



# FANS ON THE ROAD – TRAVEL PREFERENCES OF FINNISH ICE HOCKEY SUPPORTERS

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<p>Tiivistelmä/Referat – Abstract</p> <p>The aim of this study is to find out about away trips that Finnish ice hockey supporters make within Finland. The idea is also to find out if destination cities of the trips could better benefit from traveling hockey fans. The study aims at finding the basic frame by which the fan organizations choose their destinations, the motives of those who participate and visitors' perceptions of services available at the destination ice halls. Both qualitative and quantitative methods are used.</p> <p>Not many earlier studies about the topic exist. Literature about sport tourism concentrates mostly on people doing the sports themselves. Academic literature about sport fans, in turn, is usually about the psychological side of fandom. Several studies of Finnish ice hockey fans exist though. Also their point of view is often psychological. Many of Finnish studies are also only thesis-level works. Because of lack of earlier research about the topic, this work can be seen as a baseline research.</p> <p>Fan organizations choose their travel destinations mostly based on game schedule. Trips are mainly made to games played on Saturdays. On other days of the week the destination should be within a short distance. Distance to destination isn't very important on Saturdays unless the destination is very far away. Visiting fans don't spend much time at the destination city on a regular trip. Usually the fans enter the ice hall straight after stepping out of the bus and return soon after the game. However, overnight trips might interest the fans especially if the destination is far away. Previous experience about destinations also affects the choices fan organizations make.</p> <p>Most important reasons for participating in a trip are especially seeing the favorite team play and supporting the team. Traveling itself as a process isn't an important factor while making the decision to travel yet there could be interest to go on overnight trips more often than fans currently do. Also company affects travel decisions as people prefer going to games with friends or acquaintances.</p> <p>SM-Liiga ice halls seem to have all the different service types away trippers need. There's not much demand on a variety of services as visiting fans mostly buy just drinks of food. Supply of these services is good but visitors are less happy with quality, variety and price of the products sold. An important factor for game experience are the seating arrangements at the ice hall. They were found to correlate with happiness with overall game experience. Ice halls are considered safe and security works well. All in all visiting fans are happier with the service they receive at the ice halls than with the services itself.</p> <p>To improve their service in the eyes of visiting fans, the hosts should pay attention to variety of food and drinks and offer visitors seats that are suitable for their needs. Host organizations and local stakeholders could benefit from offering visiting fans moderately priced packages that could include for example transportation, game ticket, a meal and accommodation or some of these services. This way they could get visitors spend more money at the destination city and at the same time income would spread to a larger number of stakeholders.</p>			
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<p>Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on selvittää yksityiskohtia SM-Liigan seurojen kannattajien vierasmatkailusta Suomen sisällä ja tutkia, voisivatko matkojen kohdekaupungit hyötyä vierasmatkailijoista nykyistä paremmin. Tutkimus pyrkii selittämään faniyhdistysten matkojen kohteiden valintaperusteet, matkalle lähtijöiden motiivit sekä vierasmatkalaisten kokemukset kohteen jäähallin palveluista. Käytössä ovat sekä kvalitatiiviset että kvantitatiiviset menetelmät.</p> <p>Aiheesta ei ole juurikaan aiempaa tutkimusta. Urheilumatkailuun liittyvä kirjallisuus keskittyy enimmäkseen itse urheilemaan lähteviin matkailijoihin. Urheilufaneista kertova akateeminen kirjallisuus puolestaan keskittyy vahvasti faniuden psykologiseen puoleen. Jääkiekkofaneista on tehty Suomessa muutamia tutkimuksia, joista monet ovat opinnäytetyön tasoisia. Aiemman tutkimuksen vähäisyyden vuoksi tämä työ voidaan siis nähdä perustutkimuksena.</p> <p>Faniyhdistykset valitsevat matkakohteensa pääosin SM-Liigan otteluohjelman perusteella. Matkoja tehdään pääasiassa lauantaina pelattaviin otteluihin. Muina viikonpäivinä matkakohteen tulisi olla lyhyen matkan päässä, jotta matka järjestetään. Kohdekaupungin etäisyydellä ei ole lauantaisin suurta merkitystä, ellei matka ole todella pitkä. Yleensä vierasmatkailijat eivät vietä käytännössä lainkaan aikaa kohdekaupungissa, vaan menevät suoraan bussista otteluun ja poistuvat takaisin bussiin pian ottelun jälkeen. Yön yli kestävät matkat olisivat kuitenkin kiinnostavia, etenkin, jos ne suuntautuvat pois lähialueelta. Myös aiemmat kokemukset kohteesta vaikuttavat matkakohteen valintaan.</p> <p>Matkalle lähdetään ennen kaikkea seuraamaan suosikkijoukkueen edesottamuksia sekä kannustamaan suosikkijoukkuetta. Itse matkustus ei sinänsä ole tärkeä tekijä lähtöpäätöstä tehtäessä, joskin mielenkiintoa nykyistä useammalle yön yli kestäville matkoille saattaisi olla. Myös matkaseuralla on jonkin verran vaikutusta lähtöpäätökseen – matkaan on mukava lähteä ystävien tai tuttujen kanssa.</p> <p>SM-Liigan jäähalleista löytyy pääasiassa kaikki erityyppiset palvelut, joita vierasfanit kaipaavat. Tarvetta kovin monipuoliselle tarjonnalle ei edes ole, sillä enimmäkseen vieraskannattajat käyttävät vain juoma- ja ruokapalveluita. Näiden osalta tarjonta on määrällisesti kohdallaan, mutta laatuun, ruoan monipuolisuuteen ja hintaan ollaan vähemmän tyytyväisiä. Tärkeä asia ottelukokemuksen kannalta on vierashallin katsomojärjestelyt, joiden huomattiin korreloivan vierailijoiden tyytyväisyyteen ottelutapahtumaan. Jäähalleja pidetään turvallisina ja järjestyksenvalvontaa asiallisena. Kaiken kaikkiaan vieraskannattajat ovat tyytyväisempiä hallilla saamaansa palveluun kuin itse jäähallin palveluihin.</p> <p>Parantaakseen palveluitaan vieraskannattajien näkökulmasta ottelun järjestäjien tulisi kiinnittää huomiota ruoan ja juoman monipuoliseen tarjontaan sekä tarjota vieraskannattajille heidän tarkoitukseensa sopivat katsomopaikat. Seurojen ja paikallisten toimijoiden saattaisi kannattaa tarjota vieraileville faniryhmille edullisia matkapaketteja, jotka sisältäisivät esimerkiksi kuljetuksen, ottelulipun, aterian ja majoituksen tai joitakin näistä. Näin vierasmatkailijat kuluttaisivat kohdekaupungissa enemmän rahaa, joka samalla jakautuisi nykyistä useammalle palveluntarjoajalle.</p>			
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# 1. Introduction

Being a sports fan is probably something that can't be fully explained. From my own point of view I remember choosing my favorite ice hockey team before I went to school. I was probably five or six years old. Actually, I don't remember making a decision but somehow I just found myself cheering for this team. A couple of years later I started to follow the NHL, the highest level of franchise hockey. NHL, which stands for National Hockey League, is played in North America and it might sound a bit odd that about an 8-year-old kid in Finland would become interested of a foreign sports league. I was not the only one though, and the reason for this was very likely the weekly NHL show that was aired on TV every Saturday, right after the morning cartoons. From that show, and a Nordic monthly NHL magazine, I learned about a franchise with long tradition that had a very competitive team but hadn't won the championship, the Stanley Cup, for over 40 years. Finally I was totally on their side and had become a supporter of an NHL team, too. I still remember being devastated after they lost the finals in summer 1995 and I still slightly dislike the team that beat them then. Luckily my favorite team has later won 4 Stanley Cups and thus given me some peace of mind. That's my story, and this thesis may reveal reasons to the way I have behaved.

The idea of this thesis is to find answers to questions related to Finnish ice hockey fans traveling in their home country. These questions include reasons to travel to certain destinations or games, and if host organizations and cities could economically benefit from traveling hockey fans.

The situation behind this thesis is relatively simple. Liiga of male ice hockey is the most popular Finnish sporting league according to attendance numbers. Even though Finnish baseball is "officially" Finland's national sport, ice hockey is clearly the most followed and most popular sport in Finland (Toivanen 2015). On average, Liiga drew 5213 spectators on regular season 2012–2013. In comparison, football's Veikkausliiga's average was about 2000 spectators/match and Finnish Baseball's Superpesis' regular season's average was about 1500. Liiga took a new name recently for sponsorship purposes, and was previously known only as SM-liiga. The name is on sale and Liiga is still waiting for a title sponsor. Both names SM-liiga and Liiga are still in use both officially and unofficially and in this

text they refer to the same league. Before 1975, this league was named simply SM-sarja. When SM-sarja turned into SM-liiga, it was separated from other Finnish ice hockey series. The start of SM-liiga also marked a point when ice hockey became mass spectator sport in Finland (Anttila 2001). Since then, SM-liiga has been its own entity and it does not operate under the Finnish Ice Hockey Association. The second highest level, Mestis, does, and currently it's not possible for Mestis teams to be promoted from Mestis to Liiga.

All the largest Finnish urban areas have at least one team playing in Liiga. There are two teams from Tampere, and also Helsinki, Turku, Oulu, Jyväskylä, Kuopio and Lahti are cities with over 100 000 inhabitants that host a Liiga team. Other cities with Liiga teams include Pori, Lappeenranta, Hämeenlinna, Rauma, Vaasa, Kouvola and newcomer Mikkelin in 2016. In 2016, a team from Espoo went bankrupt and could not continue in the league. That makes it 15 teams in total with a wide geographical spread, though most of the teams are located in Southern Finland. When Vaasa got promoted to Liiga, Lapland is the only large geographical area that does not have a Liiga team. Figure 1 on the next page shows the locations of Liiga teams on map. All the teams have more or less official fan clubs that organize fan trips to other locations. This gives a good context in which to start working on ice hockey fans.

Other remarkable ice hockey leagues that are mentioned in this text include NHL and KHL. The NHL, National Hockey League, is arguably the best and most prestigious ice hockey league in the world and winning its championship, the Stanley Cup, is the biggest dream for almost all hockey juniors and players. The league currently includes 30 teams from all over the contiguous United States and Canada. The KHL, Kontinental Hockey League, is in turn led from Russia but in the 2016–2017 season included teams also from Finland, Latvia, Slovakia, Croatia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and China and is considered the number two league in the world, after the NHL.

When the word “hockey” is mentioned in this work, it *always* refers to ice hockey. Also the game of field hockey is called hockey in some parts of the world, but these two different sports should not be confused with each other. Field hockey is a relatively minor sport in Finland. The situation with the name of the game is somewhat similar as with football and soccer. When football is mentioned in this work, it refers to a game known as soccer in North America and Australia, unless mentioned otherwise.

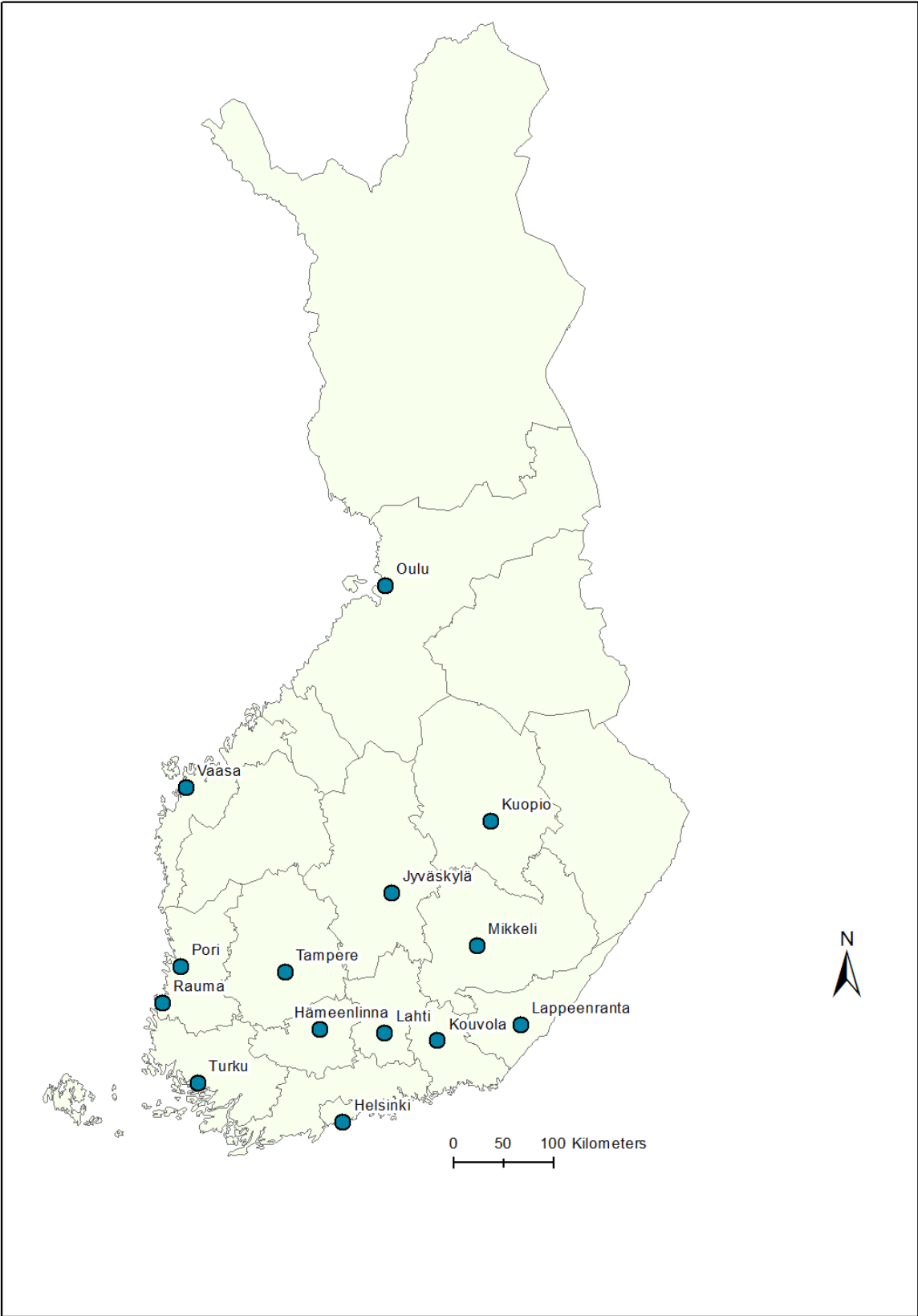


Figure 1. Location of cities with a Liiga team.



## 2. Background

The following chapters will present a summary of main themes included in my study according to existing literature. Firstly I will go through history and impacts of ice hockey in Finland. Then I introduce some aspects of sport tourism related to my topic. After that, in order to understand the people who are in the center of my topic and also my target group, I will give an overview of sport fans. The idea is to show what kind of enthusiastic people this thesis is dealing with and what drives them to follow their favorite teams and/or players for sometimes quite long distances. Then I briefly go through some sport marketing literature that is relevant to my topic.

All this will give background information about several essential parts of my topic, which include sport, tourism and economic possibilities brought by sport tourists. In other words, I will analyze both the characteristics of traveling ice hockey fans in terms of their traveling habits and the economic potential they have for the host teams and communities. The two are connected with each other, and understanding segment's motivations helps host organizations and cities offer them products they need and eventually benefit from that. In addition, the topic of visitor fans in Finnish franchise hockey has been overlooked despite clear need for it, considering hockey's status in Finland. This work has practical applications in the fields of tourism developing and marketing. This means that the focus of this thesis is, instead of concentrating on the theoretical side, a very practical one. The results can be used as a reference for backgrounds of possible coming studies. This is presented in more detail at the Methodology chapter of this study.

The research questions of this study are:

1. How are the destinations of away trips decided?
2. Which aspects affect the visitor's decision to participate in an away trip?
3. How do away trippers perceive the services at the destination ice hall?
4. How could the host teams, organizations and local stakeholders better benefit from away trips?

The first research question is simple but essential for this topic. Supporters participating in these trips are at the core of this thesis but the destinations they travel to are mostly decided by other people – the trip organizers. This research question will be answered by interviews of the fan club members who are in charge of organizing the trips.

The other questions are answered via the results of an online survey. The second question itself says it – I wanted to find out what made visitors participate in that particular trip.

The third question is important in finding out the strengths and weaknesses of ice halls by the eyes of a visitor. This gives information on how the services could be improved. This is also partially linked to the next question.

The idea of the fourth research question is to find concrete ways for host stakeholders to benefit more from the away trips. By maintaining the strengths and fixing the weaknesses the hosts can draw more visiting fans. This results in growing attendance numbers – and very likely more income.

## **2.1 A brief history of Finnish ice hockey**

To better understand the setting and ice hockey's remarkable role in Finland, I present here a short review of how ice hockey has gained its status among the field of sports.

Despite the game's status as the most popular spectator sport in Finland, the history of Finnish ice hockey is relatively short. The first ice hockey games were likely arranged in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in Helsinki (Salmi 2015, KPMG 2015). The first games somehow resembled ice hockey and bandy (a game played on a large ice field with a ball) but ice hockey properly arrived in Finland in the late 1920's when the first official games were played and first Finnish championship was decided (Toivanen 2015, KPMG 2015). Long after the World War II bandy drew bigger crowds than ice hockey. Bandy was, and still is, played in very few countries so it was less international than ice hockey. Finland has regularly participated in Ice Hockey World Championships since 1957, the year when only the first Bandy World Championships were played. (Salmi 2015.) Ice hockey began its rise into its status as Finland's most popular sport around the turn of the 1960's and 1970's (Toivanen 2015).

Salmi (2015) also narrates ice hockey's roots as an urban sport in Finland. The original Finnish hockey towns along with Helsinki were Hämeenlinna, Lahti and Tampere, of which Tampere nowadays has a reputation of having long and strong ice hockey traditions. The first fields and rinks with artificial ice were built in the 1950's which made the playing season longer and allowed the birth of the hockey nation, as Salmi puts it. Also annual World Championships helped in setting yearly goals for developing Finnish ice hockey. Nowadays the World Championships get a lot of critique for being held every year and thus reducing the tournament's value. The first ice hall was built in Tampere in 1965, when Finland was the host for the World Championships for the first time. Rinks with artificial ice weren't, though, spread all over the country until the late 1970's (Salmi 2015).

