

Saimaa University of Applied Sciences
Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality, Imatra
Degree Programme in Hotel, Restaurant and Tourism Management

Elizaveta Kursakova

**Developing an Existing Event. Case: French-Italian Food
Marketas a Periodic Mobile Market in Imatra, Finland.**

Bachelor's Thesis 2016

Abstract

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Developing an Existing Event. Case: French-Italian Food Market as a Periodic Mobile Market in Imatra, Finland, 64 pages, 3 appendices

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Instructors: Mr. Ilkka Lehtola, Senior Lecturer, Saimaa UAS

Mrs. Sari Saarinen, Event Expert, Imatra Region Development Company Ltd

The main objectives of the thesis were to find out the obstacles preventing successful event running in Imatra, Finland and offering solutions of further French-Italian periodic mobile food market development. This thesis work was supported by Imatra Region Development Company Ltd.

The thesis work consists of several theoretical backgrounds. Firstly, the events' characteristics and the key elements of tourism are explained. Secondly, product development concept, services concept, and experience design approach are used to provide different techniques for broader development of the event. And lastly, the administrative aspects which need to be considered when preparing a successful event are described. The theoretical part is based on literature, academic articles and journals, local newspapers, and the Internet. The empirical part consists of two successive studies. Firstly, the analysis of the event's current situation is applied. Secondly, the investigation of event stakeholder's opinions is completed through interviewing the host companies in Imatra and organizers of the food market from France. The surveying of last year market participants is also put into action.

The results of the research bring up possible solutions for improvement and consequently further event development. Several suggestions for changes were made regarding the variety of products presented at the market, prices, the marketing campaign used to promote the event, the installation of the market area, and the entertainment side of the event. The recommendations applied to the host companies of the event as well as to organizers of food market from France for further successful development of the food market as a gastronomic event in Imatra, Finland.

Keywords: Event Development, Mobile Markets, French-Italian Food Market

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1 Introduction

Nowadays it has become harder to surprise the highly demanding client and bring something new and unique to the market place. The tourism sector is overloaded with different kinds of travel offers and ways to enjoy a holiday time. However, during the routine days of work people like to discover new ways of spending their weekends or time after work at local areas. Along with cafes, bars, restaurants, nightclubs and shops, citizens are not stopping to seek for alternative amusements.

The inspiration for this thesis is gained from visiting an already existing event which was organized in Imatra, Finland. The event represents periodic mobile food market with goods and products brought from regions of France and Italy. The primary purposes of the study are to find out the existing obstacles preventing a successful running of the event French-Italian periodic mobile food market in Imatra and to outline possible ways of improving event organization and running in the future. The conclusive goal of this thesis is to specify areas which require changes or upgrading the actual development of the event.

To achieve the objectives mentioned, this thesis work comprises the theoretical comprehension of events and tourism, event development possibilities and administrative aspects of successful event organization. Chapters two, three, and four are designed to explore the necessities obliged for understanding the nature of case study event. Furthermore, the empirical part of the thesis introduces the case study event, the French-Italian food market, and reveals the analysis of market's current situation.

After the analysis, the second part of the empirical research begins. Chapter six explains the research methods and clarifies the processes of its implementation. In addition to aims and delimitations of the research, the chapter provides the structure of interview questions and survey organization. It also tells how the research is conducted in practice. Chapter seven introduces the results collected and analyzed during the research process. It separately presents findings from main event stakeholders. Resulting from findings the concluding suggestions and recommendations for event development are presented in chapter eight.

The final chapter proposes the implications for practical adjustments and is designed for hosting companies of the event in Imatra and can also be beneficial to the organizers of mobile food market for potential improvements.

2 Events and tourism

Today, events are vital to our cultures and traditions as perhaps never before. Improved living conditions have led to increases in leisure time and discretionary spending has led to a proliferation of public events, celebrations and entertainment. Governments now support and promote events as part of their strategies for economic development, nation building and destination marketing. Different community groups and individuals are enthusiastic to propose marvelous arrays of events on almost every subject and theme. The rise of events on society occupies much of human life time and enriches it with different kinds of experiences. (Bowdin et al. 2011) In addition, hosting special events has become an important element in cities and regions' strategy in order to attract visitors and investments, provide a major boost to the tourism sector and turn into a major contributor to improve the destination competitiveness. (Getz 2008, pp. 403-428)

This chapter concentrates on clarifying event types with special attention to gastronomic events and mobile events. It provides information regarding event tourism and its influence on region development. Along with event description, this chapter presents the basic facts about Imatra as a tourism destination and the role of stakeholders at multicultural event. However, at the beginning it would be coherent to clarify the terms used. A practical starting point when defining an event is offered by The Chambers Dictionary (1998) which states:

anything which happens; result; any incidence or occurrence esp a memorable one; contingency or possibility of occurrence; an item in a programme (of sport, etc.); a type of horse-riding competition, often held over three days (three - day event), consisting of three sections, ie dressage, cross-country riding and

showjumping; fortune or fate (obs); an organized activity at a particular venue, eg for sales promotion, fundraising.

A 'special event' is another term which has been used to describe specific rituals, presentations, performances or celebrations that are consciously planned and created to mark special occasions and/or to achieve particular social, cultural, or corporate goals and objectives. (Bowdin et al. 2011, pp.3-26)

2.1 Event classification

There are a lot of different ways of grouping and categorizing events. Two of them are classification by event size and by event content. The size of events organizes them into categories such as major events, mega-events, hallmark events and local/community events. However, exact definitions are not used in every academic study and publication and usually vary according to the author. Likewise, in more extensive review of event classifications, typologies and terminology Jago and Shaw (1998) for example propose Mega-events and Hallmark events as subcategories of major events, while other authors present these categories on a scale according to the size and impact. (Bowdin et al. 2011, pp.3-26) This is illustrated in Figure 1.

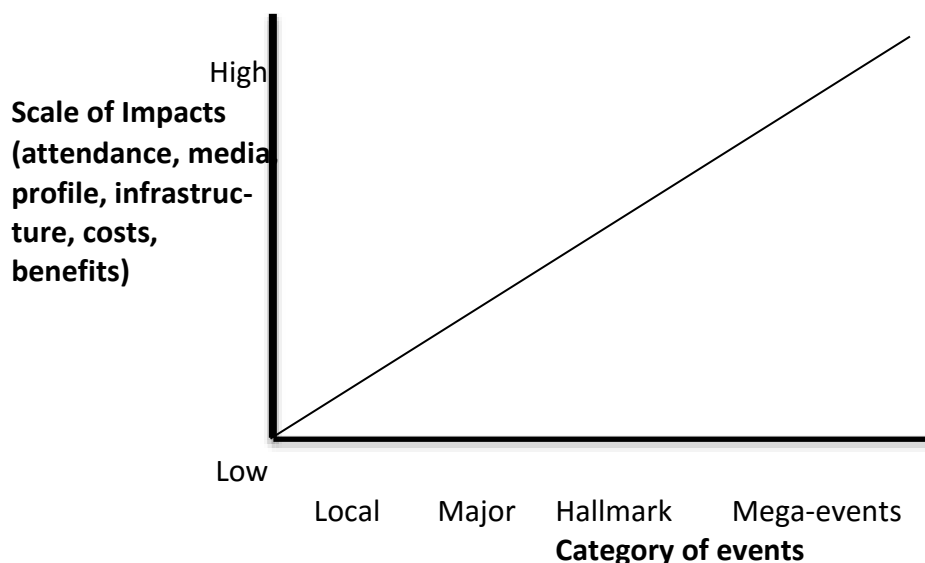


Figure 1. Categorization of events (Bowdin et al. 2011)

The meanings of categories by size are presented below.

2.1.1 Local / community events

Local or community events are events where communities host festivals and events that are targeted mainly at local audiences and staged primarily for their social, fun and entertainment value. These events often produce a range of benefits, including building pride in the community, strengthening a feeling of belonging and creating a sense of place. They can also help to expose people to new ideas and experiences, encourage participation in sports and arts activities, and encourage tolerance and diversity. For these reasons, local governments often support such events as part of their community and cultural development strategies. (Bowdin et al. 2011)

The definition of Local and community events was accurately defined by Janiskee (1996, p. 404):

Family – fun events that are considered ‘owned’ by a community because they use volunteer services from the host community, employ public venues such as streets, parks and schools and are produced at the direction of local government agencies or nongovernment organizations (NGOs) such as service clubs, public safety organizations or business associations.

These types of events are particularly important due to the closest relation with case study event of this thesis.

2.1.2 Major events, Hallmark events and Mega-events

Major events are events that, by their scale and media interest, are capable of attracting significant visitor numbers, media coverage and economic benefits. (Bowdin et al. 2011, pp.20-22) An example of Major event is the British Formula One Grand Prix.

A formal definition of Hallmark events was provided by Ritchie (1984) and defined such events as:

Major one-time or recurring events of limited duration, developed primarily to enhance the awareness, appeal and profitability of a tourism destination in the short and/or long term. Such events rely for their success on uniqueness, status, or timely significance to create interest and attract attention.

Mega-events are those that yield extraordinary high levels of tourism, media coverage, prestige, or economic impact for the host community, venue or organization. (Getz 2005, p.6) Hall (1992, p.5) defines Mega-events as events which are expressly targeted at the international tourism market and may be described as "Mega" by virtue of their size in terms of attendance, target market, level of public financial involvement, political effects, construction of facilities and impact on economic and social fabric of the host community.

The content or the form of an event is another way of grouping events. These events are classified as cultural events, sport events, and business events. All of these event types became a very powerful tool in event industry, and now generate a great income for their host cities and, increasingly, for regional centers. (Bowdin et al. 2011)

2.1.3 Cultural events

The main aim of cultural events is to bring people together in ways that express their ideas, traditions and values. From old historical ceremonies and rituals to modern national and international festivals and fairs cultural events is important expression of human activity that contributes much to today's social and cultural life. Cultural events are also increasingly linked to with tourism to generate business activity and income for their host communities (Bowdin et al. 2011). These types of events can also be considered as Hallmark events. Examples of cultural events are Cheltenham Science Festival (UK), Savonlinna Opera Festival (Finland), and Museum Night (Russia).

2.1.4 Sport events

The most famous sport event known is the Olympic Games which were firstly organized to celebrating the festival of Zeus, the most important Greek god (Shone& Parry 2004, p 8.). Nowadays, sport events are not only referring to competitive play involving concepts of time, space and rules but also non-competitive elements of sport such as health and recreation (Hudson 2003, p. 2).

