience is suggested to be managed in a five steps. The framework recommends to start from the analyzing of the customer’s world, then building an experiential platform, which is dynamic, multi-sensory and dimensional. Next comes brand experience designing and customer interface structuring that includes customer-company touch points. The point is that better results in creating the experience could be reached if company works with a customer as a partner, so that the potential offers can be negotiated (Schmitt. 2003). The creation of the offers is connected with the experience designing process.

### 2.2 Designing the experience

Similarly to any good or service, experience should be wisely designed. It is the new deliverable nowadays; as for services, they perform as a stage. Thus, the tourism “provider” is the experience “stager” Sidali, Kastenholz and Bianchi (2015: 1184).
There are five key principles: theme, impressions, negative cues excluded, memorabilia offered, and, finally, all the five senses engaged. This is, in authors’ opinion, the way towards creating memorable and effective experiences. The five senses can be presented in the THEME concept (Figure 1).

![Figure 1. Experience design principles (Adapted from slideshare.net)](image)

Most importantly, experience has to be designed according to the specific theme.

Theme performs as a foundation and therefore has to be concise and compelling. In case of Santa Park, the theme is very clear – Christmas and, focusing on Russians, New year – the holiday that is very important for this nation.

Next, theme should be fulfilled by impressions, which are harmonized by cues, supporting the theme and affirming the nature of the experience. Every small cue is an important part of the experience creation. Santa Park is all about Christmas and fairytale, so a lot of attention is devoted to the cues. For example, only elves serve the guests, all properly dressed, behaved and even talking with an elfish voice. If even one elf would start to show his behavior more associated with a regular human, like answering questions of the visitors about his place of origin, the image of a magic creature will be ruined. Therefore, the negative cue that contradicts with the theme would appear. Noteworthy, the right balance between serving in a proper manner, but not overservicing must be reached. Next, Santa Park does offer the memorabilia such as the certificate of undercrossing the Arctic Circle, where the tourist gets his or his family name and the date. As Pine and Gilmore (1999) pointed
out, visitors indeed are ready to pay, but not for the price of the good (certificate), but for the value of remembering the experience.

Santa Park can be analyzed in a similar way as Song et al. (2015) describes temple stays. According to that study, there are four categories of experience (4Es): esthetic, educational, entertainment, and escape. Alike to temple stays, the amusement theme park seems to provide all four categories of experiences and below there are the arguments to support this hypothesis. The amusement theme park is surrounded by natural environment, isolated from the city of Rovaniemi where it belongs, so definitely provides an opportunity to escape daily routines. Entering the world of Christmas and winter wonderland, tourists immerse themselves in an escape experience and magic atmosphere. There is absolutely a chance to get also an esthetic experience, while walking around manmade cave adorned with beautiful Christmas decorations, in the rhythms of Christmas songs, and being served and surrounded by staff in the image of elves. Educational experience can be seen in absorption to Finnish traditions and culture: like decorating gingerbread and participating in workshops and Elf School. Entertainment experience is taken for granted – park as a whole is one huge entertainment, to be specific, there is Angry Birds area for children, bright musical and dance show, Ice Gallery. Thus, multiply dimensions of experience are simultaneously perceived by customers.

It is very beneficial to analyze how customers envision the outcomes of “enjoyment, entertainment, learning, skills acquisition, nostalgia” (Tynan and McKechnie, 2009: 511). The attempt to explore the sources of value can assist in value propositions as well as facilitating of them, therefore shifts to the co-creation of value sources rather than just delivering and offering them.

2.3 The influence of experience on values

Next, the concept of value must be considered, because it is determined by experience that tourists had in their destination. Moreover, each experience has an impact on values, which in their turn affect the overall customer satisfaction (Song et al, 2015).
The concept of perceived value is seen as an important tool for assessment and differentiation of the strategies in the tourism industry (Kotler, 2004). Despite of Zeithaml’s (1988) assumptions, perceived value is not restricted by the perspective of price and service. Moreover, it has to be analyzed by a multi-item scale, as Lee, Lee et al. (2007) suggested. Williams and Soutar (2009) as well as Song et al. (2011) and some other researchers in the field explored two dimensions of value. According to their studies, there are two types of values: functional value that is mostly influenced by educational experience and emotional that is affected by esthetical experience (Figure 2). Tourists consciously seek for experiences and expect to fulfil their selves emotionally while visiting a theme park. It is important to mention that emotional value is always perceived in a different way therefore creates unique experience. (Song et al., 2015)

The value of the product (experience product in this case) is acknowledged by customers under condition that valuable experience is created for them (Schmitt, 1999). Therefore, the task is to analyze whether Santa Park managed to well-stage the educational, esthetic, entertainment and escape experience and consequently succeed in providing valuable experience, or not.

Figure 2. Values and tourist satisfaction

Song et al. (2015) showed that since temple stays offered various experience programs and settings, it significantly influenced the perceived value and tourist satisfaction.
Thus, the idea is to identify the experiences that enhance tourists’ perceptions of value and satisfaction with Santa Park. In order to reach that, all four types of experiences should be analyzed and their impact on both functional and emotional values.

Thus, the experience economy theory seems an appropriate conceptual framework for predicting tourist satisfaction. Apart from temple stays, the theory was also tested in a bed-and-breakfast industry (Oh, Fiore & Jeoung, 2007), wine and rural tourism (Quadri-Felitti & Fiore, 2012), food and rural tourism Sidali, Kastenholz and Bianchi (2015), E-commerce Chang, Yuan and Hsu (2010). Results of the above-mentioned studies proved that the theory indeed opens a door to study tourists’ experiences. The findings surely depend on the industry where the research was conducted. In addition, the direct relationship between types of experiences and satisfaction were previously discussed by other scholars, but the small amount of publications on the topic does not allow to claim any universal approach. For instance, the study from bed and breakfast field showed that the dominating dimension of the experience is esthetic (Oh, Fiore & Jeoung, 2007). In case of musical festival in Norway, the most influential category of the experience in terms of predicting customer satisfaction were escape and esthetic, but in the Norwegian museum – educational and esthetic (Mehmetoglu and Engen, 2011).

It has been also noted that firms with the focus on experiences are characterized by certain difficulties. The attention has to be paid also to the problem that most of the experience-based businesses face: attendance drop and less frequency of the repeat visits. The cause of this challenge lays in the fact that the experience loses its novelty. Notably, new exhibitions, different activities, attractions and spectacles have not been able to resolve the problem (Harvard Business Review, 2015). This challenge has been described on an example of Aquarium in Georgia, where the board members chose a way to focus not only on acquiring the new customers, but rather on trying to identify and find “the right ones”, those who would be willing to return. Santa Park as an enterprise with the focus on experience might face the same challenge. In order to understand the current situation with the repeat visits, the data about the customers should be gathered.
This study attempts to extend the theory through applying it in another example of tourism industry – theme park. According to Song et al. (2015) no research was conducted in the context of experience economy on tourists’ experiences with theme parks.

2.4 Cross-cultural customer satisfaction research

Nowadays, cross-cultural research in the field of tourism has received increasing attention. However, the possible impact of cultural differences on the level of customer satisfaction has not been completely assessed yet.

Consumers’ needs are heterogenic and it performs as a key challenge for tourism businesses and destinations and therefore the reason to deal with cross-cultural research. (Kozak, Bigné, and Andreu, 2004) This heterogeneity is explained by cultural differences. The influence of national culture is very wide and touches for example behavior, attitude, needs and expectations of the tourists. Culture and behavior are connected in a cause and effect relationships. Classifying Russian customers by Hofstede’s (1980) dimensions, they are collectivists with very high uncertainty avoidance level, who mostly caring for others and quality of life (feminine). For the comparison, Finns are opposite (apart from feminine dimension, which is quite similar) – individualists who considerably less threatened by the ambiguity situations and close to the power holders (The Hofstede Center, 2016). In terms of researching the Finnish company with the focus on Russian customers, it is important for Finnish managers to remember about significant difference between local staff and arriving visitors. For instance, since the degree of inequality that is considered to be normal is opposite in Finland and Russia (power distance dimension), it has to be kept in mind that Russians expect to be treated as royalty, but Finns as representatives of low power distance culture treat them almost like an equal. Another example is about uncertainty avoidance: Finns and Russians are again on the opposite sides of the dimension. Thence, Russians are risking to be perceived as too emotional and even aggressive, that is explained by their strong uncertainty avoidance culture and much lower acceptance of ambiguity. In order to avoid that, Santa Park’s managers should remember that even though Russia is the closest neighboring country, the culture differs significantly, so the needs and expectations
of Russian customers might be a bit different than it is assumed in the host country (Wursten, Fadrhonc & Roersoe, 2009).

Culture is the issue that determines expectations and perceptions of service quality. These perceptions then determine satisfaction with tourism services and tourism destinations (Buhalis & Costa, 2006). Thus, it becomes obvious that knowing details of Russian culture is essential for providing better customer service in Santa Park.

Notably, experience economy approach has been criticized because of being “too rooted” in US masculine culture. As it was mentioned earlier, there is not much dimensions with similar indexes that Finland and Russia have by Hofstede’s (1980) terminology, however, both countries are representing feminine culture. For this type’s representatives, the base of the experience is to be arranged on environmental and social values of the company. It leads to the providing of the added value for the customer, in addition, the company should be concentrated around the values that it has in common with their audience. Nijs (2003)

Santa Park is the organization that serves customers from over 40 countries around the world, therefore, it should distinguish different markets and offer services according to visitors’ specific values, attitudes etc.

Russians are important customers for the considered company, since there is even so-called “Russian season” in Santa Park, which is from catholic Christmas to the orthodox one and even longer till the end of Russian holidays (25.12 – 10.01). There are several reasons why most tourists come exactly these days. First, Russians do not celebrate Christmas in December, but New Year Celebration is more important. In addition, after New Year’s Eve, there long holidays starting for most of the people, so they plan trips for these periods. That is why the biggest flow is usually expected by around 28-29 of December (Ilyasova, 2014).

Since this is the period when lots of families and organized groups are arriving, the Park is surrounded mostly by Russians. It however does not mean that in other parts of the seasons there are no tourists from this country. Thus, in terms of destination management, the profile of Russian tourist has to be learnt, his values and behavior
have to be explored. This is the way to implement effective positioning and market segmentation strategies (Reisinger and Turner 2003).

### 2.5 Service quality

The players of the developed markets are well aware about the importance of service quality and concerned about the problem of raising its level in the company. Nowadays, it is necessary to view service quality as a winning strategy (Augustyn and Ho, 1998). Ying, Jusih and Khalifah (2012) concluded that the service quality is not the predictor variable in the experience – value relationship, but the moderator. The higher value service level is provided, the higher customer satisfaction level can be reached. The concept, however, has to be considered in every context separately, since the scales differ significantly, as Yamaguchi et al. (2015) suggests. From the customers’ perceptions, quality is determined by the degree of concordance between their expectations and the service performance (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

It is also defined that not the needs are to be satisfied nowadays, but desires and dreams. In addition, there is a shift required from perceiving the customer as a passive consumer to viewing them as active participants (Morgan, Elbe and Curiel, 2009: 204). The role of personnel is crucial, not only the managers, but also the frontline staff determine the experience that will be delivered to the customers. Therefore, it is important to analyze the visitors’ opinion about the personnel, whether they succeed in meeting the expectations and providing the appropriate service performance.

As Song et al. (2015) suggested in order to examine both dimensions of values and broaden the experience economy theory, the phenomenon of service quality has to be explored. Therefore, considering service quality in terms of this research proves to be logical and beneficial. In addition, service delivery and customer satisfaction proved to be tightly connected in Estate management business (Preko, Agbanu and Feglo, 2014). According to that study, when customers realize that they were treated with a good service quality, there is a bigger chance for a company to have customers staying loyal and also recommending these services to the future potential customers.
Consequently, the importance of focusing on the service quality becomes even more obvious.

The process of service quality management can be divided in the several steps, the very initial of which is the assessment of the current service quality. El-Kuhun (2010) suggests different approaches that could serve this need: mystery shopper, loyalty and satisfaction, and benchmarking. Researching the level of customer loyalty and satisfaction has been chosen as a focus of this study. This approach enables to understand the satisfaction level from the real customer’s point of view on the base of the customer expectations and the company perception analysis. According to El-Kuhun (2010) this data would assist to evaluate the current level of the quality service, loyalty and satisfaction index, weak and strong sides of the service that is provided in the company, priorities in developing of the services. In order to measure service quality, Oh (1999) used the scale ‘better than/worse than expected’. Therefore, in frames of this study close attention should be devoted to the expectations of the tourists, since it will assist in understanding the service quality in the company.

2.6 Destination marketing

Another concept that asks for attention in terms of composing the study in the field of customer satisfaction is tourism destination and destination marketing. As Framke (2002) mentioned, destination is a tourist identity of a place. Indeed, simply put, it is a place for tourists to visit that attracts separately taken visitors by the specific feature or the set of them. Saraniemi and Kylänen (2011) in their turn, suggest that understanding of the tourist place can be reached through analyzing the tourist perspective. In this study, customers’ feedbacks were the main source of the data, so it is assumed that the tourism destination can be also explored on the base of gathered opinions.

