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The Russian outbound tourism to Finland during the economic downturn

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Abstract

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This thesis studies the situation with Russian outbound tourism during the economic downturn (2014-2016). The aim of this thesis is to come up with recommendations how the attractiveness of Finland could be improved in Russia.

The objective of the survey was to obtain opinions of Russian experts in travel sphere about the trends of outbound tourism in Russia towards Finland; reasons of its decrease at the moment.

After fast grow during many years and becoming one of the main outbound travel markets in Europe, the Russian market experienced turbulent times in 2014. The devaluation of the rouble rise the price of foreign travel by more than 30% and numerous tour operators went bankrupt. What have actually happened with authoritative travel companies? Why did more than a million people cancel their trips abroad in 2015? We are going to concentrate on these aspects and understand the current situation.

Also considerable attention was devoted to analysing information gained from various resources and looking at current motives and behaviour of Russian tourists when they visit Finland.

The thesis covers the following issues:
- Vast change of Russian outbound tourism during latest years
- Possible reasons of dramatic decrease of Russian tourists
- Description of successful years for going abroad from Russia
- Current situation of outbound market and trends
- Predictions
- Suggestions and recommendations for re-establishing a stream of Russian tourists to Finland
- Personal experience, since I used to work in NEVA Travel Company (Department of Finland and Scandinavian countries) as a hotel booking manager and in Holiday Club Resorts Rus Company as a senior sales executive.

Keywords
Russian outbound tourism to Finland; decrease; possible reasons; future trends; motives; tourists behaviour, new destinations; values

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1 Introduction

Finland was always in great demand among Russian tourists for many years. For many Russian customers it was a “window into Europe”. This country could provide an indication of present-day Europe; for some people it was the only opportunity to come to Europe. Services and goods represented in Finland differed significantly from the Russian ones. Nordic Finnish culture, different life style and historical aspects always pulled Russian tourists to visit Finland. People never had any trouble reaching Finland. Road transportation was always well developed and did not require a lot of money. Bus trips or car trips used to be the cheapest way to come to Finland and continue to be today. Obtaining a visa to Finland has never been a problem for Russians, especially for Saint-Petersburg citizens.

The border area between Finland and Russia has a trading history going back hundreds of years. The economic relationship was based on trading products such as animal pelts, textiles and fabrics, wood goods and dairy. Saint-Petersburg residents started going west in big numbers in the 1990s, passing a million annually in 2000. Lappeenranta afterwards started to make a large effort to attract the five million inhabitants of Russia’s “cultural capital” – Saint-Petersburg. Many people were coming to Finland just for several hours to buy food and household chemicals because they were considered as better goods comparing to Russian ones. It was fancy to buy everything from Finland. DISAS Fish stores located close to the Russian border were full of Russian customers and their parking places were occupied by cars with Russian number plates. (Independent Digital News & Media, 2014.)

In autumn 2012 the Stockmann department store in the city of Helsinki started accepting rouble currency as a payment. This they did in order to attract Russian consumers. “This project during the last quarter was very fortunate. While paying by bank cards is the most well-known option at the cash register, roubles have become common foreign currency,” informed Hanna Kiminkinen from the Stockmann department store in Jumbo shopping centre in the city of Vantaa to YLE news. (Barents Observer, 2013.)

As Barents Observer reported in 2013, Finland is growing in health tourism. This is due to Russians travelling to Finland for healthcare purposes. There has been a major increase in this type of tourism over the last few years and, according to subject matter experts, this trend is growing. Finland is also a popular destination for family holidays among Russian tourists. However, the most common reason a Russian tourist is coming to Finland is for shopping. Common products that Russians buy are food and drinks, clothing and shoes as well as household goods. The reasons for Russians to shop in Finland are the high quality of products and good prices. The most appreciated things among Russian tourists coming to Finland are the good means of transportation, ability to shop for affordable prices and holiday activities. (Taloussanomat, 2012.) (Barents Observer, 2013.)

Many Russians would like to study abroad and most high-ranked educational institutes according to their opinions are located in the US and Europe. Gaining education in Finland used to be free of charge for Russian students which attracted a lot of applicants. (Rossiiskaya gazeta. 2010. /Российская газета, 2010.)

Beginning in 2014, the number of visitors has decreased, at the end of 2014 there was a significant decline in Russian tourists coming to Finland. TAK Oy reports that a total of 157,000 Russian visitors crossed the border in south-eastern Finland between 27 December 2014 and 9 September 2015. This is a decrease of 118,000 visitors compared to one year earlier. Also, the average sum spent in Finland fell sharply from 500 euros to less than 196 euros. (TAK Oy, 2015.)

The main road traffic (more than 90 per cent) crossing the Finnish-Russian border happens in south-eastern Finland. According to tourism professionals, the main reason for declining number of tourists and their spending in Finland was the fluctuating rouble rate. The European Central Bank reported that the euro strengthened from roughly 45 roubles in January 2014 to 70 roubles in December 2014 and further to 78 roubles during Christmas 2014. On the last day of December 2014, the euro price was 100 roubles per 1 euro. (European Central Bank, 2015.)

All this had a negative impact on the Russian outbound tourism and Russians urgently started to cancel their trips and ask for money refund. This resulted in dramatic bankruptcies of the largest Russian tour operators. At the same time, thousands of people who worked in the tourism field lost their jobs. With a falling need for visas to Finland, the amount of nights spent by foreign tourists in Finland (hotels, cottages, apartments) has also declined. As reported earlier by Patchwork Barents, the figure for Barents Finland totalled 1,377,644 nights in the year of 2014, and 1,420,716 nights in the year of 2013. The biggest noticeable drop took place in the region of Lapland, where the amount of nights changed from 1,027,064 to 1,001,400. (Patchwork Barents, 2016.)

Despite the crisis, some Russians still continue travelling to Finland and Finland has a major challenge to attract more Russian tourists in such a difficult financial situation for both countries. The goal of Finland's tourism strategy is to create the prerequisites for the development, growth and competitiveness of year-round tourism and the related business operations. In Finland, tourism is a significant source of employment and it helps Finland's economy to expand. Also, tourism is a significant factor as a source of regional livelihood. Finnish travel agencies needs to find a way to attract customers from Russia in such a difficult situation. Obviously, people look for different prices, they cut the amount of accommodation nights, and their preferences has changed.

As I have been working in the travel sphere for more than five years (in NEVA Travel Company, Department of Finland and Scandinavian countries) and in Holiday Club Resorts Oy (as a hotel booking manager), I experienced the effects of the tourism business crisis. When writing this thesis, I mostly look at the practical sense of it. I would like to figure out how to increase the amount of Russian tourists nowadays and to suggest possible changes, give recommendations by making research, communicate with professionals in the tourism sphere and analyse various sources.

1.1 Aim and research questions

The aim of this thesis is to come up with recommendations how the attractiveness of Finland could be improved in Russia. In order to reach the aim, the following research questions were answered:

- **What are the possible reasons for the significant decline in number of Russian tourists traveling abroad?**

• **How did the rouble depreciation affect the purchasing power of Russian consumers?**

• **What are the current trends in Russian customer behaviour in the tourism sphere in Finland?**

The plan was to conduct and combine quantitative and qualitative research, investigate the reason of the vast change of Russian outbound tourism towards Finland during the last years and investigate what are the motives of Russian customers nowadays.

1.2 Research approach and methods

The following Master thesis is based on a case study. The empirical research is carried out through both qualitative and quantitative researches. For the qualitative part, an interview with the manager of Russian department of Linnanmäki amusement park was conducted. This type of research provides very detailed data about behaviour, opinions, views and attitudes of a very small group of people. The data obtained cannot be quantified (with rare exceptions), but it gives a good idea of the mindset of consumers. Qualitative research is essential in the development of new products, services and advertising campaigns (Kolb, 2008.)

For the quantitative part, an online questionnaire was created based on the Webropol system and distributed through emails. Using the quantitative data, it is possible to look through possible reasons for the marked decline in the number of Russian tourists traveling abroad. It is very essential, as it is an easy and quick way to collect a great number of opinions of Russian tourists and Finnish and Russian travel companies.

The aim of this method is to create a valuable questionnaire and get a data from reliable sources. As many respondents may have language difficulties answering the questionnaire, it was created in two languages: English and Russian. This way the research minimises the possibility of misunderstanding and avoids collecting data that has errors.

In the end, both the interview and the questionnaire were combined and analysed.

2 Finland as a travel destination place for Russians

Over the years, Finland always occupied the leading positions as a travel destination place among Russian tourists. Clean air, beautiful nature, attractive prices, good variety of goods, high quality of services – you can enumerate a lot of things which attract Russian tourists. Besides, the great proximity to Saint-Petersburg makes Finland relatively inexpensive for the inhabitants of this city. People started to go to Finland more and more frequently, travel destination was growing rapidly, thus a lot of travel companies emerged. People started to demonstrate a strong interest in the cultural life of the finnish nation and the local cuisine; there was a tendency to buy dairy products, fish, and caviar in large amounts and bring it back to Russia.

2.1 Development of outbound tourism from Russia to Finland (post-Soviet period)

The vast change of Russian economic circumstances in the 90s drove to a sensational reform of the travel business, which resulted in an expanding number of operating travel organisations. The list of offered destinations to visit expanded, the competition between Russian tourism industry players increased and there were also an increasing stream of foreign tourists coming to Russia, thus inducing a fast growth of Russians travelling abroad. (Federal State Statistics Service (Goskomstat) of Russia, 2016.)

As indicated by the official data from the Federal State Statistics Service of Russia, the total amount of visits made by Russian citizens to the non-CIS countries (CIS - The Commonwealth of Independent States) reached 25.4 million in 2010 versus 9.8 million in 2000, including 12.2 million trips that were related to tourism in 2010, while in 2000 this number was only 4.2 million. (Federal State Statistics Service (Goskomstat) of Russia, 2016.)

A considerable amount of tourists from Russian Federation visit European Union countries annually. In general, 2.5 million Russians visited the EU countries for touristic purposes in 2000. This number grew steadily, reaching 4.1 million in 2010. In 2010, the share of tourist trips to the EU countries amounted to 33% of the total number of Russian citizens' tourist trips to non-CIS countries (the Commonwealth of Independent

States). Thus, the European market is at present very important and is of interest for Russian tourists. Meanwhile, the projected distribution of tourist flows from Russia between EU countries actually defines the challenges that Russian and European tourism and hospitality players will be facing in next years. Hence, the strategic growth of Russian and European industry players is greatly affected by the tourism demand of Russian citizens for various EU destinations. (Federal State Statistics Service (Goskomstat) of Russia, 2016.)

Tourists travelling from Russian Federation to the European Union countries has increased a lot since the last decade. However, if we look at the European Union as a destination and consider the total number of Russian tourists travelling abroad (excluding the CIS countries), we can observe a constant decline from 59% in 2000 to 33% in 2010 (see Figure 1). Although there is a significant increase of Russians travelling abroad, destinations in Europe are growing much slower. This can be explained by a steady growth of trips to South-East Asia and North Africa, and recently also South America and the Caribbean. Russians are attracted to these destinations because of the desire to experience something new, cheap prices, value for money and the uniqueness that these countries can provide. (Federal State Statistics Service (Goskomstat) of Russia, 2016.)

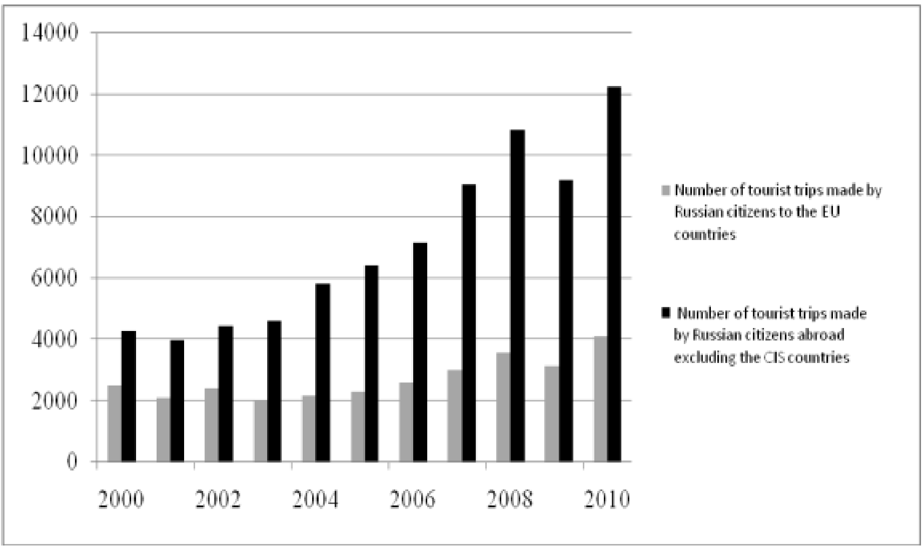

Figure 1. Number of tourist trips made by Russian citizens to the non-CIS and EU countries (in thousands) (Baggio, Czakon & Mariani, 2016.)