2.1.5 Business events

Business events include conferences, incentive travel, corporate events and exhibitions. All of these happenings are often referred as MICE (meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions/events). Business events are largely characterized by their focus on business and trade, although there is strong public and tourism aspect to many of its activities. (Bowdin et al. 2011)

2.1.6 The current study

According to the description outlined above, the French – Italian food market can be determined as a Local/community event by its size and as a Cultural and/or Business event by its content. The food market fully corresponds to both of the descriptions of event types and, moreover, cultural events often play a supportive role in the business side of event creation.

2.2 Gastronomic events

Gastronomic events are often referred to as Hallmark or special events. Hallmark events now play a key role in international, national, regional and firm tourism and food and wine marketing and promotion strategies. (Hall & Sharples 2008, p.4) From a business perspective their primary marketing function is to provide

products, sponsors, host communities and other stakeholders with an opportunity to secure high prominence in the marketplace while also adding brand value and building customer and consumer relationships. (Hall & Mitchell 2008, pp.36-109) However, as it is explained, by Hall & Sharples (2008), because of the nature of food as a product and the daily part it plays in consumption and economic systems, food events are more than just part of food marketing, promotion, and retailing but also coincide with some economical, political and social concerns. All of these concerns also related to the nature of contemporary agricultural systems, conservation of rural landscapes, maintenance of rural lifestyles and communities, and concerns over food quality.

Hall & Sharples (2008, p.344) also clarify that food events are different from other events in that although they share some of the same management, marketing and planning concern, they are inseparably bound to issues of food localization and globalization, alternative regional food systems, sense of place and terroir and the communities in which food is produced and consumed. Food events and farmers' markets therefore have sets of issues that need to be addressed differently from some of the standard event management strategies, although the wider fields can still be useful for informing food event decision-making and management.

Another distinguishing element of gastronomic events is that these events are not just for external promotion to consumers and / or tourists outside of the host region. It is also strongly connected to the consumption and production of food from particular locations and communities and to the maintenance of those communities. Therefore, when it comes to the international food market trades the products are highly connected to senses of place and community pride of where they have been produced. Furthermore, food and the emotions and the necessities that surround it, are significant not just for producers but also for consumers in that consumption of particular products may also have implications for identities and lifestyles. (Hall & Sharples 2008, p.5)

Based on above information, the main distinctive factor of food events is its connection to a product which has particular cultural, economic and environmental significance. This means that food events have to meet greater

range of consumer and producer expectations than any other events. Therefore it is important for organizers of French – Italian food market to understand the expectations of market visitors.

2.3 Event tourism

According to Getz (1997) events are an important motivator of tourism, and figure prominently in the development and marketing plans of most destinations. The roles and impacts of planned events within tourism have been well documented, and are of increasing importance for destination competitiveness. In addition, the running of tourist events has more positive impacts on a place or a region by creating economic profit based on the income from the sale of products and/or services of different activities associated with the event, and by increasing the tourist turnover which improves the quality of restaurants and infrastructure. Tourist's involvement constitutes a potential market for planned events and the tourism industry has become a key stakeholder in their success and attractiveness. (Getz 2008)

On the other hand, existing research on tourism events identifies that in some cases the promotion of a destination and its image can be hugely enhanced by the organization of a singular event. (Laws 1995) Therefore, there is a close relationship between destination image and tourist expectations and behavior. After visiting and experiencing the event, the tourist compares an induced image against the original expectations and makes a judgment of satisfaction to form a complete picture of the place. The representations used in destination marketing resulting in historical, social, economic and political processes and revealing much about the social construction of space, the cultural evolution and identity (Pritchard & Morgan 2001).

As a reference to the case study event, Imatra is strongly promoted as a tourism destination on a Russian cross - border cities. Major part of events organized by Imatra's tourism development companies' influence the image of the destination and the country. Being organized in Imatra, the French-Italian food market is indirectly involved in the creation of Imatra's image as a destination for tourists,

depending on the event's success or failure tourists can form an image of the whole region or the country.

Alternatively, other scientists have different points of view of each tourist image perception. For example, Moutinho (1987), proposes that in the process of creating a destination image in the mind of consumers, several different personal motivators interact. The first motivator is physical, which is related to the need of amusement, entertainment, relaxation, among others. The second motivator is cultural, which arises from the need to understand other cultures, trends and artistic and historical content. The next, is interpersonal, where tourism is interpreted as a means to generate emotional content, by creating new relationships with locals or visiting friends or relatives. Lastly, social or prestige aims, representing the desire to achieve social goals, such as recognition or convey a good social image. Later on Gallarza et al. (2002) conclude that the image of tourism destinations has a complex, dynamic, multiple and relativist nature.

2.4 Food tourism

Food events in terms of tourism context also play an important role. For example Hall & Mitchell (2001, p.308) define food tourism as a visitation to primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants and specific locations for which food tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of specialist food production regions are the primary motivating factor for travel. At the same time food events are often regarded as part of the supply side of tourism therefore it can be viewed as a form of tourism product. The French-Italian food market is one element of many other motivators of tourists' travelling to Imatra and the region in terms of food tourism.

According to Quan & Wang (2004) over a third of tourist spending is devoted to food. Gastronomic tourism is well defined by Hall et al. (2003):

food tourism is an experiential trip to a gastronomic region, for recreational or entertainment purposes, which includes visits to primary and secondary

producers of food, gastronomic festivals, food fairs, events, farmers' markets, cooking shows and demonstrations, tastings of quality food products or any tourism activity related to a particular lifestyle that includes experimentation, learning from different cultures, the acquisition of knowledge and understanding of the qualities or attributes related to tourism products, as well as culinary specialties produced in that region through its consumption.

Hence, the experience of food tourism constitutes one of the main reasons or motivators to travel for visitors to the exact destination.

The French-Italian food market is not a gastronomic destination for Russian travelers. However, the meaning of hosting a mobile food market assumes to increase a tourists flow and creates an experiential trip for getting to know different cultures tastes and entertainment and cookery purposes. In addition, gastronomic tourism supposes that tourists travel partially or totally in order to experience the cuisine of the place. In the case study event, the market is transported to potential clients in return to create a gastronomic tourism not only for Russian visitors, but also for those who live in surrounding areas.

In conclusion, from the tourism sector point of view, events, and particularly gastronomic ones have become an important area for destination managers, who have understood the importance of hosting an event. Special events can improve supply of tourism and increase demand, and at the same time contribute to changes in the destination's image. Events can be a fundamental tool in attracting different segments of visitors, according to the type and uniqueness of the event and the quality of its promotion. As a result, the need to assess the contribution of events not only in terms of direct financial revenues but also in terms of creating a positive image for the destination, which is aimed at creating strong relationships with its visitors.

2.4.1 Imatra as a tourism and event destination

Imatra is located in the southeast of Finland very close to the Russian border. On the other side of the border, only 7 kilometers away from the center of Imatra, lies

the town of Svetogorsk. Saint Petersburg is situated 210 km to the southeast, the capital of Finland, Helsinki, is 230 km away and Lappeenranta, the biggest town in the region, is 40 km away. (GOSAIMAA Ltd. 2016) The population of the town was approximately 28,4 thousand people in 2014.

There are no official statistics regarding tourist arrivals to South Karelia region and particularly to Imatra town. However, some data for Russian border crossing and data from tourist information services are available. Thus, based on the research completed by Baniya & Mäyrä (2014) Russian tourists are major visitor group in the area and 60.1% of them are coming with families.

According to Discovering Finland Guide (2016), Imatra is considered to be the first tourist town in Finland. Destination attractions begin with Imatrankoski rapids, the biggest white water rapids in Europe, and Kruununpuisto Park, Finland's oldest national park. Additionally, along with numerous museums in the town, and the modern Cultural Centre, Imatra also hosts an annual Festival of Early Music with performances held in its churches and other venues, and the Imatra Big Band Festival that lasts over 8 days. (Discovering Finland Guide 2016) Tourists can also find different summer and winter activities such as fishing and ATV's rent in the summer, or snowmobiles in the winter. Various accommodation possibilities with Finnish saunas and spa, as well as several restaurants with traditional cuisines only add significance to the area for visiting.

Above elements of tourist attractions make Imatra an appealing destination for different kinds of event organization. In addition, the high number of travelers gives opportunities for additional revenues to the town and possibilities for international event organizers to promote their businesses on a broad scale. Therefore, Imatra is of a great benefit to French-Italian food market organizers too.

2.4.2 Stakeholders at multicultural event

Tourism development as an outcome of event tourism has different impacts on the destination, and especially on the host communities. In the earlier studies the

term “stakeholder” does not appear, and the emphasis is more on the local communities, who are actually the most important stakeholder groups. (Vijayanand 2013) The term stakeholder has no universal definition in business ethics, strategic management or tourism literature, however the most appropriate interpretations, for this study are the following:

‘Stakeholders are people or organizations who have invested in an event. The event leader(s) must scan the event environment to identify internal as well as external stakeholders. An internal stakeholder may be a member of the board, the professional staff of the organization, a guest, or other closely related person. External stakeholders may include media, municipal officials, city agencies, or others. A stakeholder does not have to invest money in an event to be considered for this role. Emotional, political, or personal interest in a cause is evidence of investment in an event.’ (Goldblatt 2008, p. 14)

‘Groups or individuals who are affected or could be affected by an event’s existence. Primary stakeholders are those individuals or groups without whose support the event would cease to exist. Secondary stakeholders are those groups or individuals who although are not directly involved in the event can seriously impede the event’s success.’ (Reid & Arcodia 2002)

According to Allen et al. (2002), events are often used as a strategic initiative by many tourism organizations and have the potential of affecting stakeholders at different levels. These impacts influence all areas – social, cultural, political, physical, environmental, and economic environments. Engaging stakeholders throughout the planning process provides a stronger likelihood that the community is satisfied with and will support the event. Differentiating between stakeholders let further categorizing of stakeholder relationships with the event organization. The aim is to ensure integrated decision-making (Lomine & Edmunds 2007, p. 174.)

The French-Italian food market involves different types of stakeholders, starting from Imatra’s authorities, hosting companies, market organizers from France and Italy and finishing by local citizens of Imatra and Russian tourists. The involvement of so many different stakeholder groups makes the event extraordinary in its managerial structure and favorable for guests to visits. Good

collaboration between all stakeholder groups will increase the chances of the event's success.

2.5 Travelling events - Periodic Mobile Markets

Trading through travelling includes several elements that differentiate it from usual trade at the store or a shop. First, the key element of travelling markets is its periodical system. A 'periodic market' is an authorized public gathering of buyers and sellers of commodities at an appointed place. (Periodic Markets 2011) In fact, periodicity of travelling markets offers exceptional opportunities for the best use of space-time relationships and further economic development.