In terms of competition, Finland got its first remarkable victory in 1967 when the national team beat Czechoslovakia at the World Championships. In the 1970's Finland finished 4<sup>th</sup> at the World Championships for six years in a row and was winning a bronze medal at home event in 1974, until Finland's performance against Czechoslovakia was disqualified because of Finnish goaltender's doping violation. In the 1970's, first Finnish players raised in Finland moved to play in North American professional series. The 1970's generally presented a breakthrough of Finnish ice hockey on international level. Finland for example won the European Championship of under-18-year-olds in 1978. Men's first medal in international tournaments came in Calgary Olympic games in 1988 when Finland took silver. Finally, in 1995, Finland won their first World Championship in Stockholm, Sweden and has remained a strong competitor in international hockey since then with numerous medals and good performances in the World Championships, Olympics and the World Cup of Hockey. Also Finnish women's national team is a strong competitor in international tournaments with numerous bronze medals behind Canada and USA in World Championships and the Olympics.

## **2.2 Economic significance of ice hockey in Finland**

In April 2015, KPMG published a report on ice hockey's impact on Finnish economy and employment. They estimated that hockey's added value to Finnish Gross Domestic Product was about 340 million euros, which was about 0,2 % of the value of Finnish overall production in 2013. Tax revenue created by ice hockey, including direct and indirect impacts, was estimated at 105 million euros yearly. According to the report, ice hockey's

impact on Finnish employment is directly 2900 and indirectly 4900 man-years. 45 % of overall impact was created by professional ice hockey, including highest levels of competitive hockey, their ticket sales, commercial revenues, telecasting, food and drink sales, gambling and so on. The estimations do not include large non-yearly events such as the World Championships that were held in Finland in 2013. There are about 70 000 licensed players and officials, and the estimation is that ice hockey provides a hobby for about 200 000 people in Finland.

### **2.3 Sport tourism**

This thesis is about particular sort of sport tourism or, in fact, sport excursionism. World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (2014) defines a tourist as follows:

*“A visitor (domestic, inbound or outbound) is classified as a tourist (or overnight visitor), if his/her trip includes an overnight stay”*

whereas excursionist is

*“A visitor (domestic, inbound or outbound) [whose] trip does not include an overnight stay.”*

These definitions are generally used in tourism literature, and as most of the visitors studied in this thesis do not spend a night at their destination, they do not count as tourists but as excursionists. There are not unambiguous guidelines when to refer to a visitor as tourist or excursionist. For example, it is not defined how far a person has to travel to count as tourist or excursionist. An often-used definition is that a person who travels outside his/her everyday living environment is a tourist. While everyday environment of an individual may vary greatly, the terms “tourist” and “excursionist” are used very loosely in this text. Much of the literature concerning sport traveling concentrates on sports tourists rather than sport excursionists.

Sport excursionists differ from sport tourists in several ways. Excursionists have limited time at the destination which leads into different behavioral patterns between the two. Many traveling fans only visit the destination to watch sport and they do little else apart from socializing (Gibson et al. 2003). In the same study, sport excursionists in Florida Gators (American) football home game were identified as spending much less money in

the destination than sport tourists. It must be noted that all this was related to tourists who visited home games, thus they were fans of the home team but did not live near the site of the event. When the fans were asked about their behavior at away game destinations, the answers were remarkably different. When fans travel to a city they are not familiar with they take their time to take a look around. The game is still the main reason to visit other cities but fans do something other than watch the game as well. As a result of this, Gibson et al. suggest that sport tourism development of host towns should especially take into account the visitors who support the away team. This is something that is especially under my scope in this thesis.

Sport tourism has not been widely studied before the past two or three decades even when people have made sport-related trips even for centuries. Gibson (1998) recognizes three forms of sport tourism: active sport tourism, event sport tourism and nostalgia sport tourism. Active sport tourists take part in sport themselves, event sport tourists travel to watch sport events, and nostalgia sport tourists visit famous historical sporting sites and museums. Still, Kirkup (2008, p. 191) claims that what is, by the definition above, called event sport tourism, is “*a very active form of tourism*” too. This means that even tourists who only spectate sport are engaged in a relatively active form of tourism, especially if they are placed in the “active” end of sport fan continuums discussed later in this text. In Gibson's context, the particularly interesting sort of sport tourism is, of course, event sport tourism. A single hockey game is a small-scale event so methodologically this thesis falls into that category. Sport fans are also sometimes linked to special interest tourism. Special interest tourist chooses the destination by criteria different from general tourists. General tourist usually first thinks about where he/she wants to go, while special interest tourist starts by thinking about the activity he/she is pursuing and chooses the destination where engaging in that is possible (Mackellar 2006). This is very much the case with this study – the fans travel where their favorite team is playing.

Robinson & Gammon (2004) created a Sport Tourism Framework which further clarifies the connections between sport and tourism. Firstly, the combined field of these two is divided into two sections, which are sport tourism and tourism sport. Sport tourism means traveling and/or staying outside people's usual environment, while sport is the primary motivation to travel. Sport tourism is further divided by hard and soft definition of sport tourists. A hard definition means that a traveling individual actively or passively

participates at a competitive sporting event, such as Olympics. This category is also the one this thesis is mostly about. By a soft definition, a tourist travels to participate in recreational sport. An example of that would be a skiing holiday.

Tourism sport, in turn, means persons' traveling and/or staying outside their usual environment, while actively or passively participating in competitive or recreational sport is a secondary motivation to travel. Tourism sport, too, can be divided into same two categories, hard and soft definitions, as sport tourism. By a hard definition of tourism sport, a tourist's main motivation being holiday, he/she is also expecting to participate in sport activity. By a soft definition, a visitor on a holiday participates in sport activity incidentally.

However, sport tourists' true motivations can sometimes be difficult to identify as subconscious may affect the choices travelers make (Kurtzman & Zauhar 2005). Robinson & Gammon (2004) claim it's unrealistic to identify the diversity of motives that may run through tourist's head in context of sport and tourism. Sport tourists' motivations can be typified in several ways as well, like Kurtzman & Zauhar did. In their typology, sport tourists are classified in three types – feeling, doing and owning. The “feeling” type tourist travels to experience, observe and evaluate the performance in sport he/she is affected to. The “doing” type wants to be a part of the experience and the “owning” type travels to prestigious destinations, uses luxury services and hopes to get experiences from financial investments. The “feeling” and “doing” types are different at their levels of activity - the “feeling” type fan is a passive observer who wants to get the most out of athletes' performances while the “doing” type is an active participant who wants to give his/her contribution to the event.

It should be noted that sports events happen in different scales. Small-scale sports events (like a single regular season hockey game) and large, so-called hallmark events (like Olympic Games) differ in nature. While hallmark events often have many negative sides, it is suggested that small-scale events have more positive effects on the host community. The infrastructure is already there, new investments are rarely required, the benefits go to local communities instead of large sponsoring companies, crowding is more easily controlled, the effect of seasonality is smaller, and importance of events is too small to attract political scheming (Higham 1999).

Gibson's (1998) review of previous studies, as well as Gibson et al. (2003), found a tendency to assimilate sport with religion. Sport tourists can be seen as present-day pilgrims when their destinations are different kinds of sport events. Events themselves are seen as having ritualistic significance to visitors. The atmosphere of large events (such as Olympic Games) is a reason to visit the event, and "being there" is a strong motivator for visitors.

Drawing from earlier studies, Mason & Duquette (2008) line that sport and tourism seldom work in collaboration and the two sectors still remain quite separate. While small businesses don't usually see innovative development very attractive, Mason & Duquette see the possibilities for development through hockey quite restricted. The potential is still there, though. Including the city or some other major stakeholder in the process could perhaps help in unveiling that potential. In the autumn of 2014, the only Finnish KHL ice hockey team Jokerit marketed one of their home games in Tampere-based newspaper Aamulehti and offered a package that included two-way train tickets from Tampere to Helsinki with railway company VR and a ticket to a KHL game at low price. This short campaign resulted in the arrival of about 500 spectators who probably would neither have attended the game nor used VR's services without the discounted package. This means that both Jokerit and VR got 500 "extra" consumers who spent money on the services in the trains and at the arena. This three-way marketing that included a major transport company was something that probably wasn't seen in Finland before. It also shows that at least large companies have will to take advantage of sport in their marketing and that collaboration with tourism-related businesses is effective for sport organizations, too.

Mason & Duquette (2008) also listed which benefits hosting a WHL team brings to cities. WHL is the abbreviation of Western Hockey League, one of three major Canadian junior hockey leagues. I believe that most of those benefits can be adapted to Finnish context as well. Economic benefits include the money brought in by out-of-town spectators, and the visiting team. Mason & Duquette also list local industry stakeholders as those who benefit economically. In Finland, visiting teams or spectators do not usually stay overnight in towns hosting the game because of relatively short distances compared to Canada, but local restaurants, for example, can benefit from visitors in Finland too. Canadian restaurants and hotels were found using hockey games in their promotion. Some businesses had even contacted visiting teams before the start of the season, and also looked for possibilities to

locate their business where spectator masses move. The players were used in promotions as well. Having a team in town also brings the cities media coverage, both in television and print media (which Canadian managers considered very important). Mason & Duquette also list hockey team as a status symbol for the city. Finally, the arena or the area surrounding it can be turned into entertainment destination as people visit the area during game days. A similar idea is presented by Smith & Stewart (2007) who emphasize the tourism and travel experiences in sport (tourism) consumption: the event itself doesn't have to be the only reason for a sport tourist to visit the host destination. Sport tourists' motives are often complex and they are not limited to the sport-related activities even if it usually is the main reason for visit.

## **2.4 Sport fans**

The idea of this chapter is to provide background information about the people who are under the scope in this thesis. Roughly, all the people in my target group are fans but not all the fans are tourists (or excursionists). I have not come across any typologies about fans as tourists while researching for this thesis. I still found it necessary to go through the literature about sport fans here as it's been used in the background while planning the actual study part of this thesis.

The word "fan" is an abbreviation of the word "fanatic". The word comes from Latin word "fanaticus" that means being inspired by a god. Thus, being a fan means being under the inspiration of god and that is something that makes life enjoyable (Heinonen 1999). Hunt et al. (1999) see a fan as a consumer and define him/her as "*an enthusiastic devotee of some particular sports consumptive objects*" (p. 440). Mackellar (2006), in turn, considers "fan" and "fanatic" different, a fanatic being more enthusiastic and involved than a fan. In this thesis, out of these only the word "fan" is used to describe a devoted and passionate spectator.

Several studies about Finnish sport fans exist. These focus mostly on the psychological side of being a fan. Many of earlier Finnish studies about the topic are only Master's theses, and further scientific studies about the theme are rare. Even when there is plenty of Finnish text about ice hockey, the number of social or cultural studies is relatively small (Anttila & Ruonavaara 2001). Finnish literature and especially papers about ice hockey fans are a rarity as before 2001 no proper scientific research about ice hockey fans in



Finland had been done (Anttila 2001:43). There is more material about sports fans in general though. Quality of the studies used here varies and there may be issues concerning it as for example the language does not always seem very elaborate on some of my references. Along with papers quoted in this text, only few other interesting studies about the theme exist. Lindgren (1998) has written his Master's thesis about collective identity of ice hockey fan groups. Koponen & Rainesalo (1995) wrote together their Master's thesis about Finnish ice hockey crowds. According to Anttila & Ruonavaara (2001), there are some studies about Finnish hockey culture and its development, published around the turn of the millennium (Kivinen et al. 2000, Valkonen 1997). Overall, Finnish sports fans are not a very broadly studied topic, but there are numerous studies about fans abroad. Especially English football fans have been at the scope of many scholars. This is partly because of hooligan problem as the reasons behind violent behavior among sports fans have been of interest (Gibson et al. 2003). Finnish sport does luckily not have a real hooligan problem (yet some minor incidents happen every now and then), but this positive feature may also be a reason why crowds attending sport events are such an understudied topic.

Harri Heinonen has studied Finnish fans of an English football club Everton and other sport-related topics (Heinonen 1999; Heinonen 2000; Heinonen & Godenhjelm 2001) and I have used some of his work for theoretical background of this study. Even when Heinonen's study is about football and this text is about ice hockey I, as mentioned above, see no fundamental differences between the fans of these sports in Finland.

Even when there is a fair amount of foreign literature available about sport tourists, it should be noted that the findings from studies from different sport cultures aren't necessarily applicable to Finnish context. This means that while making hypotheses or thinking about anticipated results the differences between behavioral patterns in different cultures must be taken into account. It must be remembered that the results of previous studies could probably be different in Finnish context. Finnish people do not very easily go away from their homes to attend events, as can be seen in attendance numbers throughout Finnish sporting leagues. Also the individual preparation for sport events is quite different between for example Finnish and American spectators. In the USA people often go to the events hours beforehand to socialize and tailgate (cook, eat and drink at the venue parking

lot before the event, see e.g. Gibson et al. 2003) while Finns usually appear at the venues a couple of minutes before the starting time.

There are also global differences between fan cultures. For example the fan cultures between American and European spectators differ significantly from each other. In recent years, Finnish fans have started to adapt habits and practices from European fan culture. These include singing, more diverse chanting, fan marches to games, creating grandstand art (“tifos”), and other more pre-planned forms of supporting instead of only chanting the team’s name and reacting to the events happening in the field or inside the rink. This has improved the atmosphere at the games, but several groups have taken the copying too far as there are some weak signals of hooliganism taking place in Finland. So far the problems have been minor but it requires adept actions from teams and authorities to keep hooliganism at bay from the events while leaving the loud but well-behaving fan base keeping up the atmosphere. This is important for the attendance numbers of events, as for example Anttila (2001) believes that atmosphere is one of the main reasons for Finnish spectators to attend the event instead of following it at home. Still, compared to for example many European countries, Finnish sport fan culture is usually considered weak in the media and internet forums. Mähkä (2015) does not agree with the claim as even being quiet at the game is a sort of culture itself. This is an interesting viewpoint that could deliver sophisticated conversation but in this context it’s probably not necessary to have a deep meta-analysis of the essence of culture. Anyway, Mähkä claims to have often come across to an opinion that football is culture while ice hockey is sport. Reason for this presentation could be the status of ice hockey being marginal in world’s scale while football is a global form of sport. The division between these two is clearly visible especially in Finnish internet forums where fans of football and ice hockey in turn dismiss the other sport. Mähkä’s personal opinion is, though, that all the sports are culture (Mähkä 2015). It is easy to agree with this as differences between the two sports cultures are not very large after all and many people follow them both.

Attending a sporting event is not always only passive observation. The spectators can also be seen as participants of the event. Heinonen (1999, 2000) argues that grandstands at a football match can be compared to a carnival where everyone is living and feeling the event and all the usual, everyday settings are turned upside down or broken. Also Edensor (2015) sees fans as being part of the event among players and match organizers, and

possibly even affecting the game. According to him, the atmosphere of the game created by fans also depends on time of day, weekday and whether the game is played during a holiday or not. On the other hand, Mäkelä (2012:11) quotes a previous study that compares a football match to a religious event in which the players act as priests and fans as a crowd that listens to their presentation. This point of view sees fans as more passive followers of the event, compared to Heinonen and Edensor. As mentioned earlier, Gibson (1998; 2003) has also come across comparisons with sport tourists and pilgrims. These viewpoints show how differently one can see the role of fans at an event. Fans may be considered active participants of a carnival as well as people attending a religious event. Stereotypically quiet Finnish spectators would probably fall in the latter category.

No matter how fans' role is seen at events, there are also other kinds of spectators.

Heinonen (1999) mentions the group of sports consumers that follows sports but acts only passively. This passive group is larger in numbers but much quieter than active fans, and mostly unseen. They follow many kinds of sports on TV, newspapers and sometimes attend the events. Fans differ from these passive spectators by adapting cultural texts and giving them their own, new meanings. Another distinction between fans and spectators is described by Gwinner and Swanson (2003): Spectators with lower involvement have a more passive relationship with the team and have different motivations to attend sport events, such as socializing and pure entertainment, while fans consider their favorite team a central part of their identity and reflect the team's performance on personal level. One must note that the division between "true" fans and passive consumers may not be this undisputed in reality but it rather tells how sports interests many different kinds of people. There is no clear point after which an enthusiastic person should be called a fan, but Mackellar (2006) suggests that for example joining a fan club is a revealing sign of passion. Certainly it's clear that both active and passive spectators exist.

Some researchers have tried to categorize fans by their behavior. Bovellán (2007) describes a continuum that puts regular spectators on the other end and active supporters on the other. Fans can also be divided into smaller subgroups in many different ways. Whether it's necessary or not is a question that should be considered case by case. Hunt et al. (1999) classified sport fans into five groups which were temporary, local, devoted, fanatical and dysfunctional. Temporary and local fans' motivation is considered situational as it is restricted by time and space while devoted, fanatical and dysfunctional fans'

motivation is not tied to such context and is termed enduring. Fans with enduring motivation also feel that fandom is part of their concept of self. Perhaps the most descriptive fan model is that of Funk & James (2001). They have created their own theoretical framework of sport fans, the Psychological Continuum Model (PCM), which describes individual's devotion to sport and the team he/she is following. The model is a very useful tool in evaluating individuals' attitudes and affection to a sports team. According to PCM, the continuum in which the individual operates during the process of becoming a fan includes four levels: awareness, attraction, attachment and allegiance. Fan can move up and down these levels of continuum which describe the amount of his affection. The authors claim that PCM is unique among similar models as its focus is not only on the outcome but in the processes and factors behind individual's behavior.

Communality, or social identity (Ruonavaara 2001: 22), is an important part of fandom as it is possible to share one's feelings with people who feel alike and understand. Fans define themselves partly through the fan community. The identity is often constructed and boosted via community. Belonging to a group or community enables person's identification into something larger than only himself. Success of the favorite team enhances also fan's self-esteem (Wang 1997). Also symbols and the feeling of togetherness they bring attach people into a community that is larger than their immediate vicinity. Belonging into this kind of community doesn't require knowing all the people in the community, which makes the community partly imaginary. This kind of communality with unknown people was found in Toivanen's (2015) text about Kiekkokansa survey. Finnish men's national hockey team brings together people who in everyday life would not be in contact with each other. According to Toivanen, this is especially true in the moment of big victory or loss. This communality clearly links to socialization.