There are some countries that has recently appeared on the Russian market, but instead of analysing these, here it is concentrated on analysing the Russian tourist flows towards the European Union countries. During this period, the Russian tourist flow towards the EU increased, but some countries are exceptions where the flow significantly decreased. Especially tourist trips to Austria increased (616%) as well as Greece (577%), the Netherlands (563%), and Czech Republic (496%). However, some countries experienced a dramatic decline in tourist flows from Russia. In Poland, the number of Russians tourists decreased almost 95% from 2000 to 2010. Reason for this was that Russians lost their interest in Polish tourism products. Also, the visa procedures to Poland became more complicated which further attributed to this. At the same time, the Russian shuttle trade lost the attractiveness of Poland as well. A decrease in Russian tourism has been also observed in Estonia (91%), Slovakia (80%) and Lithuania (30%). The reason is similar to the situation in Poland: as the visa process became more complicated, a significant decline could be observed. There is worth noting that there is a significant difference in the number of Russian tourists visiting particular EU countries (see Fig.2). Four countries has the biggest amount of incoming Russian tourists. Finland is in the top group with 709 000 Russian tourists in 2010, which is 17% of the total number of tourists entries to the EU countries. Also in this group is Germany, that received 471 000 tourists (12%), Italy that received 452 000 tourists (11%) and Spain that received 411 000 tourists (10%). The following group of eight countries (4 to 10%) includes Greece, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Cyprus, and France. The rest of the remaining 18 countries could be allocated to a third group. This group has no more than 4% of the total number of Russians' tourist trips to the EU. (Federal State Statistics Service (Goskomstat) of Russia, 2016.)

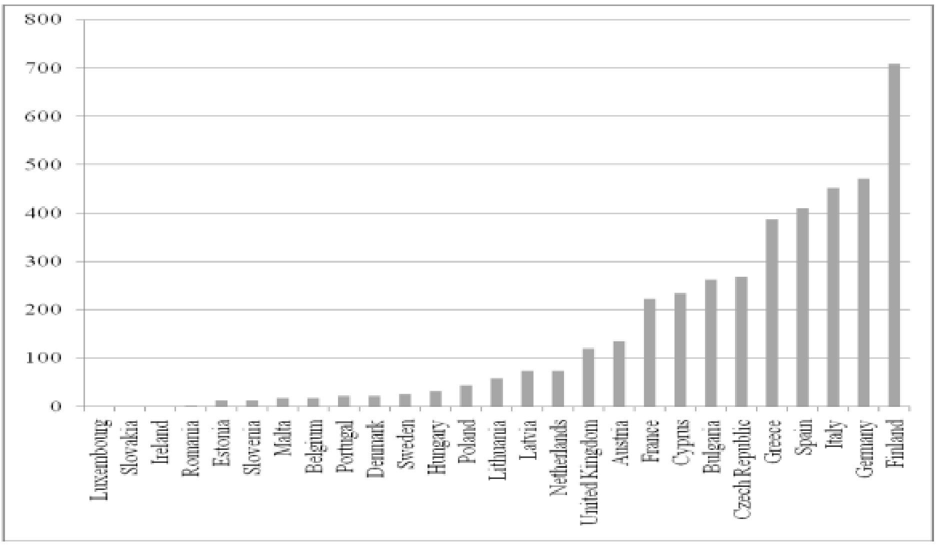

Figure 2. Number of tourist trips made by Russian citizens to the EU in 2010, by country (in thousands) (Baggio, Czakon & Mariani, 2016.)

There is an increasing trend of Russian citizens traveling to the European Union. However, these tourist flows are distributed in a certain way between the EU countries. This study gives a statistical analysis of tourist flows from Russia to the European Union countries. By using traditional statistically measurable factors, there was no apparent correlation when modelling the relationship between the tourists flows from Russia to the EU countries. The reason for this might be due to extreme heterogeneity of Russian customers with regards to tourist services, including the income differentiation, difference in preferences, lifestyles, the location of residence in relation to Europe, etc. Using the available data, it is possible to forecast the tourist flows from Russia to EU countries within a short term perspective. According to the present study, the current trends of Russian citizens' travel flows to the EU countries will not significantly change within the forecast period. The trend will continue for the countries that show a steady increase in the number of Russian tourists in the observed period. Finland, Germany, Italy, Greece and Spain will continue to be the top countries that attracts the most significant flows of Russian tourists. (Federal State Statistics Service (Goskomstat) of Russia, 2016.)

Non-resident visitors spent 29.85 million nights in Finland last year, which is one percent more than in 2014. The number of bed nights spent by visitors increased although overnight stays by Russian residents fell by 3.5 million nights. The number of bed nights is affected to a large extent by the relative development of day and overnight trips. Those visiting Finland for longer periods often stayed in their own or rented flats or with relatives, in which case they are not included in official accommodation statistics. (Visit Finland, 2015.)

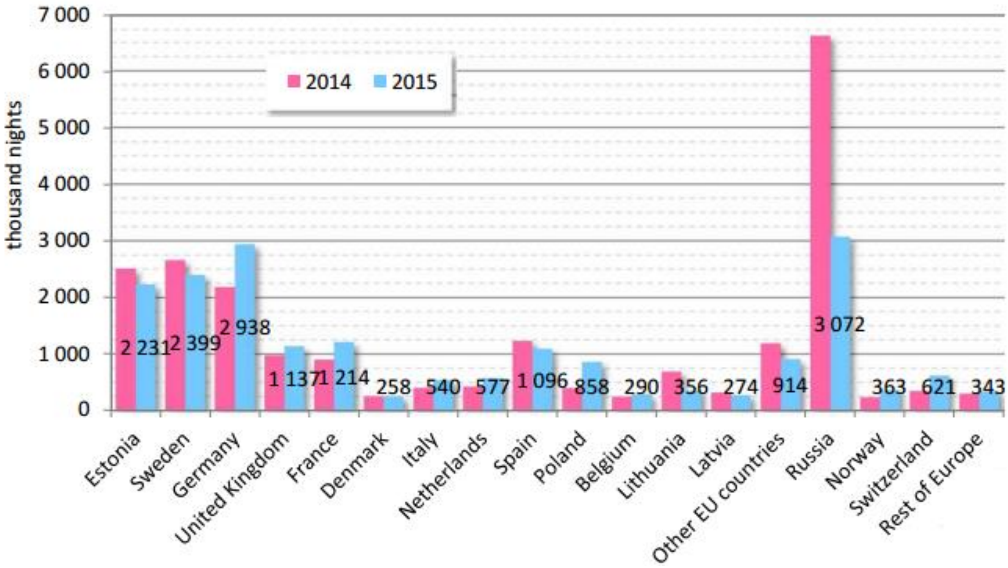

Figure 3. Total number of bed nights which non-resident visitors spent in Finland (Visit Finland, 2015.)

Comparing to year 2008 the number of nights spent by russians in Finland drammatically decreased in 2015 and 2016. Before this we could see a stable growing interest.

	Arrivals								
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
WHOLE COUNTRY									
Russian Federation	476,632	456,388	509,237	630,064	731,261	778,574	615,116	351,721	207,461

Figure 4. Yearly nights spend and arrivals by Russian visitors.

2.2 Russian cross-border shopping tourism in Finland

According to Bar-Kołelis and Wiskulski (2012, 44–45) "cross-border shopping is a certain type of shopping tourism: people travel beyond the boundaries of their own nation specifically to shop in a neighbouring country". A cross-border shopping trip may be short for visitors living close to the neighbour country border, lasting from some minutes to several hours, or may be of longer duration for those who live farther from the border. (Bar-Kołelis and Wiskulski, 2012.)

One of the most popular and common reasons why Russian customers travel to Finland is shopping. Shopping facilities in Finland are attracting Russian tourists a lot; visitors usually buy food and alcohol drinks, cheap clothes and footwear, and various cleaning supplies. There were two main reasons for buying in Finland during last years: high quality of products and relatively low prices. The most attractive aspects of coming to Finland were good transportation connections, affordable shopping and leisure possibilities. The majority of the Russian tourists coming to Finland were people who were interested in shopping and coming just for one day and returning the same date. The prices in Finland were also cheaper than in Russia at those times and this was a very significant reason for Russian tourists to shop in Finland and to visit this country. (Taloussanomat, 2012a)

There were a lot of travel companies and websites where you could book a shopping trip to Finland just for one day, a marketing message was for example: "to Finland for 1 hour". This gives you a unique opportunity to get the stamp in your passport and open your Shengen visa quickly. You will open your visa and later have more trips to Finland. Also, you will visit the Duty Free shop and one of the big supermarkets such as "LAPLANDIA", "PRISMA", and "RAJA MARKET". It doesn't matter how much time you will spend on Finland territory – it will be counted as one day of visit.
You get an opportunity to: open your Finnish visa, close your Finnish visa, and increase your number of visits to Finland." (AMG Travel, 2016.)

2.3 Enter documents and visa

An agreement between the European Community and the Russian Federation has been in force from 1 June 2007.
According to the website of the Embassy of Finland in St Petersburg, all citizens of Russian Federation are required to apply for a visa before entering Finland and/or other countries under the Schengen agreement. The Consulate-General of Finland in Saint Petersburg obtains visa applications only from the residents of the North-West region of Russia. It means that people living in other parts of Russia have to apply for their visa in The Embassy of Finland in Moscow or in Petrozavodsk. (VFS.Global, 2016.)

In order to obtain a visa, the following documents are required:

- Visa application form;
- International passport, valid for at least 90 days;

- One recent full face colour photograph
- A travel medical insurance policy;
- Russian internal passport copy - for all the Russian nationals aged 14 and above.
- Documents or relevant information which justified the purpose and conditions of travel. (VFS.Global, 2016.)

The residents of Crimea or Sevastopol (a city located in the south-western region of the Crimean Peninsula surrounded by the Black Sea) who gained their passports after 18th March 2014, when this territory was annexed by Russian Federation, (indication: 5-digit FMS office identification number starts with the codes 90, 91 or 92) are not recognised unless the holder was a Russian citizen before the annexation. Russian passports issued by Russian missions in the break-away Regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, belonging to Georgia according the international law, are also not recognised. (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 2016.)

For some residents, getting Finnish visa will not be problematic at all, for example the citizens of the Nord-West region of Russia (including the inhabitants who have permanent residency in Saint-Petersburg) have simplified rules for Finnish visa application. They do not need to provide documents to Visa centre or relevant information which explain the purpose and conditions of their travel to Finland. Thereby, tourists from Saint Petersburg can very easily gain a visa and travel to Finland as compared to people living in other parts of Russia. (VFS.Global, 2016.)

2.4 How to get to Finland

There are many options to go to Finland for Russian tourists, which can please any customer: cheap bus trips, comfortable flights, fast train trips or relaxing ferry cruises. The selection is large. The cheapest way from Saint-Petersburg to Finland is to take bus, the price can be as cheap as 8 euros one way. It normally takes 7-8 hours to reach Helsinki. However, it depends on the time spent at the border crossing. The most popular destinations from Saint-Petersburg to Finland are: Imatra, Lappeenranta, Helsinki, Lahti, Tampere and Savonlinna. There are several travel companies which offer transfer to Finland. Sometimes you do not even need to book it and you can buy bus ticket on the spot. (Stop in Finland, 2016.)

In June 2014 a popular company among Russian customers opened a new route to Helsinki. Ticket price on route St. Petersburg - Helsinki start from 10 euro. These buses are famous because of their comfort and their facilities that includes: Individual touch screen media system (videos, music, games, Internet), declinable seats and plenty of legroom, free Wi-Fi and hot drinks, power supply by every seat pair (220 V), air conditioner and WC. The trip between Saint- Petersburg and Helsinki lasts approximately 7 hours and 30 minutes, but the travel time may vary due to traffic and weather conditions. (Lux Express, 2016.)

Nowadays Russian tourists have a perfect opportunity to go to Finland in a very short time. Helsinki has a great train connection with St. Petersburg. Depending on the season, there are at least four Allegro trains running every day in each direction. The Allegro train takes less than 3.5 hours from Saint-Petersburg to Helsinki. Minimum price can be 29 euros, normally during morning hours. Passengers traveling to or from Moscow can take the Lev Tolstoy overnight train route with a stop in Saint Petersburg. The Lev Tolstoy runs once a day and offers comfortable sleeper cabins of different classes. Travel time is 13-14 hours depending on direction. The train is run by the Russian Railways. (Russian Rail, 2016.)

Russian tourists can also fly to Finland and flying from Saint-Petersburg (Pulkovo) to Helsinki (Vantaa airport) takes just 55 minutes, flying from Moscow (Sheremetyevo) takes 1 hour 40 minutes. (Stop in Finland, 2016.)

The Helsinki St Petersburg ferry route connects Finland with Russia. Currently there is only one Ferry Company operating this ferry service, St Peter Line. The service operates up to three times each week and travel time is around 15 hours 30 minutes. There are two ferries which go to Helsinki – Princess Anastasia and Princess Maria. Passengers can buy cruises, for example Saint-Petersburg – Helsinki – Stockholm - Tallinn – Saint-Petersburg or Saint-Petersburg – Helsinki – Saint-Petersburg. Also, it is possible to buy ferry tickets only to Helsinki. (St.Peterline, 2016.)