The stakeholders in travelling markets can be grouped as consumers, traders, administrators and bystanders. It is quite apparent that consumers are usually local people and traders are mobile salesman who move from one market to another and return to their home base after market travelling is over. It also assumes that the travelling trader's primary intent is to buy for resale and turn that into profit. The level of profit will be largely determined by seller's knowledge of the market system and by his interest and ability in effecting a strategy consistent with trader's objective. (Good 1975) Additionally, traders' attitudes and commutation towards potential clients increases chances their products being purchased. Administrators are the people who are responsible of the lawful side of market trade and of the collection of taxes. Finally, bystanders are those who come into the market to spend time, an example to meet people but not to spend money. (Periodic Markets 2011)

Traveling markets create goods and money circulation. Any food trade, either regional trade or global trade, can provide a long term impacts on output and productivity growth and induced effects on employment and income. When these effects are positive, trading and availability of food stuff increases. The best way to obtain all of the above benefits is to trade with other cities and countries. (Badiane et al. 2014)

Markets as commercial institutions have a number of functions to perform. They take care of utility function, exchange function and institutional function. However, one of the main functions of mobile markets is to provide a variety of goods and products to the potential clients as from the place of market situation as well as from surrounding areas. They should also have a capacity to provide goods and services to an area greater than itself. (Periodic Markets 2011)

Even though foreigner markets (food or general) attract more interest among citizens there are several factors that complicate the organization of mobile markets. Transportation costs, foreign exchanges, responsiveness of the import sector, and dietary preferences provide convincing economic explanation for country's efforts to boost regional trade prior international. However, to improve the development of regional trade, international trade should rather be considered more complementary than as a competition. (Badiane et al. 2014) When markets serve the congregation of people, a host of activities begin to converge to these markets. Good and dense transport network, banks, storage points, grading establishments and packaging tend to strengthen. By the virtue of establishment of the market, the income of settlement establishments are enhanced. Thus, a chain effect takes place on the account of the settlement of markets. The market gives way for local and regional development. (Periodic Markets 2011)

This section has defined what the nature of periodic mobile markets is. Travelling events have great potential to attract a lot of visitors due to its main element, periodicity. Periodicity of events let consumers to participate in diverse experiences which will not be repeated again. The empirical case study food market is a travelling event and the detailed description of the event is presented in chapter five.

3 Event development

Events have long been considered as part of tourism industry and still a subject to constant debates. If tourism is an industry, then events are the tools to achieve

the industry's prosperity. Events generate a great deal of economic impact, means revenues and employment, as well as improved living conditions of event's hosts. As well, numerous events provide services to industries, for example the use of trade shows or exhibitions in marketing products. Tourism and economic development already view events as a sub-set of the tourism industry. (Getz 2008) Besides, events have several regards according to what events are in reality and what the ways to develop their importance are and as a consequence bring benefits to those involved in an event.

This chapter offers different versions of how a single event can be considered. A special event can be measured as a product, a service or an experience. The concepts that are used to support those thoughts are product development concept, services concept and experience design approach.

The chapter begins with the description of "Three Levels of a Product" by Philip Kotler and Gary Armstrong (1999) which is used to describe the features and benefits of a product, why product development is equivalent to event development and its value to the customer. Product development perception is followed by services approach, where the main concentration put on service nature of the event and characteristics that differentiate services from products. Lastly, the chapter overviews experience design concept as means of delivering memorable event to the customers and why it is vital to focus on event's attendees.

3.1 Event as a product. Product development concept

The product is a tangible good that is offered at the market with a purpose to satisfy a buyer's needs. However, in a deeper level, the product is much more than a tangible good to buy and it also involves numerous stages of production and product characteristics before reaching the right customer. Philip Kotler and Gary Armstrong are the marketing scientists which offered the Three Levels of a Product model (1999) to identify the levels of product. Each level adds more customer value.

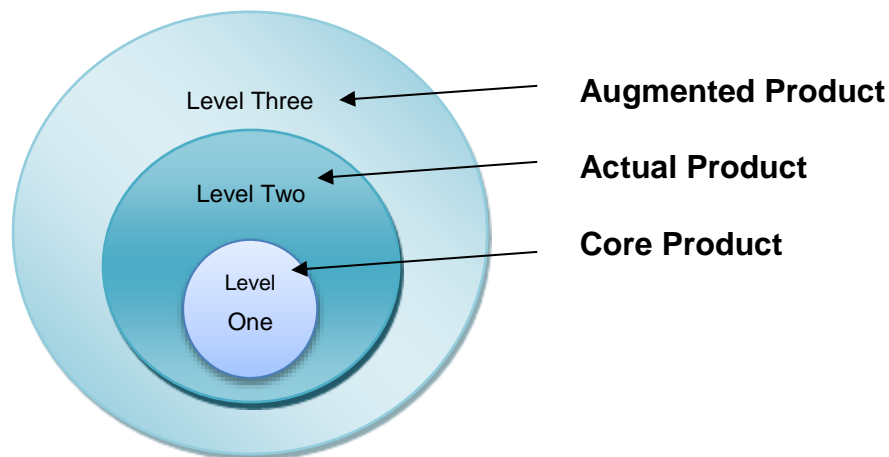


Figure 2. Three Levels of Product (Kotler & Armstrong 1999)

Level One is the Core Product. It is the most basic level and is pointed out at what people set out to buy and what benefits the producer would like their product to offer buyers (Kotler & Armstrong 1999). For example, the purchase of a smartphone means the core customer value and its main use, communication. Thus, core product (Level One) primary answers the following questions: What benefit does the consumer really seek? What is the problem that needs to be solved?

The second level is the Actual Product. This level is about stating the list of the core product benefits into a product that buyers will buy. This includes developing product features, design, a quality level, a brand name and a packaging (Marketing-Insider 2016). Using the same example of smartphone the actual product would be the smartphone's name, parts, styling, packaging, features and other phone attributes. From this example it becomes clear that actual product relate to the core customer value and Level One. This reveals that the levels of product complete each other.

Finally, the third level, the Augmented Product represents the additional non-tangible benefits that a particular product can offer. Competition at this level is based around supporting services such as after sales service, help lines, warranties, free/cheap delivery and so on. Non-tangible benefits offer customers peace of mind and demonstrate the manufacturer has faith in the quality of its product. (Learnmarketing 2016)

When considering the case study event to be a product the model of Three Levels of Products, it will look as follows. The provision of food and goods will be its Core Product. Generally, the customer is seeking for different types of products and goods which are sold at the market, whether it is cheese, baguette, candy or hand-made accessories. Features of those products and goods will represent the Actual Product. This includes the region of food production (France or Italy), quality, packaging etc. The more characteristics are involved in a product, the higher value it will give to the customer. Availability of eating area at the market, friendly and entertaining atmosphere as well as opportunity of international shopping can assemble an Augmented Product that supports the first two levels.

As stated above, a product is more than what the customer can see or touch before the purchase. Three levels of a product are involved in any buying process. This model should also help marketers and producers at developing a product and identifying the core customer value. Once the core value identified, actual product is designed and additional ways to augment are found the most satisfying experience for customers can be delivered. (Marketing-Insider 2016)

3.2 Event as a service. Services concept

Firstly, when speaking about services concept, it should be kept in mind that there is no universal definition to describe what the service really is. Still, an earlier view of service concept was that it was a mere benefit attached to a physical product. At the moment, the concept has extended its boundaries and has achieved an independence and growth quite apart from physical goods. Hence service industries are totally different from manufacturing industries. (Shodhganga 2015)

There are many academic studies (e.g. Kotler 1990, Payne 1993, Regan 1963) about services providers and services marketing. According to those studies definitions of a service are:

Any act or performance that one party can offer to another that is essentially intangible and does not result in ownership of anything. Its production may or may not be tied to a physical product. (Kotler 1990, p.467)

A service is an activity which has some element or intangibility associated with it, which involves some interaction with customers or with property in their possession, and does not result in a transfer of ownership. A change in condition may occur and production of service may or may not be closely associated with a physical product. (Payne 1993, p.6)

Activities, benefits or satisfactions which are offered for sale, or are provided in connection with the sale of goods.(Regan 1963)

A valuable action, deed, or effort performed to satisfy a need or a demand. (Business Dictionary 2016)

Moreover, services have significant features to deal with various aspects of services effectiveness and profit. Bitner et al. (1993) suggest that the main output from services marketing literature up to 1980 was the delineation of four services characteristics.

Intangibility is one of the key characteristics of services. It is a distinguishing factor between products and services. However, Onkvisit & Shaw (1991) state that the importance of intangibility is over-emphasized. They believe that the service provider's offer is their "productive capacity" and not the intangible nature of the offer. (Wolak et al. 1998)

Inseparability of services means that the production cannot be separated from its consumption. Services are unique for the reason that they are usually provided and consumed at the same time in the same location. It is an important characteristic of the service due to the fact that customers have strong expectations about how a service will be provided, which can lead to disappointment if their expectations are not met. (Pride & Ferrell 2006, p.364)

Heterogeneity (variability) means that services are variable and difficult to control. This is because they greatly depend on who provides the service as well as when, where and how they are provided. (Kotler et al. 2005) Due to that the quality control becomes critical and to achieve that, the service sector must have the right people, standardized service, and monitored customer satisfaction. (Wolak et al. 1998)

Perishability is another characteristic of the service which indicates that services cannot be stored for later use or sale. When the demand is steady, then service perishability is not a problem but the service sector faces a huge problem when the demand fluctuates (Kotler et al. 2005). In several cases, the service value exists only at a concrete point and then disappears, but the service even unused cannot be stored. Therefore, perishability is one of the reasons why the service providers charge customers for missed appointments. (Zeithalm et al. 1985)

In these situations the service sector could use the demand side strategy and/or supply side strategy. On the demand side, service sector could charge different prices for different period of time depending on the demand. This will help to attract some more customers in the off peak time. The use of complementary services and discounts also come in the demand side. On the supply side, service sector can hire part-time staffs in the peak hours or time period. To increase the peak time efficiency, the service sector can reschedule working times. Not only that they could share the service when required or whenever possible but also plan ahead for future expansion (Smith & Langford 2009).

Along with already existing service characteristics there is still ongoing process of adding more features to services while distinguishing them from products. Some of these features are lack of entry barriers, minimum opportunities to achieve economies of scale, and customer contact.

The services concept is important for the case study event because the French-Italian food market employs intangibility of its operations, meaning that although offered products can be touched, the market itself cannot be. This is an important element of the event being a service. The inseparability aspect states that no goods or products are offered for future sale and the product can only be bought at the market venue during certain period of time i.e. during several days. At this point it is rational to recognize that the more inseparable elements exist at the event, the greater market uniqueness and customer satisfaction can be reached. Heterogeneity represents the whole framework of French-Italian food market; its inside and outside stakeholders, as well as the quality control of every product presented at the market. And lastly perishability of the market means that no sale

will be available when food market is over. It is also fair that no supply will exist even though the customer will have a demand for specific product or good.