Each stakeholder is responsible for the destination development that includes bringing to the market only those products that would fit into the overall destination strategy, since otherwise it will deteriorate the destination competitiveness (Morgan, Elbe and Curiel, 2009). In this case, Santa Park is considered as an important
stakeholder of Lapland and Rovaniemi as a destination, therefore, the management of the company should synchronize the offers with overall destination strategy.

In case of the city of Rovaniemi, its story of Official Hometown of Santa Claus started in 1984, when Finnish Tourists’ board and local authorities began to promote Lapland as a Homeland of Santa Claus (Haahti & Yavas, 2004). Next, Rovaniemi has been granted a European Community Trademark as Official Hometown of Santa Claus in 2010. Thus, Santa Park perfectly fits with the destination main “topic”, however, it still means that the responsibility of keeping the image and following the destination strategy is high. The company has to aim on providing the unique services that would create the best memories. Otherwise, another firm could build the same type of organization as well, since the destination has the potential of development in frames of the topic.

Relying on traditional leisure products is risky sometimes, since other competitive destinations could offer more sophisticated products. Morgan, Elbe and Curiel (2009) described it on examples of Swedish, British and Spanish destinations and suggested to improve the offerings via “positioning and differentiating their destinations by using products based on their natural and cultural resources” (2009: 202).

Kozak, Bigné, and Andreu (2004) point out that different destinations cannot attract the similar markets, “it is not reasonable to expect that tourists visiting Italy are the same as those visiting Greece or that both destinations attract similar markets” (2004: 43). This assumption was mentioned while collecting the data from respondents of the current study.

Destination is also something developing and changing over the time, again influenced by visitors and their expectations. Saraniemi and Kylänen (2011) offer the cultural approach to the tourist destinations, explaining it by the possibility to combine cultural geography and marketing views on a destination as well as consider it as a concepts and dynamic. The approach also enables “deeper, symbolic–emotional consumption of cultures” (2011: 140), so, as it was already mentioned in the previous paragraph, would assist with determining customers’ expectations and
therefore satisfaction qualifiers. Accordingly, researchers discuss that destination is a “process into which tourists can jump in” (2011: 139) and not a fixed completed entity. Their study suggests that the destinations nowadays are successful if they enable visitors to immerse into the place. The parallel with the experience economy theory that was described earlier can be found at this point – there the immersing process was named as an escape experience. In addition, Oh, Fiore and Jeoung (2007) claimed that tourist’s destination choice is influenced by the consequences of tourist experiences (“destination- or individual travel-specific outcomes of the experience”, 2007:122). Thus, the better experience is acquired, the more positive is the attitude to the destination.

Following Oh, Fiore and Jeoung (2007) suggestions, all the events and activities form the experience of the destination, which further becomes the source of both values and evaluation of the destination. Everything that is done in order to develop, make recognizable and promote is destination marketing. Responsibility for that lies on each and every staff member of any organization that is in contact with the customers, or “frontline ambassador”, as The editorial team of placebrandobserver.com (2015) put it. It is assumed that reflections of all these efforts are customers’ opinions, experiences and satisfaction level. Therefore, studying the experiences will provide the directions for destination marketers, answering the questions how to improve the offerings and better satisfy customers’ needs.

Overall, drawing attention to the issue of tourism destination enables to consider the topic from a wider perspective, since destination encircles much more aspects, comparing to the company-centered strategies or customer orientation (Saraniemi and Kylänen, 2011). Therefore, considering Lapland and Rovaniemi in particular as a tourism destination would assist in serving the goal of the study.

2.7 Destination brand

Under conditions of globalization, marketing and branding play important role in managing the destination. Moreover, the image of the destination is also influential
aspect since it affects the destination choice. Lapland and the city of Rovaniemi in particular performs as a place where destination brand development is a must.

Briefly, Finnish Lapland used to mostly present natural and cultural attractions, but then it was noticed that it is not enough for number of the tourists, therefore some segments could not be achieved. Then, the idea of presenting Santa Claus as a tourist attraction in Finnish Lapland was planned in the 1980’s. (Mason 2008: 50)

Before going further into details, the definition of the brand in the field of tourism has to be depicted. Under brand scholars see the destination that provides a unique and unforgettable experience, in addition, this particular experience cannot be reached in any other destination (Rakita and Mitrovic, 2007: 135).

Destination brand as every brand is a product (Rakita and Šipragić, 2014). In the context of this study, a place that is visited by the tourists is a tourist product. One of its key characteristic and the distinguishing feature from another type of products is intangibility. Tourist product includes attractions and different services in a specific destination and therefore is very heterogeneous. In case if even one service caused some level of disappointment, customer could receive considerably worse impression of the whole tourist product. Rakita and Šipragić (2003) in this point address the importance of tourists’ trust and destination image, which does not seem logical. It instead appears reasonable to suggest the maintaining of every service in a possibly perfect way, so that the disappointment level would be minimized.

Branding has a central place in the experience process (Tynan and McKechnie, 2009). It is reasoned by the need of differentiation that requires the maintaining of the customers-firm-network members dialogue. Brand is an image, essence of a place, whereas destination marketing is the way tourists perceive it. When brand is created, destination marketing becomes the core process, so that customers know “who we are” and how “we communicate who we are” (placebrandobserver.com, 2015).

Answering the question why destination brand of Rovaniemi is worth to consider while researching Santa Park, it has to be said that every component of brand has a
power to bring an impact on it. Thus, Santa Park as a significant constituent of Rovaniemi as a destination brand, ideally has to strengthen this brand, therefore, their values have to align. The considered theme park is definitely respective element of Lapland, so that means that tourists of Santa Park participate directly in building the brand of the whole destination – city of Rovaniemi in a smaller perspective and Lapland in a wider one (Rakita and Šipragić, 2014).

According to Holloway et al. (2009), decision about visiting some destinations comes once the tourist finds the match between the perception of his needs and the perception of destination as a place. Regarding this, Rakita and Šipragić (2014) suggest the type of data that should be gathered from the visitors: basic (gender, age, family status), origin (city or region, in this case), decision to come (recommendations, internet), way of travelling (groups/individuals, transportation), motives for the visit (vacation, recreation), time of arriving and length of stay. Once the answers are gathered and analyzed, the basis for building and developing of the destination brand is established. This advice was taken in consideration while preparing customer interviewing that will be introduced in the next chapter.

The brand is built by the tourists’ behavior, so it is important to keep in mind by which factors it is affected. For instance, great need for information, significance of recommendations, and long process of choosing the destinations (Rakita and Šipragić, 2014). In this regard, much could be done from the side of Santa Park as a part of destination brand. More observations about tourists’ behavior will be described in the second chapter of the study.

Rakita and Šipragić (2014) through developing of the topic deeper also mention determinants of country branding that includes different international potentials: economic, creative and infrastructure. With regards to this study, creative potentials perform as one of the most important, and moreover, flexile to be improved. As it was already mentioned, the researched company performs as a bright representative of Lapland and Rovaniemi as destinations. Creative potentials include the segment of distinctive skills, such as design, folklore or handicraft. The task of the destination representatives is to demonstrate these creative skills, since it is the way to assist in
developing recognition and validation not only of the company, but the city and the whole country.

As it is seen, the various elements have to be followed in order to fully understand the phenomenon of the current study. Therefore, they all were attempted to be collected together in the following conceptual figure (Figure 3):

![Conceptual figure of the elements used in the study](image)

**Figure 3. Conceptual figure of the elements used in the study**

Thus, as Figure 3 shows, the phenomenon of interest in this study lays in the interdependencies of tourists’ perceived experiences and the service quality, which is influenced by cross-cultural differences of the service providers and the customers. The experiences in their turn take part in building the destination brand and influence visitors’ attitude to the destination, therefore, the insights from the tourists’ experiences analysis could suggest the ways to develop the tourist destination.
3 METHODOLOGY

The study is arranged using the qualitative approach and conducted in an explorative manner, since, as it was already mentioned, the topic was chosen upon researcher’s interest. That is, according to Babbie (2010), one of the purposes for performing this type of studies. Next, the research aims to examine the customers satisfaction in the theme park in the context of tourism on the base of the data gathered from the customers, therefore applies the inductive approach.

3.1 Interview as a data collection method

This study is completed using interviewing the customers method and observation as an additional method. The reason why in-depth interviews were chosen as a research method are explained by their strong advantages — flexible, multi-perspectival, reflective and many others. Interviews create the possibility to maneuver and to make reactive questions, which produce descriptive examples and identifies the connections between different phenomena (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2011: 36).

In terms of cross-cultural research, if the data collection method reflects the opinion of tourists about themselves or their experience is classified as a “direct method” (Kozak, Bigne, and Andreu, 2004). The focus of the research is thus on tourists expectations, destination choice, and benefits received — exactly the same as the current study intends to have. Therefore, this method is supposed to provide the theoretical support to the research of cross-cultural behavior in tourism.

3.2 Interviews preparation and process

The questionnaire was structured around three main topics: expectations from holidays (1), experience in Santa Park (2) and Finnish Lapland as touristic destination (3) (see Table 1). The questions of the block three were composed with the aims to measure all four dimensions of experience that were described by Song et al. (2015) and Pine and Gilmore (1999). Same questions were also intended to explore the service quality. Destination brand and marketing destination were planned to be studied on the base of the respondents’ opinions regarding the
questions from the last block. The structure and the type of each question was chosen with the aim to be less pre-directed, therefore to leave more freedom for the interviewee. As table 1 shows, each topic included from three to four questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Block of questions</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expectations from holidays</td>
<td>What do you mostly expect from your holidays?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What were you expecting from your visit to Santa Park?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Could you describe your best holidays abroad?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience in Santa Park</td>
<td>How could you describe your day? (esthetic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What did you enjoy most of all? (entertainment, escape)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What did you learn for example about Finnish culture? (educational)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What should be added?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finnish Lapland as tourist destinations</td>
<td>What else have you visited/plan to visit during your trip in Lapland?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How could you describe Lapland as a touristic destination?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What does seem most attractive for you in Lapland?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What in your opinion are the weak points of Lapland as a touristic destination?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interviewees were selected mainly by the country of origin. It was rather easy due to the fact that the fieldworker could spot the language of communication. Next, the interviewer assumed that the potential interviewee is available for a conversation and approached him, her or them from a positive standpoint as Coopman and State (2006) suggested.

The data was collected from the Russian customers in Santa Park, in the hall near the cloakrooms, which is the last place that visitors stay before leaving. It was convenient to catch the tourists and start a talk in the form of a free conversation and further starting with the interviews. Each interview took around 20 minutes on the average. The questions were announced orally, so clients did not have to spend their time on filling the blanks. The answers were typed to the tablet by the researcher. The idea to substitute filling up the printed or electronical forms with oral
interviewing was chosen because of the researcher's ability to interact with the audience in their mother tongue. Deutscher (1974) draw attention upon the aspect of language – the meaning of words in different cultures and nationalities can vary. In the case of the current study the source language and target language match, consequently, the limitations are reduced. Moreover, the researcher is not only familiar with the target culture, but is indigenous to the studied nationalities. This approach indeed assisted to alleviate the risk of refuses to spend the time on interviews and facilitate the process of communication through easier understanding between parties.

In total, 16 groups of people (families, mostly, or two to three tourists travelling together) participated in data collection. The researcher also noted the age of the tourists as well as wrote down the size of the interviewed family (e.g. the amount of children). In 8 cases out of 16 in the family there was at least one under 6 years old kid, in 9 cases there was a teenager or two. Apart from it, the respondents were asked to share the region where they come from. Most of the respondents were from Saint Petersburg, Moscow, or Murmansk.

Much attention was devoted to the process of interviewing. As suggested by Veal (2006), agreeing or disagreeing, suggesting the answers to the interviewee was avoided, because the task was to get independent responses. Therefore, the interviewee was focusing on listening and encouraging tourists to talk.

Moreover, the risk of wrong understanding of the questions was maximally reduced, because in case respondents had difficulties with the answers, the question was immediately rephrased. The questions were composed as maximally open-ended, so that the respondents could have more freedom while answering. Moreover, the type of questions with scales was avoided, since the interpretation of the strength of a scale could vary significantly among people, in other words “good” for one could be stronger or weaker than for the other (Kozak, Bigné, and Andreu, 2004). Next, the place and the moment was chosen right – usually the interviewees were dressing up or waiting for the taxi while communicating. In 100% of the cases tourists gladly agreed to devote a bit of time to the researches and shared their impressions in
details, that turned the data collection process into an interesting and pleasant activity.

In addition, some valuable notes were taken from the random tourists that visited the work spot, where the researcher was at that moment. Additional insights were also found while exploring the feedbacks and comments in the social media and blogs. The data collected is treated similarly as fieldwork notes and is included in the research.