Personal vehicle is on the top among the most popular and cheap way to go to Finland from Russia. Also, it is very convenient to reach Finland from Saint-Petersburg since the road transportation is very simplified. There is a European route E18 which goes from Saint-Petersburg via Vyborg city to Vaalimaa/Torfyanovka border crossing point in the Virolahti municipality. From Vaalima E18 continues to Helsinki and from there it goes to Turku. In the Vaalima border crossing point there are several queues for various kinds of vehicles: buses, trucks and cars. Trucks normally need to be in a queue for quite a long time but it does not affect other vehicles. Time spent in a queue by car is variable and depends on the season, time and economic situation. In 2016 there are less transport crossing the board and sometimes for me it took just 15 minutes to cross the Finnish-Russian board. Otherwise, in 2012 I spend about eight hours in a car during winter holidays on the Russian side, since the Finnish skiing resorts were very popular during those times among Russians. During border control, the residence permit and passports are checked. For Russian tourists Schengen visas are needed. There are also other border crossings between Finland and Russia, such Nuijamaa/Brusnichnoye (Lappeenranta), Vaalimaa/Torfyanovka, Imatra/Svetogorsk, Niirala (Tohmajärvi), Vartius (Kuhmo), Kelloselkä (Salla) and Raja-Jooseppi (Sodankylä). (Stop in Finland, 2016.)

In order to avoid spending a long time in a queue at the board, Russians use these two online resources where they can get a summary of waiting time in queues at the Russian-Finnish board crossing points: nagranitse.ru - На Границе.Ру and fi.granitsa-online.com.

3 Current situation of Russian outbound tourism

In this chapter we will discuss and overview the years before outbound tourism decreased. Also, we will look through the possible reasons that could contribute to the current situation on the travel market in Russia.

3.1 Years before outbound tourism collapse

During the last five years before 2014, the development of Russian tourism industry has resulted in a dramatic change in growth of a number of trips made by Russian citizens abroad, including tourist trips to the countries of European Union. Travel from Russia has grown massively over the past two decades and Europe has been a major beneficiary. With 18.1 million tourist arrivals in 2013, Russia has grown to become Europe's third largest source market. Increasing prosperity in Russia has been spurred by a growing economy, freed up by market reforms and fuelled by the rising price of oil. Consequently, more and more people are exceeding the $20,000 income threshold, identified by independent advisory firm Tourism Economics as the point at which international travel becomes affordable. (Travel weekly, 2014.)

ETC head of research, Valeria Croce, said: "The underlying fundamentals of outbound travel from Russia remain strong and the market is expected to deliver pent up demand in the medium to long term, especially to those destinations which maintain their presence in the market". (Travel weekly, 2014.)

"In the past, the European tourism sector has proved remarkably resilient to different types of shocks, including political unrest, economic recessions, and even terrorism. Despite the challenging landscape, the tourism sector is expected to confirm its role as a key driver of Europe's economy, growth, and employment." There used to be paradise times for Russian Tour Operators and Travel Agencies for some years before 2014. For instance, only in Saint-Petersburg, there were several thousand travel companies offering a huge amount of tours to any spot on the earth. (TTG Nordic, 2014.)

Tourism was very successful business and people who did not even have a job or educational background in tourism started to open travel agencies. The most successful companies during those years were: Intourist, Neva Travel Company, Versa, Solvex Tourne, West travel, Atlas, Labirint, Iuzhnii crest (South Cross), Rosa Vetrov (Wind Rose). At the moment only West Travel Company and Intourist still continue their business, others are unfortunately bankrupted. Personally, I used to work in Neva Travel Company for several years where my career as a booking manager in the Scandinavian department started. I still have fresh memories of hundreds of tourists per day who wanted to visit Finland, Estonia, and Latvia; cruises by Saint-Peterline Ferry Company were incredibly popular among Russian people. Neva travel Company used to fully rent two ferries (Anastasia and Maria) 5-8 times during New Year holidays.

In 2014 it was discussed among travel experts and specialists how sanctions imposed on Russia could affect the travel industry in general and which travel operators will survive. The consequences were obvious and 2014 was famous for the wave of bankruptcies among travel agencies and well-known major tour operators. Because of the failure of big tour operators, small representatives of tourism industry were also defeated as all of them cooperated closely. (Tourism-Review, 2015.)

Picture 1. Queues at the Russian-Finnish board. (m.proved-partner.ru.)

3.2 Factors and possible reasons which contributed to the decrease of Russian Outbound Tourism today

In March 2014, Russian Federation annexed the Ukrainian territory of Crimea. The political consequences of this crisis caused a "noticeable slowing" in the growth of tourism from Russia to many European countries. Before this crisis, the Russian outbound travel towards Europe was expected to increase by more than four million visits between 2014 and 2016. However, this forecast has been downgraded to 2.5 million. If this conflict escalates, the forecasts are harsh – it is expected that there will be a decline of two million visits from Russia in 2014 and 2015 and this is expected to continue in 2016 when the visits will go down by nearly five million compared to 2013. (Travel weekly, 2014.)

The combined factors of the political crisis in Crimea, a decline in Russia's domestic economy, the rouble value having an all-time low against the euro as well as the imposition of sanctions will have a significant impact on the choices made by Russian tourists. The destinations that will be most affected by this decline include Germany, Italy, Poland and Spain. Also because of recent political events, Egypt and Turkey will be affected. (Travel weekly, 2014.)

Travelling abroad is dependent on the economic situation in general. As the Rosstat data indicates, in April 2015, real wages of Russians, decreased by 13.2%. At the same time goods and service have become more expensive. Which means that Russians have less money for consumption. (Travel weekly, 2014.)

"The Russian rouble has dropped by almost 38% against the US dollar since December 2014. When it comes to the Euro, during the same period, the rouble has dropped almost 43%. In general, the Russian rouble still remains rather weak, compared to the levels in last year," said Timur Nigmatulin, analyst at Finam Investment Holding. (Russia and India report, 2015.)

As a consequence of the falling rouble, prices automatically increased for leisure and business trips. The Russian Federal Tourism Agency combines relevant information about Russians travelling abroad, according to this agency, Russian tourists spent around $50 billion in the countries they visited. As a response to the sanctions, government officials and power ministries were banned from travelling overseas. This ban affected the travel industry and about 4 million of potential tourists were lost. Although this is a significant loss, the travel industry managed to survive. By the middle of summer 2014, it turned out that 4 million of travel restricted tourists is a big hit, but it mainly affected the travel agencies that were focusing their business on government clients. (Russia and India report, 2015.)

Despite all this, the crisis and as a result, the dollar rate that rose two times, played a low-down trick with all players in the travel market with no exception. The first thing people began saving on was travelling. On the cusp of 2014 and 2015, most of the Russian tourists started to give up their holiday plans in favour of savings, even though at that moment people continued booking tours "by inertia", not wishing to change their habitual life style. (Tourism-Review, 2015.)

In 2015 the trend picked up. In the first quarter of the year the number of tourists decreased further compared to the already decreased fourth quarter of 2014. Long distance tours were affected the most, since the cost of flights became unaffordable because of the currency exchange rate. The countries where the holiday cost depends directly on the dollar and euro exchange rate were harmed as well. (Tourism-Review, 2015.)

Russian travel companies started to be more concentrated on the domestic tourism in the summer of 2015. Simferopol and other Russian travel destinations as Krasnodar region (South of Russia) helped fixing the Russian Federation travel business in general. Many travel companies expanded domestic travel departments, some online travel agencies fully shifted to sell trips all over Russia Federation and even closed Scandinavian and Nordic travel departments, which actually brought some profit. One of the popular Russian travel agencies "Svyaznoy Travel" announced that trips to "Simferopol" became more popular comparing to the last year, and the demand increased by six times. It is well known that some countries are very dependent on Russian outgoing tourism, among these countries are Egypt and Turkey. These countries gave out discounts for hotel accommodation, charter flights and tour packages in general. These two business lines helped Russian travel business industry to survive during the crisis times. However, from a perspective of profitability in the travel business, the increased number of tours to the south of Russia and the more inexpensive tours did not compensate for the losses that came from the decrease of international travellers. The travel businesses that were already focusing mostly on internal flights were not significantly affected. (Tourism-Review, 2015.)

Transaero Company, which was a famous airline company in Russia announced about its bankruptcy in autumn 2015 and in December 2015 it officially bankrupted. Aeroflot Airline Company commented this failure as Transaero had a very risky strategy. This sad occurrence was a shock for almost all Russian travel companies, because some of them paid for tickets' allotments in advance, thus losing a lot of money as a consequence of Transaero's bankruptcy. A lot of tourists were buying flight tickets not directly from the airline company, but through tour operators or agencies. As customers asked money back, a lot of travel companies became pre-bankrupted. Also many travel companies' travel products depended solely on Transaero as they were selling the airline company's exclusive routes and their business depend on them for more than 90 %. Transaero always offered cheap prices for the charter flights and after its exit from the travel market the flight costs have increased by 30-50%. Thus, for many tourists, this closed the possibility to buy cheap affordable flight tickets. (Tourism-Review, 2015.)

In general, the demand for international flights in Russia lowered by more than 50% even before the flights to Egypt were stopped. Egypt was one of the most popular travel destination because of an all-inclusive system and affordable prices. Also direct flights to Hurghada and Sharm El Sheikh were very convenient for Russian tourists. These destinations were incredibly popular during winter and autumn times when the Russian tourism market could not offer any beach holiday alternatives. The destinations closer and cheaper comparing to Egypt are Tunisia and Israel. According to the travel experts, the tourism in Russia will face another dramatic decline. (Tourism-Review, 2015.)

3.3 Current situation and predictions

The number of tour operators on the Russian market for outbound tourism decreased 70% in 2015 according to Maya Lomidze, executive director of the Association of Tour Operators. "In 2014, our analysts very cautiously predicted a 30% fall in the number of tour operators in outbound tourism to avoid causing panic. But in fact the number of companies decreased 70% against the same period of 2014," she said. "The economic situation depressed demand for foreign tourist trips that led to a decreasing number of tour firms which operate in this segment." At present, there are 685 tour operators in Russia's outbound tourism and a part of them refocused on the domestic market or provides agent services. Their number may also decrease 50% in 2016 if political and economic conditions in Russia and on the global market continue getting worse. (Russian Aviation, 2015.)

But even if the situation is stable, Russian outbound tourist flow will fall further in 2016, and in this case, the decrease in the number of outbound tour firms is likely to stand at 20–25%. Russian outbound tourism will fall by 40 percent in 2016. At the moment, development of domestic tourism is of strategic interest to Russia, so "you should not be worried by the fall in outbound tourism," head of the federal tourism agency (Rosturizm) Oleg Safonov said.
At the moment the outbound tourism in Russia consistently falls and there are no positives predictions for the next years. However, the Russian travel market started to put more powers to develop Domestic and Inbound Tourism, where Crimea and Sochi probably will be among leaders. (Russian Aviation, 2015.)

"We are seeing a new trend, changes in the character of the tourist stream. Businesses have noted a doubling in the number of tourists travelling to ski resorts inside Russia," said Galina Dekhtyar, Professor in the Institute of Management at RANEPA. She noted that Krasnodar Krai, Sochi, and Crimea have become priority destinations for domestic tourism. (Russia and India report, 2015.)

4 Consumer behaviour

In this chapter, a look on the process of decision making by consumers in general and Russian consumers in particular is taken. Also, it discusses the characteristics of Russian customers and specifies what makes them different from other tourists.

4.1 Consumer's decision making process

Decision making is a cognitive process that involves comparing and considering different alternatives in order to make a final choice. It is very important to understand the factors having an influence on consumers' decisions, especially in tourism. The decisions are not solely based on facts and knowledge, but is also affected by feelings, attitudes, social status, age, budget and previous experiences. (Lomine & Edmunds, 2007.)

When considering consumer behaviour, decision making plays an important and central part of the process. Depending on the risk of the decision, there is a great variety how people choose products and services. It is important to understand the basic psychological processes that leads to how customers make their final decision in the end. The first step of the buying process is when the buyer recognizes an issue or a need in his current environment. Step two involves collecting information from different sources and analyse competing brands and their characteristics. From this set of available brands, the consumer will further investigate a few. This is called the awareness set. Some of these brands may have features that will fill the customers' criteria and needs and become the candidates for consideration. Among these brands to consider, the customer collects even more information resulting in a choice set. The brands in the choice set are the ones that attracts most interest for the customer and this is the group that the customer will make a final choice from. (Kotler, 1997.)

The subject of consumer behaviour is a key to the sustenance of all marketing activity which is performed to develop, support and sell tourism products. Consumers are always influenced in their decision making processes by many internal and external motivators as well as determinants when they choose products. Horner and Swarbook (2016) have defined consumer behaviour in tourism: “Consumer behaviour is the study of why people buy the product they do, and how they make their decision.”

The process by which a consumer chooses to purchase or use a product or service is defined as the consumer behaviour process. Consumer behaviour has been defined by Engel, Blackwell and Miniard (2006) as “those activities directly involved in obtaining, consuming, and disposing of products and services including the decision processes that precedes and follows these actions”. This definition emphasizes the importance of the psychological process which the consumer goes through during the pre-purchase and post-purchase stages.