Heinonen argues that in England, fans get their team identity when they socialize with the culture surrounding them and also claims that this happens also in Finland, mentioning TPS (Turun Palloseura) as an example. The topic has not been widely studied in Finland but socialization seems to be possible in cities that host teams with a strong culture, tradition and identity. It is also possible that one first becomes a fan of a player, then a team (Hunt et al. 1999).

Arguments that support the theory about socialization in fanship have been set in numerous studies. For example, Mäkelä (2012) took a closer look at Jyväskylän JYP fans and observed fandom as an act that increases social capital. Bednall et al. (2012) found that young Australians were more likely to attend an Australian Football League match if friends were present, while half-time entertainment and interactivity had no effect. (Interestingly, also Clemes et al. [2011] found that match day entertainment was not positively related to perceived event overall outcome quality in Rugby Union context.) Wann (1997) argues that socialization is essential in becoming a fan but there has to be personal interest and motivation for it to happen. This is in line with Funk & James' (2001) model discussed earlier: one must get attached to the team to really have feelings for it. Wann (1997) made a list of factors that affect person's becoming of fan: they are eustress, self-esteem, escape, entertainment, economic, aesthetic, group affiliation, and family needs. Eustress means positive kind of stress that a fan can control. Being able to control the stress enables it to remain a positive aspect. It is also a source of motivation for the fans as the feeling of stress stimulates fans and provides them with additional energy. Out of these factors, what makes sport different from other forms of entertainment are, in my opinion, especially self-esteem and group affiliation. Both of these are hard to find outside sports at least in the same scale.

The connection between socialization and the first step (awareness) of Funk & James's (2001) model discussed earlier is clearly visible, and it is also recognized by the authors. Also the second step of their model, attraction, is said to derive from social situations and individualistic motives, among others. The third level, attachment, is in turn based more on intrinsic processes. In the final level, allegiance, the fan has built a consistent way of looking at his favorite team, which produces commitment. If conflicted information about the team is brought to fan's awareness, he processes it to re-gain the state of consistency in one way or another. Godenhjelm (1998) studied Finnish ice hockey and football fans' identification and commitment to their favorite team and players. Fans identified themselves more strongly to teams than to individual players. The amount of fans' identification also affected their level of commitment and attendance on both home and away games. Strongly identified individuals attended more games and considered the sport more important part of their lives than less identified fans. They were also more willing to

invest money into their favorite team's games. The more strongly identified fans also had more optimistic views on their favorite team's future success in the sport.

Hunt et al. (1999) suggested, based on information processing theory, that fans identify themselves into an object, for example a team, but a halo effect may also make them identify themselves as a fan of an individual player. In other words, the target of fan's enthusiasm is at certain level (e.g. team) but the same affection reflects to objects that are (usually) related to the main target but are not at the same level (e.g. single player). It also seems that forming ties to a team and a sport instead of individual players makes a fan build a longer-lasting attachment (Mahony et al. 2002). As noted earlier, Godenhjelm (1998) found that females identify themselves more often to individual players than males. This suggests that male fans are more prone to build strong attachment to certain team and/or sport than female fans. The degree of fan identification is an essential issue in the context of this thesis as loyalty may predict fans' willingness to travel after their team (Smith & Stewart 2007).

In Finland, sport has always been strongly connected to national identity (Heinonen 2000, Toivanen 2015). Finnish people have been proud of their sport heroes for a long time. That has probably started with long-distance runner and Olympic hero Paavo Nurmi in the 1920's and 30's or even a decade earlier with Hannes Kolehmainen. Later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century runners and cross-country skiers have been replaced by motor racers such as Formula One World Champions Mika Häkkinen and Kimi Räikkönen (Keke Rosberg was the first Finnish Formula One World Champion but during his prime motorsport wasn't yet very highly appreciated in Finland), and especially Finnish men's national ice hockey team. The annual Ice Hockey World Championship tournament in particular is a large carnival in Finland and it brings the nation together for a couple of weeks every May.

Identity in general is often an important part in following sport, but it is not always only a positive aspect. For example, Australia's National Soccer League suffered from problems caused by strong ethnicity of its teams (Lock et al. 2009). Havard (2014) found that while people are introduced to a team by their families or friends they also learn to dislike their biggest rivals. Winning a rival team brings fans joy and excitement, and some supporters also want the rival to lose their games against other teams as well. Some of his respondents couldn't even watch a playoff or championship game when a rival was playing. Havard

calls the phenomenon of getting enjoyment when the favorite team's rival loses "Glory Out of Reflected Failure", or GORFing.

Sport can also be linked to place identity. It may appear in different forms, such as nostalgia or a more tangible form like certain location (Ramshaw & Hinch 2006). This can be seen in Finnish ice hockey too. Like many sports teams around the world, also Finnish ice hockey fan groups have chants related to different places that are important for their identity. Chants may be about the home city (like fans of both Jokerit and HIFK have a strong urban identity and e.g. use slang term Stadi, meaning Helsinki, when referring to team's home town), home region or other geographic location that has a meaning for the fans (like fans of Oulun Kärpät emphasize that their team comes from the "North"), home ice hall/arena (which fans often refer to as home for both the team and fans) or the named section fans are seated in at the home games.

Bovellán (2007) argues that the difference between sexes is strongly related to ice hockey's fan culture and she has a mental image of ice hockey fans being highly masculine. Smith & Stewart (2007) think that sport in general is manly gendered and list values that are usually associated with sport. The values are aggression, mental toughness, external discipline and character building (p. 165). All these values have strong associations with what usually is considered male identity. Godenhjelm (2008) found that female fans, especially young ones, stronger identified themselves in certain favorite players instead of teams than males. Andrew et al. (2009) found that gender affects spectator motivations as well. Also the game of hockey itself is almost always considered a game played by men. It is often forgotten that women play hockey too. Women's ice hockey is usually ignored in the media and fans' talks and it only gains some attention during the Olympics. Even the World Championships don't get much media coverage and the inequality between men's and women's ice hockey has been in talks for a while now (Leinonen 2015). Gender-related questions in crowds and in the rink could easily be research topics on their own, but this thesis doesn't take a look at that.

Theories discussed in this text seem to happen in reality as well. Among with the theoretical and psychological studies, also more tangible studies which show how fans actually act exist. Some of those are reviewed here in detail as they resemble the study I did for this thesis.

A good example of fan behavior related to what is written above is found in Mitrano's (1999) study about Hartford Whalers fans' reactions when the NHL franchise was relocated from Hartford, Connecticut to North Carolina.

*"I keep seeing posts for people who are already deciding who they are going to choose to follow now that the Whalers are being taken from Hartford. Excuse me? Say what? Hey folks you don't choose a team to follow like you do a #2 from Burger King with extra pickles. Following a team is being committed, informed and passionate about "YOUR TEAM!!" ...Man, ya'll make me want to puke. Where's your loyalty? Would you leave a wounded loved one? ...Geez!!"* (From Mitrano 1999: 144)

The quoted text is written by a Hartford Whalers fan after the announcement of team relocation in 1997. By this time, some Whalers fans had already accepted the loss of their franchise and discussed in the Internet about which hockey teams they should start following. The reaction above shows behavior associated with Funk & James (2001) model's fourth level of commitment. The writer also takes a point in how people become supporters: he clearly thinks it is not possible to just pick a new team to follow and leave the old favorite behind. As literature suggests, becoming a fan often involves socialization and is partly a result of family ties and friends and is not necessarily a conscious process.

In case of new or relocated teams, such as the Hartford Whalers being relocated and becoming the Carolina Hurricanes, marketers have tried to create fan (consumer) commitment out of nothing. Fans in North Carolina hardly knew what ice hockey is when they were introduced a local professional team. Despite all that has been written about socialization and identity formation, it has been shown that identification with a new franchise can happen very rapidly (Lock et al. 1999). Locality can play an important role in this identification process. People's local identity, which is a social identity that is defined by individual's place of residence, affects how people feel about their favorite team. For example, fans in Finland are not usually happy if their team is filled with players coming from the outside of organization. (Ruonavaara 2001.) Turning this around, people are more likely to become interested in hockey if they have a local team. Kelley et al. (1999) recognized five fan adoption steps in marketing of the Hurricanes: (1) creating awareness; (2) generating interest; (3) facilitating evaluation; (4) prompting trial; and (5) ensuring adoption. The case of Hurricanes was not only about marketing a new team, but also new



sport, which makes it somewhat different from conventional fan adoption. Anyway, there are some similarities between Kelley et al. (1999) marketing steps and Funk & James (2001) model. The main difference between these two is probably the viewpoint: the former's aim is at making consumers buy the product while the latter concentrates on the behavior of hardcore sport fans.

Crawford (2001) carried out a survey of British ice hockey team Manchester Storm fans. Ice hockey is not a big sport in Great Britain but Crawford's demographic findings about the crowd were interesting. The crowd's profile was significantly different compared to other spectator sports in Great Britain (such as football and rugby) and it consisted of widely varied backgrounds. It also proved different to the profile of ice hockey audience in North America where the sport originally comes from. The main differences between other ice hockey and football crowds in Britain were the higher number of young people and women among hockey spectators. Study's findings may though not be comparable with Finnish hockey audience as ice hockey is very marginal in Great Britain (which leads e.g. into lower ticket prices) whereas in Finland it is considered the unofficial national sport. Also differences in sport culture must be taken into account. Finns are usually not very keen on attending games or events, which can be seen in spectator numbers in all Finnish sport leagues. Nowadays, in case of hockey, all the games can be seen from pay TV at relatively low prices. This, with the addition of relatively high ticket prices, often results in people staying at home watching the game in their own living rooms.

There are also Finnish studies about ice hockey spectators. Pöntinen (2001) has conducted a survey within hockey crowd in Turku, and Bovellán (2007) wrote her Master's thesis about fans of HPK (Hämeenlinnan Pallokerho). The topics of these studies are probably the ones that are closest to mine, so they are worth reviewing to understand the setting of my study.

Comparing to Crawford (2001), spectators in Pöntinen's (2001) study were not especially young. About one third of the spectators were women. Interestingly, it seems that most of the Finnish hockey spectators do not go to away games, and going to them on a regular basis is a rarity (Pöntinen 2001). This suggests that target group of Pöntinen's study is different than the one in this thesis. Most of the Finnish spectators, regardless of age, still consider themselves supporters or fans of their local team even when the Finnish word *fani*

has negative connotations among some of the spectators. The word may be linked to young girls that for example follow only certain players but are not interested in the team itself, in a similar way as Godenhjelm (1998) found earlier. Categorizing oneself clearly into a group, which fans can be considered to be, may be difficult though. (Pöntinen 2001; Bovellán 2007.)

Locality is also an important factor for Finnish hockey fans. Basically everyone who attends their favorite team's home game comes from the area near the team. The choice of favorite team comes quite naturally by location. (Pöntinen 2001; Bovellán 2007). The situation may be different in more sparsely populated areas of Finland but probably people in those areas also support the team that is geographically closest to their place of residence. Friends and family seem to have some effect on becoming a supporter of a team, which proves that socialization happens also in Finnish context. I think this enhances Heinonen's (2000) argument about English football fans mentioned earlier, and it is also in line with Havard's (2014) findings in American college sport context. Despite this, some supporters may still have family members that support a different team. In some cases people may support even more than one team in a same league but usually other teams are seen as enemies and thus can't be supported (Bovellán 2007).

Finnish supporters like to see skillful and quick ice hockey with a high quality of game. Likeable style of playing and spirit of the team (which I think could together be called identity of the team) are also important for fans. They don't necessarily want to see teams that are built with large amounts of money. Instead of this, locality of players in the team is considered important. (Pöntinen 2001, Bovellán 2007.) What makes Finnish hockey spectators different from British and American is the attitude towards violence and rough plays. Finns, especially older ones, have a negative attitude towards fighting and most of the spectators don't seem to consider hard checking an interesting aspect in a hockey game. This is interesting as checking is allowed in the rules of the game. Aggressiveness and even violence seem to attract crowds in Britain and the USA but Finnish spectators are more interested in skill the players provide to the crowd. (Pöntinen 2001; Crawford 2001; Andrew et al. 2009.) Possible reason to this difference could lie in hockey cultures – Finland is a “hockey nation” when Britain and Southwestern USA, where the Andrew et al. study was carried out, are perhaps less keen on the game itself and people might attend the games just to seek entertainment. Violence inside the rink has also been in talks in Finland

and game's suitability for young spectators has been questioned especially after occurrences of exceptional events. At the same time, Croatian team Medvescak Zagreb, which played in the KHL until 2017, has strongly marketed its games as family products (Peterson 2009).

According to Heinonen's (1999) findings, alcohol may be part of getting into the carnival mood when watching the game at the stadium. On the contrary, the fans who follow the games at home do not get drunk and after the game they usually spend the evening with their families. One of Heinonen's interviewees stated that (own translation)

*"...I want to see the game properly, I'm not getting drunk while watching it. That would put the watching in waste".*

All in all, Finnish crowds attending sport events do not drink very much during the event (Heinonen & Godenhjelm 2001). Celebrations after the game may be a different story. When Finland won the World Championship in 2011, the consumption of alcohol was a big issue in Finnish media as some of the players and other team members were considered too drunk for public appearances. On the plus side, celebrations have been found to have effect even for national economy and gross domestic product in some countries (Kannisto 2015).

## **2.5 Marketing the sport**

Clemes et al. (2011) proved that fanship is important for perceived service quality, satisfaction and behavioral intentions. They suggest that teams could improve fan involvement with the team and enhance awareness of the event to increase fans' intentions to attend future games. Financially it is as well important for sport organizations to understand why people want to attend games. Cunningham & Kwon (2003) found in their study among college students that sociability is an important part of attracting people into sport events. This also enhances the picture that attending sport events is often a very social act. They also suggest that identifying fans' wants and needs and satisfying them can create more positive attitude towards the team and sport. The idea of supplying people what they want instead of what producers produce is frequently presented in contemporary tourism marketing and service developing literature as well (e.g. Hjalager & Nordin 2011; Sigala 2012). To be able to provide the visitors with what they want, one must first know

why sport tourists behave the way they do, as suggested also by Gibson (2005). However, attending sport event is only one option among many others for consumers to interact socially (Funk et al. 2012). This means that sport has to compete with other forms of entertainment, such as movie theaters or restaurants. Consumers don't only use sport as a tool to construct their identities but it's also a part of their leisure time choices (Smith & Stewart 2007). Sport thus has to find ways to stand out among leisure options and make itself attractive. Nowadays, with e.g. extensive internet live streaming possibilities for sports and other forms of entertainment, people don't even have to leave their homes to relax with their favorite amusement. That makes it even more challenging to draw spectators to sport events.

As mentioned before, some sport organizations have used players in their marketing. Marketing a league and a team only with individual players is risky as fans of individual players are not as attached to the product as fans whose main interests are sport and teams themselves. It has been found that player attachment does not increase attendance frequency or long-term commitment to the team. When a player who has a central role in team's marketing retires or switches teams, it may be hard to find another frontman to take the place. Thus, sustainable marketing should be built on the whole team instead of certain players. (Mahony et al. 2002.)

Hunt et al. (1999) suggest that marketing should be targeted to fan groups with different level of identification and enthusiasm. The idea is an implication of their own typology of fans briefly discussed earlier. Best economic results could be reached by choosing the best marketing strategy for every fan segment, and strategies vary depending on which segment is targeted. Good marketing can also increase fans' devotion to sport object they are following thus increasing the number of loyal consumers. Also the overly-fanatical fans can be a target segment – Hunt et al. suggest marketing strategies that aim at turning down their fanaticism as it may have negative effects on other fans and hence be harmful to the team. It must be remembered that, reflecting to ideas presented in marketing literature, recognizing all fan segments and their needs should nowadays be a starting point in this kind of marketing, too. This means that a market research should be carried out beforehand to get the best results out of a strategy suggested by Hunt et al. They also claim that, in addition to ticket sales and attendance numbers, successful marketing takes into account other forms of publicity such as sponsorships and merchandise sales.

Because of the reasons previously presented by Higham (1999), small sport events (or events suitable for capacities of host towns) such as Liiga regular season games could be a sustainable way of developing local tourism. Higham also suggests that international tourists, too, might be willing to attend interesting sport events and change their travel plans in favor of host towns. Attracting a larger number of away team's fans could boost local service businesses inside the ice halls and the areas surrounding and leading to them without a need for large investments. As there are currently 30 home games for each Liiga team, even a small addition in out-of-town visitor numbers could result in considerable total increase in tourism revenues, especially if the visitors would stay overnight at the host town. Co-operation with local tourism businesses such as hotels and restaurants or bars could be worth thinking about for Liiga teams. A Finnish example on this can already be found, yet in a slightly different context. Helsingin Jokerit, who moved to international KHL league in 2014, draws hundreds of foreign ice hockey tourists to their home games (Jokerit on... 2014). According to Jokerit CEO Jukka Kohonen who was quoted in the newspaper article, a foreign hockey tourist spends at least 150 euros in host town, excluding hotel night and game ticket. Jokerit is probably the first Finnish hockey team that has started co-operation with Finnish tourism industry. The team has also collaborated with hotels and a railroad company to offer Russian visitors a package to Jokerit's home games. This is an example how sport and tourism can be put together in Finland. Of course, in Liiga context, it may be more difficult to get Finnish domestic travelers to stay overnight in the host town, but the example shows that collaboration between sport and tourism industry can bring great benefits to host communities.

Liiga has been working on expansion in recent years. After Helsingin Jokerit left the league in 2014 to join the international KHL and Vaasan Sport was promoted to Liiga from Mestis, the number of teams remained 14. In 2015, KooKoo from Kouvola joined Liiga which made it a 15-team series, and in 2016, also Jukurit from Mikkeli joined the series. After the financial problems of Espoo Blues, that eventually makes Liiga a 15-team series, compared to only 12 teams in 2000. Expansion does widen the market and may increase league's overall attendance (but not necessarily the average attendance), but it also brings threats. Too vast expansion might be dangerous for the product as especially long-term fans of Liiga value the quality of the game (Bovellán 2007) which will eventually fall if too many teams and players are introduced to the league. Smith & Stewart (2007), too,

claim that sport's ability to bring memorable moments to spectators is an important reason for many fans to follow it. Also Mahony et al. (2002) suggest team officials to avoid expansion to maintain high level of skill. This, with disabling the possibility to get relegated from the league (and to get promoted from Mestis) might lead to dissatisfaction of fans and lack of interest (Anttila & Ruonavaara 2001). If a team performs poorly throughout the season but has no fear of getting relegated while overall level of the game remains mediocre for the whole season, it is possible that many temporary fans (Hunt et al. 1999) will abandon the team. Fans of uncompetitive teams need to have a reason such as interesting opponent or star players to attend the game (Smith & Stewart 2007). The lack of motivation to attend the games might lead to decline in number of spectators which may result in financial and image-related troubles.