3.3 Events as an experience. Experience design concept

The importance of considering events as experiences comes from the future perspective. While products and services are getting obsolete in their ability to impress and to satisfy the customer the technological era rises. Companies now need to deliver “something more” than tangible goods and supportive services. The best way to do so is to convey consumer to “live through” the event. Businesses are getting to the point where “knowing your clients” becomes nearly the key to company’s survival. Experience design is an approach which helps to create innovative and what is more important functional way to stay competitive at the market and to amaze the customer by the use of technological progress.

Experience design is a practice of designing products, processes, services, events and environments with a main focus placed on the quality of the user experience and culturally relevant solutions. It comes from many other disciplines such as psychology, architecture, communication and cognitive science. After defining products and services for any types of events, businesses need to concentrate on the experience that their clients receive. Culturally relevant ideas and quality of the experience are getting more significant, since technological progress raises and products and services are getting more alike. (Experience design event 2016)

To understand the phenomenon of experience design and as a consequence an event experience, the experience matrix was developed. Zoels & Gabrielli (2003) created the experience matrix, which argues that adopting a clear human-based strategy for event management will enable event experiences to become ever more predictable. Matrix suggests that foresight of experience can be designed only when thinking about human-centric concerns, such as sensory, tactile, visual, photographic, auditory impact, intellectual, emotional, functional informative, cultural, and core. This matrix gives a ready-made framework for the basis for research into responses to an experience creation.

An experience is not an amorphous construct; it is as real an offering as any service, good, or commodity (Pine & Gilmore 1998). The idea of considering an event as an experience has become more extensive only in the last two decades, mostly because the corporate sector has adopted experience as a valuable tool to make its business more competitive and its influence has grown in importance across the business, tourism, leisure, hospitality and event sectors (Pettersson & Getz 2009). An experience occurs when an organization deliberately uses services as the stage, and goods as props, to engage individual customers in a way that creates memorable event. Goods and products are tangible, services are intangible, and experiences are memorable. (Pine & Gilmore 1998)The components of experience, on which customers base their evaluation, consist of several hedonic aspects such as satisfaction, sensation, emotion, and imagery (Holbrook & Hirschmann 1982). At the same time the research of Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 1990) claims that the desirable outcome of all experiences is achieving optimum flow of every component.

Therefore, if an event is the experience for the customers then event design is the platform upon which experience design is build. Event design can also help to create the entire process of planning, managing, and delivering an event. However, it cannot guarantee how consumers will respond to it or whether the stimuli provided will be received in the way it was intended. (Berridge 2011)

For the empirical study of this thesis, the experience design concept can help to achieve strong competitive and popularity advantages over other events by forming new base of food market's development. To do so market organizers require envision of market experience from the guests' point of view. It also requires identification of event elements of previous successes, aspects that will take advantage of opportunities and strengths, and components that will alleviate challenges, weaknesses, and threats. And finally, the marketing framework for customer experience should then focus on which senses, feelings, thinking, actions and similarities visitors get by participating in the event rather than just on promoting a product or service. (Berridge 2011)

To conclude this chapter, it can be stated that a singular event can have different ways of its development. For example, a traditional way of thinking about an event

is to present it as a product and to simply concentrate on developing product characteristics. Another way of developing an event is to pay attention to the provision of services which go along with products. To provide these services in a satisfying manner for the event's attendees, managers need to understand the features that differentiate services from products and to implement them in their decision-making strategy. The last technique of developing an event is to create the experience design. This technique involves a lot of concentration on human factor which in return gives an event participant unforgettable and remarkable experience. However, a combination of all three techniques has greater prospect to achieve successful event development. Therefore, improvement of product characteristics, the correct use of services distinguishing features and realization of experience design methods can positively be employed in development process of French-Italian food market in Imatra.

4 Administrative aspects of successful event running

This chapter follows the already presented idea of event diversity; however it focuses more on administrative elements in successful event organization. More precisely, the chapter explores the importance of market segmentation for the event, marketing and promotion actions, and competitive edge of "trade type" events. Aspects are chosen due to the relevance of case-study event's current obstacles.

4.1 Target Market

One of the main objectives of almost every event is to attract new customers. To do so, event managers should be clear of what type of customers they want to attract. Certainly, different events are targeted at different target market. For example, the target market for a rugby tournament would be quite different from one for a heritage pageant or a motor show, since different people like different things. The more is known about potential target market of an event, the more useful it can be for further marketing actions. However, usually events are not

targeted only for a single group of customers. An example is a local food festival. The main target market is the citizens of a town where the festival takes place, secondary market is those who live in surrounding area, and another target market is the tourists who happen to be visiting the town on a time when the festival is being held. (Shone & Parry 2010)

By asking various questions, for example those that have been offered by Richards (2001), managers of an event can develop future strategies of product and service development if such exist at the event. The questions are as follows:

1. Is your event targeted at the general public, or at a specific group?
2. What sort of age or lifestyle segment will your event attract?
3. Will your event appeal to special interests group?
4. Can you identify different segments to attract?
5. Are the different segments likely to be responsive to different prices?

If, for example the answer for the first question is “General public”, then the next step is to consider how this knowledge can be used in practice. This provides a focus around which organizers of an event need to work and it indicates what kind of techniques can be used and what marketing approach might be best for each target market group specified with the resources that are available. (Shone & Parry 2010) In addition, the larger an event, the more likely it is to attract a more diverse range of people, for which more broad market segmentation might be needed (Swarbrooke 2002).

To identify a precise target market for an event it is important to know where the visitors are coming from. This involves census information as well as travel distances to the destination of an event. In the case study event the target area varies a lot. People from Imatra and mainly those within walking distance, as well as surrounding villages and travelers from Russia are the target groups of French-Italian food market.

By understanding and analyzing the information about social group size and target area, a potential amount of incoming visitors can be predicted. Attendance will also be influenced by a whole range of things, such as how effective or ineffective marketing to personal interests, the opinions of friends and relatives and another events or happenings going on at the same time.

4.2 Marketing and Promotion

Since the partnership of this thesis work is done with organizations, which are responsible for marketing and promotion activities of the event, it would be relevant to understand the importance and influence of their actions on the event as a whole.

The main idea of any marketing and promotion actions is aimed at attracting new customers, increasing sales, raising awareness or expanding market penetration. The variety of an initiative is usually based on the organization's advertising budget. Marketing in general is a human activity directed at satisfying the needs and wants of consumers throughout the exchange process (Kotler 1980). According to CIM (The Chartered Institute of Marketing), it is the management function which organizes and directs all those activities involved in assessing and converting customer purchasing power into effective demand for a specific product or service and to achieve the profit motive in moving the product to the final customers or users. Therefore, marketing is fundamentally a customer-oriented activity where satisfaction of a client is a focal point. (CIM 2015)

In addition, Kotler (1990) states that marketing is getting the right goods and service to the right people, at the right places, at the right time and at the right price with the right communications and promotions. At the same time Kotler & Levy (1969) say that marketing is a critical element in the hosting and management of successful food events. This means that marketing is a function of food management that can keep the event's participants and consumers in connection, for further ability to read their needs and motivations, develop products that meet these needs and to build a contact program which expresses the event's and associated product's purposes and objectives.

However, promotion and advertising is not simple. It is possible to waste a lot of money and time, mounting a totally misdirected and useless advertising campaign. The most important point to remember is that advertising in the right places, at the right times, with the right advert, at the right price will increase attendance and income. (Conway 2009, p.69)

From a more modern point of view a successful event marketing campaign provides value to attendees beyond information about a product or service. A discount, free sample, charity alignment, or fun event will make customers feel like there are receiving a benefit and not just attending a live-action commercial. (Event Marketing 2012) One of the most important elements of marketing and promotion activities of the case study event is to find out a correct way of advertisement which will reach a targeted audience with limited funds available both locals and tourists.

4.3 Competition

A clear understanding of competition is a key to success of any business venture. Even if a product or a service fills a unique niche in the market, there are always other companies offering something similar, or there are other ways to satisfy the same customer's need. The solution when thinking about competition is to learn what makes the consumer choose one product/service over another. The different choices that customer consider are usually competitors. (Small Business 2016)

Competition can either be direct or indirect. Direct competition means competing by selling the same products whereas indirect means competing for the same market. The intensity of competition existing around, whether direct or indirect, affects the general potential for success of the industry. For that reason, it is significant to consider all types of competitors while planning a market trade or any other events and to ensure the venture has an edge over others in the same industry. (Small Business 2016)

As for direct competition, customers are more likely to consider a variety of price points, locations, service levels, and product features when deciding where to purchase something. Although, not all clients choose the same combination of those options, and this is essentially why competition exists. By positioning a product or a service to offer a unique mix of options, businesses will be able to reach different type of customers and by understanding where competitors are positioned will bring an advantage by filling up the gaps. Indirect competitors

usually offer slightly different products and services but target the same group of consumers with the goal of satisfying the same need. (Small Business 2016)

Lastly, a creation of USP (Unique Selling Proposition) of products presented at the market can also add extra weight on a competitive edge as well as help in improving marketing campaign of an event. (Entrepreneur 2016) By considering different ways of how customers can be satisfied and creating a strategy for handling competition, French-Italian travelling food market can gain a powerful advantage over local businesses in Imatra and increase its sales.

5 Introduction of French-Italian food market in Imatra

French-Italian food market is an event organized in Finland in many different cities, towns and regions. The market travels and offers its products and goods all the way from Helsinki to Lapland and spends around six consecutive months in Finland. The first appearance of the market in Imatra was in 2013. At that time the French-Italian food market was highly popular and attracted by many clients, both local citizens and visitors from Russia. The company, which maintains the market travelling around Finland, is called Team Fantastique with a project director Ali Chehboun. His role since the very first appearance has been to find out greatest sellers, products and ideas for the market organization and to perform a marketplace at a destination. He is also the one contacting with partners and finding the best possible solutions for the business venture. The host companies of the event in Imatra are presented by Imatra Region Development Company Ltd (KEHY Oy) and An Association for Imatra town center Management (IMITSI Ry). Both of these organizations are partners of this thesis.

This chapter will include the detailed descriptions of market's stakeholders, products, target market, competitors and external forces are presented. All of these elements comprise the analysis of French-Italian food market at the current time. A combination of different data collection methods was used to complete the analysis.

5.1 Analysis of event's current situation

The situation analysis is used to define a current situation of the food market as an event. It presents a snapshot of where things stand at the time.