3.3 Observation

As it was mentioned, the methodology of the study is formed mainly by customers interviewing, however, it was decided to refer to participant observation as an additional method. As DeMunck and Sobo (1998) noticed, this method enables to form more detailed description of the case while collecting the data. For instance, observation establishes the chance to look upon or participate in unscheduled events, therefore enables to ameliorate the quality of the data collection and interpretation (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2002).

The opportunity to use observations as the methodological approach is seen as a strength of the study, because considerable amount of important data was acquired while observing the customers and situations in Santa Park daily. Luckily, the researcher had an opportunity to spend significant amount of time with customers in different parts of the Park and get involved to the interactions directly. Lincoln and Guba (1994) claimed these conditions as the most important to consider findings trustworthy. In addition, most limitations of observation as data collecting tool, mentioned by Schensul, Schensul, and Lecompte (1999) were obviated. The researchers pointed out appearance, ethnicity, age, gender, and class of the person arranging observation as aspects that could interfere the acceptance to the observed community. However, in this case the fieldworker ideally fit to the community, thus no trust or language barriers took place. The necessary notes have been made and later performed as a valuable information in finalizing and the results.
The following tips have been used as suggested by DeWalt and DeWalt (2002): active observing and attending to details, careful listening to conversations and also getting involved in informal interviews or conversations (Wolcott, 2001). Overall, the combination of observations and in-depth interviews are seen as a perfect way to acquire valuable data during the fieldwork. Werner and Schoepfle (1987) determined this type as focused observation that means researcher is guided by the data retrieved from the interviews and focuses more precisely on what exactly to observe. In this case, for instance, the fieldworker spotted the expressions heard from the visitors right after arriving to the Park, discussions near the certain parts of the cave and before leaving.

### 3.4 Data analysis method

As soon as the data has been collected, it should be analyzed. There are four steps in the process of analyzing qualitative data, as Wilson (2010) suggests. First, the collected data must be transcribed. In this case, the respondents’ answers were written down by the researcher at the time when each interview was conducted. The additional task was to translate the received data from Russian into English. Next, it is necessary to read the text through and start with coding. This process involves generating categories, themes and patterns (Wilson 2010: 255), and therefore assists to organize the gathered data. In addition, since the analysis is qualitative, this is the stage when understanding and creating of the theory begins (Ghauri & Grønhaug 2005: 208).

While grouping the answers of the respondents for the second block of question, the measurement scale of Chang and Lin (2015) was partly taken as an example. The authors suggest that entertainment experience is received, if the “service settings were captivating” and “made fun” for a visitor. Next, educational experience is received in case respondents “learnt a lot” or “learnt specific knowledge” or the visit “stimulated the curiosity to learn new things”. Next, the condition to conclude that the escape experience was perceived is to “play different character” during the stay, or manage to “completely escape from daily routine” or even to feel as he or she “was living in a different time or place”. Finally, the esthetic experience is provided
if the tourist has an opportunity to “feel a real sense of harmony”, if close attention is paid to details designing, if the environment is very pleasant.

According to Wilson (2010), the coding process can be inductive or deductive. In the first case, it is an emergent coding, where the data is examined and then the categories are formed. In the deductive case, preliminary coding takes place, so the categories have been determined before the data analysis. In this study, the primary theme categories used in the interviews also perform as a basis for coding of the data. However, since the respondents were given an opportunity for a free word feedback, the impact of the gathered data on codification could not be underestimated, thus the data coding approach can be described as a mixture of inductive and deductive approaches. After coding, the data that was counted to be irrelevant or insignificant information was excluded.

Next, the third step is about the findings interpretation. Answer by answer in each topic, all the collected data was analyzed and grouped, because some answers had clear similarities. Some data was aligning with the chosen theoretical concepts, so the analysis depended on the theoretical propositions to some extent. Lastly, the fourth step is writing the report.

As for analyzing the results of observations, this research follows DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) who suggest that field notes perform as both data and analysis. Indeed, the notes that have been captured by the researcher include precise description of what was observed so can be considered as a product of observation process. The fieldworker tried to keep the quotes when possible and also include the background information to understand the context of situations.
4 EMPIRICAL DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter leads to the empirical research, where the collected data is analyzed on the base of applying the theoretical concepts that have been presented earlier. First, the research object is introduced in order to provide the understanding of the study case.

4.1 Description of the research object

The research is conducted on the base of Santa Park, which is an entertainment theme park located in Lapland, Finland. It was founded in 1997 (Introduction to Santa Park concept, 2014) and has been welcoming guests since 1998 (Santapark.com). The concept was created by Santaworld Ltd. (UK) and the cost of construction was 6.7 million euros. There were several Finnish companies that shared the ownership such as Finnair, MTV, Sampo, Lasten Päivän Säätiö, Posti. In addition, Ministry of Trade and Industry was also involved (Huvipuisto.net, 2013).

As an amusement park, the company did not reach its economic goals and by 2002 there was an attempt to renew the concept via featuring Santa Claus and Christmas together with Lappish culture and nature (Yle Lappi, 2009). After the biggest company’s shares were purchased by entrepreneur couple in 2009, the services and experiences have increased rapidly, mentions the official website of the company. The company serves the flow of tourists from 41 countries, about 70 000 people every year (Santapark, 2016).

In comparison, Lapland had around 2.3 million overnight stays in 2014-2015, with about 1.5 million during the winter season (October-April), reports Lapin Liitto (2016). Rovaniemi in its turn served almost 400 000 overnights in 2014-2015 with almost 300 000 overnights during the winter season (Lapin Liitto, 2016). Thus, only one third of the city’s visitors and about 3.5% of Lapland’s guests have experienced Santa Park.

Santa Park is the home cavern of Santa, his official residence in the Arctic Circle. The Park is literally situated in the cave that is carved in the bedrock of
Syväsenvaara. In Santa Park, there are different activities open for visitors (lifetime experiences, as the official website suggests): Santa’s Office, Elf School, Mrs. Gingerbread’s Kitchen, Santa’s Office, Magic Train, Ice Princesses’ Ice Gallery, and Post Office.

Santa Park claims its goal in preservation of the eco- and cultural attractiveness of the area and its development and worldwide promotion (Introduction to Santa Park concept, 2014). Santa Park is a unique place with distinctive services, as the company describes their concept – providing the best Christmas experience, and Forbes magazine ranked it as World Top Christmas destination in 2011. SantaPark has also been awarded with the Golden Pony Award by the Games & Park Industry (Santapark, 2016).

Noteworthy, in 2014, Santa Park was awarded with Experience Stager of the Year (EXPY) for “its dedication to details and continuous consistent improvement in offering unique Christmas experiences in Santa’s "home cavern" in the Arctic Circle” (strategicichorozons.com, 2016). EXPY is the annual award that was established and given by Pine & Gilmore, the authors of the experience economy theory. Santa Park won the prize “for its exceptional skills envisioning, designing and staging truly memorable and innovative experiences” at the annual ThinkAbout event in Cincinnati OH (USA) (SantaPark, 2016).

Thus, the uniqueness of the place and the experience that it provides are seen as competitive advantages. These advantages perform as a key to the customer satisfaction, so the factors that influence it from the viewpoint of visitors are important to be analyzed. That is why the research object perfectly serves the exploration of the studied questions.

4.2 Esthetic, educational, entertainment, and escape experience

Santa Park as a representative of the entertainment theme park industry should provide all four types of the experience – esthetic, educational, entertainment and escape. In order to examine whether each types of the experience has been provided, different measurement scales have been used (Table 2).
Table 2. Measurement scales for examining the experiences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measurement scale</th>
<th>Educational</th>
<th>Esthetic</th>
<th>Entertainment</th>
<th>Escape</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“learnt a lot”, “learnt specific knowledge”, “stimulated to learn new”</td>
<td>“the setting is attractive and provides pleasure to the senses”, “the setting showed attention to detail design”</td>
<td>“activities of others were amusing to watch”, “service settings were captivating”, “made fun for me”</td>
<td>“completely escaped from reality”, “totally forgot about my daily routine”, “felt I was someone else in a different world”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The measurement scale by Oh, Fiore & Jeoung (2007) was used to analyze all the dimensions of the experience apart from the educational. For that type of experience the scale offered by Chang and Lin (2015) was chosen, because the criteria performed more suitable for the current case.

4.2.1 Educational

The analysis is starting with the educational experience, since it was one of the biggest concern of the researcher. Based on the respondents’ answers it is attempted to examine whether the experience was educational for the visitors or not. According to Chang and Lin (2015) educational experience is received in case respondents “learnt a lot” or “learnt specific knowledge” or the visit “stimulated the curiosity to learn new things”.

Santa Park definitely is a place to provide the educational experience, but unfortunately, this opportunity is not used at its full strength. The dominating part of the respondents said they did not learn anything new about the culture neither the history of Lapland. As mentioned, the customer service in the company is held by elves (tontut, suom; эльфы, rus.) who are magic creatures that are least associated with Christmas for Russian tourists. Therefore, the closer attention has to be devoted to the presentation of these creatures and explanation of their tight connection to Christmas in Finnish culture.

“Oh, they were elves… Finally we know it for sure, we were trying to guess, who all those creatures around are…” (Family from Murmansk)
That is why most of the customers usually call the staff as “gnomes” or even “trolls”. Some respondents were sure that they met the elves from the “Lord of the rings”. The representatives of local staff sometimes mentioned that for them the association between the elves, Santa and Christmas is so strong that the fact that for tourists from the other cultures it could be controversial situation is simply forgotten. Even though four families mentioned that they learnt about elves, they could not specify what exactly did they explore. Two families announced that they learnt about gnomes. Thus, it was concluded that visitors did not have a chance to learn about the elves as significant constituents of Finnish culture.

Sadly, even though only half of the respondents admitted that they did not get any educational insight from the visit to Santa Park, not much was found out by either the rest of the interviewees, who mentioned some learnt aspects. Some respondents (four families) noted that they have seen the traditional national clothes while taking the magic train. Couple of times the show was mentioned as an example of “what new did you see”, but after the answer respondents asked the interviewer to tell about the plot, since they could not manage to follow it:

“The show is difficult to understand and quite mean in general.” (Family from Moscow)

Therefore, it could be concluded that the show also failed in attempting to open the door to the Finnish culture and hence did not either serve the goal of providing the educational experience.

At the same time, workshop (handicraft) and calligraphy were mentioned by about one third of the respondents as a place that they enjoyed most of all. Handicraft involves children and their parents to the creative processes: the task is to make an elf or Santa out of the offered materials and tools. Calligraphy requires patience and diligence: the visitors are invited to try real ink and feather pen. The idea is to write a wish and drop it into the Magic Drum. The idea of the workshops is decent, but the implementation is not. In the handicraft part tourists do not even know if they are making Santa or an elf. In addition, the elf who is managing the workshop rarely tells that the wall full of the handicrafts actually represents Santa’s Facebook, because it
is filled by “messages” – the handicrafts of the visitors. The handicraft elf could also
remind that as it was taught in the Elf School, workshops are essential part of typical
eelves’ activities. However, some tourists were complaining that they even felt the
lack of instructions and guidelines while trying to participate in the workshop.
Surely, there is no question about stories that have been told by the elf, if even no essential instructions were provided. It seems that there was no elf at the spot during
that particular moment, thus the visitors were left to explore the activity on their
own. Most of the visitors were not sure if they created Santa or an elf, after finishing
the handicraft. Some respondents told they just passed by the calligraphy, since it
seemed as a “messy table with pens and papers” (Family from Murmansk). The
solution can be easy: the written instructions can be added or an elf should
participate in the workshop himself. His example will be very inspirational and will
perfectly show the idea. As it was observed, people were very touched when they
saw the elf writing with a feather pen, took a picture and admired watching the
process.

Consequently, workshops lost the chance to provide educational experience. In
addition, due to the low attention to the customers, workshops remained in visitors’
memory as a negative experience.

It should be noticed that the way Finns call Santa – Joulupukki – sounds
considerably funny for the Russian speakers. Even though quite a lot of tourists
mentioned his name, it was not pronounced correctly – “Jalopuki”, “Jelopuki”.
“Julapuki” (Russian: “Ялопуки”, “Елопуки”, “Юлапуки”). Since Joulupukki is the
central figure of Finnish Christmas stories and the highlight of the visit to Santa Park,
the legend about his name and his story in general should be attempted to be
delivered. Another reason is that Russian Santa Claus is named “Ded Moroz”
(Russian: Дед Мороз) and has absolutely different distinguishing features, therefore
by his characteristics does not fit the description of neither Joulupukki nor Santa
Claus. For example, Ded Moroz wears a floor-length coat (usually blue) with a sash,
and a short hat. He does not fly in the sky, but finds a route in the woods and his
sleigh pulled by three horses instead of reindeers.
According to the belief story, Finnish Santa Claus lives in the mountain of Korvatunturi, Lapland, which is a hidden place in the middle of snow. The elves live there with him and take it as an honor to help in the daily routines. Next, the etymology of the word “Joulupukki” is interesting. Originally, the Finnish Santa Claus was not this friendly oldster as nowadays, but a strict man garbed as a goat (Finnish: “pukki”) that visited homes and handed presents to well-behaving children and punished the mean ones. Later the scary character of “pukki” has been replaced, but the element of evaluating people’s behaviour has remained. (Rusko, Meriheimo and Haanpää, 2013)

Thus, it is obvious that the stories about Finnish Santa should be presented to the visitors, due to the cultural differences in perceptions of key Christmas figures. The delivery of the story could be arranged via informational billboards or booklets and lessons in the Elf School, for example. Elf School is an activity that is visited by almost every visitor and both billboards and booklets could fit perfectly to the situation when families or group members are waiting for each other or lining up for an attraction.