## **2.6 Summary**

The idea of the chapter above was to provide a review of the main themes of this thesis: sport fans and tourism (or excursionism). As far as I know, these two have not been mixed together in Finnish academic literature at least in very much detail. In my opinion, it was actually a bit surprising how hard it was to find information and previous studies about Finnish travelling hockey fans considering ice hockey's status as the most popular spectator sport in Finland. I think this pretty much justifies the choice of topic for my thesis (Anttila & Ruonavaara 2001: 10): it turned out that the idea wasn't to fill a gap in the existing literature, but to study something novel. Ice hockey is, after all, a relatively marginal sport in global context largely because of its climatic or infrastructural requirements and the cost of the game as a hobby. This partly explains the global lack of studies about the topic.

The literature has shown that there are many different kinds of fans. The assumption is that this study is likely to concentrate on the fans that are located in the active and loyal end of the imaginary continuum of fan behavior. More casual or temporary fans are not probably the ones who attend fan trips. The focus of this study though is not in identifying the traveling fans, but to find out reasons why fans travel after their team and how could the host teams and communities get a larger benefit out of the visits. Nevertheless, the theoretical target group of this study consists of people who are active both in following sports and traveling.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Framework**

During past decades, qualitative research has taken steps even further away from natural science and positivism. This means that a wide variety of new methods and narratives have emerged in tourism studies. For example, the researcher is no more an all-knowing expert and generalization of the result isn't a necessity. This means that the writer may only be one voice among all the others. (Phillimore & Goodson 2004.) Personal motivations and the starting point for the research drove me to this direction, which resulted in a subjective perspective and inductive approach to my work. I didn't feel myself as an outside researcher during the writing process and I chose the topic because of personal interest towards the phenomenon.

Also, as the literature review in Background chapter showed, there wasn't very much background information available about traveling franchise hockey fans. The literature review also showed the possible differences between supporter cultures in different countries and continents. This means that large-scale generalization would probably be difficult. This is rather normal in contemporary methodological approaches and I personally wanted to try this as the topic greatly intrigued me. All this also naturally leads to conclusion that this study has an inductive approach to the problem.

Despite the possible lack of generalization, this thesis, in my opinion, isn't exactly a case study either. The broad geographical spread of and demographic differences between respondents in the quantitative questionnaire mean the topic is probably too wide to be called a single case either. Had the scope been on fans of a single team or a certain geographical area, this would in my opinion have been a case study. The wide range of people that are under the scope in this study also means this research is nomothetic in nature (e.g. Baxter 2010:86). In terms of methodology, I think this study is a sort of test how contemporary approach to research works in a mixed-method tourism geography thesis.

In the next paragraphs I will present the methods I used to gather and analyze the data for this study.

### **3.2 Mixed methods approach**

In order to find answers to my research questions, I decided to use both quantitative and qualitative methods. In other words, I took the mixed methods approach. The lack of background information about this particular topic led me to looking for answers from two directions: the people who arrange the fan trips to away locations, and the people who attend the trips. The first idea was to find out the reasons behind the decisions on when, where and why the trips are made. The most practical way of doing this was interviewing the people who arrange the trips and make the decisions. After getting to know the processes going on before the trip, it was time to find out the participants' perceptions on the trip. Mixed methods approach has been criticized for being methods-centric, which means choosing the methods (tools) before methodology (ways of finding the answers to research questions) (Hesse-Biber 2010). This study works the other way around, as I came across mixed methods approach after deciding my focus and research questions. One suggested order in which to approach a study is first the research question, second the accessibility of data, and third what to do with the data (Newman & Benz 1998). This viewpoint has also been used in this thesis, yet admittedly unconsciously.

In mixed methods approach, it is possible to start from either qualitative or quantitative part of the research. If the qualitative part is completed first, it opens up the background of the study. This allows the researcher to gain knowledge about the themes and topics around the subject and drive the study towards the directions revealed by qualitative methods. After that the quantitative part is carried out, which allows generalization of the data. If done other way around, so that the quantitative part comes first, it enables the testing of a theory or a concept before diving deeper into the phenomenon. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2009:30.) Mixed method approach also opens up the possibility for triangulation of data, as the result of the data gathering are two data sets. Two different approaches also allows researcher to get answers to different kinds of questions. This was a remarkable reason for me to use mixed methods as I thought my research questions required both qualitative and quantitative data. Different data types give answers to different research questions (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2009). In this study, qualitative and quantitative parts were carried out mostly separately from each other.



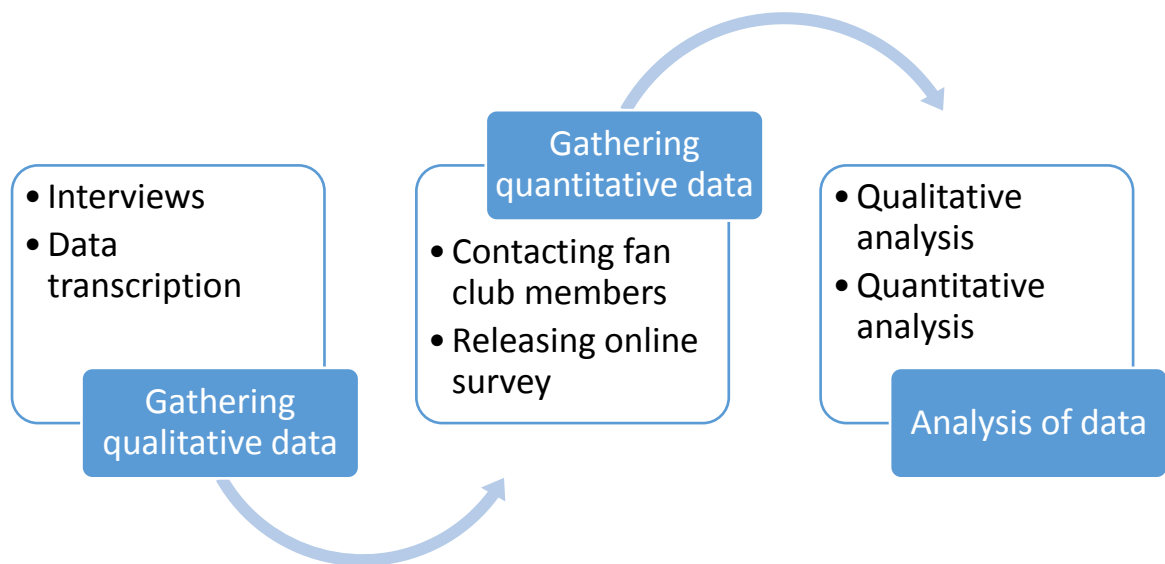


Figure 2. Study process visualized.

Because of lack of information available about away trips in Finnish context, I decided to gather the qualitative data first. This approach firstly gives background information about the phenomenon under the scope (qualitative part), and allows generalizations later when enough data is gathered (quantitative part) (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2009). The idea of this part of the study was to gather information about the process which happens before the fan trips. This allowed me to recognize the reasons behind the choices that define the destinations for away trips of fan organizations and therefore people traveling with them. Assumption before data gathering was that many respondents participating in away trips would travel with fan organizations, which was a main reason that led to my decision to gather the qualitative data first. It also allowed me to edit the quantitative questionnaire according to new ideas that emerged during the interview part of the study. The flow chart of the whole process is seen in Figure 2. There also was no existing theory in this context, which meant that doing the quantitative part first would've been irrelevant. As an existing, concrete theory wasn't available as a background for this study but this work leans on my own research questions instead, a precise description of the phenomenon is presented in the results section, as suggested by Morse & Niehaus (2009).

Spending patterns of spectators have long been of interest of event sport tourism scholars. One problem that has been evident in the studies of spending patterns is the inaccuracy of respondent's expenditure estimations. People tend to underestimate the amount of money

they have spent in the events. One solution is to ask respondents to keep a record of their expenditures during the trip. (Gibson 1998.) This is not as big a problem in this study as the trips are relatively short in duration and only abstract conceptions about prices were asked in the questionnaire.

As for the sample size, Havard (2014) interviewed 15 participants in his study about intercollegiate sport fans. Interviews were carried out during one calendar year. He used snowball sample to find people that could be interested in participating. The interviews lasted 30–40 minutes. I believe that in my study, where qualitative part was carried out only to gather background information about the trip arrangements, the lower amount of participants is justified. Small number of participants also means that results and conclusions made in the qualitative part of this study should be approached cautiously. The main task of the interviews in this study was to provide background for what would be asked in the survey and to find out if the questions were relevant. This means that quantitative part of this study probably gives broader and more detailed answers compared to the qualitative part.

### **3.3 Qualitative part**

The qualitative part of this study consists of three semi-structured interviews conducted in different cities in Southern Finland in 2016.

#### **3.3.1 Semi-structured interview**

Semi-structured interview is a method that lies somewhere between structured and non-structured interview. The questions are the same for all interviewees but their form and order may differ on occasion. Questions are focused on content and questioning is flexible (Dunn 2010) which allows the interview situation be conversation-like. Usually one or more aspects of the interview (e.g. order of the questions, in which form the questions are asked etc.) are defined before the interview but otherwise the process may differ between the interview sessions. In this case, I used a certain type of semi-structured interview which proceeds by pre-defined themes and is relatively loose in form. The idea is giving the voice more to the interviewees (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2009). I also thought this approach, together with my background knowledge about the topic, would make the interviewees feel relaxed and give out honest and deep answers.

### **3.3.2 The interviews**

Target group for my interviews was rather small as it consisted of people who had experience in organizing fan trips to away games. Even then it proved to be surprisingly difficult to find participants. I contacted all Liiga teams' supporter clubs that act in or relatively near Southern Finland. The clubs were contacted via email or their homepage contact/feedback tool (as these usually were the only possible ways of getting into contact with them as no other contact information was available) and asked if someone would be willing to be interviewed. I explained how the interviews would be conducted and how long they would take. I got five responses that showed interest, but two of these did not give a further answer when I asked for suitable places and times for the interview.

The interviews took place in both public and private locations and took between 30 and 50 minutes. The interviews were of semi-structural form as certain questions were asked from all of the participants but occasionally discussions led to different paths (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2009). The frame of the questions remained the same during all interviews but additional questions were included after the first interview. The structure was somewhat similar to the quantitative survey except of the personal information which I asked at the beginning. The questions were presented in slightly different order between the interviews as the conversations sometimes went different ways. In all of the interviews the atmosphere was relaxed after the excitement at the beginning had gone and answers were sometimes longer than I had expected.

Respondents were, as expected, all willing to talk and conversations went very smoothly. As I'm a hockey fan myself, I felt I had a mutual understanding with the respondents during all interviews. Interviewees' attitude towards myself was very good and they did not seem to think of me as a completely outside researcher. Just in case, I did not want to reveal much about myself as a hockey fan before the interviews to make sure it would not affect the attitudes towards myself. This was easy as pretty much nothing was asked from me until the end of the interviews. I had only told the respondents what I study and what my motivations were. In the end, all of this probably would not have mattered anyway as the respondents were smart, ordinary people who had a same interest as myself (but a different favorite team!).

### 3.3.3 Analysis of data

I recorded all of the interviews with permission of the respondents. I transcribed all interviews in their entirety in Finnish. I excluded non-relevant additional words while transcribing the interviews as such accuracy wasn't necessary in this study because of my methods – I wasn't doing discourse analysis or other methods that concentrate on use of language (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2009). Answers were not directly translated at any point but the analysis was written in English. After the transcription I created an Excel sheet where I went through and compared the interviews question by question and wrote down the main points of each of the answers. The main points were chosen by finding words or expressions I thought were relevant. This allowed me to compare the responses and thus draw conclusions. I did not find coding of the answers necessary as questions were clearly organized and number of interviews was small.

The data was organized by themes (which were based on the questions) which were Arranging the trips, Traveling, Sport factors, Details of the trip, Social factors, Services and background information about the respondents and people traveling. The results are also presented in this form yet the order of questions during the interviews was slightly different. Overview after the organization of data showed that answers to similar questions were sometimes found in different parts of the interview. Also the first interview did not give as many answers as the latter two as more topics came into discussion during these interviews. All planned topics were still covered in all of the three interviews but in different detail. The result is reminiscent of grounded theory approach (e.g. Flick 2014:40) which I was not intentionally using but how many data-based studies (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2009:164–165) eventually end up.

With such small number of respondents the data can't be certainly generalized but general similarity of the answers indicates that reliability and validity of qualitative part of this study should be in an adequate level (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2009:186). In qualitative research, the amount of respondents is not even as important as choosing the respondents carefully (Bradshaw & Stratford 2010:73), which was done in this study. I believe that saturation point of the answers would have been reached if the number of respondents were doubled (which would have covered 40 % of the Liiga teams). Also, if interviews had

included teams with longer distances to other Liiga cities the results could have changed. This is of course pure speculation and very hard to evaluate precisely.

### **3.4 Quantitative part**

The quantitative material was collected by the University of Helsinki online survey tool. Most responses came during October and November 2016. The basic construction of the survey was created before the qualitative part of this study took place. The survey consisted mostly of questions answered in 5-step Likert scale. Answers to background questions could be chosen from dropdown menus. There were also two open questions regarding the services and one for giving feedback. Some questions were slightly modified after the interviews but in the end the final questionnaire was almost similar to the original version. The survey was in Finnish as I assumed it's the native language for large majority of the respondents and all participants would understand it.

The survey was spread via Liiga teams' supporter organizations. The organizations were contacted by email where I asked if they could spread the link to the survey in the social media or through their email lists. I also expressed my wish to spread the link further to get more respondents. I can't tell if the snowball sampling worked or not as most of the organizations did not reply to the original email. Thus, it is unclear which organizations actually spread the link. I managed to get 103 responses in total. It is hard to estimate how representative a sample size this is as there are no statistics about the number of people attending their favorite team's away games during little over two seasons. After the interviews I estimated there are, on average, a maximum of 100 more or less active visitors for each 15 teams, which makes it about 1500 people participating in away trips actively. This does not include more casual visitors as some of the largest single trips may have hundreds of participants. This is just my personal estimation which is based only on few interviews, so the actual number may be completely different.

Prior to the survey, some instructions were given to participants. The target group were people who had attended Liiga game in a location *other than their own place of residence or the home town of their favorite team* during seasons 2014–2015, 2015–2016 or 2016–2017. This meant there were restrictions to some supporters. KooKoo from Kouvola has only participated Liiga since 2015 and Jukurit from Mikkeli since 2016. Blues from Espoo went bankrupt in 2016 and was relegated after the season 2015–2016. The supporters of

these teams were allowed to participate if they had been on a trip to a Liiga game but not if they visited any other hockey league game (practically Mestis).

Respondents were told to answer the questions according to their *most recent* away trip which makes the nature of the survey cross-sectional. There were sections in the survey that could have been understood to mean respondents' opinions in general. That's why it was emphasized that respondents would only think about their most recent trip. I also mentioned that respondents could participate despite their means of travel. In other words, not all the participants were on a supporter organization's trip. It was also possible to participate even if respondent wasn't a supporter of a certain Liiga team but it was mentioned that answering some of the questions would be easier for supporters.

The survey was divided into six parts, each of which consisted of one page. The first page consisted of questions regarding motivations related to sport, second dealt with traveling, third was about social factors, fourth about available services, fifth asked about quality of service and final page was background information about respondents. In order to get as many answers as possible, I wanted to keep the survey relatively short while still getting answers to all the questions I had in mind. I estimated it would take about 15 minutes to participate. I tried the survey myself and it took me almost ten minutes while I knew the questions and how they should be answered.

In order to further identify the respondents, I also calculated sum variables about certain themes. This resulted in variables which tell general information about respondents' attraction to their team and away traveling (which I called fan index), interest in the act of traveling in this context (traveling index), and social interaction within the trips (social index). Sum variable is a variable that is calculated by "adding together values of independent variables that measure the same phenomenon" (KvantiMOTV 2009). In this case, I identified several questions regarding the themes mentioned above and counted averages for each theme. The questions were asked as "how much the following things affected your decisions to take an away trip". Generally the questions for calculating all the indexes were chosen by their content so that they all should measure the same subject. Variables chosen for the calculation of sum variables can be chosen by using correlations but content-based choice of variables is also allowed (KvantiMOTV 2009). I used the latter approach.

The questions included in counting the fan index were Will to see favorite team play, Will to support favorite team, Will to “be there”, and amount of away games seen during the previous, ongoing and coming season. The answers for amount of games were re-coded so that they fit the 5-step Likert scale, even when it is mathematically not exactly allowed the way I did it as the nominal scale was not evenly distributed. When done this way, I believe the results are still accurate enough for this purpose. Additionally, this is not an essential part of this thesis.

Questions used in the calculation of traveling index were Distance to destination city, Attractiveness of the destination, Will to travel to another location, Will to see other cities, Will to see new cities, Will to spend time in other city, Will to stay overnight at the destination, Will to see new ice halls and Personal tradition of going on away trips. The social index was calculated by using Company, Meeting friends and acquaintances, Getting to know new people and Interacting with fans of opposing team. All the index values were re-coded to original Likert scale numbers instead of using the actual sums. This makes the results more generalized but also easier to compare with other values presented in this study.

As can be deduced from the text above, I coded the answers of Likert scale questions to numbers which I used in the analysis. Also this is not completely trouble-free from purely mathematical perspective but in practice it is widely accepted (KvantiMOTV 2007). In this study it was practically the best possible way for interpretation, analysis and presentation of my data. I also used lots of averages, modes and standard deviations which is a widely-used practice in studies similar to this. The use of these statistics with ordinal scale data is also under some argument but in practice this gives adequately accurate picture of opinions under study (Akin menetelmäblogi 2011).

Data gathered from Likert scale questions are not actually numbers but ranks. This means that the data is presented in ordinal scale. This sets restrictions on the ways how the results can be analyzed. As mentioned above, calculating averages, modes and standard deviations from Likert scale data are a common practice in social sciences yet it is mathematically not totally correct. Correlations can, however, be calculated from ordinal scale data. The method for this is Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (e.g. Walford 1995:291), which

has been used in this study. Two-tailed correlations and their statistical significances were calculated by using SPSS version 24 as software.