As part of stakeholders' investigation and analysis it is significant to know local authorities for further event preparation. In the city of Imatra a hosting company is Imatra Region Development Company Ltd (equivalent KEHY Oy). It is owned by regional municipalities and companies and is responsible for business development in the region. KEHY Oy offers high-grade management consultancy services for enterprises setting in the area. The basic consultancy services are free of charge and can be tailored according to the needs in cooperation with other agents in the region. The services encompass the whole process of setting into the area, from information provision to practical help in establishing a business and making contacts. (KEHY Oy 2015) KEHY Oy also provides tourism development services and development supporting tourism projects, therefore the involvement of this company in organization of the international food market was practical.

Another event supporting company which is at the same time one of main stakeholder is IMITSI Ry. IMITSI Ry is an association for Imatra town center management which involves 90 members. Some of main aims of the organization are to enhance the vitality and cozy atmosphere of the center of Imatra and to create a favorable business environment for the enterprises located in the center. (IMITSI Ry 2014) In other words, IMITSI Ry makes sure that the city center of Imatra town is attracting visitors by different kinds of events and happenings. As for business environment IMITSI Ry is responsible for advising and coordinating its members. In case of French-Italian food market this organization act as a landlord of the market place (the square of Imatra) and provide the tenants with information about law and regulations involved in this venture.

As already mentioned, the organizing company of the event is called Team Fantastique, with a project director Ali Chehboun. The company started in 2003 with organizing and planning events in the UK and France. An example of events where Ali and his team took place was Brighton Food Lovers Festival, the re-

launch of Scarborough Fair, the Cardiff Riverside Festival, Manchester and Lancaster for a special Lancashire Christmas event and others. Later in 2009, Team Fantastique came to Finland with the idea of French-Italian travel food market. The team is also able to provide other 'Specialist Events' such as Gourmet Food Events and Wine and Food Festivals. (Chehboun 2013)

Furthermore, customers and guests of the market are another stakeholder party involved in the event. Their role is crucial since the estimation of event success is measured by visitor's satisfaction. To make clients happy and to receive a chance to return another year are one of the main purposes of event organizers.

Finally, there could be an additional key stakeholder who might be interested in activities provided by the market. A Local Bar & Café Lumo which is situated on the same venue of the marketplace and offers coffees, baked goods, baguettes, cocktails, wines and tapas (Bar & Café Lumo 2015). There is no involvement of this bar in French-Italian food market operations at the moment. However, in author's opinion proper collaboration actions between the food market and Bar & Café Lumo could benefit both of them in terms of common target market, increased revenues and giving its customers more opportunities for product and beverage purchases.

5.1.1 Current Product, Place, Promotion

According to City of Rauma (2015) the food market provides savoury cheeses, sausages, pastries, olives, chocolates, dried fruits, and honey products. The marketing campaign of French – Italian food market in Jyväskylä states products description as cheese from the alpine regions, ham and sausages, special spices, baguettes, pastries, olives, high-quality olive oil, dried fruit and honey products. (City of Jyväskylä 2015) And according to Helsinki Times (2013) French producer brings all-natural and organic French and Italian products to Finland, organic cheese, some dry saucisson (sausage), olives and sun-dried tomatoes. As for Imatra products brought from regions of France and Italy were delicatessen (saucisson, cheese), olives, olive oil, dried tomatoes, spices, bakery products (baguettes, croissants), pancakes, candies and jam. Non-edible goods such as

household accessories and handmade objects were also sold at the market. For example lavender bags sachets, soap and hand-made bags.

It would also be relevant to mention that prices at the market are set up by its traders and are not negotiable with other event organizers. No discounts or special offers were used during last year trade. Pricing is an important element of product description as well as memorable aspect of purchasing process. In addition, the latest price of products was one of the major complaints received as feedback from customers in 2015. It was also noticed by other stakeholders of the event.

Another part of product sales is promotional activities. During this event, hosting company takes responsibility of marketing actions and targeted at promoting it among local citizens of Imatra and incoming tourists. However, few obstacles have influenced the successful advertising campaign. As it was found out during the research, one of the most influential factor was a lack of financial support for the event this year. Marketing campaign was done with available resources mainly through social web pages and a number of leaflets were posted around center of Imatra. Second related factor was the lack of latest information regarding product lines and the final name of the event. The name of the event has varied from Herkkujen Tori (Delicacy Market) to French-Italian Food Market. As a result it has prevented the outlook of a flyer of being attractive and even caused confusion among potential clients.

Finally, to support market trade, a dining area was implemented at the same venue. The use of few tables and chairs helped market visitors to enjoy freshly prepared pancakes, merguez sausage and other fast-food options. However, the space was very tiny and most of the clients needed to stand or have a seat at closely located Bar & Café Lumo.

5.1.2 Current target market

As it follows from the idea of creating an international food market event, the target market was local citizens of Imatra town and tourists coming from Russia;

all those who wish to experience the tastes of central Europe. The general target market approach at this stage can be seen as mass target – the aim is to sell to a broad market and to attract as many customers as possible.

Due to that approach the market tries to satisfy needs of male and female, different income level households, different age groups, different lifestyles, different attitudes, and different purchasing characteristics. However, some common characteristics of buyers' behavior can be predicted. For example, local citizens of Imatra region expect to find a product that is unique and cannot be found at any other place. This concerns the quality of products, the taste of product, the use of product and/or its exceptional availability. Other visitors and tourists of Imatra may look for the same characteristics of goods and products before purchasing.

Besides these buyer behavior characteristics, some other elements may influence the purchasing process. For instance the “candy stand” purchases were heavily influenced by children who came accompanied by parents. Despite this element of buying process, mature individuals are still the ones taken responsibilities of decision-making process of a purchase.

Another important element of target market is the estimation of probable visitors. As it was mentioned earlier, this type of event is trying to attract as many customers as possible, there is no restriction about that. Although in practice, the number of visitors was over estimated. In the eyes of stakeholders a most likely reason of target market overestimation is an external factor that was not taken in consideration from the beginning of the event planning process.

5.1.3 Current Competitors

It might look like the event has no close competitors, however it is not exactly so. Even though the event is impermanent and meant to be out of competition by providing uncommon goods and products, there are still number of shops and restaurants in Imatra that can compete directly and indirectly with French-Italian food market.

The first strong competitors of the market are local retailer stores K-market and S-market. The accessibility of these stores and equivalent products makes it much cheaper for clients to shop there. For example, a croissant costs 0,39 euro in K-market store in comparison to 2,00 euro croissant at the market.

Secondly, the food store Lidl is another competitor of the market trade. Due to thematic weekly sales it often offers products from France and Italy. This is especially important in terms of inhabitants of Imatra as they have a chance to experience central European products at least once in a month. At the same time visitors from Russia have almost equal chances to buy internationally produced foodstuff from Lidl. Lastly, the surrounding cafes and restaurants for example Rosso (an Italian restaurant) offers better “value-price” deals when customers are hungry.

To summarize the competitive edge of the market, organizers must have a clear vision of the products and goods sold around. Most of the clients are coming by car; therefore the distance between the venue of the market and other stores does not play a key role unlike the price. The product should be very unique itself if traders wish to sell it at higher prices.

Even though the competition for the food market is tight, the event will always have an advantage over its competitors. By offering a range of different products and goods, providing supportive services and keeping friendly international atmosphere customers will come back to experience the event and spend some money on unique foodstuff.

5.1.4 External Forces

External forces are the conditions that are generally uncontrolled by any stakeholder of an event but may adversely affect the whole experience for its visitors. In case of French-Italian food market there were several of those.

According to authors' observation and to partner companies of the thesis, the most influencing threats of last year performance were economic issues and weather conditions. Due to economic instability in Europe in recent years, many

households have limited their “extra expenditures”. In return, this directly reflects on the amount of events organized by the town and people’s desire to spend more money. The same situation concerns international currency exchanges. While the expectation of Russian tourists was high, increasing currency rates made it complicated for them to travel and to invest in foreign currency. Therefore, an involvement of Russian travelers should not be overestimated.

In addition to economical threats the timing of the event could be seen as another hazard. In the beginning of autumn South Karelia region becomes an area of upcoming rains and cloudy sky. Since the food market operates in open air it could be unpleasant for visitors as well as for traders to stay in the rain for a long time. Thus, weather conditions may prevent the satisfaction of market guests. As well as economic issues, the weather cannot be predicted at the time when organizers start to plan the event, therefore it is wise to keep uncertainty of nature in mind. Moreover, the end of August and the beginning of September is also the time when students return to school, as a result the expenditures of families’ with kids raise, so fewer financials are available for entertainment.

As a conclusion of this situational analysis, the author could point out main obstacles that currently block the success of the event. At the moment, high attention should be paid to the product characteristics i.e. which foodstuff is interesting to the buyer and which could be found locally. Another important element is setting up the right price according to customers’ financial resources. Appropriate marketing actions, the use of competitor analysis, correct estimation of incoming visitors and readiness to uncertainty of external threats are current success prevention factors that were found out during the analysis. These are the key areas which will be under precise consideration for final suggestions.

6 Research methods and its implementation

This chapter is used to describe research methods of the thesis and its implementation in practice. Except extensive information concerning aims and delimitation of the research, the chapter explains the structure of interview

questions and survey organization. It also tells how the research was conducted in practice.

6.1 Justifications for researching the topic

The French-Italian food market attracts many potential clients. According to the recent research of most wanted event types in South Karelian region including Imatra town “Markets & Fairs” events are on 2nd place on event types by popularity and “Gastronomic” events are on the 6th place in the same research. (Baniya & Mäyrä 2014) Therefore, the interest for international gastronomic market seems to be high among citizens and visitors of Imatra. However, the previous year’s customer dissatisfaction and low profit of the venture gave the author an idea of researching the topic more deeply and as result to suggest ways of improvement.

It is also wise to remember that Imatra is a cross-border town between Finland and Russia. As a consequence of that lots of Russian citizens spend time in Imatra for shopping and leisure. Therefore, involvement of Russian clients in almost every event of a region is guaranteed. The last, but not the least reason of researching the topic is the author’s self-interest and the interest of Imatra Region Development Company Ltd and An Association of for Imatra Town Center Management in this particular event.

6.2 Aims and delimitation of the research

The main aims of the thesis were to find out what are the obstacles preventing the successful event running in Imatra, Finland, and offering solutions to improve current situation of food market. By achieving those aims, further development of the event can be maintained. Supportive questions such as which kinds of products would be more beneficial to sell at the market to gain more satisfaction for customers, what types of services can accompany the market, how to improve

the marketing campaign of the event and finally how to get clients to a positive image of the event, were meant to help the research process.

In order to achieve the aims, firstly, the author presented a current situation analysis of the event (chapter five). Secondly, the author collected the opinions of event stakeholders: hosting companies of the event (KEHY Oy and IMITSI Ry), organizers of the event (Team Fantastique), and the visitors of the market in 2015. Thirdly, the data collected was analyzed and the findings of the research were demonstrated (chapter seven). Finally, the conclusions of the thesis research and suggestions for further event development were presented (chapter eight).