One more place in the Park could provide more educational insights than it already does at the moment. It is the Ice Gallery with beautiful ice sculptures inside, which represents wild animals traditionally residing in Lappish territories. However, it was suggested to add the signs or even audio guides, so that people can learn about these animals more:

“We were just walking there, did not learn anything new. I would not mind some audio guide or some booklet.” (Grandmother with grandson, Moscow)

In addition, from the signs Russians could see the English term for an animal and therefore improve their language skills. The absence of signs in the Gallery can be probably explained by the will of the management to keep the place authentic. Perhaps, the signs would ruin the icy style of the room and upset the feeling of being in the world of winter. However, they could also bring the idea to the tourists that the sculptures are there for observational purposes, since many people perceive the idea
of the Ice Gallery differently. This aspect would be developed further in the subchapter about esthetic experience.

Next, the character that represents Ice Gallery could be also used in providing the educational experience. In this part of the park, visitors are met and served not by elves, but by Ice Princesses. Since in neither Russian literature nor culture there is no such a character as Ice Princess, a proper representation of the character is needed. Otherwise, customers stay with the idea that they were greeted either by the Snow Queen (the character of the fairytale with the same name by H.C. Andersen), Snegurochka (granddaughter of Ded Moroz) or Elza (character of Frozen by Disney). The Ice Princess should to use every chance to communicate with the visitors and represent herself. This is the way how tourists can get some educational insights after the visit to the Ice Gallery. In addition, since customers confuse Ice Princess with Snow Queen, the perception turns out to be absolutely wrong, since Snow Queen is a negative character. Especially children facing this issue and consequently get scared to come closer to the “dangerous lady”, therefore not only miss the educational experience, but also risk interrupting the esthetic feelings. Adults also frequently perceive Ice Princess as an Ice Queen, there were cases when they tried to calm their kids down, threatening that the angry queen is going to punish them for misbehaving. On the other hand, sometimes, even funny cases happen:

Tourist from Moscow: “Stop crying, otherwise, the Snow Queen will freeze you!”

Ice Princess: “No, I will not, I am a kind Ice Princess, not an angry Snow Queen!”

Tourist (referring to his wife): Sure, every Princess is kind, until she becomes a Queen!”

In this case, tourist’s sense of humor changed the experience to be very nice, however, clearly showed that neither he nor the rest of his family did guess the character right. Consequently, if the Ice Princess would have not represent herself, the customers would leave the Park with the idea that they met the Snow Queen.
As it was mentioned, Song et al. (2015) suggested that educational realm of the experience has an impact on functional value. Thus, following the discussion above, the level of providing the educational category of experience does not allow to say that customers of Santa Park perceived functional value sufficiently. However, the data collected from the respondents leads to the conclusion that educational insights were not the main aim of a visit, since it was not mentioned neither in their expectations nor the biggest regrets. Nevertheless, developed educational experience could still add value to the general experience of the Park. Therefore, it is suggested to consider the above mentioned suggestions for enhancing the educational experience in Santa Park, since it would assist in raising the overall customer satisfaction level (Song et al., 2015).

4.2.2 Esthetic

In contrast to the educational experience, the Park succeeded in providing the esthetic one considerably more. The feedback about the general atmosphere was, perhaps, the most frequent one. Among the particular examples, Russian visitors listed the Post office and the Ice gallery as places where they enjoyed to be the most. The most often used phrases to describe the day in Santa Park were “fairytale”, “holiday mood”, “awesome mood”, “Christmas atmosphere”, “joy and happiness”, “positive and friendly”. Applying the scale of Oh, Fiore & Jeoung (2007), the setting of Santa Park is attractive and provides pleasure to the senses. Tourists described the place as very cozy, beautiful, even the details were characterized as perfectly fitting.

“This is just a great place, infrastructure is good, atmosphere is full of miracles.” (Tourists from Saint Petersburg)

“It is all so interesting and funny!” (Family from Petrozavodsk)

“We felt as in a world of fairytale, children are amazed and so are we.” (Moscow)

Therefore, it can be also concluded that customers felt the “pleasure of just being there” as Oh, Fiore & Jeoung, (2007) measured the esthetic experience. It refers to
the overall appearance of the place, the way it designed and therefore looks like. Unfortunately, the “pleasure of being there” is frequently mixed with the impulse to behave as one is at home. The place that experiences this a lot is the Ice Gallery and its sculptures. Due to the fact that every Russian northern town has some sculptures made of ice and snow on the main square, therefore visitors of Santa Park perceive the ice animals in the Gallery similarly as they do in their hometowns. The colossal difference here is that ice sculptures in Santa Park differ by their fragility and instability, since they are created with the particular attention to the details and are supposed to be only observed. However, typical Russian tourist usually wants to touch sculptures or in a worst case scenario even climb on them. Surely, that applies mostly to children, but same cases have been noted on the adults-visitors. That is how the intended esthetic experience is mixed with the entertainment and escape. Probably, it is a bit confusing for the visitors that they are actually allowed to take a sit and a picture on the royal chair of the Ice Kingdom, the sleigh and slide, but are not allowed to touch the other sculptures. Therefore, as a solution, some elegant signs could be placed next to the sculptures, so that the visitors could intuitively feel: that is a place to observe. Thus, the Gallery would look as a museum, therefore there is a chance that other behavioral pattern would be chosen by the visitors. In addition, this way the Gallery would represent another type of a place in the Park, so it will be not mixed with the Angry Birds Playing Area. Nowadays, children often run into the Gallery and misbehave which is dangerous due to the slippery parts of the place. As it was already mentioned in the previous chapter, signs would also serve the educational function, therefore it could be beneficial in addition to the Ice Gallery. Otherwise, the esthetic experience is interrupted by the requests of not touching and climb to the sculptures that Ice Princess is announcing in a kindest possible way.

One more inconvenience that disturbs the “real sense of harmony” of the customers while enjoying the Ice Gallery is the door. The problem is that from the inside part of the Gallery the door is not even that recognizable – it looks like a metallic wall, since it does not have any handle. Instead, it has a metallic stick, which blocks the right door. For tourists it is sometimes complicated to find the exit, but when they succeed, they do not manage to open the door. Thus, visitors start to move the blocking stick up and down, consequently they open the right door and confuse the incoming people. In addition, when the right door is not blocked it does not allow to close
properly both doors, since they overlap in a wrong position. That leaves the space between the doors and therefore causes a risk to defrost the room. Instead, the right door has to stay blocked and left one should be pushed, but as it was observed, many people face difficulties in this stage, try to pull the left door, do not succeed and almost start panicking. Some people even try to use the emergency exit on the opposite part of the Gallery. Therefore, in order to alleviate the “exit procedure” some highlights should be placed on the left door, which will explain that it has to be pushed. From the outside, the door is well decorated: covered with a snow-looking painting and accompanied with a reindeer horn-handle. Before entering, tourists get excited of the frozen look of the door and try to check whether it is real coverage. Consequently, the door has less and less of “the real hoarfrost”, but unfortunately it is not fixed in time and looks quite shabby. It is suggested to keep the door in style, otherwise the risk to have negative cue arises again. Lastly, the carpets covering the floor in the Gallery should be changed – at the moment they consist of hubby pieces and therefore prevent the free moving around the room. The wires near the sleigh and the slide should be properly covered, otherwise they are at first visible and second dangerous.

Otherwise, in terms of the huge size of the Park, it is adorned very well. There are a lot of decorations, small details, drawings. The style and the design of each part is well-planned. It was also noticed by the respondents:

“Every detail is wonderful. Perfect match with the theme.” (Grandmother with the grandson, Moscow)

This fact fits the scale of Oh, Fiore & Jeoung (2007), where the check point is whether the setting showed attention to detail design. According to the analysis of the social media, Russian customers took and published a lot of pictures from Santa Park’s interiors and places. In addition, they did appreciated a lot that picture zone in the Park is endless. Their posts show that they were truly impressed:

“I will not stop to repeat – each detail of every element is well planned and created with soul, ideally.” (Young woman in Instagram)
The tourists told that they are very delighted by the appearance of the cavern. They also assumed that it took huge amount of efforts, imagination and skills. Their pictures were described by such an expressions and hashtags as “beauty”, “fairytales”, “dreams come true”, “miracles”, “magic”, etc.

Despite of the pretty impression that the cave gives from the first look, it does feel that there are many seasons have passed since the Park was opened, and no reconstruction was arranged ever since. Moreover, all the attractions stay the same all the time, and instead of adding the new ones some are eliminated. About one fourth of the respondents noticed that there are refreshments in the Park’s appearance needed. Next, about one third of the tourists that were interviewed told that they have been visiting the Park more than once and they really hoped there is something new is waiting for them this time. Thus, it could be a good idea to improve the esthetic experience through expanding the attractions and activities in Santa Park. Among those, respondents suggested to add attractions and new exhibitions. In addition, the renovation of the cave could be a good idea: some places as the Ice Gallery look too old, some installations as Magic Train and interior elements are broken or hubby. Otherwise, the risk to have the negative cues affecting the experience can take place.

Esthetic experience is connected to the second type of values - emotional value – as Song et al. (2015) suggested. The data collected from the customers allows to conclude that Santa Park succeed in providing the emotional value. However, since perceived value includes also functional type of value, it is not possible to conclude that the visitors were also generally satisfied by their visit, especially since the functional value was not provided sufficiently.

4.2.3 Escape

The escape experience is asking for the opportunities to forget about daily routines and immersing in new environment. Oh, Fiore & Jeoung (2007) suggested that escapism is a key tourist motivation. One of the key roles in serving this function is played by the place where the theme park is situated. Thus, the visitors were charmed by Santa Park’s location, many of them gladly underlined that this place becomes very special and unique because it is built in the cave:
“Since we entered the tunnel, the excitement became the dominating feeling! The deeper in the cave we walked, the stronger it developed.” (Family from Saint Petersburg)

The location of the park had been chosen initially, therefore proves to be the right decision. Now the task is to keep the inside interior and atmosphere complementing the theme. Considerable amount of the customers specified one of the aims of their trip as “the chance to change the environment”. Since most of the visitors come from big cities and overall the rhythm and style of life in Russia is stressful and busy, this change of the environment was mostly expected to be forwarded towards the calm atmosphere and proper chance to get enough rest. According to the scale of measurement of the escape experience by Oh, Fiore & Jeoung (2007), visitors should not only forget their daily routines, but also escape from the reality and even feel to be in a different world. According to the respondents, the visit to Santa Park can be associated with experiencing of the another reality:

“It is a world of miracles and fairytale, so beautiful.” (Different families)

According to the interviewees, this “fairytale world” succeed in serving one of the initial aims:

“So calm here, finally no hurry.” (Family with three kids from Moscow)

There is not much to add about other expectations from the visit that tourists from Russia specified. Mostly, they told that they basically did not expect anything particular.

“We did not expect anything, we came to take a look.” (Family from Velikyi Novgorod)

Most of the tourists’ choice to visit Santa Park was grounded in the recommendations of their friends. Some people dropped by only because the Park was on their way, in most cases they went to Santa Village and then decided to see also the cave, since it
is only two kilometers away. It is interesting that this “no specific expectations” approach sounded sometimes like simple curiosity:

“Let us see… In case we will happen to like the place, we could return tomorrow once again.” (Heard from the family walking in the tunnel)

Oh, Fiore & Jeoung (2007) also suggest that the escape dimension of the experience is to be delivered via letting the visitors feel as someone else. It was noticed that customers of Santa Park while walking around the cave eventually start to sing along the Christmas songs and even move similarly to the elves. That proves the positive influence of the atmosphere in the Park on customers’ mood and impressions. Indeed, most of the respondents mentioned that at the time spent in Santa Park they were in an awesome holiday mood, which was developing “the deeper we walked in the cave”, as it was already mentioned.