Horner & Swarbrooke (2016), originally by Solomon (1996), incorporate the concept of consumer needs and wants into his definition as follows: “Consumer behaviour is the process involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use, or dispose of products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and wants.” This definition introduces the idea that consumers may make purchase decisions in groups, not simply as individuals. The processes that are highlighted in these definitions are very complex, and for this reason it has been more common to illustrate the consumer behaviour process with reference to models rather than definitions. These are reviewed in the following section.

An understanding of consumer behaviour is vital to the marketing activity carried out by organizations in order to be effective. Marketing is concerned with the relationship between consumer or buyer and seller. Marketing relies on the idea that organizations should have the consumer as the central focus for all their activities. Organizations often consider their consumer's wants and needs, but also rely on persuading them to buy their products and services. This is often referred to as consumer persuasion, rather than putting the consumer at the centre of the organization in a process which is often referred to as consumer sovereignty. (Horner & Swarbrooke, 2016.)

The marketing concept does suggest, however, that the overriding inclination of the organization will be to serve the final consumer's wants and needs as the main priority. This will mean that the organization constantly researches consumer demand and the reasons for this demand. The organization will constantly seek what the consumer wants, both today and in the future, and will work hard to produce the products and services that are requested by the assembly of correctly designed marketing mixes. The provision of these well designed products and services will require an understanding of consumer behaviour and the ability to predict how this will change in the future. The organization will also have to understand how and why a consumer makes a choice. (Horner & Swarbrooke, 2016.)

Understanding consumer decision-making is a cornerstone of marketing strategy. Consumer behaviour in tourism is underpinned by general assumptions about how decisions are made. The processes involved in consumer behaviour decision-making require the use of models rather than definitions alone to understand their complexity. (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2016.)

Traditionally, consumer behaviour research has been influenced by research outside tourism, notably the classical buyer behaviour school of thought. The offspring of this school of thought, whether the grand models of consumer behaviour or tourism consumer behaviour models view consumers as rational decision-makers. One of the main assumptions of these models is that decisions are thought to follow a sequence from attitude to intention to behaviour. (Decrop & Snelders, 2014.)

4.2 Russian Consumers

Russian customers are always very impulsive buyers and often buy products influenced by their mood. Moreover, they pay attention to famous brands and the quality of a products, as well as its life gap for people with a modest income. Russian consumers assumed that people live better in Europe, they have larger salaries, better quality products, and kinder society. But the price is not the most important reason why Russians travel abroad and make purchases, the most important thing that attracts them is a bargain. More than three-quarters of Russians reported an interest in proving new products. Moreover, 38% reported that they have noticed when new products were added to shelves, which is higher than the global average of 29%. It is also important to notice that Russian consumers are very loyal towards brands, as an example, before even reaching the shopping mall, Russians have usually already decided what they are going to buy. In addition to this, Russians usually purchase products for short-term use; 25% of shoppers' purchases satisfy an immediate need, while 47% of purchased items will be consumed on the same day. From a profile and purchasing power perspective, Russians are not used to save a lot, likely due to the bank system's lack of reliability. The normal thing is that Russians spend more than 80% of their income. It is also important to note that only 16% of Russians actually like shopping, considering that this figure is 26% globally. Russians shops mostly for family members. As family is still very important in Russian life, it also affects how people are shopping. More than half (53%) of the Russian consumers shop for their families regularly (compared with 45% globally). Similarly, only one-third (32%) of Russians shop for themselves. (Consumer 360, 2015.)

About 73% of the Russian population lives in urban areas and this constitutes a large amount (85%) of the purchasing power. The rising middle class consists of 25 million inhabitants and they generate 80% of the country's demand. The Russian consumer is attracted to the Western way of life, is usually educated and haves a sophisticated taste. The most effective ways of advertising towards the Russian consumer is through television and online social media. (Consumer 360, 2015.)

4.3 Push and Pull factor in tourism

According to Kassean and Gassita (2013) originally by Crompton (1992), without push and pull factors to travel, there would be no travel industry. Nowadays we can see a growing competitiveness among all world travel destinations and travellers start to have more choices compared to what has been offered previously. Destination marketers are working hard to understand why people choose to travel to a certain place. There are various influencing factors which force tourists to prefer one travel destination over the other and to travel in general.

In the study from 2010 Krippendorf believes that one of the main reasons why we choose to travel is that we want to take our mind off our daily routine. We want to forget about obligations and problems which we meet in our everyday life. At present time, everybody are stressed with things such as their jobs and computer technologies so people start feeling trapped in routines over which they have no control. (Krippendorf, 2010.)

Nowadays, the need to travel is above all created by society and marked by the ordinary. People leave because they no longer feel at ease where they are, where they work, and where they live. They feel an urgent need to rid themselves temporarily of the burdens imposed by the everyday work, home and leisure scenes, in order to be in a fit state to pick the burden up again. Their work is more and more mechanized, bureaucratized, and determined without regard to their wishes. Deep inside, they feel the monotony of the ordinary, the cold rationality of factories, offices, apartment buildings, and the highway infrastructure, the impoverishment of human contact, the repression of feelings, the degradation of nature, and the loss of nature (Krippendorf, 2010.)

Kripendorf highlights, besides the motivation, the society has simultaneously furnished to its members the means of carrying out this escape: money, in the form of higher income; and time, thanks to more and more limited work schedules. But most important of all, industry has developed the true prime mover of mobile society. The car, and to a lesser extent, the airplane have ushered in the mobile leisure revolution and have brought it to today's state in scarcely two decades and at an amazing speed. (Krippendorf, 2010.)

Sharpley & Telfer (2002) originally by Crompton Mill and Morrison (1998) argued that motivation normally increases when the person wants to satisfy his or her needs. There are certain forces that drive an individual to act, and these forces are named as push and pull factors, which motivate and lead people to travel.

In general, push factors are important for creating the desire to travel whereas pull factors decides which destination is chosen. According to Crompton (1979) there are two kinds of motives among people going for vacation: socio-psychological motives and cultural motives. (Crompton, 1979.)

Push factors are emotional aspect of the travellers. Dann (1977) suggested two factors as push travel motives: anomie and ego-enhancement. Anomie means the wish to escape the daily routine and to get rid of everyday boringness. Ego-enhancement came from the need of recognition, which you can get while you travel. Push factors are supposed to make tourists to reduce their needs. Travelers want to get relaxation, forget about everyday problems and get social interaction. These factors also includes an intellectual component when people are interested and motivated in discovering new attractions. For the social component, travellers are motivated to meet new friends, share their impressions and get new relationship. Furthermore, they also have need for the esteem of others. Figure 4 shows travel career pattern concepts developed by Pearce (2002). His study examined the relationship between patterns of travel motivation and travel experience.

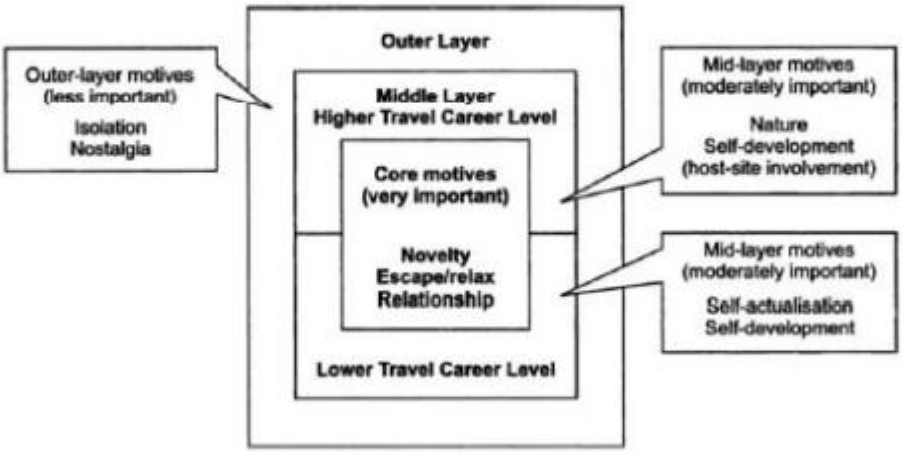

Figure 4. Travel career patterns concepts (Pearce, 2002.)

According to Professor Graham M.S. Dann (1977) there are two distinctive types: anomic tourists and ego-enhancement tourists. The anomic tourists are typically young, married, male, above-average socio-economic status, from small towns and rural areas, and they are coming back to the same destinations that they have visited before. Ego-enhancement tourists are on the other side of the scale. This type of tourist is typically female, first-time visitors, from lower socio-economic strata and older than anomic tourists. (Sharpley & Telfer, 2002.)

Considering the descriptions above of anomie and ego-enhancement, we can tell that travel does not only fulfil certain basic needs for the potential tourist, but it also offers an alternative to the daily life he is living in. For example, as a contrast to the life in a faceless city or public village, life becomes easier when there is a possibility to escape from these daily routines. Travel is a very good way to make such a break possible. (Sharpley & Telfer, 2002.)

According to Dann, “push” factors are more important as these are a prerequisite for ‘pull' factors and, because of this, “push” factors should be examined. Also, he states that the question of “what makes tourists travel” is only related to “push” factors, as this question does not have any connection to destination or other values of “pull” factors. Dann agrees that both the anomie and ego-enhancement concepts comes from “push” factors, but he does not see the relationship between these two concepts as mutually exclusive. In his theoretical framework, this is a scale where anomie and ego-enhancement are located in different ends of the scale.

Pull factors are the motives that make tourists search for new destinations to travel, travellers influenced by other people to go to the certain place and advertise it. Push factors are inspired by attractiveness of the place: cultural attractions, shopping, nature, historical aspects and spa facilities. People from various countries can choose to travel for the same reasons, but reasons for choosing a certain destination can be different. Pull factors are closely related to the destination. (Uysal & Jurowski, 1994.)

Example of pull factors are: active sports environment, unique natural environment, safety, sunshine, inexpensiveness, cultural activities, entertainment, sightseeing, local culture, different culture and cuisine and uniqueness of small towns/villages/mountains. (Sharpley & Telfer, 2002.)

An attempt from Crouch et al (2000), comprehensively summarize the various factors that together contribute to a tourist destination. They highlighted that the service infrastructure and destination environment are important categories in building the tourist destination experience. Furthermore, the service infrastructure and destination environment consists of dimensions, completing the tourist destination as illustrated in Figure 5.

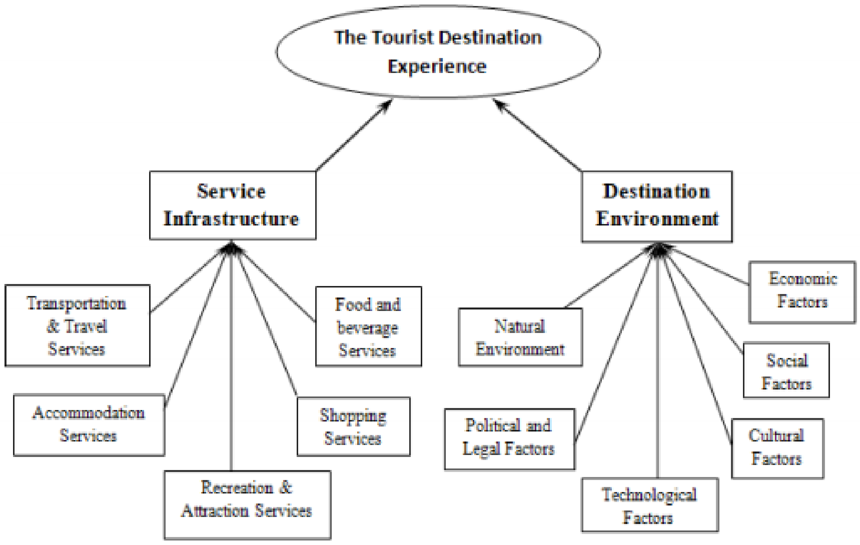

Figure 5. The tourist destination experience (Crouch et al, 2000.)

The concept of tourist motivation includes questions about why people travel. However, it is very difficult to specify the relationship between the motivation of an individual and the destinations that are chosen. As an example, Krippendorf (2010) has selected a number of tourist motivations, including:

- Recuperation and regeneration;
- Compensation and social integration;
- Escape;
- Communication;
- Broadening the mind;
- Freedom and self-determination;
- Self-realisation;
- Happiness.

Together, these motivations explain that it is not possible to assign the traveller to a certain category as the traveller can have many characteristics. Additionally, he explains that as an opposite to the daily routines, a man uses part of his free time to engage in mobile leisure activities, that is in travel. This activity is described and constrained by specific influences, motivations, and expectations. The meaning of travel is the polar opposite of daily life: it is a representation of something that is not ordinary. With this background, the examination of the travellers' behaviour and experiences as well as the circumstances and environment of the people visited (the hosts) is very interesting. Also interesting is to examine how travellers meet other travellers as well as their hosts. (Krippendorf, 2010.)

The system of work - habitat - leisure - travel is enclosed in a large framework and influenced by the force which governs it. One can distinguish four major domains of these forces, which are connected to each other by numerous interactions: society with its value system (sociocultural subsystem); the economy and its structure (economic subsystem); the environment and its resources (ecological subsystem); the government and its policies (political subsystem). (Krippendorf, 2010.)

5 Methodology

This chapter focuses on to the research methods, design process of the questionnaire, Data collection, validity and reliability.