As a result, stakeholders KEHY Oy, IMITSI Ry and Team Fantastique could employ the findings of the research and conclusions into their organizational processes and promotional and marketing strategies to increase customer satisfaction and give the event an opportunity for development.

However, there was some delimitation applied in this research. Since the event had passed already it was challenging to reach high population sample of respondents who visited the market. Therefore, author aimed to interview a minimum of 20-25 persons, although in practice it was a higher number. Certainly, there were risks involved with a quiet small number of respondents. For example, opinions of Imatra town visitors and tourists may not be included in the final suggestion list. There was also high probability that only citizens of Imatra and surrounding areas would be involved in the research. Since the event is considered to be international, the survey was designed in English. On the other hand, the foreign language could lead to a fewer answers from respondents.

Lastly, the result of this research should only apply to this particular case study event. Even though some general ideas are common for different types of event planning the author is mainly concentrated to resolve issues involved in French-Italian food market in Imatra.

6.3 Research Methods

This thesis work consists of two major components that comprise the empirical part. The first is an analysis of French-Italian food market event at the current time that was presented in chapter five. To complete this analysis, secondary data was collected and analyzed. Secondary data is data that is already available in different sources of information (Kothari 2004). For this analysis, secondary data was gathered from a mixture of different electronic sources, such as correspondence between key stakeholders, online publications, companies' websites and printed materials such as newspapers and event's promoting leaflet.

Second component of the empirical part is interviews of event's organizing stakeholders and consumers of the market in 2015. A field study research was chosen as main academic approach to support the research. A field study is a general method for collecting data about users, user needs, and product requirements that involves observation and interviewing. Data is collected about task flows, inefficiency, and the organizational and physical environments of users. (Usability Body of Knowledge 2012) In the case study event, field study research was implemented to figure out main disadvantages that caused parties' dissatisfaction. To find out multiple views and opinions about improving the event, the field study research is based on qualitative data collection methods and is divided into three main parts. Primarily, the interview of hosts of the event in Imatra, KEHY Oy and IMITSI Ry, was applied. Secondly, interviewing of market representatives, Team Fantastique, was put into action. Finally, a survey questionnaire for visitors of the food market in 2015 in Imatra was distributed. The entire research process was implemented in February – March, 2015.

Semi-structured interviews were used in case of interviewing hosting companies' representatives Sari Saarinen who is Event Specialist in Imatra Region Development Company Ltd. and Liisa Marsio, the Executive Director at IMITSI Ry. The market organizer company and its project director Ali Chehboun was also interviewed with an aid of semi-structured interview. The role of the author in this context was to prescribe focal questions and let a right for interviewees to

answer without restraint. Extra comments and relevant additions were highly appreciated. Several questions were standard and repeated for each interviewee. Survey questionnaire was developed for visitors of the event in 2015. In total there were 32 answers collected. The author believes that the combination of these research methods support the creation of practical conclusions and give a good start for further event development.

6.3.1 Structure of interviews and survey

Two different sets of questions were created for two major event stakeholders. The main idea was to expose the thoughts and involvement of each stakeholder in the event preparation. Partnership companies' interviews include seven open-ended questions mainly referencing their job at the event since the beginning of its operations in Imatra. The food market's organizer, Team Fantastique's interview consisted of eight open-ended questions about doing business in Imatra, inquiring their opinions about the event preparation and running, the support of hosting companies, and things that they wished to be changed or improved.

As for the survey, it was designed for the visitors of the last year French-Italian food market event. It consists of ten questions which aimed at receiving official feedback with event estimation and satisfaction. The survey was distributed through official IMITSI Ry Facebook page, e-mails of Saimaa's UAS personnel and teaching staff, e-mails of Saimaa's Vocational College Sampo teaching staff and international students, and few other Imatra based Facebook groups. In author's opinion these ways of reaching the appropriate audience were the most reliable at the time of the research. In total there were 32 answers received and analyzed. The survey was entirely constructed in English language. Both interview papers and survey questionnaire can be found at the end in attachments.

7 Results of research

Results of the research are presented in this chapter. Finding is a conclusion reached after examination or investigation. (Dictionary of the English Language 2011) Findings are divided according to three different key stakeholder groups. All the information based on answers was received during the interviews and conducting the survey. Some answers are more detailed than others and therefore provide more concrete areas for changes and improvement. Positive feedback is also mentioned.

7.1 Findings from KEHY Oy and IMITSI Ry

Findings received from KEHY Oy as well as IMITSI Ry construct a valuable part in the research process. Both companies are greatly interested in this particular event success as being a part of region development strategic partners and partners of this thesis work.

KEHY Oy supports the idea of organizing the event due to its difference and interest among Imatra's citizens and tourists coming to the area. In addition, positive benchmarking phonecall surveys to other towns revealed the event being well working and nicely organized. Calls were made to towns such as Tampere, Porvoo, Seinäjoki and Hämeenlinna.

At the very first time of the event's preparation in 2013 KEHY's role was to arrange negotiations with other stakeholders in Imatra. This included involvement of IMITSI as a lender of a market space, local media, hotels, Lassila & Tikanoja enterprise for cleaning services support, and some other. In cooperation with IMITSI Ry the agreement about market stands and their places were reached. Moreover, the connection with an advertising agency was established to create the outlook of the flyer. The role of Sari Saarinen as an Event Specialist was primary consisted of providing support in maintaining the relationships with necessary stakeholders in Imatra and reaching the agreements with local authorities concerning lawful permits required for the event.

When it comes to present day, the function of KEHY Oy and Sari Saarinen in particular has decreased. Sari is only helping in flyer distribution among marketing channels which were set up before and in making good deals with waste/disposal companies. The channels that were used for marketing and promotion in 2015 were GoSaimaa webpage (including Russian pages), KEHY's official Facebook page, ImatraBaseCamp web pages, Town of Imatra Facebook pages, IMITSI's Facebook page, and Ihmeellinen Imatra Facebook pages.

In general, the event representative of Team Fantastique has learnt to know routines of event organization in Imatra and has also grown to be more independent and self-organized.

Furthermore, different comments were given. Starting with little details and finishing with more serious issues. For example, during the interview it was found out that market trade booths positioning requires more consequent and logical stand layout. This is an important element, since it could allow the visitors to attain all the stands more easily without crowds.

The establishment of a cafeteria type area and trade stands was also seen to be unorganized. More sitting possibilities would greatly benefit the market. The entertainment part seemed to be forgotten too.

Besides little details, few serious issues were involved in market operations. Few negative comments received from guests were given to Sari Saarinen and to other people involved in organizational process. Guests claimed that high prices together with the way of selling products i.e. adding extra when weighting the product and making the customer pay for it too, made the general impression of the market slightly unpleasant. Customers wished to pay for the desired amount of products only.

IMITSI Ry was responsible for lending the city's square for the French-Italian food market. IMITSI Ry was also responsible for informing surrounding businesses, shops and stores about the event. That were the main elements of support provided by IMITSI Ry.

In comparison of previous year experience and earlier years, Liisa Marsio mentioned that more accurate marketing should be applied. For example,

marketing material should be prepared in cooperation with IMITSI Ry and KEHY Oy. It would give more clear and concrete vision of actions going to happen at the event. Additionally, the same name of the event should be used at all times to avoid visitors' confusion. At the end, IMITSI Ry advised to pay more attention to clients' feedback. Guests often comment on what they would like to improve or buy at the market.

7.2 Findings from Team Fantastique

First of all, Team Fantastique has previous experience in organizing food markets in the United Kingdom. The idea of promoting French products in the UK came when many English customers frequently started to come to Normandy for food shopping. Afterwards, food culture exchanges were established with the border cities in England. The duration of these markets did not exceed one weekend.

According to Ali Chehboun, Imatra was chosen as a market destination due to its people's positive commitment to develop and flourish the area in terms of internationalization. All products and goods presented at the market have high quality standards which determine their price. However, if the price of the high quality products is the reason of fewer purchases, the sellers at the market will reconsider the pricing strategy. In addition, Team Fantastique is looking for new ways to impress and satisfy demanding customer needs but it becomes more and more difficult since there are not many things that people did not experience before.

To make an event successful, a good effort should be done for advertising campaign. Team Fantastique requires strong support from local promotion companies to reach high number of visitors. In Chehboun's opinion the best sources of event advertisement are the Internet and other local social media channels of Imatra.

In conclusion, Team Fantastique is very grateful to Imatra's hosting companies for the job they do to organize the event. The commitment and energy put to the

event is appreciated. Although, more concentration on advertising and promoting actions is required for public's awareness.

7.3 Findings from clients of the food market

In the survey that was offered to visitors of the French-Italian food market were ten main questions. Those questions were intended to find out:

1. Genders of market visitors
2. Customer satisfaction on a scale from 1 to 5 (where "5" meant the event was great and "1" the guest did not enjoy it)
3. Specification of the concrete issue which prevented the visitor from enjoying the market
4. Specification of the most interesting product for purchasing
5. Capital available for spending at the market for food products
6. How did guests find out about the event happening
7. Was the timing right
8. Was the venue easy to access
9. Additional comments or other issues arising from the event experience
10. Would the event be recommended to others for visiting

Some of the results are presented in graphical form for clearer understanding.

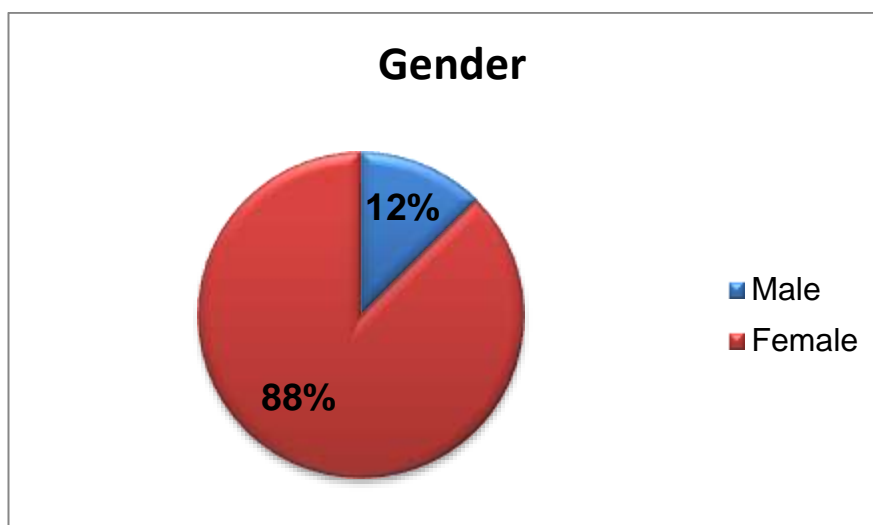


Figure 3. Gender of respondents

Figure 3 shows that most of the research participants were female.