The role of personnel performs to be crucial in organizing the environment around the people in a certain way. Thus, visitors rated the staff as “amazing”, “perfectly prepared”, “all entirely believe in a fairytale”, therefore it was

“…easy and natural for us also to believe in everything we see.” (Family from Petrozavodsk)

One aspect that does not let visitors completely immersing in the fairytale world is the need to orientate in the place. According to the customers, in Santa Park it was not that easy in some points:

“Why there is nobody in the cloakroom?” (The man from Murmansk)

“I do not understand the system of lunch, neither cafeteria.” (The lady with three kids)

“So…what can we do here?” (Every second family or visitor that realizes the availability of Russian speaking elves)
For Russians, many issues are weird and new, but since Finns take them for granted, nobody have thought about foreign-friendly details. Therefore, the complete immersing to the fairytale world is negatively influenced by problems with orientating in the Park. One example can be lunch system – it was observed that representatives of other countries also faced inconveniences. The main cafeteria – Kota – works by system of self-service: customers should take the tray and on the way to the cashier fill it with the items they liked. Kota is a round place, so the line usually blocks the access to the goods, since people stand around the shelves. Many people guess that the buns and juices are showed just an example, so they do not dare to take them, but wait for their turn instead. In this case the elf on the cashier either sends them back to choose the food or runs around the cafeteria. In the first case, it annoys the visitor, in the second – it slows down the line. Russian tourists told they would prefer to pay extra for the service:

“I would prefer to take a seat and check the menu. After that I could order from the waiter and calmly wait for my order.” (Man from Moscow)

“I am with two kids and I have only two hands, how am I supposed to pick up the food?” (Lady with two small kids from Murmansk)

Therefore, the menu-type of system should be considered by the management of Santa Park. Another option for the visitors is to have the lunch that is open in certain hours, usually until 3 pm. Lunch includes the warm meal, salad, drink and bread. Tourists expressed some discontents about lunch:

“We did not manage to find the menu even in English! It was hard to decide whether we want to take it or not.” (Family from Petrozavodsk)

“You should definitely have the lunch open longer! We could not make it in time and in the city everything is probably also closed at this time..” (Family with three kids)

In fact, the menu of the lunch does exist in three languages, but the place it is attached to the wall is not the best for observation. Therefore, this aspect should be reconsidered. As an option, the menu could be placed on the booklet, they is offered
to the customers in the main entrance and at the end of the tunnel. The booklet also should include the map of the activities with the brief description. At the moment the booklet has the parts of the Park listed, but the way it is drawn looks confusing for the customers. That is why every second visitor asks for the directions and every third Russian for the advices “what can we see/do here”.

Many tourists chose Ice Gallery as a most memorable place of the Park. It is the place, where in a way they escape from the environment of Santa Park: due to the white painting of the walls and everything else only in silver or blue color this place looks outstanding. Through the glass windows of the outside part of Ice Gallery zone the inside part can be seen. In the room decorated by ice sculptures, visitors immerse in Ice Kingdom and are greeted by Ice Princess. They also have a chance to visit the Ice bar, which is in the same room. However, no one actually mentioned the Bar while sharing their impressions, so it can be assumed that it was not that exciting. The “cold room” has a slide, sleigh and the royal throne, where visitors like to take pictures. Ice sculptures are representing traditional Lappish wild animals such as polar bears and lynx, wolverines and reindeers. Despite of the chilly weather inside of the Ice Kingdom (-10 C) customers seem to enjoy the place:

“We walked around, kids tried the slide and watched the sculptures… Impressive! After other activities we came to the Gallery again.” (Mother with three kids)

One more concern of the visitors is the jacket that is offered for everyone who is willing to enter the Ice Gallery. Since the temperature inside is about minus ten degrees, parents get primarily worried about their kids. Unfortunately, there is not much to offer – most of the jackets are intended for the adults. There some jackets shortened with ribbons, but they are usually taken by adults for themselves, especially in the rush hour. Thus, they often get confused about inappropriate short length and untie them. As a result most of the shortened jackets are on the adults that looks funny, but the kids are covered with the long ones. Another problem that for two-four years old children even the tied jackets are too long, so it prevents them from free comfortable walking and causes falls and traumas. Some more positive minded people consider it cute and say their kids look like snowmen or angels, but the dominating part gets annoyed and worried. Therefore, the absence of the jackets
for kids can perform as a negative cue and interrupt peaceful and magic time in Santa Park, so the solution has to be found as soon as possible.

Thus, it could be concluded that Santa Park succeed in developing the escape dimension of the experience. The main issue to be considered is to establish the signs and instructions panels as well as to improve the booklets, maps where the activities’ location and description will be listed. The system of lunch should be reconsidered and attempts to adopt it for foreigners should be initiated. Another aspect to think about is the jackets for kids in the Ice Gallery (IG), since it is not only the issue of pleasant stay, but also safety and comfort.

4.2.4 Entertainment

Entertainment experience assumes that visitors enjoy watching activities of others, because it is fun and something amusing. Next, the customers are considered to be entertained if the service settings are captivating (Oh, Fiore, & Jeoung, 2007). As for observing activities, there is plenty of choices in such a big and crowded place as Santa Park. However, as it was mentioned before, the case when the visitor listens and watches only, refers to the passive type of participation. Although ideal participation asks for active participation which means that the customer does not only watch, but also plays some role. Inviting the visitor to become a part of an activity that he is observing leads to the better experience – immersing and active participation. (Pine and Gilmore, 1999).

In case of Santa Park, there are both activities that have to be watched and the ones where the customer can participate. The main representative of the first category is the show that can be seen from the main stage of the cave three times per day. This is indeed Santa Park’s opportunity to present something special and memorable. As it was mentioned before, it could be also a source of educational experience. However, it seems that the show does not really use its potential, since about half of the respondents expressed their disappointment about it:
“I could not really get the plot of the show. What was that jumping brown sack supposed to represent?” (Young man from Saint Petersburg and his friend from Kostomuksha)

“The show is just horrible. Can they at least try to dance synchronically?” (The old lady and her grandson, Moscow)

The rude comments have been heard from the audience that was watching the show. Unfortunately, the dancing skills of the show-team are not ideal as well as their artistry. In Russian cities, variety of shows devoted to New Year and Christmas celebrations are presented and usually they are highly professional. From this sense, the audience is spoiled in a way and demands better quality of the show than just a weak unclear story with not very synchronically moving dancers. It is suggested to devote more attention to the show, change the plot to some more understandable one that at the same time will create the opportunity for the visitors to get the ideas about distinguishing features of Christmas in Lapland. The movements of the dancers have to be polished as well as their skills to express emotions from the stage. In this case, the dancing show will be able to serve the entertaining function.

Another activity that does not involve any active participation, but “makes fun” and aims to provide “the chance to observe” instead, is the magic train. Even though there are artificial moving sculptures instead of the real animators, it is anyways amusing and captivating to watch. The ride takes less than ten minutes and during the trip in the small carriage guests observe elves’ lifestyle and typical activities during the seasons of the year. In the interviews, respondents often mentioned this part of the cave, about one third chose it as an activity that they liked most of all:

“Children really liked the train, we went three times!” (Family from Murmansk)

From the places that visitors noted as “an activity to participate in” there are workshops: handicraft and calligraphy. It is also the place where the service has captivating setting, so aligns with Oh, Fiore & Jeoung’s (2007) measurement scale. Handicraft involves children and their parents to the creative processes: the task is to make an elf or Santa out of the offered materials and tools. Calligraphy requires
patience and diligence: the visitors are invited to try the real ink and feather pen. The idea is to write a wish and drop it into the Magic Drum. For instance, since handicraft and calligraphy are usually managed by one employee-elf, calligraphy is often left without any supervision that of course awakes negative emotions:

“Pens do not work there, nobody explained us what to do.” (Mother with three kids)

Therefore, workshops unfortunately do not serve the goal that they could have served. Consequently, it is suggested to devote more attention to the arrangements of these activities, so that the experience that people could get there would be delivered in a best possible way.

Another place of the Park combines both the performance from the side of elves and the participation form the visitors – it is Elf School. The School was chosen as an absolutely favourite by almost a half of respondents: visitors truly appreciated amazing acting skills of “professors” and small pleasant details.

“Oh yeah, the school was nice, very nice! And we got an awesome certificate with real elf signs!” (Family from Murmansk)

These few places in Santa Park are able to arrange the immersing and active participation in the activity, therefore, create the good completed experience. However, certain amount of deficiencies in arrangement of these activities perform to alleviate their potential.

Perhaps due to the cultural difference in perceptions of entertainment, the respondents noted that they happen to feel the lack of entertaining activities. The families with small children suggested to add the activities for under 3 years old kids, families with teenagers complained that their children were bored at some point, even some adults mentioned that they feel like some more entertainment sources are needed. As it was pointed out before, this dissatisfaction can be explained by the cultural differences of Finnish experience providers and Russian consumers at some standards. More about the cultural issues will be described in the following subchapter.
4.2.5 Estimation of the experiences provided

Overall, Santa Park’s attempts in providing all four constructs of the experience can be estimated as successful, however, there are certain elements missing, which alleviate the potential of each dimension (Table 3). The strongest parts are esthetic and escape dimensions; entertainment takes the middle position and educational construct - the weakest. Considering places of the Park, it is seen that some of them have a potential to provide more than a single dimension of the experience. However, this capability is not used on its full power: either one dimension is not provided, or both. For instance, Ice Gallery is a place with attractive settings (esthetic dimension), which is able to provide new knowledge and stimulating to learn new (educational function). Unfortunately, the possibility to learn is omitted due to the absence of signs. In addition, shabby carpets, wires on the floor and other elements affect the esthetic experience negatively. Next, the show could serve entertaining function and educational as well, nevertheless, it is neither “fun to watch” nor offers to “learn a lot”.

Table 3. Experience constructs in Santa Park.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition of receiving</th>
<th>Esthetic</th>
<th>Escape</th>
<th>Entertainment</th>
<th>Educational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“the setting is attractive and provides pleasure to the senses”, “the setting showed attention to detail design”</td>
<td>“completely escaped from reality” “totally forgot about daily routine”, “felt being someone else in a different world”</td>
<td>“enjoy watching activities of others”, “activities are fun to watch”, “active participation”</td>
<td>“learnt a lot”, “learnt specific knowledge”, “stimulated to learn new”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspects</td>
<td>Appearance of the cavern</td>
<td>Calm atmosphere, no hurry, fairytale mood</td>
<td>Entertainments, activities with active participation</td>
<td>Elves, Joulupukki, traditions,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources</td>
<td>Interior, Ice Gallery</td>
<td>Interior: tunnel, corridors, personnel. Service areas as Kota</td>
<td>Show, magic train, Elf School, Angry Birds area</td>
<td>Bakery, Ice Gallery, Show, Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be added</td>
<td>New installations and exhibitions. IG: door highlights and signs next to sculptures.</td>
<td>Signs and instructions, menu in Kota, booklet with map and descriptions, jackets for kids in the IG</td>
<td>The show that is easier to understand and with better choreography, new amusement activities for different ages</td>
<td>Instructions and guidelines in workshops, billboards and booklets with stories. IG: signs. Show: a plot about Lapland, culture, traditions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As it is summarized in the Table 3, according to the respondents, there are aspects to be amended in order to improve the experience in the Park and therefore raise the level of customer satisfaction. Thus, esthetic experience can be improved via expanding the amount of installations and exhibitions. The size of the cavern easily allows filling the walls and corridors with new décor elements or establish mini exhibitions. One idea could be to organize the wall of visitors at the lower entrance to the cave. This wall would have a big bright map where customers could mark their hometown, so that everyone could see how wide the geography of Santa Park’s guests is. One more place of the Park that is asking for additional attention is the Ice Gallery. In order to allow people enjoying the magic atmosphere of the Ice Kingdom, the signs should be attached next to the sculptures, so that it is clear that they are supposed to be observed and admired, but not checked for the durability by climbing on them. In addition, the exit door should be highlighted, so the visitors do not have inconveniences with leaving the place. Ice Gallery could also become a better and safer place after adding the children’s sizes of the jackets, renewing the carpets and fixing the wires.

Signs with arrows, maps with description and location of the activities could assist in orientating in the cave, therefore the issue of feeling lost would not ruin the escape experience. This way from the very beginning visitors would know what they would like to visit initially and where to find other activities. Same function of assisting the customers with orienting in the Park could be served by the explaining instructions of the lunch system and the possibility to take a look on the menu in the main cafeteria of Kota. These menus could be placed on the tables and also on the walls, so the customers would have a chance to orientate confidently.

The show has to be definitely reconsidered, since in order to be captivating it has to at least get better choreography. At the moment, in addition to the show there is only Magic Train, Elf School and Angry Birds Area, which is mostly for kids. Thus, the assortment of the entertaining activities for the teenagers and adults should be enhanced. Visitors with little kids would probably appreciate some free-walking elf, who could act as an animator and entertain the kids. Elf School was asked to have more involvement of the participants to the action rather than just watching the performance of two elves.
Lastly, in order to provide an opportunity to learn new, the workshops should be organized with a better care, meaning that there should be always someone to assist. In addition, instructions should be placed on the visible spot, so the visitors could also have an idea what to do themselves without waiting for help. Lastly, the show should be presented with a plot that would tell the visitors about Lapland or Finnish culture and traditions. Ice Gallery should become more educational as well via adding the signs describing the sculptures.