## **4. Results**

Results of this study are presented here in the same order as the data was collected and analyzed. First I introduce the results of interviews, then move on to descriptive statistics collected by the survey and finally take a look if there are correlations within the answers of each section of the survey and which aspects seem to have effect on overall experience the respondents had in the game and during the trip.

### **4.1 Qualitative part**

The respondents were young males from Southern Finland who had followed ice hockey for a long time (well over 10 years at minimum). They had also participated in supporter club activities for many years. Two of the participants had also multiple years of experience in arranging the away trips and the remaining one had also arranged many trips.

#### **4.1.1 Arranging the trips**

First were the questions of the basic principles of arranging the trips. It came very clear that the day of the week has to be Saturday. Trips during the week are usually out of the question unless the destination is very close. The dates are decided right after the season schedule is published. This means that increasing the number of Saturday games could lead to higher attendance league-wide. Distance to destination seemed to have no effect while arranging the trips. The only exception to this was distant Oulu as bus trip there takes so much time. As the respondent's favorite teams play in Southern Finland, there is still plenty of choice for destinations as distances there are not very long (Table 1). The effect of choice of destination to the number of people participating in the trip gave contradictory answers. One of the respondents stated that long trip effects the number negatively but other thought that long trips are the most interesting for the people. The one who associated distance with lower interest stated that advertising and raising the awareness of the trip is more important than the distance – people will participate in trips despite the destination if hype around the journey is created. The one who spoke fondly of long trips also mentioned that trips with overnight stay or boat trip after the game raise most interest.



The average number of people attending a trip was estimated at about 50 which means approximately one full bus. The second bus is not easily reserved and one bus is mostly enough anyway. The number of people regularly participating in away trips was estimated at several dozens. The age of the participants usually varies between about 18 and 40 years, and respondents estimated about 10-20 % of the participants were female.

Ice hall at the host destination has some effect on fan clubs' decisions on where to travel. Usually the difference is not remarkable but some of the halls have worse reputation than others. For example Synergia-areena in Jyväskylä stood out in negative light during the interviews. Generally it can be said that the worst halls are dropped out of the fan clubs' trip schedules while considering the destinations for trips. Facilities or services of the halls play no part during the planning phase, but visitor fans' seating was the reason some destinations are not popular choices for away trips. As for the facilities, all the ice halls serve beer and have toilets and that is pretty much enough for the trip organizers. Thus, seating was considered the most important aspect in the ice halls while planning a trip. The conditions at the stands have taken a large leap forward during the years and seats (or actually the reserved area in the stands as majority of the fans stand during the game anyway) are good almost everywhere. Seating can be negotiated in some ice halls but not everywhere. It was suggested that all the host organizations could reserve a same certain area for away fans for every game.

*Table 1. Distances between Liiga cities by fastest route. Source: Fonecta.fi.*

	Helsinki	Hämeenlinna	Jyväskylä	Kouvola	Kuopio	Lahti	Lappeenranta	Mikkeli	Oulu	Pori	Rauma	Tampere	Turku	Vaasa
Helsinki		102	270	135	384	105	231	231	609	245	258	178	169	423
Hämeenlinna	102		187	138	333	73	225	208	529	188	188	78	144	323
Jyväskylä	270	187		193	146	171	225	115	341	265	290	148	309	271
Kouvola	135	138	193		267	62	91	107	532	305	319	188	296	429
Kuopio	384	333	146	267		285	270	162	289	410	436	294	455	378
Lahti	105	73	171	62	285		148	133	511	245	259	128	215	368
Lappeenranta	231	225	225	91	270	148		109	557	392	408	275	391	496
Mikkeli	231	208	115	107	162	133	109		450	379	404	261	351	386
Oulu	609	529	341	532	289	511	557	450		498	548	482	623	320
Pori	245	188	265	305	410	245	392	379	498		51	114	140	191
Rauma	258	188	290	319	436	259	408	404	548	51		143	93	243
Tampere	178	78	148	188	294	128	275	261	482	114	143		164	241
Turku	169	144	309	296	455	215	391	351	623	140	143	164		331
Vaasa	423	323	271	429	378	368	496	386	320	191	243	241	331	

Safety is of no concern for trip organizers. All ice halls are considered safe even though occasional conflicts may occur, often triggered by alcohol. Perceptions of security guards' actions differ as different cities seem to have different policies on security issues. No respondent mentioned safety as a factor when planning the destinations.

#### **4.1.2 Reasons to travel: traveling**

After talking about the principles of arranging the trips, the interviews moved towards respondents' own perceptions and assumed reasons of participants to join an away trip. Price of the trip was believed to be an important factor in making a travel decision. Usual price for a single trip was around 20–30 euros, which includes transportation and the game ticket. Long trips cost more than that. All the respondents stated that the prices are kept low to keep the attendance high and fan organization do not make profit out of the trips. Actually the organizations may lose money for arranging the trips and the prices are sometimes subsidized by other means such as yearly fees.

Traveling itself was considered very important in making decision to travel. Social transactions and good atmosphere during the traveling phase of the trip seem in some cases to be actually the most important reasons to participate in an away trip, even more important than the game itself. The significance of travel companion was mentioned during all interviews. There seems to be a threshold to make a decision to travel if no friends are coming with. This happens even when people are not divided into groups during the trip. The people participating in trips seem to be pretty much the same faces every time. Some newcomers of course show up, and they will come again if they like the atmosphere. Newcomers are often very young. There is no remarkable interaction between fans of the host and visiting team. Some single individuals may start chatting with home team's supporters but that is not believed to be a reason to participate in a trip.

There is usually no time for other activities during the trips. Buses arrive at the hall about 30–60 minutes before the puck drops. This means that people just walk straight into the hall. The buses also depart straight after the game so there's no time to stay in the host city afterwards either. Some groups arrange overnight trips where fans stay at a hotel or a cruise ferry after the game. These might be of more interest if they fit the schedule. Overnight trips should also take place in a city that is not located near home town. The price of such trip might become a problem though.

The tradition of participating in an away trip is also believed to be a factor in making travel decision. The destination itself isn't important but people like to travel and have fun with a group of friends. This clearly seems to be a motive for some visitors. On the other hand, new cities and teams also create interest and seem to draw good number of participants out of curiosity.

#### **4.1.3 Reasons to travel: sport factors**

Sport or competitive factors, meaning the motivations to see the game, were considered the most important in making the travel decision. Will to see the favorite team playing, and supporting and following the favorite team were considered self-evident. Also the will to "be there" was very important. The success of favorite team didn't affect the respondents themselves but more casual visitors come more easily if the team is doing well. The team favorite team is playing against doesn't have much effect unless that is considered a rival or the team is HIFK (which comes from the capital and has a legendary reputation). The competitive level of the opponent and assumed competitive closeness of the game don't affect much either, own team's recent performance is more important. Individual players aren't believed to have effect on travel decisions, the possible exception being NHL lockout seasons when some of the world's best players come to play in other leagues.

#### **4.1.4 Reasons to travel: details of the trip**

Distance of the trip affects people's willingness if destination is far away. Threshold was estimated at about 3 hours of one way traveling. Trips shorter than this weren't believed to have effect on number of participants. As mentioned before, traveling as such is an important factor on deciding to participate in away trips. The destination was not considered important. Will to see other cities and ice halls was not remarkable either, as there is usually no time to visit the city anyway. New cities and ice halls bring more interest to the trip but after one or two visits it does not make a difference anymore. Facilities and seating at the host ice halls do not have much effect on individual decisions to travel but they are given thought when planning the trips. The atmosphere at the game has not much effect either as groups are so focused on their own supporting. It was said it is nice if the other supporter group also makes noise but it is all just extra. Other program than the game at the ice hall was not believed to have any effect on travel decision. Active

supporters participate in trips anyway but it is hard to tell if some individual visitors think about that. In any case, that is very marginal.

#### **4.1.5 Reasons to travel: social reasons**

As mentioned in the traveling part, social factors are an important part of away trips. Meeting friends is a remarkable reason for many trip participants but on the other hand people may not attend if no friends are coming with. Still, trips were considered a good chance to get to know people as they are social events. When on an overnight trip, organizers also try to get all the participants to spend a night at a same place but it is usually not possible as the group is quite large. As mentioned in the planning phase, interacting with other team's fans usually is not part of the trip. Contacts are made in social media between the games.

#### **4.1.6 Services at the ice halls**

Respondents were asked their opinions on the services of ice halls. The questions concentrated on food, beverages and toilets as these turned out to be the services that away fans mostly use.

Respondents did not usually buy food from the ice halls themselves. The number of food sales points was generally considered fair. Some queue is formed as in all sports events, and size of the venue and number of people attending the game naturally affects the waiting time. Quality and variety of food served was not very much appreciated. Sausages, meat pasties and other sorts of greasy fast food is available everywhere but ice halls lack salads and low-fat dishes. In other words, the variety is not too good. Food prices were considered high, yet some understanding towards price policies was stated too.

Beverage sales had similar problems as with food. Queues are sometimes so long that people miss the beginning of next period if they buy something to drink. (In 2016–2017 season, longer 20-minute intermissions have been tested in some Liiga games to deal with the problem.) In some destinations, such as in Vaasa, visiting team's fans are reserved their own bar by the hosts. The amount of spectators in general of course affects this too. Variety of drinks was considered adequate as there is no demand for specialties. Prices were again considered very high. One respondent told he does not usually even buy beer

from the most expensive places, such as Helsinki ice hall. For example 7 or 7,5 euros for a 0,4-litre beer was considered way too much.

Two of the respondents thought the number of toilets available was good and there has not been problems anywhere. One respondent had a different opinion and he claimed the game organizers lose money when people queue for toilets during intermissions. The views about cleanliness of toilets were also mixed.

When asked about some services that ice halls usually lack but would be useful, no particular needs arose. Away fans do not seem to demand much, but gambling services and cash withdrawal machines got mentioned. Free drinking water is not available everywhere but it would be of good use for fans who chant and shout during the periods.

Customer service at ice halls generally works well. Queuing takes time but otherwise service is quick and friendly. Security arrangements and guards' actions differ between cities. At some ice halls visitor fans are isolated from other spectators. Practices are different and there are no common guidelines within the league. Security guards were usually ok and reputation of supporter groups probably affects the reception visiting fans get. Visitors' safety raised no concerns among the respondents either.

Questions about practical arrangements at the grandstands were also asked at the service section. As mentioned before, away fans' seating has gotten better over the years and usually groups are happy with it. Supporting has evolved in Finland during the years but seating has not kept up with changes everywhere. At some places it may be difficult to for example stand during the game and place banderols without causing disturbance to other spectators. Best arrangement would be an own section at the grandstand where fans can stand, place their banderols and wave flags while also being able to see the game fairly well.

As a conclusion respondents said they were happy with the overall experience at the game.

#### **4.1.7 Background information about visitors**

As the final part of the interview the respondents were asked some general information about themselves and people who attend the trips. Respondents and people generally travel with their friends but girlfriends may sometimes attend as well. Groups of friend usually consist of males. Trip decisions are made with one or two friends but at the bus people get

mixed and everyone belongs to the same group. Respondents attended around 10+ away games during the period of two seasons, and most active people may visit about 20 games during the same period of time if they do some traveling on their own. Respondents also planned on visiting about similar number of away games in the future as well.

## **4.2 Quantitative part**

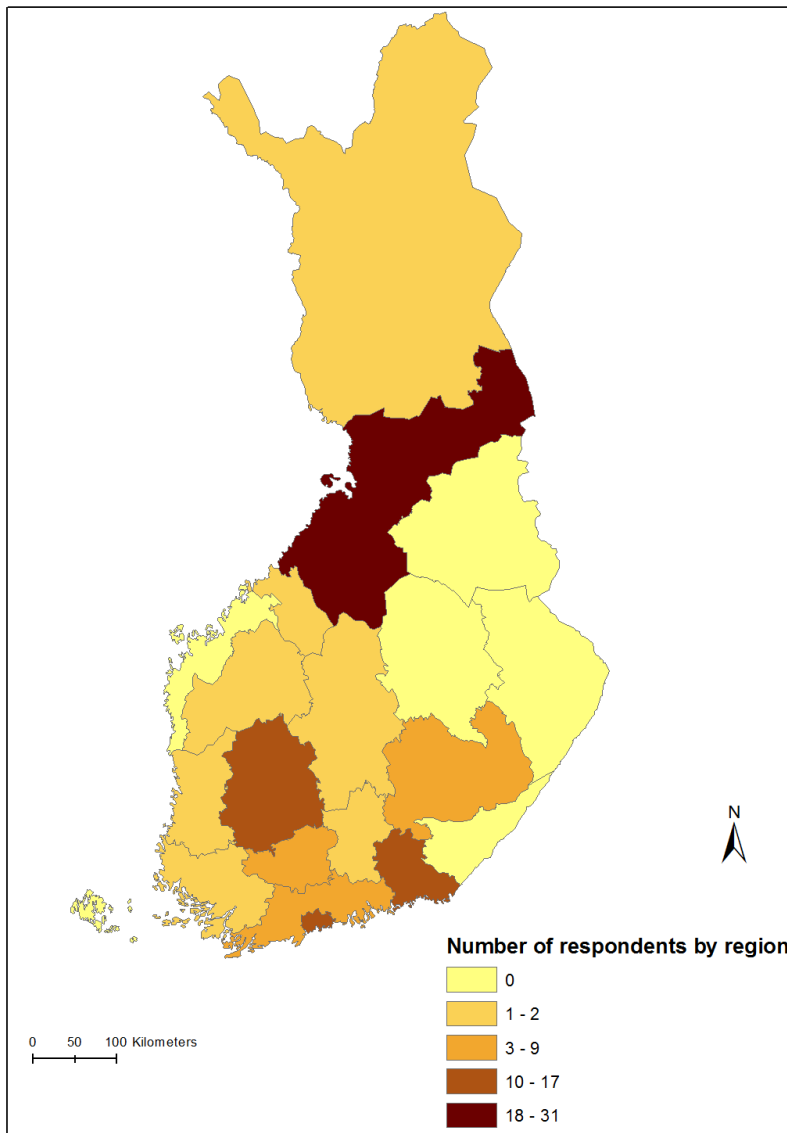
### **4.2.1 Descriptive statistics: respondents**

60 out of 103 respondents were men, 41 were women and 2 did not answer the question. The percentage of women among the respondents is considerably larger than what trip arrangers estimated to participate in away trips (about 10–20 %). This means that women are probably overrepresented in the sample. This may be a deficiency in generalizing the results but in quantitative research, getting adequate amount of respondents is more important than choosing the most representative respondents (Bradshaw & Stratford 2010:73). Generally the respondents were relatively young as only 28 of them were over 35 years of age. There were no over 65-year-olds but there were nine under 18-year-olds.

75 of the respondents lived in only four Finnish regions (Kymenlaakso [13 respondents], Pirkanmaa [17], Northern Ostrobothnia [31] and Finnish Capital region [14]). There were no respondents living in Åland islands, South Karelia, Ostrobothnia, North Karelia and Northern Savonia. This means that supporters from Eastern Finland are not well represented in the sample. This indicates that supporters of KalPa and SaiPa are not probably included in this study, at least in big numbers. Figure 3 on the next page shows respondents on map.

Visited destinations included all Liiga cities except Espoo (team which went bankrupt after the season 2015-2016), Pori and possibly Mikkeli that could not be chosen in the survey (Figure 4 on page 43). Many respondents had visited destinations that are located near their place of residence. For example, 12 out of 31 people living in Northern Ostrobothnia had visited Vaasa, nine out of 17 from Pirkanmaa visited Tampere, Lahti or Hämeenlinna, 11 out of 14 people from Finnish Capital Region went to Tampere or Hämeenlinna and nine out of 13 from Kymenlaakso to Lahti or Lappeenranta. There of course were some respondents who had traveled long distances (e.g. eight people went from Northern

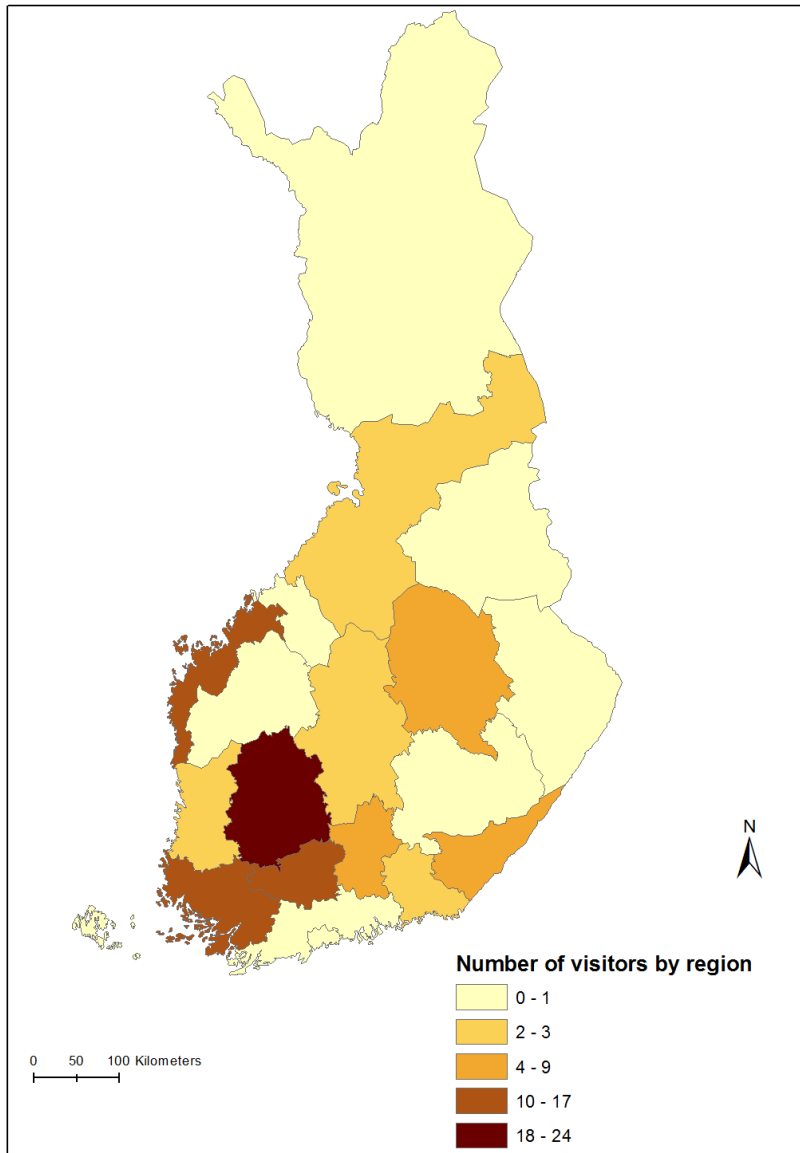
Ostrobothnia to Turku) but mostly the destinations were not too far from their places of residence (Table 2 on page 44).