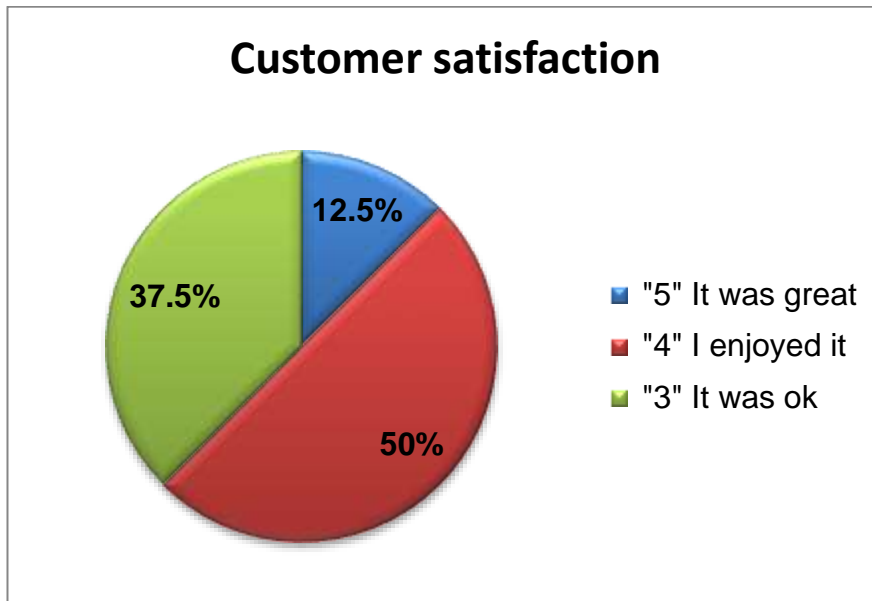


Figure 4. Satisfaction of customers in 2015

Even though the survey offered a scale from 1 to 5 for measuring customer satisfaction of the event, none of the participants chose 1 or 2 as an option. As it can be seen from Figure 4, half of the respondents enjoyed the event.

According to the exact question of what was particularly poor last year at the market, answers varied. However, most common problems were limited choice of goods and products available (mentioned by 6 persons), and high prices of products compared to previous years (mentioned by 4 persons). Other answers included the size of the market in general (too small for shopping), the bakery products were not as good as expected, and the atmosphere of the market could be more entertaining. This question was only needed to be answered by those who did not enjoy the market, however even those who did still commented on this matter.

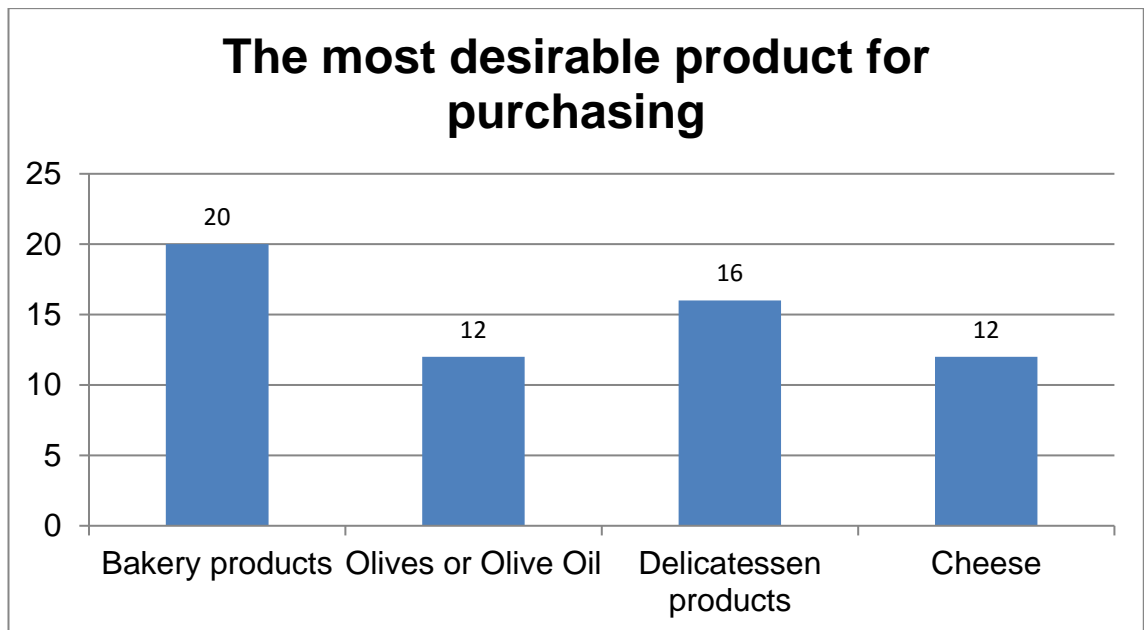


Figure 5. The most desirable product for purchasing

Since question 4 was a multiple choice question most of the respondents chose two or more products as the most desirable. It is obvious by looking at Figure 5 that the most popular products for purchasing were bakery products and delicatessen products. People also pointed out jam, candies, pizza and wine as desirable products to acquire in future.

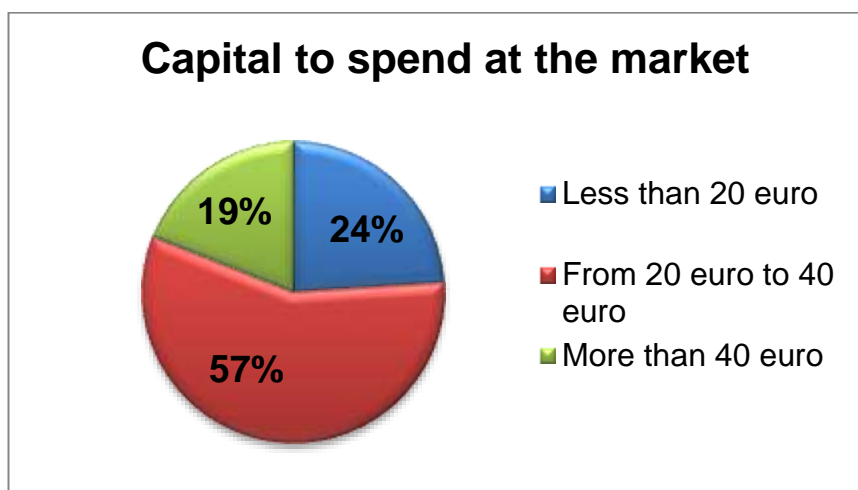


Figure 6. Capital to spend at the market for food products

From Figure 6 it can be concluded that majority of visitors were ready to spend 20-40 euro on international food products.

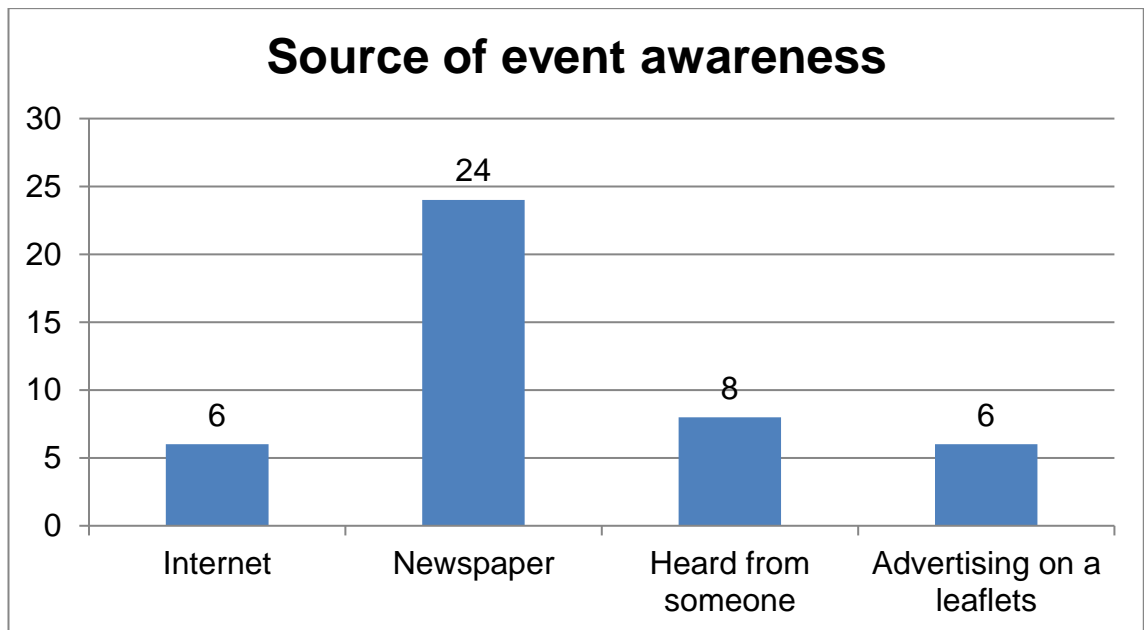


Figure 7. Sources of French-Italian food market awareness

Respondents had multiple choices when answering this question. All of the participants chose at least two alternatives for the source from where they heard about the event. The most common information provider was a newspaper (Figure 7).

In accordance with survey findings, all 100 percent of respondents are agreed with the timing decision and the venue proposition. In addition, guests suggest including the pedestrian street (Koskenparras) of Imatra city center too.

Several extra comments were received based on question 9. Such for example people noticed that prices were greatly increased since the last year. However, the number of sellers decreased. Fewer goods and products were sold but the packaging seemed to get larger. Seven people mentioned lack of choice in bakery department. Three peoples commented on disorganized intake area. Two guests wished to feel more the sense of France and Italy. On a more positive note, respondents were happy that the market had long working hours and an opportunity to come after work. For some respondents, everything went well and there was no need for change. Furthermore, everyone who visited the French-Italian food market last year and participated in a survey would recommend visiting the event to others.

8 Conclusions and suggestions

The purposes of the thesis were to figure out the existing obstacles preventing a successful running of an event French-Italian mobile food market and to outline ways of improving and developing event organization in the future. An analysis of the event's current situation was implemented to present an existing condition of travelling food market in Imatra.

In order to achieve the main goal of the thesis, an interviews and a survey of event's stakeholders were carried out. Based on the analysis of a market current situation and results of the research several conclusions and suggestions can be outlined.

The most important element found out during the research is that half of the respondents appreciated the event and said that it was managed well. Another 12 percent of respondents thought that the event was great and gave 5 out of 5 points for market estimation. This point let the author and other event stakeholders to concentrate on the minority of those who are not satisfied with the market operations and provide ways for developing and delivering even better food market experience.