5.1 Research approach

For this master's thesis, a case study research was chosen.

In case research one or several cases are examined. But usually only one case is analysed. A case subject can be for example a company, a group of people, a community or a situation. Case study includes the characteristics of both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. Data collection methods used for the case study are interviews, questionnaires, various documents, archives, reports, direct observation, participant observation etc.; the sources are countless. Certainly, case study is more accurate when several data sources are used. Whilst the case study research method will not answer a question completely, it will give some indications and allow further elaboration and hypothesis creation on a subject. (Kananen, 2013.)

Research methods can be placed into two basic categories: quantitative or qualitative. The quantitative research is most often seen as a numerical study when the qualitative research seek for meanings and consequences. A study can represent exclusively one method or combine aspects of both methods. (Dwyer, Gill & Seetaram, 2012.)

Qualitative research approach aims to understand and analyse the phenomenon which is the research object. The principal rule for using this research is if we know less about the phenomenon, it is more likely that this research will be applied. Qualitative research is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. There are several situations when this research approach is best suited: if we wish to gain a good description of a phenomenon which is a new object of research; it is needed to get more information and close view on a phenomenon; the researcher is interested in creating new theories. The purpose is to give a reasonable interpretation of the phenomenon. Compared to quantitative research, qualitative research is flexible and there are no certain methodological guidance and strict rules. The most popular qualitative data gathering methods are: in-depth interviews, direct observation and written documents. Qualitative research is a research without statistical methods (numbers) which are always used in quantitative researches. It is always based on words and sentences. (Kananen, 2013.)

The quantitative research approach requires theories for explanation in order to analyse and understand the phenomenon. Statistics and numbers are used for the quantitative research which can be used for different mathematical calculations and more in-depth analysis. Quantitative research is about numbers, this research can be directly analysed. When analysing surveys, using scientific data will help to understand the problem. There is no absolute difference between qualitative and quantitative research, thus qualitative one is also always quantitative. (Kananen, 2013.)

The empirical research is done through both qualitative and quantitative researches.

For the qualitative part, an **interview** with the manager of Russian department of Linnanmäki amusement park was conducted.

This approach requires establishing evidences, facts or patterns between variables, counting data statistically to discover principles of their interconnection in order to gain get insight of the research questions. The empirical research was aimed to define the reasons of the vast change of Russian outbound tourism towards Finland during last years until present time. Key questions to consider include the following: what do they think about the current situation in the tourism field under the prevailing circumstances? How did the rouble depreciation affect the purchasing power of Russian consumers? What are the current trends in Russian tourism?

Questionnaire is a method of data collection that is widely used for the case study research. It’s a set of questions for gaining statistically useful information.

For the quantitative part, an online **questionnaire** was created based on the Webropol system and distributed through emails. Using the quantitative data, it is possible to look through possible reasons for the decline in the number of Russian tourists traveling abroad. It is very essential, as it is an easy and quick way to collect a great number of opinions of Russian tourists and Finnish and Russian travel companies.

The goal of this method was to create a valuable questionnaire and then get some statistics. The questionnaire was created in two languages: English and Russian, because many people might have language difficulties answering the survey, and this way the researcher will prevent misunderstanding and avoid unreliable data.

The questionnaire was tested by several both Russian and English speaking volunteers, who are currently working in the travel industry and know the current situation in the Russian outbound tourism business. Some questions were replaced and taken away by their recommendations. Final version is in attachments 1, 2.

In the end, both interview and questionnaire were combined and analysed.

5.2 Data gathering

The data for the research was collected from a quantitative survey conducted in some travel companies and organizations in Saint-Petersburg/Moscow. As I have been working in the travel sphere for more than five years, I have many people contacts who are directly related to the travel field, both from Russian and Finnish side.

The data was collected during the period of 19th September 2016 to 2nd October 2016. The reason for choosing this particular period was the low travel season, thus respondents had enough spare time to take part in the questionnaire.

Leading Russian travel experts took part in the survey. People who have worked in travel sphere more than 5 years (travel companies, representatives of websites about Finland) are indicated as travel experts. The questionnaire was designed in English and then translated into Russian (Attachment 1, 2) in the Webropol online survey tool and it consisted of open-ended, closed, multiple choice and scale questions. The total amount of questions was 17. At the beginning of the survey, there was an introduction presenting the research and its purpose. It was explained that all the information will be collected anonymously and used for the master's thesis. However, some respondents insisted on

including a question about their current job position and full name. They agreed to take part in the questionnaire only if these questions were added. So, according to their wish, I decided to include this as an optional field in the questionnaire.
All planned and actual respondents received a link to the Webropol survey by Facebook messenger.

The main questions of the interview were:

- What are the possible innovations and recommendations to re-establish the stream of Russian tourists traveling to Finland?
- What Russian customers consider as a barrier to come to Finland and what are the possible ways to circumvent them?
- What are the current trends in Russian customer behaviour in tourism sphere in Finland?

Initial plan was to receive 25 answers, thus the link of the quiz was sent to 25 respondents. However, only 17 respondents took part in the study. Two of these respondents asked to be paid as the information which they offered could be used in commercially. However, it was agreed with them that they will fill out the questionnaire for free, but their names will be mentioned if somebody will be interested in a discussion of the current thesis. These participants, according to theirs words, have ideas and decisions about restoring the flow of Russian tourists to Finland.

Webropol as the chosen online survey tool facilitated clear but effective design and outlook of the survey. It enabled gathering both quantitative and qualitative questions which are further explained. Webropol allowed to easily create the survey and it was also used for analysis.

Also an individual interview with the manager of Russian department of Linnanmäki amusement park was conducted. (Attachment 3). This person has a long experience of attracting Russian customers to Finland and worked in Sokos hotel group (Sokotel Oy) before. It was decided to mix the principles of both theme interview and semi-structured interview. The interview was kept by phone and transcripted. Since the manager is a native Russian speaking person, the interview was conducted in Russian. There were several main questions in the interview:

- Does Russian outbound travel market has any tendencies at the moment?
- If we take away the expensiveness as a barrier for Russian customers to come to Finland, which are the other difficulties which prevent Russian customers from coming to Finland?
- What you think can attract Russian tourists to come to Finland?

Also, we freely discussed the current situation with Russian customers in Finland and the second part of interview was run along the terms of the interviewee. The interviewer examined the opinions, thoughts, feelings and views of the respondent.

The data collected from the interview and questionnaire was checked, completed and organized. Transcribing was used as a method to organize the data from the interview, which helped me to use the material in my analysis. The key points of the research are analysis, understanding and conclusions of the collected data.

5.3 Validity and reliability

When analysing the results of the research, the validity and reliability has to be considered. Validity is an essential quality of quantitative research data and focused on whether the data were collected correctly for a certain research. Even though that the data were collected accurately; the serious factor is whether it is appropriate and accurate for the research aims and corresponds to the research objectives. According to Mertler & Charles (2006), the validity of data has a subsequent effect on the interpretation of the data. (Mertler, 2006.)

Reliability refers to the consistency of a measure of a concept. By a concept, it is meant points around which a research is conducted. There are three very important factors involved while considering whether a measure is reliable, such as stability, internal reliability, and inter-observed consistency (Bryman & Bell, 2007.)

The validity and reliability in this research were taken into consideration. A total number 17 questionnaires were conducted in order to gain a reliable result. The given results should not be incorrect or unusable since all the information gathered is from known travel experts.

Also, by conducting the interview, more findings were added to the study which helped to come up with final recommendations. After analysing the survey and the interview, it was perceived that more interviews are not needed and conclusions and recommendations could be done with the current amount of received information.

6 Results

In this chapter the outcomes of the research are presented. This chapter consists of two subchapters. First subchapter represents the results from the survey, the second subchapter shows the results from the interview. The most valuable questions from the questionnaire have been picked up and answers have been analysed. First, this chapter shows the basic information of the respondents and after that the most important questions and answers are presented.

6.1 Results from the survey

The participants of the survey have been working in the tourism industry for an average of 10.5 years. Some of the respondents have more than 25 years of travel sphere work experience.

When the respondents were asked which is the most popular destinations for Russians at the moment, Finland was mentioned eight times (see Figure 7) followed by Spain (6 times) and Greece (6 times).

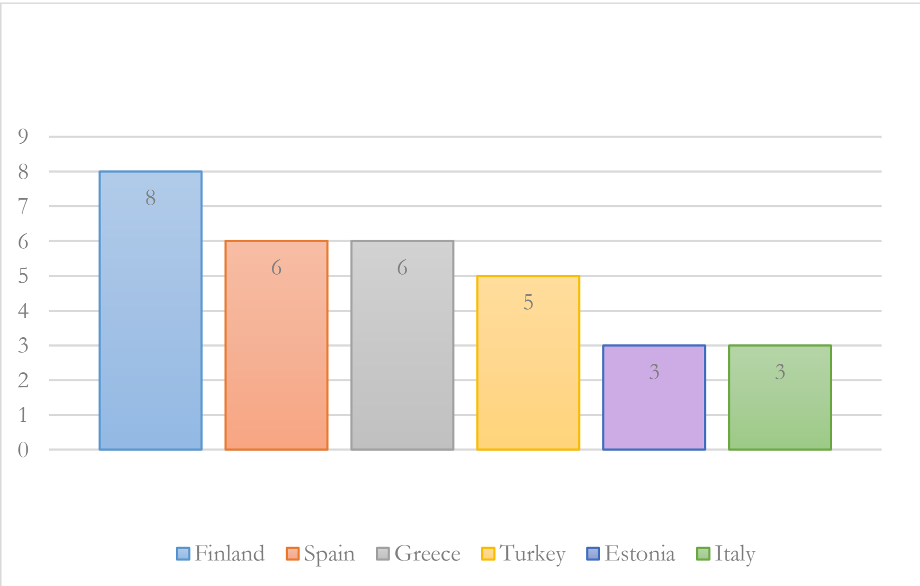

Figure 7. Most popular destinations for Russians in 2016 (n=17)

Figure 8 shows the most popular Finnish destinations according to the experts that answered the survey. The most popular was Helsinki (11 answers), Imatra (5 answers) and Lappeenranta (4 answers).

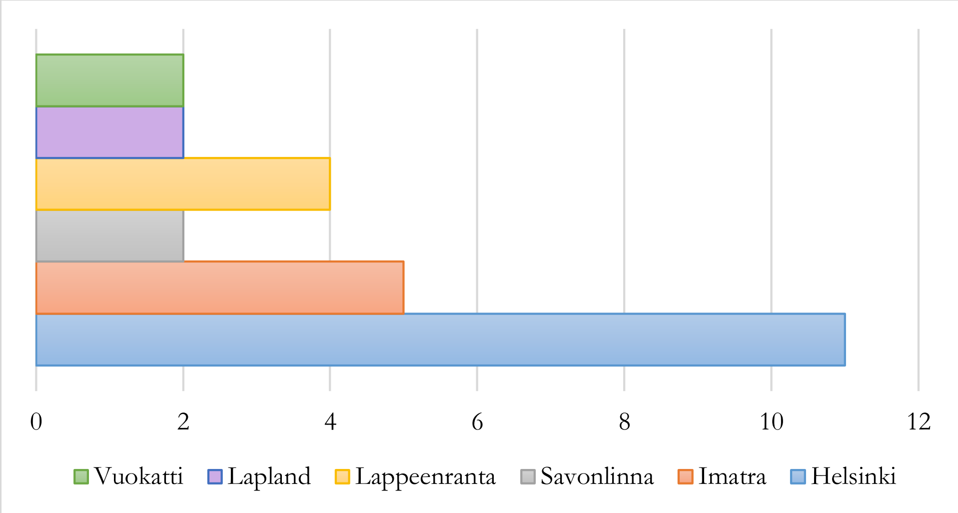

Figure 8. Most popular Finnish destinations for Russian tourists in 2016 (n=17)

Figure 9 describes what Russian tourists are currently interested in when travelling to Finland. Cottages (6 answers), shopping (5 answers) and winter activities (4 answers) are the most popular reasons why Russians are willing to come to Finland. Summarizing some comments and results I made an overview of this question. Travelers without overnights stays mainly come for shopping. However, if they stay overnight, they are interested in cottages surrounded with pure nature, skiing and other winter activities. In Lapland they are interested in Santa Claus and classical Lapland activities such as husky safaris, reindeer safaris, snowmobile safaris etc. Families with kids are also interested in Spa-hotels. Interest towards Finland remains the same, however, the trip budget has decreased, and travellers have to save on certain things, such as accommodation, activities and duration of the trip.