*Figure 3. Survey respondents by region of residence.*

72 of the respondents had traveled by transportations arranged by the fan club. 22 did the trip by private car or motorbike, eight had privately arranged a group trip and one person came by public transportation. 61 respondents said they were traveling in a group of more than ten people. The question was unclear though – it was not specified whether the respondents should count in all the people traveling in the same bus or just their own companion. The options available in the survey suggested the latter (which was the original

idea) but it is not known how people understood the question. Bus trip arranged by fan club was the most popular means of travel to almost all of the destinations, exceptions being



*Figure 4. Destination regions of survey respondents.*

Helsinki, Jyväskylä and Rauma which very few respondents had visited. Most popular destinations to those who did the trip by private car or motorbike were Hämeenlinna and Tampere which, because of their locations, are both very easily accessible by road from many locations in Southern Finland. (Table 3 on page 45.)



People participating in the survey were frequent – only four respondents had answered

*Table 2. Respondents' region of residence and destination (destinations with at least one visit).*

Region of residence	Destination visited													Total	
	Helinki	Hämeenlinna	Jyväskylä	Kouvol	Kuopio	Lahti	Lappeenranta	Oulu	Rauma	Tampere	Turku	Vaasa	Other		
Southern Ostrobothnia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Southern Savonia	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	5
Tavastia Proper	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	5
Central Ostrobothnia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Central Finland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
Kymenlaakso	0	1	1	1	1	5	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	13
Lapland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
Pirkanmaa	0	2	0	0	1	3	2	0	1	4	1	1	2	0	17
Northern Ostrobothnia	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	6	8	12	1	31	
Päijätne Tavastia	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	
Capital Region	0	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	7	2	0	0	14	
Satakunta	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	
Lusima (exc. Capital Region)	1	3	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	9	
Southwest Finland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>103</b>	

Count

according to their only away game experience during the ongoing and previous seasons. Most commonly participants had attended six to ten away games during little over one Liiga season. 14 of the respondents had attended over 20 away games during the period. Participants also planned on continuing to travel after their favorite team. When asked how many away games they were going to attend during the ongoing and following season, the results were very similar. The only remarkable change was that there were about ten more responses in the category of 2–5 away games and about ten less in the category of 6–10. It is not exactly known which categories moved into which but it seems that the sample group is generally going to attend somewhat less away games in the future.

The gross yearly household income of the respondents was usually less than 40 000 euros. There were at least a couple of respondents in each income group. Finnish average yearly income per household was 37 778 euros in 2014 and median income 31 764 euros (Statistics Finland 2015) so the sample should be representative in that sense. 13 respondents didn't want to tell their yearly income.

As mentioned in the Methodology chapter, further identification about the respondents was done by counting fan index, travel index and social index for the whole sample. This was done in order to find out what kind of supporters participated in the

survey. The fan index of the respondents was 3,98 when transformed into a 5-step Likert scale, which means that

*Table 3. Respondents' destination and means of travel (destinations with at least one visit).*

Count		Means of travel				Total
		Trip arranged by fan organization	Private car/motorbike	Public transportation	Other	
Destination visited	Helsinki	0	0	1	0	<b>1</b>
	Hämeenlinna	6	6	1	0	<b>13</b>
	Jyväskylä	0	2	0	0	<b>2</b>
	Kouvola	2	0	0	0	<b>2</b>
	Kuopio	5	1	0	0	<b>6</b>
	Lahti	8	1	0	0	<b>9</b>
	Lappeenranta	7	1	0	0	<b>8</b>
	Oulu	3	0	0	0	<b>3</b>
	Rauma	1	1	0	0	<b>2</b>
	Tampere	15	5	4	0	<b>24</b>
	Turku	7	3	2	1	<b>13</b>
	Vaasa	15	2	0	0	<b>17</b>
	Other	3	0	0	0	<b>3</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>103</b>	

supporting and following the favorite team was very important for the respondents. Traveling index was 2,42 in a similar scale. This means that traveling itself (excluding the social viewpoint) is not a very essential part of the away trip experience. Social index of the respondents was 3,04, so social interactions are a moderately important factor in making the travel decision for this sample.

I also asked for feedback and comments at the end of the survey. I got several comments, most of which thanked the author about an interesting choice of topic. Some feedback about certain cities and ice halls was given as well, and they mostly conformed the views of trip organizers in the qualitative part of this study.

#### **4.2.2 Descriptive statistics: Sport factors**

First part of the survey consisted of 11 questions regarding the sport or game itself. As predicted in the qualitative part, this proved to be an extremely important reason to attend the away trips. Like all other parts in the quantitative part of this study, the questions were asked in 5-step Likert scale. The questions in this section were asked in a form of “how much the following things affected your decisions to take an away trip”. The options were 1 = had no effect, 2 = had little effect, 3 = had moderate effect, 4 = had a big effect and 5 = had a very big effect. Averages scores for all variables at the section are visualized in Figure 5 on the next page.

Both will to see favorite team play and will to support the favorite team proved to be very important factors in making the travel decision. Will to see the team play scored an average of 4,71 and will to support the favorite team 4,68 mode being 5 for both questions. Will to “be there” also scored high with a 4,40 average and mode 5. Success of the favorite team got remarkably lower average with mode being 1, as did the attractiveness of the opposing team. Rivalry between the teams didn’t have much effect either. Competitive quality of the opposing team, assumed closeness of the game and assumed likelihood of favorite team to win got scores below 2 so they are not very much thought about when making the travel decision. Star players and interesting individuals on ice was considered somewhat more important with an average of 2,55 with mode being 1. This may suggest the phenomenon that trip arrangers mentioned in some of the interviews exists: people frequently participating in away trips do not care about individual players while more casual visitors have more interest towards well-known players. The special nature of game or the trip had an average of 3,17 with mode of 4 which makes it more important than, for example, the opposing team or assumed closeness of the game.

To sum up the role of sport factors in travel decision, the numbers tell that the most important thing is the supporter’s love for his/her favorite team. Eustress often sought in sports (Wann 1997) does not seem to make Finnish hockey fans travel. Possible future growth in numbers of visiting fans clearly does not come from the competitive factors studied in this thesis but from personal needs and wills through which people become supporters and fans in the first place.

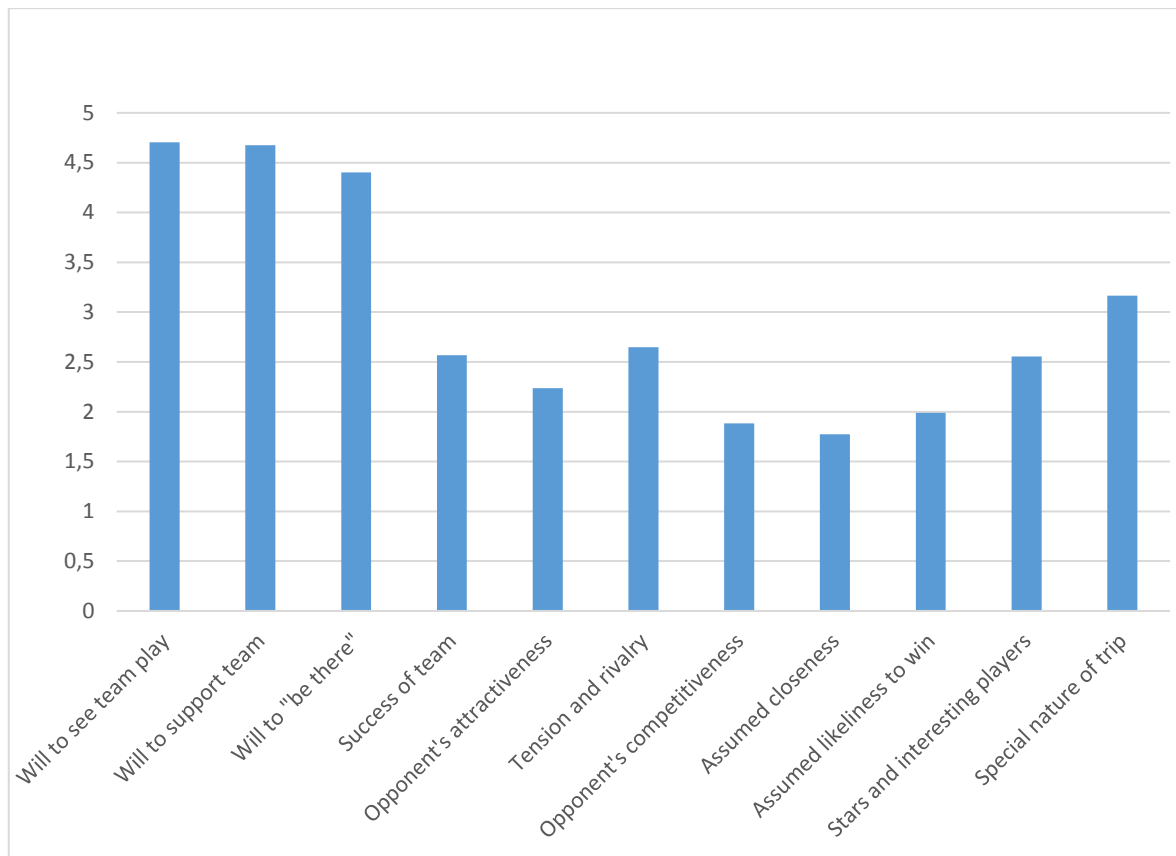
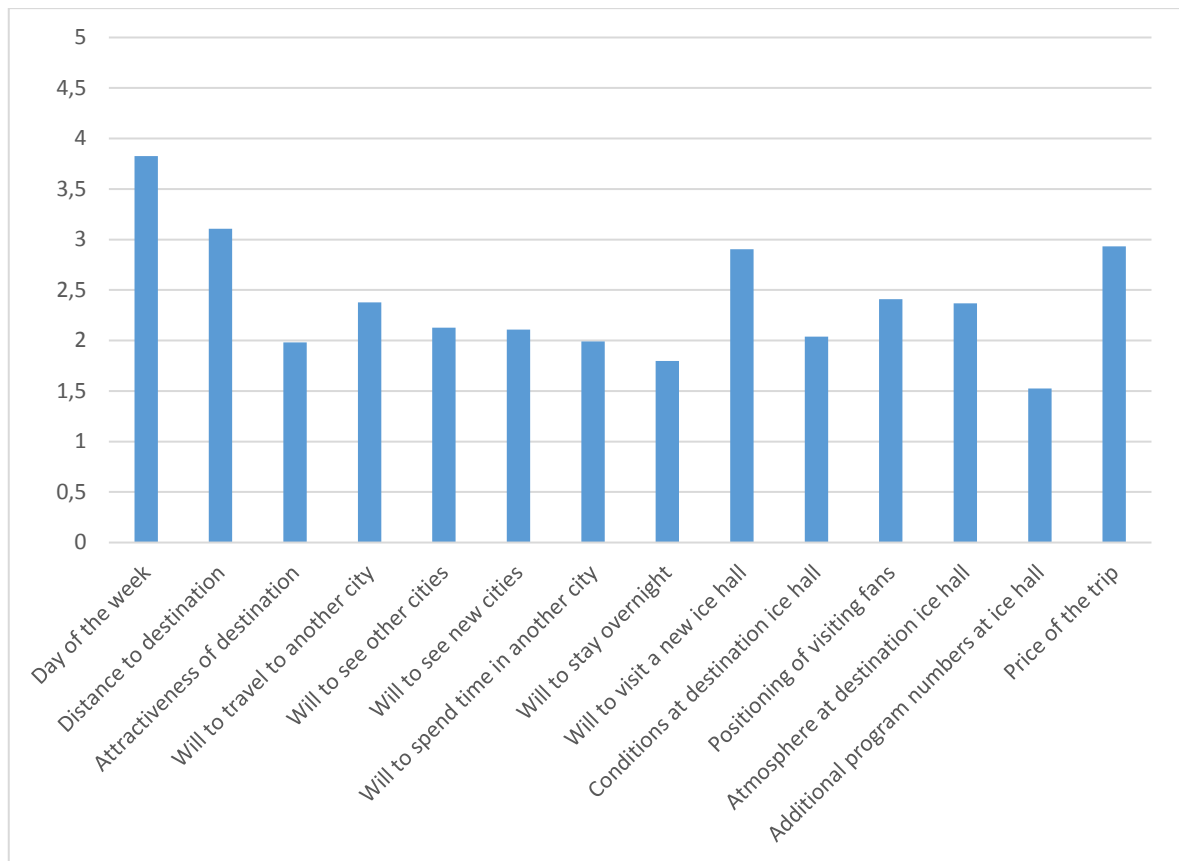


Figure 5. Average scores of sport factors section of the survey.

#### 4.2.3 Descriptive statistics: Traveling

The questions for this part were asked in a similar way as in the Sport factors part. Averages are presented in graphical form in Figure 6 on the next page. First question was about day of the week. It got a score of 3,83 meaning it's considered important also among the public. The interviews with trip arrangers revealed that day of the week is the most important factor in planning the trips. Mode for this question was 5 which also implicates the importance of choice of the day.

Distance to destination city proved only moderately important in travel decision with an average of 3,11. The attractiveness of the destination got an average of 1,98 with mode of 1. This could be predicted after the interviews as the respondents stated there's usually no time during the arranged trips in the actual city. Will to travel to another cities got a bit higher score at 2,38 but with a mode of 1 that can't be considered to have remarkable



*Figure 6. Average scores of traveling section.*

importance. Will to see other cities and new cities do not explain the willingness to travel as they got averages of 2,13 and 2,11 respectively. Will to spend time and stay overnight in the destination also got low scores of 1,99 and 1,80. All of these questions also had a mode of 1, as had will to visit an ice hall where respondents had not been before. What must be remembered while interpreting the questions regarding overnight stay, new locations and new-to-the-visitor ice halls is that respondents were asked to answer according to their most recent away trip experience. Most of the respondents had not probably visited a new destination or stayed overnight at the destination while answering to the survey. The interviews in the qualitative part suggested that new destinations or overnight trips usually get moving crowds larger than usual. Thus it is possible that new destinations actually interest away trippers more than this study shows, especially as responses to the question about visiting new ice halls had a higher standard deviation (1,52) than other questions and question about new cities also returned a relatively high standard deviation (1,25). The

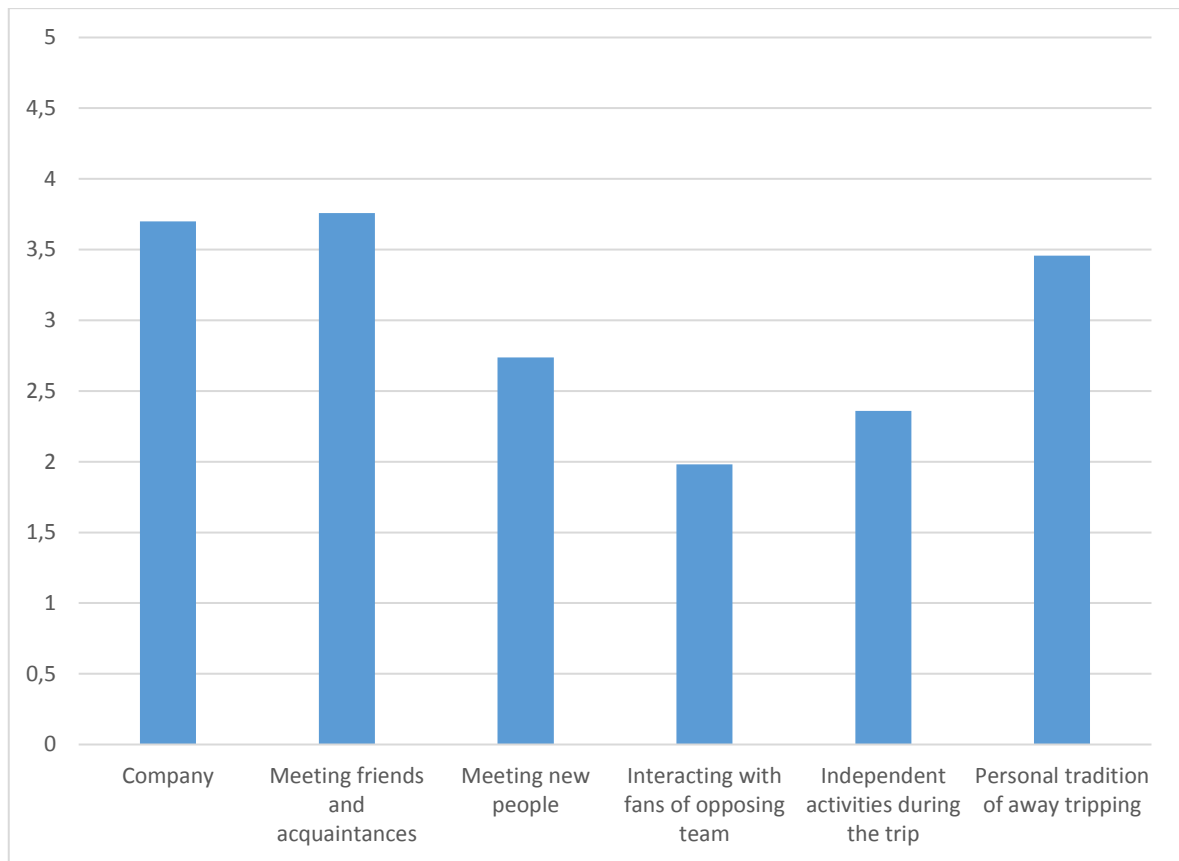
numbers may also confirm that overnight trips are a rarity within fan trips as, according to qualitative interviews, they raise interest but got low scores in the survey.

Host ice hall did not seem to affect travel decisions very much either. Conditions at the ice hall got an average of 2,04. Seating/positioning of visiting fans and quality of seats was more important at 2,41 as was the atmosphere (2,37). Program other than the game did not effect travel decisions with a score of 1,52. This finding is similar to earlier studies of Clemes et al. (2011) and Bednall et al. (2012) – additional program numbers do not seem to attract spectators. Again, mode for all questions mentioned above was 1. Price of the trip was more important to the participants as it had an average at 2,93.