As it was mentioned in the theoretical part, the direct relationship between types of experiences and satisfaction was not fully discussed previously. In different cases and industries (Norwegian festival and museum, bed and breakfast industry), one or another experience performs to be more influential than the other. The current example suggests that for Russian customers in the theme park the most influential experiences are esthetic and escape, next comes entertainment and only at the end educational (Figure 4).

**Figure 4. The rating of the experiences influencing customer satisfaction in Santa Park**

This conclusion has been made on the base of the overall customer satisfaction: since generally Russian visitors admitted to be satisfied with their visit, the experiences that they described as “well-perceived” can be viewed as the most influential ones.
Consequently, even if the experience was not fully perceived, but the overall satisfaction stayed high, it can be concluded that the importance of this experience is not that big. For instance, almost none of the respondents told that the educational experience has been perceived in Santa Park, however, it did not influence negatively the overall satisfaction, therefore, has been placed on the last position of experiences rating.

4.3 Experience design

As it was described in the first chapter, the experience economy theory suggests that every experience has to be precisely designed. Santa Park as an enterprise from the entertainment industry has to focus on experience designing on the first place and be an experience stager (Sidali, Kastenholz and Bianchi (2015). In order to create memorable and effective experience, the company has to follow five key principles of designing the experience: theme, impressions, negative cues excluded, memorabilia offered, and, finally, all the five senses engaged. The application of the model on the case of Santa Park, shows clearly that the principles of the design have to be adjusted on the base of cultural differences and customers’ opinion (Table 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Case Santa Park</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Customers’ opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Christmas</td>
<td>New Year – more important for Russians, do not know much about catholic Christmas</td>
<td>Did not learn about the different characters and holiday’s traditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impressions</td>
<td>Focus on details, wholeness of the perception</td>
<td>Theme entertainment park supposes to have more attractions</td>
<td>Hard to orientate; more attractions to be added</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative cues excluded</td>
<td>Every detail fits the theme – decorations, staff, music</td>
<td>The certain parts ask for renovation, additional attention and supervision has to be added</td>
<td>Problems with the lunch. To be added: jackets in IG, maps, instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorabilia offered</td>
<td>Certificate of Undercrossing the Arctic Circle, Elf School (ES) Picture zone everywhere Handcrafts</td>
<td>Additional announcement needed – hard to find Elf-picture-machine does not always work Calligraphy left without supervision</td>
<td>1. Only ES mentioned by customers 2. Appreciated 3. Enjoyed, additional supervision requested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five senses engaged</td>
<td>Initial idea fits the principles</td>
<td>Attention to be paid on excluding negative cues</td>
<td>Overall satisfaction is good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The focus on Russian tourists suggests to think not only about the theme of Christmas, but also the holiday of New Year, since for the representatives of this country this celebration is more important. From the other hand, Christmas traditions should be highlighted in the theme, so that the tourists could learn about importance of this holiday for local community. Impressions could be maintained in a better way via expansion of the entertaining activities, since this is the first thing Russians associate with the theme park. Unfortunately, the negative cues have not been excluded, so it is suggested to fix the issues as jackets in the Ice Gallery, lunch system, add map of the Park and instructions in the certain spots. Offer of memorabilia can be strengthened via brighter promotion of the Certificate of Undercrossing the Arctic Circle and improving the supervision in the workshops, from where tourists can get their own memorable handicrafts. Lastly, in order to reach the engagement of five senses, the above-mentioned recommendations have to be followed with the focus on excluding the negative cues, since they create the biggest risks on the negative influencing of the general experience.

4.4 Cultural aspects

Russians represent unique culture, their behavioral patterns differ considerably from those of service providers or other visitors. Similarly, the needs of tourists from Russia differ from the customers with other cultural background. As it was mentioned in the theoretical part, when applying both countries on Hofstede’s cultures dimensions it becomes clear that the difference is significant (Table 4.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Russians</th>
<th>Finns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Collectivists</td>
<td>• Individualists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• High uncertainty avoidance</td>
<td>• Low uncertainty avoidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Feminine</td>
<td>• Feminine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• High power distance</td>
<td>• Low power distance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the table depicts, the level of power distance is the opposite for Finnish people and Russians. In other words, Russian customers expect to be treated as royalty,
since they are used to the “customer is a king”-approach. Staff members from Russia certainly feel it and as it was observed ready to respond for any wish of a customer. Many times it was observed how an elf had to run around the storages of cave, looking for some specific type of packaging materials, or getting the Head Elf to solve the individual request/dissatisfaction/dispute. Same applies for answering endless list of questions from the customers, entertaining them, and talking to them. Unfortunately, the staff from countries other than Russia, prefer to follow the low power distance approach and treat customers in a more relaxed way. Another example is the cafeteria system – Russians pointed out that they would prefer to take a sit and order from the menu rather than picking up the food from the shelves of cafe. Service providers and staff members should also understand the loud and emotional behavior of Russian tourists, which is explained by the level of uncertainty avoidance and ambiguity acceptance. High uncertainty explains the problems of Russian tourists to orientate in the place and exploring the activities, therefore the maps with the information about the Park, descriptions and locations of the activities has to be developed. Next, collectivists Russians most likely are going to share their experiences with their friends, coworkers, other contacts, so any negative experience could ruin the entire story about the visit. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the staff members to maximally please them and follow every request.

The next considered aspect has not been covered by interviews, but performs to be important on the base of the observations of the researcher. The following facts also hard to support by academic articles, since the topic is considered to be not serious enough for the academic world (Kuzmina & Radchenko, 2015).

Every year Santa Park sells the tickets for the celebration of New Year’s Eve – “New Year Party with Gala Dinner” (Santapark.com, 2016). Unfortunately, most of the visitors are not satisfied with the style of this event, as the observation showed. In order to explain the core reasons of these disappointments, the meaning of New Year’s Eve as a holiday for Finns and Russians has to be described.

For Finnish people, Christmas comes first, in terms of both time framing and the significance of the holiday. New Year’s Eve is celebrated as well, but in a considerably simpler way.
Russians as orthodox Christians in their turn celebrate Christmas on the night of 7th of January with some visits of relatives during the day time. It is considered more as a family holiday when people go to churches or just relax at home. New Year’s Eve in its turn, comes as a huge long-awaited holiday, perceived by many people as the biggest celebration of the year. Both young people and older generation have chosen the New Year as the most favourite and memorable holiday, according to Tikhomirova (2008). In addition, Kalacheva (2003) showed that 91% of the respondents selected New Year as a most popular holiday. Even among foreigners, the typical Russian traditions that they could recall were connected to New Year’s celebrations aspects (Toporkova and Lisya, 2015). The first signs of the holiday appear on the streets already in November, preparations start in the middle of December. On 31st of December most people still work, but usually the working day is cut, so that everyone can manage to set the holiday table. The midnight countdown could be spent at home with family, but after that, the massive celebration starts: people go out, visit the central square, where they can enjoy the animation and holiday concert, some people go to the bars, restaurants or nightclubs. The ratio between Russians who prefer staying home for the celebration and the ones who are planning to travel is 42% and 18% (Lyulin, 2015). It shows that not a big share prefers to leave their houses compared to trips and new impressions, therefore, the goal is to promote the loveliness of magical possibility to celebrate New Year’s Eve in such a beautiful place as Lapland.

The main aim for Russians about celebrations is to have as much exciting activities as possible, have real fun, escape the daily routines and enjoy the magical holiday time. If spending outside of the family’ house, the celebration is associated with loud and bright program followed by cheerful musical background, beautiful performances, activities and competitions for children and adults provided by animation team.

In case of New Year Party with Gala Dinner in Santa Park, the program presented on the stage is hard to call professional: it was seen that there were not enough rehearsals, instead of “professional animation team” two elves were trying their best from the stage. However, they were definitely lacking the proper experience in handling the entertainment of such an event, since their performance was not
cheerful enough, the atmosphere was far from the “real fun” and the audience did not get into the holiday mood that much. The show of the evening was not spectacular enough as well, according to the reactions of the audience. In addition, the very special moment of the countdown at 12 o’clock and the magic minutes after were literally failed, since the elves simply did not manage to start the countdown at the right time and then were standing on the stage weakly and asynchronously wobbling. After, the slightly belated indoors fireworks started.

Instead, the performance on the stage could be presented in style of regular New Year-themed TV show. The accent had to be made on the moment about 15 minutes before countdown, when elves from the stage could build the conversation with the audience, recall the bright events of the year and express the honor to have all the guests in Santa Park in that evening. The countdown had to be announced on time, loudly and cheerfully, accompanied by the sounds of chime and followed by fireworks. After that, some better and more energetic songs could play, more elves could come to the stage to do some very simple movements, but synchronically. This performance could go along with some very nice new year-wishes announced by the “main elves”, therefore creating the magical and holiday mood for the guests. The countdown part could be followed by disco, which this year actually succeed to have the right playlist, but did not manage to make people dance. The problem could be solved by the elves, who could come to the dancefloor and show the example of uncomplicated movements or simply being there and creating the holiday mood.

Lastly, not only the Gala Dinner could please the customers, expecting to spend unforgettable and very special holidays both in Lapland and particularly in Santa Park. The service providers have to keep in mind that Russians represent other religion, so their Christmas is in January. Therefore, it would be very pleasant for them to find some cues about this holiday while being in Santa Park – at least some announcements during the day, also some cues that would show that the Park is aware of the holiday. It could be for instance the theme of the workshop or even some special offers in shopping area.
4.5 Service quality

As it was mentioned in the theoretical part, measuring the service quality is completed by using Oh’s (1999) scale. The author based his measures on the expectations, therefore those of Russian tourists in Santa Park should be analyzed. Tourists’ expectations perform as one of the most important issues to discover, however, it is also the hardest data to gather, since the respondents are not usually able to describe what they actually expect concretely.

The study of Oh (1999) suggests to check whether the visit was ‘better or worse than expected. In case of the studied company, the dominating part of the respondents seemed to be frustrated by the question, since they told that “they did not expect anything”:

“Expectations? Hmm… we just came to see and check it out, did not really expected anything special” (Parents with two kids from Murmansk)

This aspect leads to the thought that curiosity is the main driver of the visit to the Park. Therefore, it is easier to get the customer satisfied if he does not have too much expectations (any, in this case). According to some respondents, the level of expectations was so low that they did not even know they are going to be in a cave – the Park in the title led them to assume it is an open space, so they dressed for the outside activities. This, however, tells that the company recognition is considerably low, even though the unique location could be used widely in the marketing of the Park.

Since quality is determined by the degree of concordance between customers’ expectations and the service performance (Parasuraman et al., 1988), the task of staff in Santa Park is alleviated – since there is no expectations, there is no certain level of service quality to be achieved. It could be assumed that the best impression and memories one can get comes from an unexpected experience. It seems to be explained by the fact that the less one is awaiting, the lower is the chance to get disappointed. Consequently, when the experience is unexpectedly pleasant, it seems to feel twice better. Contrary, if there is a certain level of expectations, they have to
be reached, otherwise the experience would be completely ruined. Case “Santa Park” for Russian tourists seem to fit this hypothesis – low level of expectations simplifies the task of providing the experience, and in most of the cases leads to the satisfaction of everything people have got.

Some visitors (about 30%) told that they always got exactly the same that they have expected from their holidays. In terms of this particular trip, tourists listed examples of expectations as radical change of the environment and weather conditions, meeting the winter fairytale and visiting the unusual place:

“Finally real winter! The cave is adorable – have not seen anything similar, so the goal is reached” (Couple from Velikyi Novgorod and a teenager)

Next answer by popularity, out of these few feedbacks about the expectations, refers to the main hero of the cave. About one fourth of the respondents told that meeting Santa Claus was the main or even only thing that was expected. People appreciated the chance to not only see him, but have a chance to talk, arranging the “gift handing procedure”:

“Children are amazed! An elf helped with the translation, so we actually got a proper chat with Santa!” (Father with two kids, Petrozavodsk)

Some return customers, however, mentioned that they are missing the times when Santa was walking around the cave and interacting with the visitors. Obviously that is not possible to arrange, since Santa is usually in his office, and the place where he is communicating with the guests is there. However, on the way to his break, when he normally passes the corridors and the Kota-area (center of the cave), he could maybe not only take pictures, but act a bit more openly – ask questions, thank for visit. Santa is a main figure and attraction of the Park, so to his behavior and actions should be devoted as much attention as possible.

Lastly, the expectation of more attractions was mentioned by some respondents. Certain amount of visitors were also disappointed that they could not see the facilities, which were previously offered in Santa Park. It seems that the travel
agencies still have the old promotional booklets and advertisements. Therefore, tourists develop wrong expectations of “things to do” in the theme park. Among those, there are for example huge white ball filled with snow and coins making machine – these are not in the Park anymore. In addition, some tourists told that they came after friends’ recommendations of the place and activities that they liked most of all. Consequently, the tourists were particularly interested to see these certain attractions, but they could not be found anymore. Sadly, not much new activities were added in Santa Park, consequently, instead of developing the specter of activities the company reduced the amount of attractions that it used to have. However, it seems that the size of the cave allows to expand the activities to offer, therefore, in order to boost customer satisfaction the management of the Park should consider it. In addition, all the returning customers pointed out that even though they enjoy their visits to Santa Park, but keep walking around same interiors and doing the same activities every time is a bit disappointing.