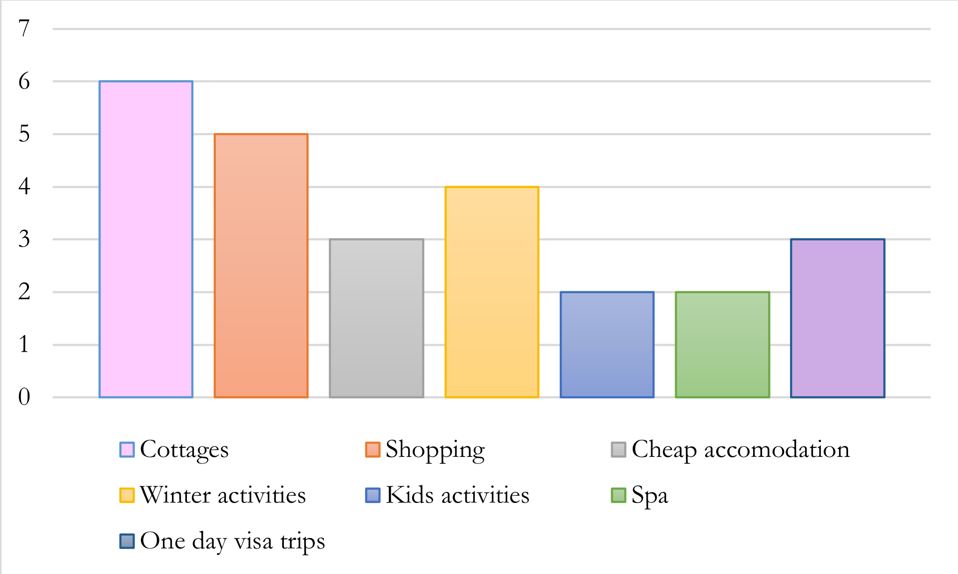

Figure 9. Interests of Russians when coming to Finland in 2016 (n=17)

Figure 10 shows the age groups of Russian tourists coming to Finland. The most popular age group is 36-50 years old according to the survey result, 16 respondents marked this age group. People older than 65 years are not frequent visitors of Finland (2 answers).

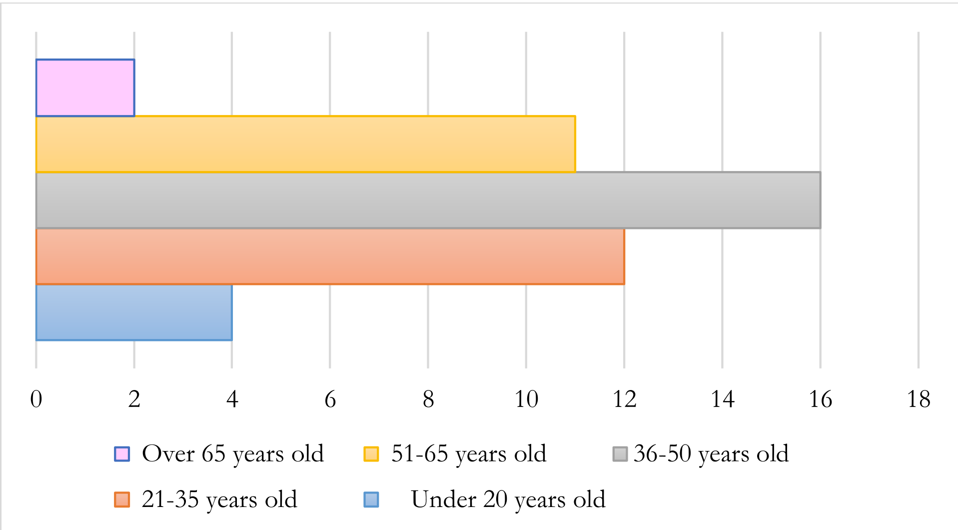

Figure 10. Age of Russian tourists coming to Finland in 2016 (n=17)

Figure 11 illustrates the preferences of Russian customers with whom they travel to Finland. Most of the respondents (16) answered that Russians mostly prefer to travel with family, and 14 people answered that they also prefer travelling with friends.

According to the gained results only 4 respondents think that Russians travel to Finland with colleagues.

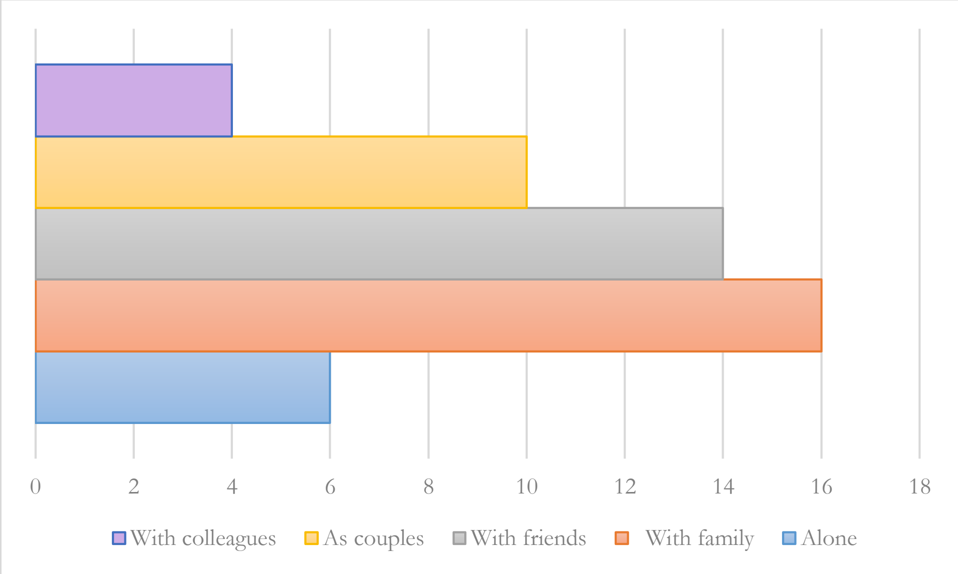

Figure 11. With whom Russian tourists travel to Finland in 2016 (n=17)

According to figure 12, Russians are mostly interested in outdoor activities (14 %), 12% of results belong to wellbeing and SPA. And less Russian tourists are interested in timesharing (6%) and restaurants (8%). Also, I received comments such as "there are no good places for Russian customers to have lunch in Helsinki". Respondents argued that the prices are too high and the variety of dishes and restaurants is small. According to their opinion, normally in Russian places you can get lunch for 2-4 euros and you can choose from at least 3 soups.

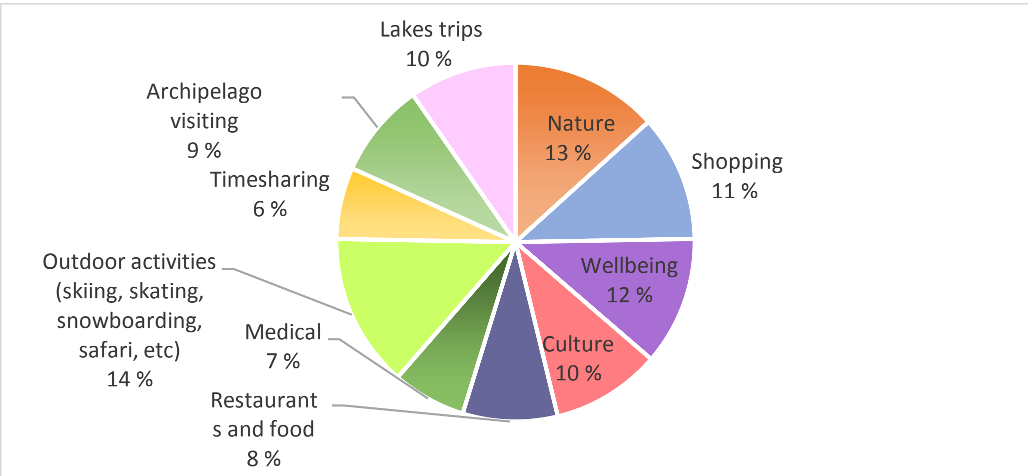

Figure 12. Growing or stable interest in the following in Finland among Russians in 2016 (n=17)

As a best transport option to go to Finland, Russians travel experts choose personal vehicle (7 answers) and train (5 answers). Aircraft, ferry and travel company busses did not get any points. (Figure 13.)

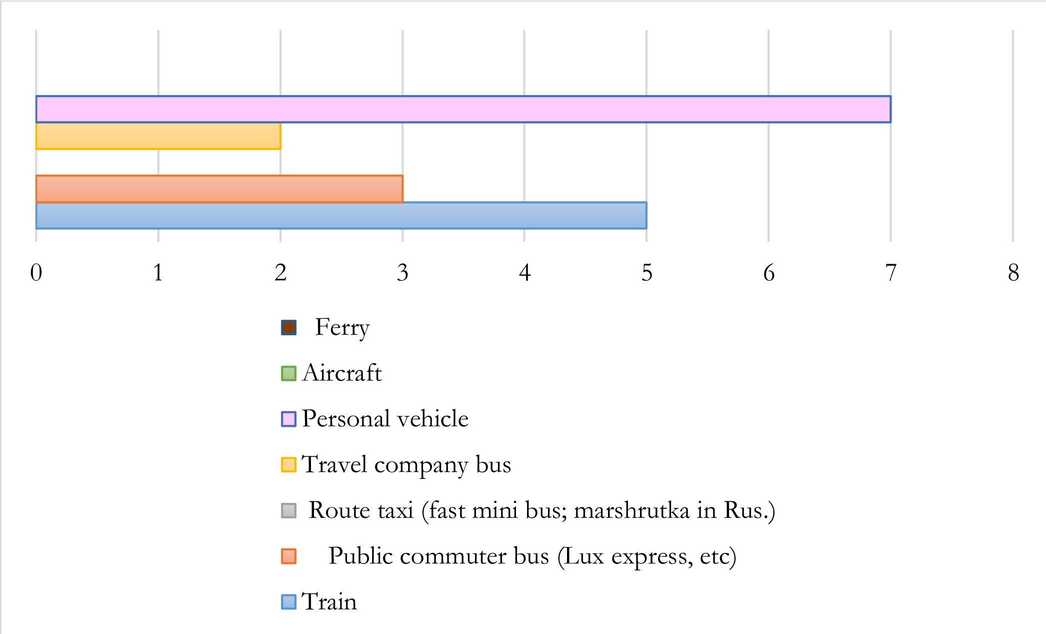

Figure 13. Best transport option to go to Finland for Russians (n=17)

Figure 14 shows the average duration of the trip to Finland by Russian customers. 11 respondents answered that mostly people prefer to stay 2-3 days in Finland. Travelers do not stay 1 week or more.

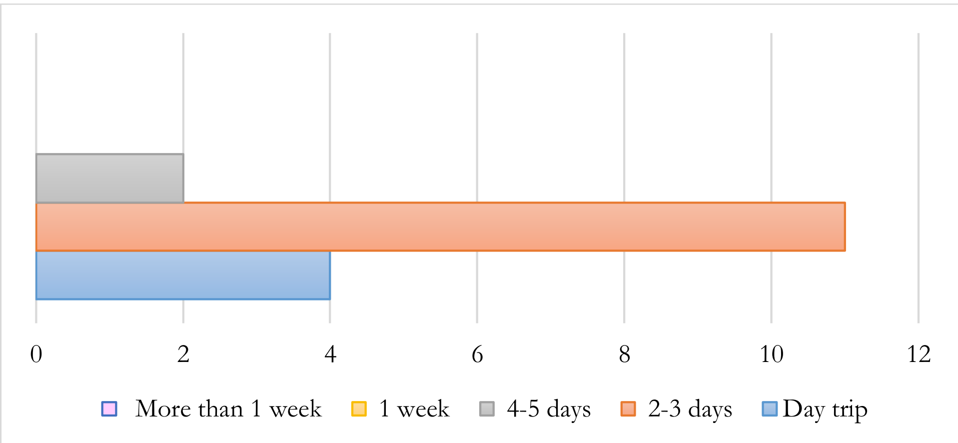

Figure 14. The average duration of the trip to Finland by Russian customers (n=17)

Figure 15 presents that according to the travel experts opinions, Russians mostly prefer hotels (21%) and cottages (21%) to stay in Finland. Only 11 percent of value goes to camping.

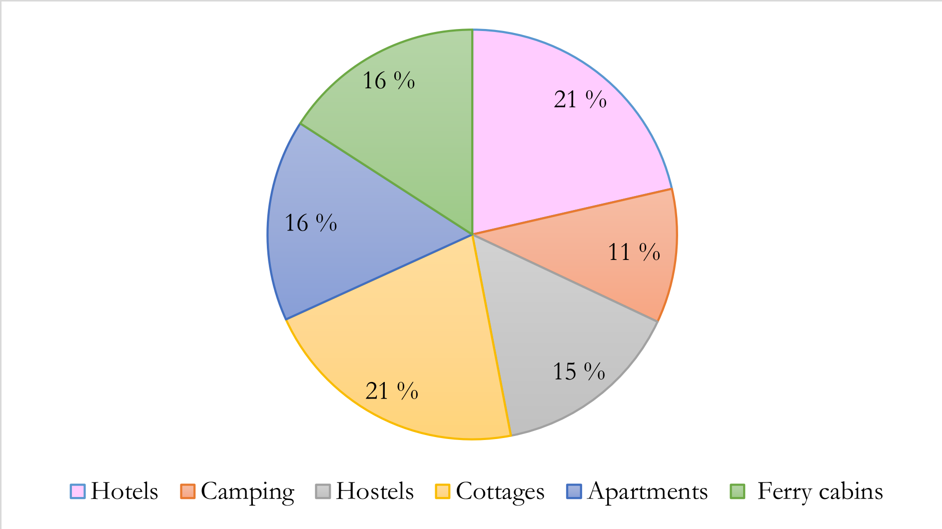

Figure 15. Accommodation which Russian customers prefer in Finland (n=17)

Figure 16 shows that respondents choose hotel rates and low commission (30%) as the most common reason of not coming to Finland. It also shows that visa application or lack of services are not important reasons of not coming to Finland (12% and 12 %).