As it was mentioned in the analysis of the event's current situation and found out during the research process, the products and goods that are presented at the market are the key components for the whole French-Italian food market event experience. The limitation of one product group can lead to a dissatisfaction of the total event occurrence. For example, the French-Italian food market has quite good and thought-out cheese selection. However, less than 40 percent of visitors are coming for this type of products. Referring back to the theoretical part, the three levels of product development can help to generate extra characteristics of each product and service offered at the market. At the same time, creating an augmented element should not be kept apart, either. This means that establishing new services can raise chances for event development and general customer satisfaction.

The second issue arising from the event's current situation was the price of products. According to data collected from previous year, product prices were

raised dramatically. Although, based on the current research, only 19 percent of visitors were ready to spend more than 40 euro on food products. Here, at this point it is also wise to remember that the market has quite strong competitors, as mentioned earlier, at least for some products, and the price will be a determining factor of the purchasing decision.

Another element involved in current event dissatisfaction is marketing actions. Event hosts as well as market organizers mentioned a nuisance during marketing campaigns and actions taken on event advertisement from both sides. As it was mentioned in chapter 4.2, a successful marketing campaign should provide personal value to attendees rather than information about a product or service. It was also specified in chapter 2.4.2, that engaging stakeholders throughout the planning process provides a stronger likelihood that the community is satisfied with and will support the event. However, even though that both stakeholders were dissatisfied with the organizational side of marketing activities, visitors of the market pointed out at least two different sources of event awareness.

Consequently, it was found out that the French-Italian food market is targeted at multiple groups of customers. To make the event viable to its visitors it is necessary to understand and satisfy the needs of those visitors. Questions suggested in chapter 4.1 can help in developing necessary strategy for products and services offered to different target groups for assisting further event improvement.

The fifth element that caused disagreement, in connection with high prices, was competition. Local shops and stores offer nearly equivalent items for cheaper prices. This mostly concerns the bakery department. However, based on the research, bakery goods are the most desirable goods to purchase for more than 62 percent of respondents of the survey.

Furthermore, amusement, entertainment and relaxation are the elements of memorable experience. As described in chapter 2.3, physical motivators can lead to increased number of visitors. The research process also pointed out that the event did not include any entertainment. In addition, a well thought plan of a market place requires the provision of an easy access to the trade point. Well organized trading stands can make visitors to continue to observe the market and

give a glance at all items offered, and as a consequence, can lead to a greater sales turnover. It also helps customers to systematize their shopping time.

The penultimate comment regards the involvement of other stakeholders in this event. Closer collaboration with local businesses can increase customer's trust and confidence of the event operations. At the end it is always wise to forecast possible external misfortune that can affect the French-Italian food market performance. These are for example economic instability and weather conditions. According to the research none of the participants would prefer different time for the event, or another location. The only proposal is, then, to use Koskenparras street along with the Imatra's city square.

8.1 Suggestions for event development to KEHY Oy and IMITSI Ry

Due to the close cooperation between KEHY Oy and IMITSI Ry the suggestions are presented in the same section and applied to both event hosts. There are three precise areas for future event development: marketing and promotion, governmental support and involvement of other stakeholders.

Since the highest number of the event participants and survey respondents state that advertisement in newspaper was the most useful marketing tool, then more concentration should apply to other event awareness sources. For example, the best source of reaching Russian clients would be the Internet. Advertisement in Russian social network (www.vk.com) as well as continuing promotion through already existing web channels is recommended. Flyer distribution may become a valuable marketing tool by distributing leaflets around Imatra's city center and other big stores such as Prisma and K-CityMarket.

As was mentioned earlier and based on the research made by Baniya & Mäyrä (2014), gastronomic events are at high interest among citizens and visitors of South Karelia and Imatra in particular. For that reason, the French-Italian food market can also be considered as tourism development event for the region. Such events required extra efforts in organizational processes as well as adequate financial support from hosting destinations. Therefore, investing governmental

financial resources could greatly benefit the marketing campaign prepared by KEHY Oy and could also influence the number of people reached either from Imatra or surrounding areas or from Russia.

Based on the idea received from one of the guests of the French-Italian food market, author suggests a small business alliance with closely located Bar & Café Lumo could bring profit to all parties. This means that consumers would be given an opportunity to buy products complementing each other. For example, bakery products bought at the market could be combined with a cup of coffee or tea from Lumo's Bar & Café; or cheese selection could be accompanied by a glass of wine. This venture could bring financial profit to organizers and, more importantly, satisfaction to visitors. Such collaboration could increase sales for both enterprises and add popularity to the event. However, the support of hosting companies is required to reach the collaboration with local entrepreneurs.

8.2 Suggestions for event development to Team Fantastique

Several suggestions are offered to the organizers of French-Italian mobile food market.

8.2.1 Products

It is suggested that the selection of cheese could be slightly reduced and instead replaced by greater amount of delicatessen products and/or by bakery products, which were mentioned as the most desirable products by almost 63 percent of survey respondents. If traders wish to keep on selling the existing variety of products then ways of product development or improvement should apply. The same concerns services offered at the market. Expanded eating area will greatly benefit fast-food sales e.g. crepes, muffins, merguez sausages etc.

In addition, a candy stand was the sole place at the market where children could find something desirable for them. However, it was noticed that many visitors come with children; therefore, author would also recommend considering additional products and goods possibilities that can interest young attendees.

8.2.2 Price and competition

As a result of the research a reconsideration of pricing level is essential if the market wishes to sell more and keep clients satisfied. To figure out the correct price of the products and goods, the implementation of competitor analysis is suggested. Along with high quality of products, great packaging and other exceptional product characteristics, the financial abilities of customers should be kept in mind.

8.2.3 Marketing and promotion

Already existing at the market, “free testing” of dairy products is a good move for adding value to the customers. However, the use of special promotional activities such as “two for the price of one” or “buy more and receive more discounts” can be an important tool in building committed relationships with customers. Charity alignments also work well and give buyer a sense of buying for helping others.

At the same time, the whole atmosphere of the French-Italian food market can easily be used as an additional marketing element of the event. The friendly attitude of sellers, the use of French and Italian music and the smell of freshly prepared bakery goods increases sales and makes visitors to have a sense of being away from home.

However, the most important element of marketing an event on a local basis is the cooperation with and reliance on hosting organizations. Thus, accurate and agreed with hosts of the event, marketing actions should be put into practice. The concrete example of where cooperation is needed was the outlook of the event flyer and the name of the event. Both of these marketing elements should be proposed and approved in advance without further changes.

8.2.4 Entertainment and trade stands situation

Entertainment is one of the factors which make the event memorable. Therefore, having a musician is a good solution for the French-Italian food market. Besides, having a balloon artist can help at keeping kids occupied while parents are shopping. Moreover, logos used on a balloon can promote the event along with other marketing and promotional tools. It is also a money saving entertainment solution.

Finally, the market stands must facilitate the process of observing products and goods for sale and prevent the appearance of either crowds or lonely stands. On the other hand, nearby shops should not be blocked for entering and exiting as well.

The French-Italian periodic mobile food market has a great potential to become one of the best gastronomic events in Imatra and even the whole South Karelia region. It has all the opportunities to implement necessary changes and to develop the existing situation. It also has equally good chances to create new services to accompany existing products and goods sales. This thesis work can be a good start for further investigation about development of the French-Italian travelling food market.

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Appendix 1



Dear partnership companies! These questions are developed to find out more about your involvement in French - Italian Food Market event. Your answers are very valued and hopefully will be as informative as possible! All data is used for educational and research reasons only.

- 1. Why did you decide to support the organization of French – Italian food market event in Imatra?**

- 2. What was your role in this event preparation?**

- 3. Would you change anything according event running /organizing based on previous year experience?**

- 4. Do you have any financial support from Imatra town for organizing the event?**

- 5. What are the tools to promote the event in your opinion?**

- 6. What could you do from your side to improve the future of this event?**

- 7. Any other issues arising from event organizing / running you would like to discuss?**

Thank you for your time and answers! Elizaveta Kursakova (Saimaa UAS)

Appendix 2



Dear Team Fantastique! Imatra values your involvement in town's event happenings and would like to improve the future of our cooperation. The questions suggested are meant to find out your opinions about last year experience of French – Italian Food Market event organized in Imatra. Please answer carefully and help us to find ways for mutual benefits! Thank you! ☺

- 1. How did you get the idea of this kind of event organizing?**
- 2. Is there any particular reason(s) why you choose Imatra as a destination for trade?**
- 3. How do you choose the product for selling?**
 - 3.1 Food products**
 - 3.2 House – keeping goods**
 - 3.3 Hand – made goods**
- 4. If during the research process it will be found out that price level is one of the major reasons of customers negative purchase decision, are you going to lower the price or make any other marketing move eg. Special offers?**
- 5. What are the tools to promote the event in your opinion?**
- 6. Would you change anything according event running /organizing based on previous year experience?**
- 7. What could you wish or suggest to the organizing companies KEHY Oy and IMITSI Ry in future cooperation?**

8. Any other comments on event organizing or running that you would like to discuss?

Thank you for your time and answers! Elizaveta Kursakova (Saimaa UAS

Appendix 3

Dear citizens and visitors of Imatra! This survey was designed to find out your opinions



about the French – Italian Food Market event in Imatra with the main purpose of future event improvement! All of the responses will be used for educational and research reasons only. Please take a part in the research and help us to improve it! Thank you



1. What is your gender?

Male

Female

2. On a scale from 1 to 5, how much did you enjoy the event last time? Choose one.

1 – not at all

2 – rather didn't like it then like it

3 – it was ok

4 – I enjoyed it

5 – I really like it, it was great

Other _____

If you tick 4 or 5 please proceed to the question 4.

3. What was particularly stopping you from enjoying the market?

4. Which French or Italian product you would be interested to buy from the market in the future most? Choose at least one.

Bakery products

Olives or olive oil

Cheese

Delicatessen products

Other

If you can, please, specify _____

5. How much are you willing to spend on international food products all together?

- Less than 20 €
- 20 € to 40 €
- More than 40 €

6. How did you know about the event? Choose at least one.

- Newspaper
- Internet
- Advertising on a leaflets
- Heard from friends/relatives etc
- I didn't know about the event in advance

7. Was the timing of the event suitable for you?

- Yes No

If "No", what would be the best time that suits you? _____

8. Was the venue of the event is suitable for you?

- Yes No

If "No", what would be better venue for the event in your opinion?

9. Is there something else that you would like to change or add to the next year French – Italian Food market?

10. Would you recommend this event for visiting?

- Yes No

Thank you for your time and answers! Elizaveta Kursakova (Saimaa UAS)