Consequently, expansion of the activities proves to be worth for consideration.

Next, the talk is about the services that the visitors gave feedback about. As it was mentioned, customers should be viewed nowadays as active participants rather than passive consumers (Morgan, Elbe and Curiel, 2009: 204). Thus, some respondents mentioned that would like to be involved more in the activities.

“Elf School was worth to visit! Elves did a great job, but we would like to participate more, otherwise it looks as a show as well” (Families from Moscow)

“We liked the Bakery – it is a great place! Would be even better if we could bake the cookies ourselves” (Family from Saint Petersburg)

The opportunity to participate not only in decorating the gingerbread could also assist in providing educational experience. Next, tourists also mentioned that the Bakery could be improved via adding more shapes of gingerbread, since this is the core element of the place, but the choice is restricted by only 1-2 options (gingerbread man, bigger and heart, smaller). As an example, such a shapes could be added as Christmas tree, star, snowflake, etc.
Next, in forming the service quality, the role of personnel is crucial. Russian tourists appreciated friendly, smiling and helpful elves in Santa Park, who were also able to serve them in their mother tongue right from the entrance – one third of the respondents mentioned it as an aspect that they enjoyed most of all. Many people also expressed their delight of the personnel’s language skills, elves were able to speak almost every language that a customer in the Park. However, some people were surprised that due to the internationality of the staff the Finnish language skills are not that common at the end. In general, visitors characterized the staff as responsive, funny, willing to help, positive, excellent, kind:

“Everyone in the cave is amazing! So happy and smiling, good job! ” (Group of adults from Saint Petersburg)

The individual approach that the staff has showed was highly appreciated by the customers. For instance, family from Saint Petersburg gladly thanked the ticket-elf when she agreed to host their dog. Another family from the same city shared how they liked the elf at Santa’s door – the girl easily found the style of communication with every visitor in the line. Another family that did not share their city of origin appreciated the way Santa reacted on the news that their kid has birthday – The Man of the cave took the toy from the Christmas tree and handed it to the kid, and also sang a song. In addition, it was observed that the staff was arranging all the possibly best assistance to every visitor – from very friendly communications to fulfilling any preferences in shopping procedures.

Lastly, the lack of the signs and proper maps in the Park asks a lot of efforts from the personnel to guide and lead the visitors. In addition, as soon as the customer hears greeting on his mother tongue he uses the opportunity to ask as much as he can – starting from the detailed description of activities in the Park and finishing on advices for further program in Lapland. Therefore, it demands a lot of patience and politeness from the elves-service providers to handle such conversations with the tourists. Even though the questions coming from the visitors sometimes are out of the Santa Park’s topic, staff cannot leave the customers to deal with the issues on their own. Thus, it is suggested to train the elves in a way that they will be able answering
and suggesting anything customers want to know, therefore, the level of service would be ranked in a best way.

4.6 Lapland and Rovaniemi as a tourism destination and brand

Concluding from the general to particular, first data that is analyzed explains how the Russian tourists perceive Lapland as a destination. On the base of that, the destination brand of Lapland from the viewpoint of the considered group of tourists could be analyzed.

As it was previously mentioned, understanding of the tourist place can be reached through exploring the tourist perspective (Saraniemi and Kylänen, 2011). Russian tourists view Lapland, first of all, as a good place for resting.

“…It is very calm and safe place that fits perfectly to distract from the everyday life.” (The man from Moscow)

The tourist pointed out also the untouched nature, fresh air and silence as the most attractive issues of Lapland. In addition, the uniqueness of the destination and distinctive location was underlined:

“We were lucky and so happy to see the northern lights…” (Family from Moscow)

Visitors noted that Lapland is very special for children, since it is Santa’s land, consequently, the place to meet with a fairytale. Indeed, almost half of the respondents while describing Lapland as a destination, mentioned “It is the place where Santa lives”. This from the first look aligns perfectly with the definition of the brand, the place that provides unforgettable experience, which “cannot be reached in any other destination”. However, for Russians there is an alternative to visit the Official Residency of Father Frost, which is analogue of Santa Park and Santa Village in Russia.

On the other hand, proudly holding the title of the official Santa’s home, the destination does not develop the other activities that could fit the brand. For instance,
respondents specified that Lapland as a ski resort loses to the competitors significantly:

“…Not even nearly the level of Austrian or German ski resorts, even though the requested price is the same” (Tourist from Moscow)

Thus, this disappointment could cause worse impression of the tourist product in general, as Rakita and Šipragić (2003) suggest, while discussing the tourist product and destination brand. Since the climate and location conditions allow the maintaining of the destination as a ski resort, it is a mistake to lose this opportunity. Indeed, some respondents mentioned Levi (twice) and Ruka (once) as places for skiing, but only few, as could be seen, meaning that others are not even aware of those destinations. However, since tourists did compare Lappish skiing places with others in Europe, it proves that people are informed about the places with unique characteristic as skiing hills, therefore it is not reasonable to blame Lapland for insufficient development of this side construct. Only about half of the respondents told that their main purpose to come was “to meet Santa”. It seems that Russian tourists prefer places with the wide range of offers – even if they came with the primary plan to see Santa, they most likely would go to look for more “things to do”, aiming to perceive as many experiences as possible. This fact confirms that in Lapland other facilities than Santa’s-land offerings must be developed, since Russians are the tourists that willing to perceive diversified experience. Among other places that have been visited or were in an intended plan, respondents listed (by popularity) Santa Village, Ranua Zoo, and Arktikum.

Since the brand of Lapland is built on different components, it seems that there are not much respective elements that Russian tourists could note. Some respondents even used such words as “boring” or “disorganized” while describing Lapland as a destination. It is not only the direction for developing, but also the call to think about expanding of the facilities. Concerning this, even though tourists mainly come to see Santa, they still hope to experience something else. As it was noted during the fieldwork, almost every visitor asked about recommendations “what to do” while visiting Rovaniemi or Lapland.
Next, a lot has been said about the potential deficits of Lapland as a destination.

“...It could all be organized better, there is no directions, signs, neither audio guides”
(Family from Murmansk)

People were complaining that it is hard to find the data about transportation and the places to visit. During the interviews, some families started to discuss between each other the places to visit and the ways to get there. Thus, tourists do lack the support in planning their activities. Many things could be offered, and as mentioned, there is a demand, so the destinations marketers should use the chance and promote the possible activities in Lapland. It is especially sad when people tell that there is not enough sport facilities [in Rovaniemi] or the hillsides, since the environmental potential is actually decent enough to develop these offerings.

Lastly, the respondents were asked about the places they enjoyed to visit previously. As it was mentioned before, Kozak, Bigné, and Andreu (2004) claimed that different destinations cannot attract similar markets. Russian tourists were hesitating to describe their best holidays abroad, since their travel experience includes quite a big selection of destinations and each experience was good if estimating it through its type. Thus, about one third of the respondents told that they particularly enjoyed cultural trips (trips around Europe, guided excursions), four families mentioned beach holidays (all inclusive-type of trips to Egypt, Turkey, or bed-and-breakfast-type in Greece) and some tourists specified skiing vacations (Austria, France, Switzerland). Even though the method of this study does not allow announcing too definitive conclusions, it can be suggested that despite Kozak, Bigné, and Andreu (2004) assumption, in this case one market was attracted by different destinations. It is clear that respondents’ choices of destinations were very wide, moreover, the customers perceived positive experience in different type of destinations, such as cultural trips, skiing or beach holidays.

4.7 Santa Park’s relation to tourism destination brand and marketing

As it was mentioned, tourism destination is determined as a tourist identity of the place (Framke, 2002). Lapland in general and the city of Rovaniemi in particular
perform as a good place for rest in opinion of Russian tourists. The respondents noted both natural resources of the destination (nature, location, climate, silent and calm atmosphere) and the offers created by stakeholders (Santa Park and Santa Village, Arktikum, Ranua Zoo). Santa Park as a stakeholder of the destination is responsible for the destination’s brand development towards competitiveness, therefore it is important for the management to make sure all the offerings fit the overall destination marketing strategy. Santa Park’s goal is to provide best memories through unique services and the opportunity for the visitors to immerse into the place. As a magic cave with official Santa’s office and activities the Park aligns with the brand of Lapland as a fairytale world, and decently participates in destination marketing presenting all the services and activities. While interviewing the visitors, the attempt to understand whether the studied company succeeded in supporting the brand and marketing the destination.

Russian tourists admitted the uniqueness of Santa Park, due to both its location and offerings. Overall, the dominating share of the visitors estimated the experience in the Park as positive. Therefore, it can be concluded that their attitude to the destination is positive as well, as Oh, Fiore and Jeoung (2007) suggested. However, the offerings can be improved via arranging “foreigners-friendly” environment. It includes the instructions, arrows, signs in the cavern, since it will assist with the comfortable orientation in the place. Same applies for the city of Rovaniemi – customers noted that orientating in the city is not easy. In addition, the Internet sources have to be developed – according to the respondents, they did not manage to find the necessary data about the transportation and catering. This is one more direction for destination marketers.

Russians also expect more entertaining activities, therefore both Santa Park and the city of Rovaniemi should think about broadening the amount of this type of offerings. In the cavern also existing entertaining activities as show should be reconsidered, since its current level is low. For the city, perhaps some open air events could be suggested, as well as theme parties in bars and clubs.
5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Discussing the findings

This research aimed to examine the customer satisfaction in the theme park. Customer satisfaction performed to be very complex phenomenon, since it includes different correlated factors such as service quality, cross-cultural aspects, several realms of experiences and values. Separately, the notions of tourism have been considered, such as tourist destination and place marketing, in order to create the opportunity for not only improving the level of customer satisfaction in one particular company, but also establishing the directions for destination marketing and strengthening the brand.

The above-mentioned aspects have been considered in this paper with the attempt to examine the correlation between them. The results of the analysis are presented on the following model (Figure 5):
**Figure 5. Russian customer satisfaction model**

Instead of a key to the figure 5, it could be described that the core elements are the service provider and the customer, while yellow boxes represent recommendations, and the box “cultural differences” lists the main issues that differ significantly between two parties. The arrows show the connection between designed and perceived experience and the influence of expectations on developing the service quality. Red colored experiences are worse provided than those marked in green.

The model (figure 5) depicts the interaction of the service provider (Santa Park) and Russian customer and explains the interconnection between service quality and customers’ expectations, experiences that were designed and experiences perceived in a result. Even though the service provider aimed to introduce all four dimensions of experience described by Song *et al.* (2015), some of them were not fully perceived, as the data analysis has shown. Thus, certain recommendations are suggested to be considered and implemented in the future.

In addition, the model depicts that service providers are responsible for the destination brand and do participate in destination marketing, since the Park as every company is a stakeholder of the tourism destination.

The last research sub questions referred to the correlation of the service quality and customer satisfaction in general. In this study service quality was analyzed through exploring customers’ expectations, as Oh (1999) suggested. The blurry answers of the respondents on the topic of expectations from the visit led to the conclusion that curiosity was one of the main motivations to come. Consequently, the low degree of expectations allows the staff to establish their own acceptable level of service quality. A few expectations that were mentioned referred to the natural resources of the tourist destination rather than services of the particular place to visit, thus customers were very excited to see the real winter and beautiful Lappish nature. Only Santa was mentioned as an expectation from the visit and mostly awaited character associated with the place – therefore it is suggested to work on his image precisely, arrange for the visitors a decent conversation with happy, talkative and very friendly Santa. Consequently, it has to be carefully checked that Santa in Santa Park follows
the pattern of Santa’s behavior that Russian tourists are willing to meet and therefore even exceeds the expectations of the visitors.

Overall, the last sub question demonstrates conceptually the interdependency of expectations from the one side (Russian customers) and service quality from the other side (Service provider - Santa Park). Even though the number of expectations is considerably low, it still can give a hint for the directions to develop the facilities and services in the entertainment park.

Lastly, some of the feedbacks about the perceived service will be depicted. Russians noted the reduction of the entertaining activities that were available in the Park previously and sadly admitted they would prefer to be entertained more. Complementing the disappointments with the reduction of the entertaining activities, return customers mentioned that the interiors have not anyhow changed either. Thus, answering the sub question about to-be-developed-services in Santa Park, it is suggested to think about the new installations, designing some untouched parts of the cave or changing some of the old exhibitions. Russian tourists are also willing to be active participants of the activities as Elf School and Bakery, so it is recommended to reconsider the script of the School and add the activities in the Bakery. This gives one more point to the question of the services that must be improved. The performance of the staff has been rated very high, nevertheless it is advised to also train the personnel being ready to support the visitors in the “outside-cave-questions” topic.