The most important factor about traveling for hockey fans was day of the week. It is followed by distance to destination and price of the trip, but only day of the week has a large effect on travel decision with distance and price having only moderate effect. Traveling itself is not considered very important in away tripping. Traveling as social interaction was mentioned as an important factor during the interviews but it seems that the actual physical movement from one's hometown to another city does not play a large part in taking an away trip.

#### **4.2.4 Descriptive statistics: Social factors**

Questions about social factors in making travel decision were asked in a similar way as in previous parts. Average scores are shown in Figure 7 on the next page. Company seemed to be important for away trippers. Company in general got an average of 3,70 (mode 5) and meeting friends and acquaintances 3,76 (mode 4). Getting to know new people was not as important at 2,74, and interacting with fans of opposing team only scored 1,98 with mode at 1. Independent activities had some effect at 2,36 yet mode for this question was also 1. Personal tradition or habit of going on an away trip was relatively important (3,46). Mode for this question was 4 so it seems there are a good amount of people among away trip regulars who participate out of tradition. All in all, it is company in general, meeting friends and tradition that are the social reasons behind the travel decisions of individual supporters.



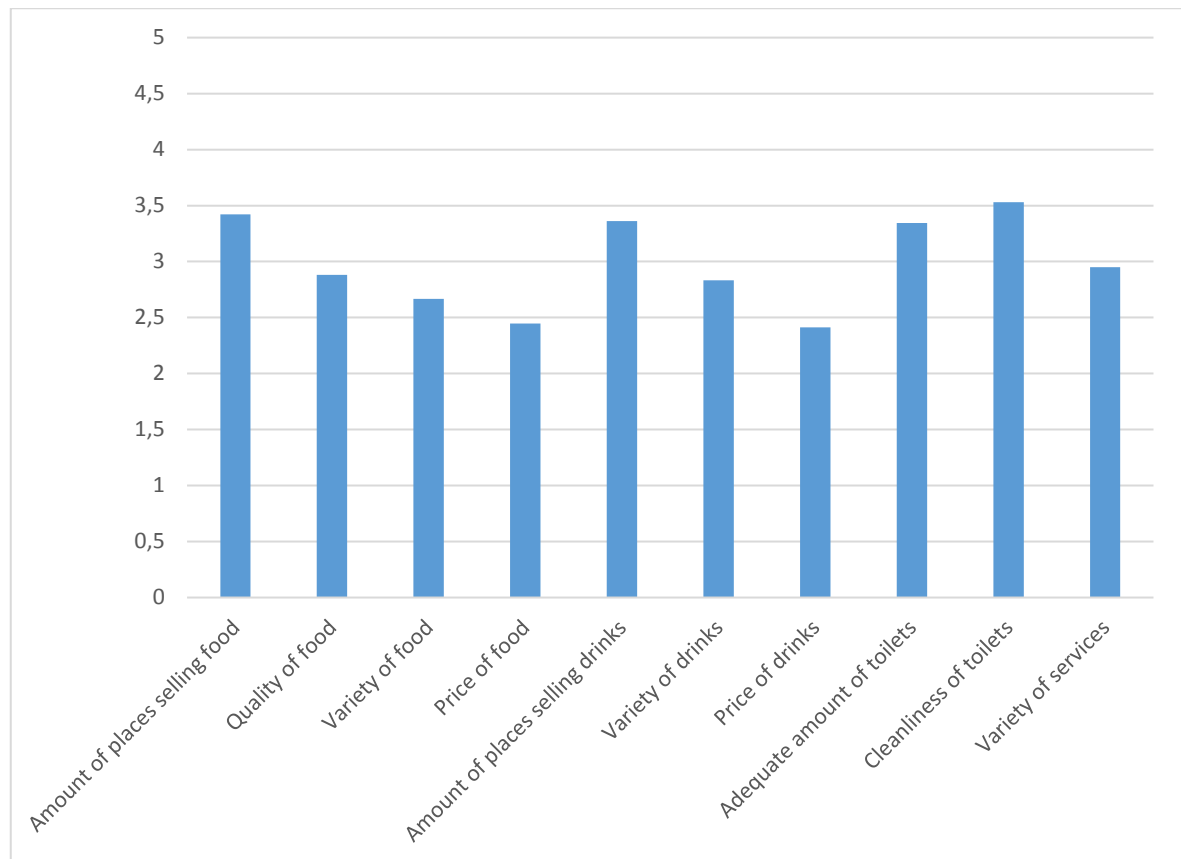
*Figure 7. Average scores of social factors section.*

#### **4.2.5 Descriptive statistics: Services at the ice hall – facilities**

Last two parts of the survey consisted of questions about services and facilities at the ice hall. The idea was to find out what the away fans are happy with at the host ice halls and if there are some services that could be improved. The questions were posed in a different form in these sections: the Likert scale was still there but options for claims presented were 1 = (I) totally disagree, 2 = partly disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = partly agree and 5 = totally agree. The structure of this part of the survey was similar to the one used in the interviews that were conducted before the survey. Figure 8 on the next page shows the averages for this section.

First the respondents answered questions about food that was served at the ice hall. The claim “There were enough places selling food” turned out to be positive on average as the score was 3,42. Quality of food was not regarded very high at 2,88 though. Variety and

price of food also scored below 3, which means away fans are generally not satisfied with food services available at ice halls.



*Figure 8. Average scores of service facilities section.*

The claims about drinks got somewhat similar scores as those about food. “There were enough places selling drinks” got a slightly positive average of 3,36 as variety and price scored 2,83 and 2,41 respectively. It seems that visiting fans are generally not very happy with drink services either. Generally Figure 7 on the previous page shows that amount of places selling food and drink products is good but scores drop gradually when coming to quality, variety and price of food and drink products.

The amount of toilets was considered slightly positive at average of 3,34 and their cleanliness was also ok at 3,53. The variety of services in general got 2,95 so there could probably be a niche market for services other than food and drink. Unfortunately, the open questions about what those services could be got so few answers that they didn’t reveal anything that could be generalized. At places where visiting fans are isolated from other



spectators, such as Vaasa, the lack of variety is understandable as the visitors can only use services that are located in the area where they are allowed to go. This was also mentioned in some of the answers to the open questions, and all the comments were not positive. Differences between the cities was also mentioned – places where participants had visited while answering the survey affects the results and results can't be generalized to the whole league.

#### 4.2.6 Descriptive statistics: Services at the ice halls – service

Last part of the survey concentrated on the quality of service at the ice hall. The agree–disagree Likert scale was used. Service was generally considered better than food and drinks sold at the venues. Service got good at averages at being quick (3,53) and friendly (3,89). Mode for both of the questions was 4. Participants were also happy with actions of security guards (3,75) and were treated well by the security (3,82). Visitors also felt very

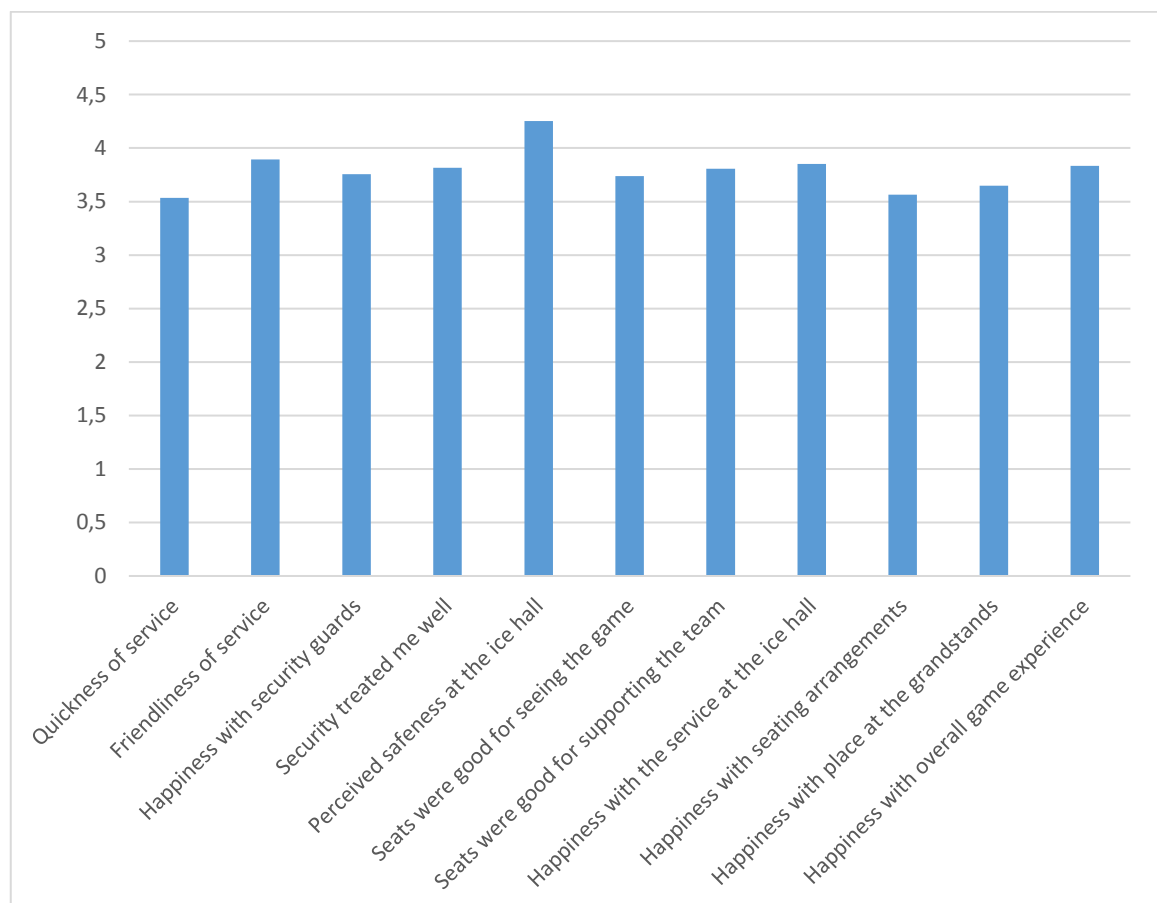


Figure 9. Average scores of service section.

safe at the ice hall (4,25). Security does not seem to be a problem in ice halls. Seating was also good for following the game (3,74) and supporting the team (3,81). General happiness with service in the ice hall was also at good level (3,85). Arrangements at the grandstands and places reserved for visiting fans were also considered good (3,56 and 3,65 respectively). Most importantly, happiness with the total experience at the game was at high level (3,83).

Generally, unlike with food and drink served at the venues, perceptions of service at the ice halls turned to positive overall as Figure 9 on the previous page shows. This suggests that quality and/or price of products sold should be improved in order to offer a better value for money and perhaps increase the sales

#### **4.2.7 Coefficients**

But how are the numbers presented above connected to each other? Next it is time to see which aspects might have effect on visitors' perceptions about the game, traveling and satisfaction with services and overall experience at the game. The most important reason to do this was to find which variables correlate with overall game experience. The idea is to find which variables might affect respondents' perceptions and predict their satisfaction with the trip and game event. Analysis was done by calculating Spearman's two-tailed correlation coefficients between several variables. Coefficients are calculated from same data which was used in previous sections. Software used was IBM SPSS version 24. Results must still be interpreted cautiously: correlation does not necessarily mean there is also causation between the variables. Also the respondents were asked to answer according to their most recent away game experience so generalizing the results to all away trips is problematic. This may or may not be evened out in the sample.

Results are presented here in same thematic order as in previous sections. Some of the correlations can be considered self-evident and are not analyzed in detail. Statistical significance is taken into account here as sample size is relatively small. N mostly varies between 100 and 102 in all the sections. Correlations are mostly calculated within themes but correlation of satisfaction with overall game experience is calculated for every variable. This was done in order to find out which aspects affect the consumer satisfaction. This gives valuable information how game experience (and customer satisfaction) could be improved. All correlations mentioned in the text are positive unless notified otherwise.

As mentioned above while interpreting the basic statistical numbers, some questions and sections of the survey proved to have little effect in the actual travel decision. This means that even when correlations have been found, some of them may not be very significant in practice no matter what the statistical significance is.

#### **4.2.8 Coefficients: Sport factors**

Will to see favorite team play and will to support favorite team are, unsurprisingly, related. Coefficient of 0,529 ( $p < 0.01$ ) is among the highest in this section. Also will to “be there” instead of following the game on other channels correlates with will to see the team play ( $r = 0,394$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) – this suggests that, in respondents’ opinion, the best way to follow team play is to attend the games. Will to “be there” and will to support are also connected ( $r = 0,480$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Interestingly, the competitive level of opposing team and assumed closeness of the game correlate negatively, yet weakly ( $r = -0,260$  and  $r = -0,263$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), with will to see favorite team play. Reason to this could be that respondents are mostly only interested in their favorite team and don’t care which team they play against.

Favorite team’s success, or competitiveness, seems to be related to many of the variables. For example assumed probability of favorite team’s win ( $r = 0,559$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and seeing stars or interesting players play ( $r = 0,513$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) seem to be connected when respondents make travel decisions. Also opposing team, their competitive level and assumed closeness of the game are significantly ( $p < 0.01$ ) related to favorite team’s competitiveness. Among the aspects which make opposing team interesting are especially their competitive level ( $r = 0,608$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), rivalry (tension and competitive setting) between the teams ( $r = 0,603$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and assumed closeness of the game (evenly matched teams) ( $r = 0,519$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Rivalry between the teams and opposing team’s competitive level also correlate ( $r = 0,559$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Rivalry was defined as “tension and competitive setting between the teams” in the survey so it is hard to say if respondents have answered according to long history between the teams or if they are just currently fighting for same positions in league.

Could there be something in the sport factors that makes trip special? Highest coefficients with this variable had opposing team’s competitive level, seeing interesting players play and rivalry ( $r = 0,420$ ,  $r = 0,394$  and  $r = 0,330$  respectively,  $p < 0.01$  for all). It seems they have some kind of connection but, again, correlation is only moderate.

Table 4. Spearman's correlations within sport factors section of the survey.

Spearman's rho	I was happy with overall game experience	I was happy with overall game experience	Will to see my favorite team play	Will to support the favorite team	Will to "be there"	Success of my favorite team in Liga	Interestingness of opposing team	Tension and rivalry between my favorite team and the opponent	Competitive level of opposing team	Assumed closeness of the game	Assumed probability for my favorite team's win	Seeing stars or otherwise interesting players play	Special nature of the game or trip
	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	,001	,124	-,011	,078	-,045	,089	-,001	-,121	,031	,235*	,104
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,990	,218	,914	,437	,655	,379	,994	,228	,788	,019	,300
	N	102	101	101	101	101	101	101	101	101	101	100	101
	Will to see my favorite team play	Correlation Coefficient	,001	1,000	,529*	,394**	-,178	-,200*	-,260**	-,263**	-,061	-,023	-,172
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,990	,000	,000	,251	,074	,044	,008	,007	,543	,821	,094
	N	101	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	101	102
	Will to support the favorite team	Correlation Coefficient	,124	,529**	1,000	-,001	-,143	-,050	-,057	-,137	-,125	,048	,048
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,218	,000	,480**	,993	,000	,466**	,608**	,473**	,569**	,048	,048
	N	101	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102
	Will to "be there"	Correlation Coefficient	-,011	,394**	,480**	1,000	-,141	-,124	-,073	-,116	-,039	-,062	-,062
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,914	,000	,000	,223	,156	,215	,468	,473**	,569**	,048	,048
	N	101	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102
	Success of my favorite team in Liga	Correlation Coefficient	,078	-,115	-,001	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,437	,251	,993	,466**	,608**	,608**	,608**	,608**	,608**	,608**	,608**
	N	101	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102
	Interestingness of opposing team	Correlation Coefficient	-,045	-,178	-,143	-,141	1,000	,603**	,608**	,519**	,519**	,345**	,301**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,655	,074	,151	,156	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
	N	101	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102
	Tension and rivalry between my favorite team and the opponent	Correlation Coefficient	,089	-,200*	-,050	-,124	,414**	1,000	,559**	,472**	,472**	,293**	,385**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,379	,044	,617	,215	,603**	1,000	,559**	,472**	,472**	,293**	,385**
	N	101	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102
	Competitive level of opposing team	Correlation Coefficient	-,001	-,260**	-,057	-,073	1,000	,000	1,000	,643**	,643**	,393**	,531**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,994	,008	,571	,468	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
	N	101	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102
	Assumed closeness of the game	Correlation Coefficient	-,121	-,263**	-,137	-,116	1,000	,000	1,000	1,000	,532**	,532**	,382**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,228	,007	,169	,245	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
	N	101	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102
	Assumed probability for my favorite team's win	Correlation Coefficient	,031	-,061	-,125	-,039	,569**	,293**	,393**	,532**	1,000	1,000	,425**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,788	,043	,212	,700	,000	,003	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
	N	101	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102
	Seeing stars or otherwise interesting players play	Correlation Coefficient	,235*	-,023	,048	-,062	,513**	,385**	,531**	,382**	,425**	1,000	,394**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,019	,821	,635	,540	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
	N	100	101	101	101	101	101	101	101	101	101	101	101
	Special nature of the game or trip	Correlation Coefficient	,104	-,172	,060	,101	,220*	,301**	,420**	,224*	,092	,394**	1,000
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,300	,084	,547	,026	,002	,001	,000	,023	,358	,000	,000
	N	101	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	102	101	102

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

No remarkable correlations between any of the variables at this section and satisfaction with overall game experience were found. This was rather expected as the questions are related to time when respondents only made the decision to travel and thus can't yet know how the trip turns out to be. The same probably affects Traveling and Social factors sections.

Calculating bivariate correlations within sport factors revealed certain connection between the variables. Table 4 on the previous page presents the full set of coefficients calculated for this section. Coefficients were mostly only moderate but statistical significances of found correlations are at good level for a theme related to social science. Anyway, data reveals that people who are there to see their favorite team play support their favorite team and feel the atmosphere. Opposing team's competitiveness does not play a part for those who want to see their favorite team in action. This can be seen to confirm that people who go to away games are loyal supporters of their team. There were no positive correlations between the motivations for seeing and supporting the favorite team and any variables concerning opposing team. However, even when these things do not seem to affect fans' travel decisions, there seemed to be certain things that make opposing team interesting. This may mean that these teams are more interesting in home games as well and draw larger home crowds. This data does not answer the question if these interesting teams are always the same or do they vary according to respondent's favorite team. It is very likely that there are both kinds: some teams draw large nation-wide attention but some of the "smaller" teams may be local rivals to others.