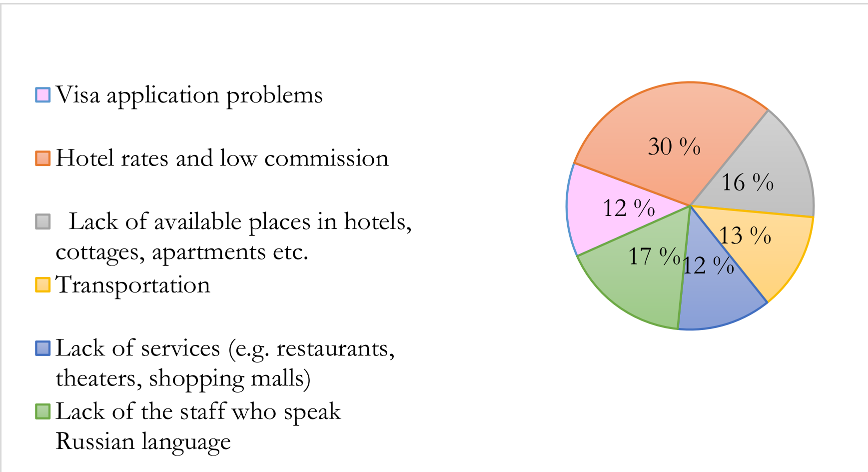

Figure 16. Barriers of coming to Finland (n=17)

The participants were asked to mention three things which could be more appreciated by Russian tourists and increase the desire to come back to Finland. Among the most popular answers were: accommodation price decrease; nature; more activities; shopping, service quality.

The most popular and valuable websites which Russian customers prefer to get information about Finland were: visitfinland.ru; fontanka.fi, efinland.ru, finnish.ru, kidfinland.ru; vk.com; Facebook; suomi.ru.

Among leading travel companies in selling trips to Finland, Russian travel experts named: West travel, Saint Peterline, Edelweis, DSBW.

All participants of the survey answered that the lack of Russian speaking partners in Finland does not affect Russian travel companies´ collaboration with their Finnish partners. I also received additional answer that affects collaboration such as the difference in way of thinking, cultural moments, and difference between working hours in the two countries. For example, in Russia you can a have meeting or call after 5 p.m. In Finland it is preferred to have it during the first half of the working day.

Figure 17 shows the level of service problems provided in Finnish hotels. Thus, travel experts think that the most common problem in Finnish hotels is high price (the grade point average was 5.76). According to respondents' answers, the cleanliness of hotel rooms is the least of worries (1.88). Hotel rooms are clean enough.

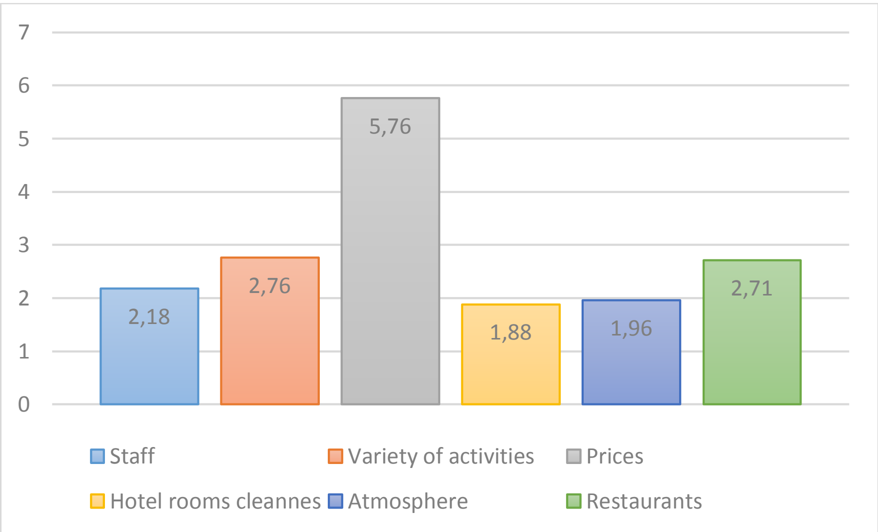

Figure 17. The quality of service provided at Finnish hotels (n=17)

The final question was about recommendations and critics that travel experts can give in order to improve the hospitality services, restaurants and tourism sector in general in Finland.

Travel experts think that, in general, the quality of services provided in Finland is very high. One of the main problems for Russian customers is the lack of information about trips, excursions and resorts in Finland. Customers are not enough informed about ski resorts, exhibitions and concerts. All of the experts said that they would like to get better hotel rates and discounts, special offers during low season because of the rouble falling. There were some critics concerning high transport prices inside Finland for tourists. In general, respondents noticed that Finland is a safe and attractive country to travel for Russian customers.

6.2 Results from the interview

The interview with the manager of Russian department of Linnanmäki amusement park was conducted. It was decided to mix the principles of both theme interview and semi-structured interview. The full transcript of interview questions can be found in Attachment 3.

To sum up, the interview findings are as follows:

The Linnanmäki amusement park is interested in collaborating with Russian travel companies, but at the moment they do not have group requests. Bus tours, as it used to be, are not so popular at the moment among Russian customers, mostly requests come from individual customers. At the moment you can see one or two travel buses from Russia per month, before there used to be tens of them.

Interviewee said that it is a big difference in the stream of Russian customers at the moment comparing to the last years. At the moment there are not many Russian customers. It was noticed that there are a lot of customers from Estonia and Sweden. On the other hand, the amount of local Russian speaking customers increased.

If we take away the expensiveness as a barrier for Russian customers to come to Finland, there are many other difficulties which prevent Russian customers from coming to Finland. Finland became the country of "getting visa", "one day trip country" and people are not interested in long lasting trips. They want to come just for several hours or for a couple of days and they are not interested in actual vacation. This situation needs to be fixed. There should be better proposals for Russian travel companies and tourists in general. It is also the lack of information about various activities (concerts, new swimming pools, shopping centres and museums) for Russian customers. There is a need for more promotion on the Russian market.

The interviewee also talked about things attracting Russian tourists to come to Finland. One of these things is safety. Guards create an image of a safe place and they also make sure that people disturbing the others would leave the shops or hotels. Better assortment of products has been mentioned as another important factor. Need for Russian-speaking personnel and advertising materials has been highlighted.
Talking about the amusement park promotion for Russian customers, the company organizes fam trips (familiarization trips) regularly. They encourage travel companies with free entrance tickets. They also do a lot of work in Facebook and Vkontakte groups. In these groups, they often make competitions and lottery for Russian travel customers.

It was also discussed about companies which have an active strategy towards the Finnish travel business, and companies which changed their priorities and are not active in collaborating anymore. At the moment most companies are interested in selling trips to Baltic countries, mostly Estonia. West Travel Company is a leader at the moment among Russian travel companies to sell trips to Finland. Unfortunately, at the moment Russian travel companies do not seek to sell trips to Finland because it does not bring a lot of money to their businesses.

The current Russian outbound travel market tendencies was also discussed. It seems that Russians are mostly interested in Estonia according to Russian travel companies' opinions. Also Thailand, Spain, Greece and Bulgaria are popular. Considering inbound tourism, we can see a huge development inside Russian travel market at the moment. Sochi and Crimea are currently very popular among Russian customers even though the prices are not low.

The interviewee talked about Finnish popular destinations among Russian consumers nowadays. Still, Imatra and Lappenranta are quite popular because of proximity to the tourists who live in Saint-Petersburg. For the inhabitants of Murmansk, Rovaniemi and Lapland is quite popular in general. Helsinki as a capital and cultural, historical object will be always have a leading position. Unfortunately, West Finland is not a popular destination among Russian customers, even there is a lot to see there. Vaasa, Turku, Kristiinankaupunki and a lot of other cities could be interesting for Russian customers. One of the most important reasons why Russians come to Finland is the quality of goods. Unfortunately, nowadays large manufacturing companies move their production abroad to cheaper countries and the quality suffers. It is very common to find goods on the market produced in China or Thailand while they are positioning themselves as Finnish products.

6.3 Recommendations

It is very important to suggest and recommend some workable solutions after carrying out the travel experts questionnaire and interview with the representative of the Finnish travel industry. The sets of suggestions and recommendations can be used to improve the tourism development in Finland for Russian customers.

One of the reasons for choosing this particular topic for the thesis was the fact that Russians are such an important customer group for the whole of Finland. During many years, Russians were among the top tourists visiting Finland. A lot of businesses depended on Russian customers. Russians differ from the domestic customers, not only with regards to language, but also culture and manners are different. Development of tourism in Finland for Russian customers' needs a certain approach, knowledge and specialists.

After analysing the interview and respondents' answers, I came up with three key recommendations on what needs to be concentrated on. These recommendations are: pricing, advertisement and new activities (Figure 16).

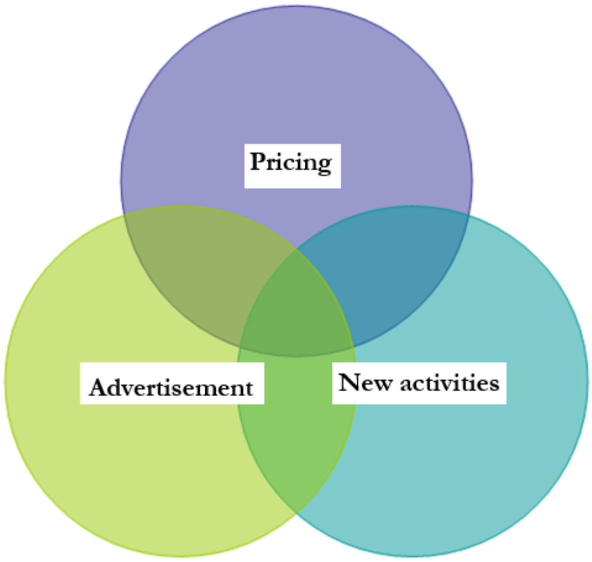

Figure 16. Key recommendations to improve Russian outbound tourism to Finland

6.3.1 Pricing

The first aspect that the Finnish travel market concentrate on is pricing. Obviously, because of the current situation with an instable Russian currency, prices in Finland are too high for the Russian clients. Anyway, we always need to work towards the future and someday the Russian currency will stabilize. Then we will re-establish the stream of Russian tourists, but at the moment we still need to hold the minimum of customers which still travel to Finland and we need to continue collaborating with Russian travel companies. There should be special prices, combo tickets, deals for Russian travel companies and private customers. Today is the era of Airbnb (a peer-to-peer online marketplace and homestay network that enables people to list or rent short-term lodging in residential properties, with the cost of such accommodation set by the property owner), thus hotels and resorts need to keep low prices in order to be competitive. Special offers during low season and packages including free spa or breakfast would attract more customers. Group deals, free hotel rooms for guides, drivers, free transfers, bonus nights (after staying 10 nights in one hotel chain for example) and discounts in the stores, water parks and amusement parks are also examples of what could attract more customers.

6.3.2 Advertisement

The promotion and advertisement of the destination is one of the key elements of bringing popularity to a certain place. There are several obstacles to raise the level of commercial for Russian customers. Firstly, the level of knowledge of foreign languages among Russian tourists is low, it is difficult for them to read and fully comprehend information from the websites and promotion brochures in English or other languages that are foreign to them. Many Russian tourists understand English on some basic level and speak a little, but there are also some of them who do not know any other language, except Russian. Promotion materials in Finnish are not effective for Russian customers at all. Russians learn the Finnish language very rarely and most of them cannot speak it at all. Some Russian tourists, who visit Finland often, memorize some Finnish words that are used often in everyday life, but usually it does not help them to start learning Finnish further. Thus, the best language for promotion materials for Russian customers is Russian. Since Russians do not study Finnish, they also do not know the Finnish culture. Therefore, Russians do not know how Finnish people really are in everyday life. Most often, Russians learn about Finns from the movies, books and travel guides. This information is usually quite short and superficial. It is very common that people get knowledge about Finland from the stories of their Russian friends who have visited Finland before. Also, Russians very often follow friends' advices and recommendations about spending holidays in Finland. It is very common that tourists are asking for the same cottage or hotel where their friends used to stay. Most Russians, who visit Finland, come from Saint Petersburg or the Russian Karelia territory. Its inhabitants traditionally know more about Finland and its culture than people from other parts of Russia. For this reason, Finnish tourism companies have to promote not only their services, but also the benefits that tourists can have choosing Finland as a travel destination. There needs to be closer collaboration between Finnish and Russian business partners; special accommodation offers during Matka Helsinki Travel Fair and more attentiveness to the Russian travel companies. It is recommended to use popular and valuable Russian websites about Finland to post more commercials and information about Finland: restaurants, hotels, special offers, events, etc.

There should be representatives in every community, for example students, dance enthusiasts, handiwork lovers, teachers and extreme sport lovers who will make commercials about upcoming thematic events in Finland. For example, more than five hundred people are coming from abroad for the Helsinki dance festival event FIKi'17 in 2017. Since I am a part of this community, I know that no representative in the Finnish travel sphere offered any good deals for accommodation during the event. Travel companies do not collaborate with festival promoters.