Studying tourist experience via utilizing the experience economy theory is a door to predict the customer satisfaction (Song et al., 2015). It is also the way to provide richer experience and gain the competitive advantage for companies from the sector (Chang & Lin, 2015; Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Summing up the experiences that were perceived by Russian customers of Santa Park, it has to be stated that the level of each dimension of the experience was estimated differently by the visitors. Nevertheless, the overall satisfaction with the experiences perceived stayed high, even though some reasonable directions of developments have been explored, as it is also depicted on figure 5. For instance, new exhibitions should be developed, the interiors refreshed and the signs added (esthetic experience). Next, signs and arrows,
maps combined with informational booklets that include the hints about schedules of the activities, reconsideration of the lunch and cafeteria system (escape). Entertainment dimension is to be developed via changing both the plot and the dancers of the show, allowing to participate more in the activities of the Elf School and be amused by the free-walking elf. Educational realm of the experience is to be improved by better organizing the supervision and story telling at workshops, presenting the character of Finnish Santa Claus, changing the plot of the show and placing the signs in Ice Gallery. These advices are seen as the way to create for the customers a chance to learn specific knowledge, as Chang and Lin (2015) have described the condition for providing this realm of an experience.

Overall, these recommendations complement the earlier attempt to provide the answer for the sub question about the services offered in the company. In other words, on the base of established suggestions the management of the theme park can devote more attention to these facilities that lead to the perception of experiences and therefore towards raising the customer satisfaction (Chang & Lin, 2015). Moreover, analyzing the experiences arranged the opportunity to answer another sub question about the aspects increased the customer satisfaction mostly. Among those there is the staff – very friendly and in addition, Russian speaking; atmosphere of holiday and interiors’ design.

Moreover, all four types of experiences have been rated in terms of their importance for Russian customers – thus, the first position is taken by esthetic and escape realms, followed by entertainment and finally educational aspect. It expands the experience economy theory by depicting the relation of each of the experience dimensions to the overall satisfaction, importance for the customer and the consequences on forming the experience. The entertainment park as tourism provider and the experience stager should take it into consideration while designing the experience, as Sidali, Kastenholz and Bianchi (2015: 1184) proposed. The conclusion points out on how the services and offerings that are able to provide each realm of the experience must be developed in order to satisfy Russian customers.

The issues of destination brand and marketing were explored as additional aspects in order to enhance the context of the study. Destination brand is an essence of the
place, while destination marketing is the way it is presented. Santa Park performs to be responsible for both aspects, since it is an element of Lapland’s-Santa’s land-image (brand) and it is the tool to present Lapland in a certain way – the place where the Christmas miracles happen (marketing). Russian tourists’ claims include not “foreign-friendly” enough atmosphere and lack of entertaining activities, theme parties or open-air events. In order to please Russian customers more, side offerings as skiing, skating have to be developed. Foreign-open infrastructure would include detailed information about transportations and working hours of the places. In case the marketers will take into consideration above mentioned advices, the flow of Russian tourists will increase, despite their will to travel to the different places while weekends.

Cross-cultural issues consideration proved to be important aspect in terms of studying customer satisfaction. Collectivists Russians with their high level of uncertainty avoidance and power distance definitely demand more attention than it seems from the first look. This group of customers should be treated like royalty, because they are not used to any other approach than “customer is a king”. That is why the system of cafeteria is not only common, but also inconvenient, because it is more self-service-type. Russians are also facing uncertainty and ambiguity while being in a big cave without the map, descriptions and instructions, therefore, developing the above mentioned materials would be especially valuable for them as for representatives of high level uncertainty type of culture. Leaving aside Hofstede’s (1980) dimensions, the aspect of main winter holidays has to be noted. For Russians, it is New Year’s Eve, and in Santa Park there is Gala dinner organized. Unfortunately, the organizational features and the overall atmosphere does not really fit Russians’ expectations of celebrating such a huge event. Therefore, it is recommended to fulfil the program with entertaining activities, change the show for more professional one in terms of dance, and add some animation and interaction with the guests.

The following table introduces answered research question and sub questions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services to add/develop</th>
<th>Activities with active participation, entertaining</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appreciated</td>
<td>Friendly and helpful staff, pretty interior design, holiday atmosphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction decreases</td>
<td>Non-professional show with unclear plot, difficulties with orientating, shabby interiors and old decorations; New Year’s Eve, difficult orientating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directions to meet expectations</td>
<td>Santa’s behavioral pattern, entertaining activities, improving the organization of special events (e.g. Gala-dinner)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, the customer satisfaction in Santa Park performs to have decent level, operating with the fact that most of the respondents were satisfied with their visit. Nevertheless, the empirical results could assist with establishing the directions for Santa Park. For instance, it is recommended to develop the opportunities for active participation in the activities such as Elf School and Bakery. The focus has to be placed also on the entertainment activities, since this is what Russian visitors currently lack in the Park. It is recommended to improve the show via changing the plot and inviting more professional dancers.

Russian customers mostly attracted by the interiors and atmosphere of the Park, which is created by the design of the cavern and the staff. Satisfaction decreases because of “old-looking” interiors’ part, difficulties to orientate and low level of the offerings such as show. Tourists from Russia are very determined to see Santa and have a chance for proper communication, therefore the behavioral pattern of this character has to be polished. The expectation to have extraordinary celebration of the biggest holiday – New Year’s Eve – is to be fulfilled with improving the program of Gala Dinner and adding special cues about Russian Christmas.

5.2 Theoretical implications

The study’s theoretical implications are established on the base of aligning the theory with practical findings of empirical research. Thus, the experience economy theory is expanded via its application on the context of theme and entertainment park. The empirical research has demonstrated that even though the service provider aimed to provide all four types of experiences, that Song et al. (2015) has described, the considered group of customers perceived fully only esthetic and escape realms of it. As for educational and entertainment experience, it was provided rather weakly,
according to respondents. However, the overall satisfaction stayed rather high, therefore, current study suggests that the importance of experience’s dimensions can differ. Thus, it can be suggested to analyze each dimension of the experience separately, since the importance of each realm and its influence on the overall satisfaction is not the same. Therefore, instead of spreading the efforts of developing every dimension, it could be considered wiser to focus on those which play a key role in the concrete organization.

Moreover, the study described the new example of analyzing the customer satisfaction, since in the previous research other industries were mostly taken into consideration (Cotiu (2013), Chang and Lin (2015), (Brunner-Sperdin & Peters, (2009), Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011)). Different related aspects such as service quality or destination brand have been explored in order to provide clear overview on customer satisfaction topic on an example of the theme park. Since the research was arranged in the context of tourism, it contributes both to the tourism research and customer satisfaction. In addition, since the focus has been made on Russian tourists, the research provided the insights of the distinguishing features of Russian customers as well as the comparison of cultural backgrounds between them and service providers (Finnish people). The image of typical Russian tourist has been created through detailed analysis of his needs, expectations and preferences. Therefore, the study contributes also to cross-cultural research.

Even though the focus on such a terms as destination brand and marketing was not that deep, the study’s results can be also beneficial for the understanding the brand of Lapland and the city of Rovaniemi. In addition, the brand of Lapland from the viewpoint of Russian tourists was described. It complements the studies about destination branding and marketing that were taken as a theoretical framework for this study (Oh, Fiore and Jeoung (2007), Framke (2002)), since it presents the image of the considered brand that is seen by particular group as well as suggests the directions for the development of Lapland as tourist destination.
5.3 Managerial and practical relevance of the study

The managerial relevance of the study includes the insights for improving the customer satisfaction in the chosen company. For example, the questions for the interviews were prepared in a way that visitors could fully express their feedbacks. In addition, the interviews have been organized right after their visit, therefore, the impressions were very fresh and emotionally bright. Moreover, additional method of obtaining the data – the observation – played beneficial role in acquiring valuable discoveries. Thus, the results offer the concrete explanations and answers for every season’s challenges of Santa Park’s staff and managers. Moreover, since the significance of experiences for any company nowadays is brightly depicted in this study, the implications can become useful directions for other companies as well, even if they belong to other than tourism industry. Companies providing entertainment, catering, leisure and recreation services could also become aware of the importance of the experiences nowadays and therefore benefit from the study.

For instance, the concrete advices have been provided for organizing New Year’s Eve and Gala Dinner, with regards to expectations and cultural background of Russian guests. Next, the insights about the chances that Russian tourists missed during their visit could assist with preparing the training materials for the staff. That is the way new elves-staff members would get the hints of serving the customers in a best way, keeping in mind their cultural background and prerequisites. It is also advised to develop the activities with the potential of providing the educational experience (Ice Gallery, workshops, Bakery), since currently the level of perceiving this dimension of the activity is the lowest.

Moreover, the study can be useful for managers of other theme parks, where Russian customers are the target group as well. While being aware of this tourist group’s cultural background it easier to create the offerings which would satisfy them in a best way. In addition, the findings of the study can be used by managers of other companies from the tourism industry, since the insights provided can assist in building the strategy of attracting and satisfying Russian customers.
The conclusions that were drawn on the base of obtained data can be used by destination marketers, in order to improve the offerings of the considered region. In addition, insights for developing the marketing strategy of Lapland as destination have been provided, since the study succeed in obtaining valuable feedbacks from Russian tourists.

The practical relevance is explained by the possibility of an immediate testing and implementation of the suggestions during the preparation to the next season in the entertainment park. In addition, there are many tourists who either visit Santa Park for the second or even more time, or could return once again in case their wishes and comments would be taken into consideration. Thus, the study serves a role of the intermediary between the organization and customers, since the results will be delivered to the managers right after completion.

5.4 Reliability and validity of the study

As suggested by Koskinen et al. (2005:254-257), concepts of reliability and validity are the most accepted in terms of qualitative researches evaluation, therefore, this study uses them as well. Before starting with empirical research, academic literature was utilized theoretical framework built and concepts to explore were chosen carefully (internal validity). This base was used for structuring the interviews, therefore, the most appropriate groups of questions were selected. The versatility of the study was reached by the sample – among the participants in the interviews there were young people and families, from bigger cities and smaller places.

As for external validity, the sample was chosen randomly as a most, but since the flow of visitors in the Park is very diverse, the participants of the interviews and therefore their answers were frequently unique. Obviously, many aspects were commonly noted, but also considerable amount of fresh ideas was gathered during the interpretation stage. The questions chosen for the interviews facilitated the process of obtaining relevant data that can be generalized for tourism industry within selected interacting groups.
The construct validity of the study could be raised by increasing the amount of interviews, however, the number that has been arranged is sufficient for qualitative study and for understanding of the phenomena. The empirical part does not rely on a single view, therefore, information collected can be considered as deep and not very generalized (Alasuutari, 1999:231).

Reliability of the study is reached through attempts to eliminate the errors and broadening the specter of operational steps. For instance, the obtained data was recorded, then translated and then transcribed. The interviewees’ opinions were depicted with the quotations that allowed to decrease the biases usually appearing from the researchers’ interpretations.

As Koskinen et al. (2005:253) have emphasized, the goal of academic research is not in only absolute correctness but in producing the new information. According to that despite the limitations that evaluation of this study shows up, this research brings out important aspects to the academic and managerial discussion relating to researched phenomena.

5.5 Limitations and suggestions for further research

The theoretical framework of the study was chosen carefully in order to get the complete overview on the studied phenomena. However, the amount of scientific papers on the topic is very broad, so the current paper does not pretend to account all the previous publications on the topic. The author does not exclude an option that the selected research papers have determined the direction of the study in a certain way.

This study was completed with the focus on Russian customers, therefore concentrated on this group of tourists’ opinions, distinguishing features and specific requirements. Consequently, the study opened the aspects of customer satisfaction mostly referring to this particular group. It means that findings can be used limitedly while considering the tourists from other countries, due to the high level of unique characteristics of the culture, that considerably differ from the others. Despite the considerable amount of Russian tourists both in Santa Park and Finnish Lapland, it is suggested to later analyze the specific conditions of satisfying customers with other
cultural backgrounds, since the international flow in the company and the destination is much wider than just Russian tourists.

The data was obtained during the winter season of 2015-2016, so the field work was restricted by the duration of the season – 6 weeks. In addition, the researcher’s cultural background is the same as respondents’, so the actual interactions with the participants often were exceeding the limits of interviews structure. Therefore, it is possible that the interpretation of the answers might got slightly affected by this additional data.

Next, the study has considered relations between experiences and values, however, the assumptions of correlation between values and experiences were taken for granted and fully followed the suggestions of the previous scholars (Shmitt, 1999; Song et al., 2015). Those suggestions include the influences of the emotional value by the esthetic experience and functional by educational. However, no prove was found to support or disregard these assumptions.

Regarding the research object, not all the offered services were described in the study, since the data obtained did not include the feedback about all the offerings. The conclusions and recommendations are therefore restricted by the insights that respondents shared, while answering open-ended questions.

This study demonstrated customer satisfaction with regards to interdependent factors as service quality and expectations, offered and perceived experiences. In addition, the influence of cross-cultural aspects was depicted and the notions of marketing destination and brand were discussed. Future research could focus on other determinants of customer satisfaction than those considered in this paper. The new attempt to find the correlations between values and experiences could be arranged as well.
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