6.3.3 New activities

It is also recommended to put more attention to the new activities in Finland. It could be organized more thematic events, as it was mentioned before, for various subcultures. Finland could also be a platform for business meetings between Russian and European business partners. Russians like coming to Finland during the winter season for winter sports activities, thus these winter sports could be combined with some other events as part of the accommodation package. Hiking, bicycling and golf trips also needs some development for Russian customers, because at the moment there is lack of information about these things. Any kind of educational/professional courses could be developed for Russian customers, such as cooking, language, dance and different kinds of sports courses. Russians need more information about these things, when I was working in a Russian Travel Company in Saint-Petersburg, none of these ideas were offered by Finnish travel sphere representatives.

7 Conclusion

This chapter presents conclusions of the research about travel experts' views and recommendations on the current situation of the Finnish travel market for Russian customers.

All in all, the aim of the study was to come up with recommendations how the attractiveness of Finland could be improved among Russian tourists when it comes to existing services, facilities and overall opportunities.

The plans of the research were to get responses, new ideas, and opinions from Russian travel experts about fixing the current situation with the flow of tourists coming from Russia. 17 of 25 travel experts were interested in taking part in this study which proves that Russian outbound tourism is expected to be revived. I also managed to have an interview with a professional, who has worked for more than 15 years in the Finnish travel sphere with Russian customers. All these made it possible to come up with some valuable recommendations.

During the research, I faced a lot of resistance from Russian travel experts to answer the questionnaire which can be explained by changes in politics and concept of outbound tourism in general.

Representatives of the Russian travel field are not always very cooperative, but working on this research gave me the opportunity to learn how to work and collaborate with them. Since I used to work on the Russian outbound travel market side, I did not see the cultural difference or difference in priorities and interests of the Finnish incoming tourism. At the moment I am working on the Finnish side and this research helped me to clearly understand the Russian travel market point of view. At the moment in Russia, the government is heavily promoting patriotism, domestic tourism and local goods. Nonetheless Russians are still interested in visiting neighbour countries, such as Finland.

According to the analysed material, we can conclude that outbound tourism demand directly depends on the euro/dollar price. The fall of the Russian rouble has dramatically hit the Russian tourists, mainly in the European destinations, which has been the fastest developing tourist exit market in recent years. It was a dramatic decrease in the outbound tourism market in Russia during last years and a lot of tour operators suspended their activities. In the near future, Russia is planning to continue developing inbound tourism which showed good results last years; a lot of travel companies shifted towards working as incoming tour operators. Some companies which were focused on the Russian south leisure destinations opened incoming departments for foreign tourists.

Thus, 2014, 2015 and 2016 were hard years for the Russian tourist market. If the conflict with the West prolongs (anti-Russia sanctions are prolonged) and the value of the rouble continues to fall, we should expect further recession in the exit tourism market.

Even though Finland has the availability of tourism product and services, there still needs to be sufficient promotional activities for the destinations. The attraction of tourism in Finland needs to be highlighted as a promotional activity so that Finland can expect a large number of tourists from all over the world.

Summing up the results, Russians are still looking to travel. More expensive destinations will perhaps loose next years - more Russians will probably choose cheaper destinations. All in all, the study can be considered as a highly successful personal learning experience. I managed to work out the theoretical framework of the research, as well as to perform the practical part of the study, which involved the large-scale questionnaire survey and an individual interview with a representative of a Finnish company.

Having summed up the study end-results, I believe that the research conducted will make an original and meaningful contribution to the Russian outboard tourism to Finland.

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Attachments

Attachment 1. Questionnaire for travel experts in English

Dear travel experts,

At the moment I am working on a project that focuses on increasing the flow of Russian tourists to Finland, improving the quality of tourism services and making Finland a more attractive destination for Russian customers.

Would you mind answering a few questions? This will take a few minutes of your time. The individual answers will be confidential and highly beneficial to our studies and the tourism development of Finland.

1. **How many years have you been working with the Finnish market?**
2. **What do you think are the most popular world travel destinations for Russian tourists at the moment** (except domestic tourism)**?**
3. **What are the most popular travel destinations in Finland for Russian tourists at the moment?**
4. **At present time, what are Russian tourists interested in when travelling to Finland?** (E.g. cottages, fishing etc. How the preferences changed since the downturn of the economy of both countries?)
5. **What is the age of Russian tourists coming to Finland? (select all that apply)**

a. Under 20 years old

b. 21-35 years old

c. 36-50 years old

d. 51-65 years old

e. Over 65 years old

6. **Who are Russian tourists travelling with?**

a. Alone

b. With family

c. With friends

d. As couples

e. With colleagues

7. Currently, among Russians you can see a growing or stable interest in the following in Finland (put 1 to 5 where 1 is a little interest, 5 is a lot of interest):

a. Nature

1 2 3 4 5

b. Shopping

1 2 3 4 5

c. Wellbeing

1 2 3 4 5

d. Culture

1 2 3 4 5

e. Restaurants and food

1 2 3 4 5

f. Medical

1 2 3 4 5

g. Outdoor activities (skiing, skating, snowboarding, safari, etc.)

1 2 3 4 5

h. Timesharing

1 2 3 4 5

i. Archipelago visiting

1 2 3 4 5

j. Lakes trips

1 2 3 4 5

8. What do you consider as the best transport option to go to Finland that you learned by your job experience while communicating with tourists?

a. Train

b. Public commuter bus (Lux express, etc.)

c. Route taxi (fast mini bus; marshrutka in Rus.)

d. Travel company bus

e. Personal vehicle

f. Aircraft

g. Ferry

9. What is the average duration of the trip to Finland nowadays?

a. Day trip

b. 2-3 days

c. 4-5 days

d. 1 week

e. More than 1 week

10. What kind of accommodation do Russian customers prefer in Finland? (put 1 to 5 where 1 is a little interest, 5 is a lot of interest):

a. Hotels

1 2 3 4 5

b. Camping

1 2 3 4 5

c. Hostels

1 2 3 4 5

d. Cottages

1 2 3 4 5

e. Apartments

1 2 3 4 5

f. Ferry cabins

1 2 3 4 5

11. To what extend do you see these as barriers coming to Finland for Russian tourists? (put 1 to 5 where 1 is no barrier, 5 is a huge barrier):

a. Visa application problems

1 2 3 4 5

b. Hotel rates and low commission

1 2 3 4 5

c. Lack of available places in hotels, cottages, apartments etc.

1 2 3 4 5

d. Transportation

1 2 3 4 5

e. Lack of services (e.g. restaurants, theatres, shopping malls)

1 2 3 4 5

f. Lack of the staff who speak Russian language

1 2 3 4 5

12. List three things which could be more appreciated by Russian tourists and increase the desire to come back to Finland.

13. Which valuable and popular Russian websites about Finland can you name?

14. Which Russian travel companies are the leaders (or potential leaders) in selling trips to Finland?

15. To what extend the lack of Russian-speaking partners in Finland somehow negatively affect Russian travel companies´ collaboration with their Finnish partners?

16. How do you consider the service provided at Finnish hotels? Please select the number below that best represents how Russian customers were feeling after last visits to Finland. (Choose the number mostly representing your answer)

Friendly staff	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unfriendly staff
Big variety of activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Poor variety of activities
Friendly prices	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unfriendly prices
Clean hotel rooms	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Dirty hotel rooms
Good atmosphere	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Bad atmosphere
Good restaurants	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Bad restaurants

17. Finally, do you have any comments concerning the hospitality services, restaurants and tourism sector in general in Finland, critics or recommendations?

Attachment 2. Questionnaire for travel experts in Russian

Уважаемые эксперты, в настоящий момент я работаю над проектом, целью которого является увеличение потока российских туристов в Финляндию, улучшение качества сервиса в сфере туризма. Задача проекта - сделать Финляндию еще более привлекательной для российских туристов. Прошу Вас ответить на несколько вопросов. Это займет всего несколько минут Вашего времени. Ответы будут конфиденциальны и мы будем очень рады, если Вы внесете вклад в развитие туристического рынка Финляндии.

1. **Сколько лет Вы работаете с финским направлением ?**
2. **Какие, на Ваш вгляд, туристические направления наиболее популярны для российских туристов (за исключением внутреннего туризма) в данный момент (Например, Финляндия, Швеция, Греция)?**
3. **Какие направления в Финляндии, на Ваш вгляд, наиболее популярны для российских туристов в данный момент (Например, Хельсинки, Иматра, Катинкульта)?**
4. **В чем наиболее заинтересованы российские туристы при посещении Финляндии? (Например: коттеджи, рыбалка и т.д. Как изменились предпочтения в период экономического спада обеих стран?)**
5. **Каков возрастной диапазон российских туристов, посещающих Финляндию?**

a. Младше 20-ти лет

b. 21-35 лет

c. 36-50 лет

d. 51-65 лет

e. Старше 65 лет

6. **С кем путешествуют российские туристы?**

a. В одиночку

b. С семьей

c. С друзьями

d. Парами

e. С коллегами по работе

7. В настоящее время Вы можете видеть растущий или стабильный интерес к следующим направлениям в Финляндии (поставьте оценку от 1 до 5-ти, где 1- слабый интерес, 5- повышенный интерес):

a. Природа

1 2 3 4 5

b. Шоппинг

1 2 3 4 5

c. СПА

1 2 3 4 5

d. Культура

1 2 3 4 5

e. Рестораны и еда

1 2 3 4 5

f. Медицинский туризм

1 2 3 4 5

g. Активитеты на свежем воздухе (катание на лыжах, коньках, сноуборде, сафари и т.д.)

1 2 3 4 5

h. Таймшер

1 2 3 4 5

i. Посещение архипелага

1 2 3 4 5

j. Водные прогулки по озерам

1 2 3 4 5

8. Какой, на Ваш взгляд, лучший вид транспорта для поездки в Финляндию для российских туристов?

a. Поезд

b. Чартерный автобус (Lux express и т.д.)

c. Маршрутное такси

d. Туристический автобус

e. Персональный транспорт

f. Самолет

g. Паром

9. Какая средняя продолжительность поездки в Финляндию в настоящее время?

a. Одновневная поездка

b. 2-3 дня

c. 4-5 дней

d. 1 неделя

e. Более 1 недели

10. Какой вид размещения российские клиенты предпочитают в Финляндии? (поставьте оценку от 1 до 5-ти, где 1- слабое предпочтение, 5- высокое предпочтение):

a. Отели

1 2 3 4 5

b. Кемпинг

1 2 3 4 5

c. Хостелы

1 2 3 4 5

d. Коттеджи

1 2 3 4 5

e. Апартаменты

1 2 3 4 5

f. Каюты

1 2 3 4 5

11. Что Вы считаете барьером при посещении Финляндии российскими туристами? (поставьте оценку от 1 до 5-ти, где 1- незначимый барьер, 5- высокозначимый барьер):

a. Проблемы при подаче документов на визу

1 2 3 4 5

b. Цены на отели и маленькая комиссия

1 2 3 4 5

c. Недостаточное количество свободных мест в отелях

1 2 3 4 5

d. Транспортные средства

1 2 3 4 5

e. Недостаток сервиса (ресторанов, театров, магазинов и т.д.)

1 2 3 4 5

f. Недостаток русскоговорящего персонала

1 2 3 4 5

12. Перечислите три вещи, которые бы привлекли российских туристов возвращаться Финляндию снова и снова.

13. Какие наиболее популярные российские вебсайты о Финляндии Вы можете назвать?

14. Кто из российских компаний является лидером или потенциальным лидером в продаже туров в Финляндию на данный момент?

15. В какой мере недостаток русскоговорящих партнеров в Финляндии как-то негативно влияет на сотрудничество российских туристических компаний с их финскими партнерами?

16. Как Вы оцениваете уровень услуг, предоставляемый в финских отелях? Пожалуйста, выберите число, отражающее Ваш ответ.

Дружелюбный персонал	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Недружелюбный персонал
Большой выбор активитетов	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Маленький выбор активитетов
Низкие цены	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Высокие цены
Чистые отельные номера	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Грязные отельные номера
Хорошая общая атмосфера	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Плохая общая атмосфера
Хорошие Рестораны	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Плохие рестораны

17. А итоге, есть ли у Вас какие-либо комментарии, рекомендации, относительно гостинничного сервиса, ресторанов и туристического сектора в целом?

Attachment 3. Interview with the representative of the Finnish travel sphere (manager of Russian department of Linnanmäki amusement park)

1. Explain what services Linnanmäki offers at the moment and how long you have been tightly collaborating with Russian tour operators?

2. Could you see the difference in the stream of Russian customers at the moment comparing to the last years?

3. If we take away the expensiveness as a barrier for Russian customers to come to Finland, which are other difficulties which prevent Russian customers from coming to Finland?

4. What you think can attract Russian tourists to come to Finland?

5. How do you promote your company for Russian customers? (E.g. fam trips, social media, etc.)

6. Which Russian companies has active politic towards Finnish travel business, which companies changed their priorities and not active in collaborating anymore?

7. Does Russian outbound travel market has any tendencies at the moment?

8. Which Finnish directions are popular among Russian consumers nowadays and what do tourists prefer coming to Finland?