#### **4.2.9 Coefficients: Traveling**

Weekday, an important factor in away trips, had connection with distance to destination city ( $r = 0,485$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This is probably linked to what was found in the interviews: if trips are arranged during the week the destination must be close. Distance to destination also correlated moderately with attractiveness of destination ( $r = 0,337$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

Attractiveness of destination also, quite naturally, has effect in e.g. will to spend time at the destination ( $r = 0,615$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), will to stay overnight at the destination ( $r = 0,572$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and will to see other cities ( $r = 0,524$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This suggests that even when the arranged away trips are tightly scheduled with little possibilities to see the destination city, the visitors might be interested in spending more time there in some context.

Table 5. Spearman's correlations within traveling section.

Spearman's rho	I was happy with overall game experience	Day of the week	Distance to destination city	Interestingness of destination city	Will to travel to another city	Will to see other cities	Will to see new cities	Will to spend time in another city	Will to stay overnight in another city	Will to visit an ice hall haven't visited before	Conditions of destination ice hall	Seating of visiting fans and quality of seats	Atmosphere at the destination ice hall	Additional program at ice hall (performances, special events, themed game...)	Price of the tip
I was happy with overall game experience	1,000														
Day of the week	.599	1,000													
Distance to destination city	.033	.000	1,000												
Interestingness of destination city	.696	.000	.466**	1,000											
Will to travel to another city	.155	-.080	-.007	.446**	1,000										
Will to see other cities	.548	.727	.106	.000	.000	1,000									
Will to see new cities	.029	.105	.162	.437**	.561**	.819**	1,000								
Will to spend time in another city	.537	.326	.049	.000	.000	.000	.646**	1,000							
Will to stay overnight in another city	.036	.002	.099	.572**	.533**	.492**	.682**	.000	1,000						
Will to visit an ice hall haven't visited before	.088	.145	.184	.396**	.248**	.394**	.534**	.423**	.378**	1,000					
Conditions of destination ice hall	.011	.058	.287**	.361**	.362**	.451**	.443**	.429**	.510**	.510**	1,000				
Seating of visiting fans and quality of seats	.156	.162	.288**	.216*	.124	.205*	.346**	.282**	.240*	.421**	.695**	1,000			
Atmosphere at the destination ice hall	.795	.243	.003	.002	.023	.002	.000	.036	.001	.000	.000	.000	1,000		
Additional program at the ice hall (performances, special events, themed game...)	.667	.238	.019	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	1,000	
Price of the tip	.021	.249*	.240*	.189	.287**	.281**	.370**	.293**	.190	.270**	.328**	.271**	.267**	.502**	1,000
N	830	830	830	830	830	830	830	830	830	830	830	830	830	830	830

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).  
\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Most of the variables concerning will to travel and see other cities, new cities etc. have moderate to strong statistically significant positive correlations. What could be useful in practice for trip arrangers and even host teams and cities includes the connection between will to spend time and stay overnight at the destination ( $r = 0,662$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This means there could be demand for overnight trips. Interviews with trip arrangers also suggested that there could be unused potential in overnight trips, but price of such trips should be kept low enough. Perhaps co-operation between the stakeholders could prove successful.

Same variables that explain the traveling itself seem to affect the destination ice halls. New ice halls and seeing their conditions and facilities seem to have connection ( $r = 0,510$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Conditions at the ice hall seem to be quite strongly linked to seating of visiting fans ( $r = 0,695$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Conditions and atmosphere, as well as additional program also correlated with each other ( $r = 0,571$  and  $r = 0,577$ ,  $p < 0.01$  for both). Seating and atmosphere also had an unsurprising connection ( $r = 0,617$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Additional program also correlated moderately with most of the variables at the traveling section but it's hard to see an actual connection between the program and traveling. There's a possibility that those correlations are coincidental.

There were no correlations between variables of this section and satisfaction with overall game experience. Full list of coefficients of this section is presented in Table 5 on the previous page.

When making conclusions about correlations in this section, it must be kept in mind that many questions in this section didn't have much effect on participants' travel decisions. Correlations exist but they don't necessarily play a big role in the overall picture of away trips. Full list of coefficients of the section are shown in Table 5 on the previous page.

#### **4.2.10 Coefficients: Social factors**

Not many even moderate correlations were found within this section. Company and meeting friends and acquaintances were of course linked to each other ( $r = 0,633$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Trips aren't necessarily only for seeing old friends as meeting friends and meeting new people have also a slight connection ( $r = 0,338$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Interacting with supporters of opposing team wasn't considered important earlier in this study but it correlates with e.g. meeting new people ( $r = 0,509$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and independent activities during the trip ( $r =$

0,434,  $p < 0.01$ ) anyway. Personal habit or tradition has a linkage to meeting friends and acquaintances ( $r = 0,335$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), which is quite natural. Away trips seem to be an opportunity to see friends almost as well as to follow sports and favorite team. Again, no correlation between this section and overall game experience was found. Correlations between variables on this section can be seen in Table 6.

*Table 6. Spearman's correlations within social factors section.*

			I was happy with overall game experience	Company	Meeting friends and acquaintances	Meeting new people	Interacting with fans of opposing team	Individual activities during the trip	Personal habit/tradition of away tripping
Spearman's rho	I was happy with overall game experience	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	,116	-,010	,122	,171	,031	,022
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,247	,923	,221	,087	,760	,829
		N	102	102	102	102	101	102	102
Company	Company	Correlation Coefficient	,116	1,000	,633**	,294**	,202*	,253**	,289**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,247	.	,000	,003	,041	,010	,003
		N	102	103	103	103	102	103	103
Meeting friends and acquaintances	Meeting friends and acquaintances	Correlation Coefficient	-,010	,633**	1,000	,338**	,264**	,337**	,335**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,923	,000	.	,000	,007	,001	,001
		N	102	103	103	103	102	103	103
Meeting new people	Meeting new people	Correlation Coefficient	,122	,294**	,338**	1,000	,509**	,434**	,317**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,221	,003	,000	.	,000	,000	,001
		N	102	103	103	103	102	103	103
Interacting with fans of opposing team	Interacting with fans of opposing team	Correlation Coefficient	,171	,202*	,264**	,509**	1,000	,511**	,181
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,087	,041	,007	,000	.	,000	,069
		N	101	102	102	102	102	102	102
Individual activities during the trip	Individual activities during the trip	Correlation Coefficient	,031	,253**	,337**	,434**	,511**	1,000	,256**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,760	,010	,001	,000	,000	.	,009
		N	102	103	103	103	102	103	103
Personal habit/tradition of away tripping	Personal habit/tradition of away tripping	Correlation Coefficient	,022	,289**	,335**	,317**	,181	,256**	1,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,829	,003	,001	,001	,069	,009	.
		N	102	103	103	103	102	103	103

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

#### 4.2.11 Coefficients: Services at ice halls – facilities

Correlations within responses about sale of food were interesting. Adequate number of places selling food and quality of food sold had a connection ( $r = 0,525$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Thus it can roughly be said that the more places of food sales there are, the better the perceived quality is. This can be at least partly explained by the sheer amount which probably brings in more quality – the more places of sale there are, more likely it is that some of them are good. Perceived quality of food also correlated with good variety ( $r = 0,649$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Reason to this can be the same as large variety probably means more places of sale but also a bigger possibility to find a product the consumer is looking for. Quality and price were also moderately correlated at  $r = 0,473$ ,  $p < 0.01$ .

Drink sales at the ice halls had similar correlations as food. Adequate number of places of sale and variety of drinks available had a moderate correlation of  $r = 0,511$ ,  $p < 0.01$ .

Variety and price correlated within drinks slightly more than within food ( $r = 0,405$  for



Table 7. Spearman's correlations within service facilities section.

Spearman's rho	I was happy with overall game experience		There were enough places selling food at the ice hall		Food sold at the ice hall was of good quality		Variety of food sold at the ice hall was good		Food sold at the ice hall was affordable		There were enough places selling drinks at the ice hall		Variety of drinks sold at the ice hall was good		Drinks sold at the ice hall were affordable		There were enough toilets available		Toilets were clean		There was a good variety of services available at the ice hall	
	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)
I was happy with overall game experience	1,000																					
	N	102																				
There were enough places selling food at the ice hall			1,000																			
	N	101																				
Food sold at the ice hall was of good quality				1,000																		
	N	101																				
Variety of food sold at the ice hall was good					1,000																	
	N	101																				
Food sold at the ice hall was affordable						1,000																
	N	101																				
There were enough places selling drinks at the ice hall							1,000															
	N	101																				
Variety of drinks sold at the ice hall was good								1,000														
	N	101																				
Drinks sold at the ice hall were affordable									1,000													
	N	101																				
There were enough toilets available										1,000												
	N	101																				
Toilets were clean											1,000											
	N	101																				
There was a good variety of services available at the ice hall												1,000										
	N	99																				

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).  
\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

drinks,  $r = 0,360$  for food,  $p < 0.01$  for both). Quality of drinks was not included in the survey as it was assumed, according to interviews and my personal experience, that products sold are very similar at all venues.

Correlations between sales of food and drink were also calculated. Strongest correlation was found in prices ( $r = 0,670$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This means that prices of food and drink are pretty much in line with each other – according to analysis earlier in this text they are both too expensive in respondents' opinion. Also amount of places of sale and variety seemed to have a slight connection ( $r = 0,541$  and  $r = 0,514$  respectively,  $p < 0.01$ ). Other moderate correlations were also found but they probably aren't connected in practice.

Overall variety of services was asked at the survey. Overall variety available at the ice hall had, naturally, the strongest correlation with variety of food and drinks. Correlation between amount of places of sale was stronger with drinks than with food when compared to overall variety ( $r = 0,383$  and  $r = 0,306$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Even when the correlation is still moderate, I had expected a stronger connection between overall variety and variety of food and drink sales. Perhaps the respondents thought more about other services than those related to food and drink while answering the question. This is good as it means the results in previous part of survey analysis may concentrate more on other services which was the original idea. The overall variety of services also correlated with the adequate amount of toilets ( $r = 0,500$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Cleanliness and number of toilets available also seem to go together in the minds of visitors ( $r = 0,644$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

Unlike previous survey sections, some service facilities seem to be connected to satisfaction with perceived overall game experience. Table 7 on the previous page shows all the coefficients for this section. Correlations are again only moderate but could still be useful in improving the overall product of hockey game. Factors that correlated the most with overall satisfaction were, in this order, variety of drinks available ( $r = 0,453$ ), overall variety of services at the ice hall ( $r = 0,414$ ), variety of food available ( $r = 0,408$ ) and quality of food ( $r = 0,405$ ). All of these correlations were significant at the 0.01 level. This means that, in terms of services, host teams and organizations should emphasize the variety of products available for customers at the ice hall if they want to improve the satisfaction of visiting team's supporters.

#### **4.2.12 Coefficients: Services at ice halls – service**

Quickness and friendliness of customer service were found to be connected at  $r = 0,558$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . Both of these are, naturally, connected to overall satisfaction with service at the ice hall ( $r = 0,565$  for quickness and  $r = 0,633$  for friendliness,  $p < 0.01$ ). It seems that friendliness is more important than quickness for visiting fans.

Security guards' way of acting may sometimes be an important part of the trip for visiting fans. They keep all the visitors safe but also decide what fans are allowed to do in terms of supporting their team. Thus it's unsurprising that happiness with security guards' acting and receiving good service from them have a very strong correlation ( $r = 0,904$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Happiness with guards' acting and perceived feel of security are also connected at  $r = 0,585$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . Happiness with security guards and friendliness of service at the ice hall are less correlated but still have a connection ( $r = 0,432$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Overall satisfaction with service at the ice hall and satisfaction with security guards' acting are linked at  $r = 0,572$ ,  $p < 0.01$ .

Interviews revealed that seating of visiting fans is an important factor in deciding where trips are organized. Survey shows that if seats are good for following the game, they are also good for supporting the team as these two are strongly correlated ( $r = 0,796$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Good seating and happiness with seating arrangements were also strongly correlated which is quite self-evident. Seating and happiness with service at the ice hall had also moderate correlation with each other but it's hard to tell if these factors are practically related to each other as seating and service may or may not be considered to be linked with each other. They were put in the same section in the survey anyway.

Service at the ice hall and seating were also factors that had effect on perceived overall game experience. Most important were factors related to seating. In order, the strongest correlations with overall game experience had satisfaction with visiting supporters' place in the grandstands and grandstand arrangements ( $r = 0,640$  and  $r = 0,633$  respectively), good seats for supporting the favorite team ( $r = 0,554$ ), good seats for following the game ( $r = 0,533$ ), overall satisfaction with service at the ice hall ( $r = 0,530$ ) and friendliness of service ( $r = 0,403$ ). All correlations with overall game experience at this section, including the ones mentioned above, were significant at the 0.01 level. Correlations with seating and overall game experience are clearly stronger than those in the service facilities section.

Table 8. Spearman's correlations within service section.

Spearman's rho	I was happy with overall game experience	I was happy with overall game experience	Service at the ice hall was quick	Service at the ice hall was friendly	I was happy with actions of security guards	Security guards treated visiting fans well	I felt safe at the ice hall	Visiting fans' seats were good for following the game	Visiting fans' seats were good for supporting my favorite team	I was happy with the service at the ice hall	I was happy with seating arrangements of visiting fans	I was happy with seats of visiting fans
	1,000											
	Correlation Coefficient	.272**	.403**	.275**	.275**	.319**	.377**	.633**	.654**	.630**	.633**	.640**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	.000	.002	.005	.001	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	102	102	102	101	102	102	102	102	101	102	101
	Correlation Coefficient	.272**	1,000	.568**	.297**	.271**	.205*	.204*	.233*	.204*	.204*	.204*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	.000	.000	.002	.006	.038	.039	.033**	.038	.038	.038
	N	102	103	103	102	103	103	103	103	102	103	102
	Correlation Coefficient	.403**	.558**	1,000	.432**	.400**	.222*	.052	.094	.052	.094	.052
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.024	.006	.000	.024	.000	.000
	N	102	103	103	102	103	103	102	103	102	103	102
	Correlation Coefficient	.530**	.565**	.633**	.572**	.482**	.500**	.388**	.413**	.500**	.413**	.500**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	101	102	102	101	102	102	102	102	101	102	101
	Correlation Coefficient	.633**	.346**	.324**	.310**	.317**	.352**	.804**	.698**	.537**	1,000	.892**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.001	.002	.001	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	102	103	103	102	103	103	103	103	102	103	102
	Correlation Coefficient	.640**	.330**	.259**	.210*	.232*	.236*	.831**	.770**	.516**	.892**	1,000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.009	.035	.019	.017	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	101	102	102	101	102	102	102	102	101	102	102

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).  
\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

This means that seating is the most important thing for visiting fans. To draw more visiting fans, all the teams should offer good seats where both supporting the team and following the game are possible. Table 8 on the previous page is the full table for correlation coefficients for this section.

## **5. Conclusions**

This study brought new information about Finnish ice hockey fans who travel after their favorite franchise. Previous studies about the topic are practically non-existent so many interesting aspects have now seen daylight in literature. Some of the information presented in this thesis is probably widely known among fan communities but the results and analysis in this text can confirm some of the relationships and correlations. This study revealed what happens behind the scenes of hockey supporters' away trips before the trip itself as well as revealed what fans consider important while making travel decisions and what makes them happy with the trip experience. Some possible causations were also explored. Some of the results could have been reasoned with common sense, some could not, but now there is studied information available about this phenomenon.

Day of the week stood out as the most important factor for the fan clubs in deciding in which games to arrange the trips. Fans participating also found day of the week important. As Saturday is mostly the day when large trips occur, distance plays a surprisingly small role. This suggests that the amount of Saturday games should be increased if possible. It could result in larger numbers of visiting fans which means more income for host cities from outside of economic region.

Even when traveling itself is not important for the fans, indications to possible will to stay overnight and spend time at the destination were found both in interviews and the survey. This would call for co-operation between trip organizers and local stakeholders such as host organization, hotels and restaurants. If the same bus that usually takes visitors back home would take them to a hotel after the game instead, the money spent at the destination would be multiplied. Also local tourism planning organization could be involved as they should be well connected to local businesses. Visitor's interest could be raised with a good

value package, which could include e.g. trips, game ticket, accommodation, meal, entrance to an attraction or a nightclub etc. In practice this could work out, for example, as follows: The fan organization contacts the Liiga organization while arranging the trip. Liiga organization welcomes the fans to the game and asks if they are willing to stay overnight. Liiga team offers them a package they have negotiated in co-operation with a local hotel and a restaurant (located possibly in the ice hall). Price of accommodation and a meal is slightly lower compared to buying the product from the list as the entrepreneur or company sees the possibility of getting a rather large group of customers. The hotels in Finland are often less booked in weekends than during the week. Fan organization has thought about making an overnight trip during the season and accepts the offer as it is easy for the arrangers and also slightly cheaper than doing the whole thing on their own. The detailed contents of the package should be planned with fan organization to be able to offer the visitors something that interests them. Recognizing relevant products for this target group requires more detailed segmentation and it is hard to say if this has already been done by Liiga organizations especially in the context of away fans. This sort of market research is essential in contemporary marketing, as pointed out in Chapter 2.5 on page 22 and by Hjalager & Nordin (2011) and Sigala (2012). All this would benefit many local stakeholders and offer visiting fans an attractive domestic holiday trip. Earlier also Smith & Stewart (2007) and Mason & Duquette (2008) have come to similar conclusions.

As the act of traveling and social transactions within the trip were considered among the most important parts in participating in an away trip, it can be said that socialization happens not only in becoming a fan but also within the fan club. Good company and tradition of attending the trips make it tempting to come again and thus strengthen the bond between the individual and the franchise and everyone involved. On the other hand, it was considered difficult to participate in trips on one's own and also the attending of friends seem to affect the willingness to join the trip.

Away trips are a very essential part of supporter clubs' operation. The organizations actually often suffer monetary deficit out of the trips to get larger amounts of people moving. This indicates the big importance of away trips in supporter clubs' activity. The money needed to run a fan organization is made elsewhere, usually from member fees. As the trips are also a social happening, it can be said that fan clubs, consciously or not, support the act of socialization. It brings commitment within the community and can

eventually lead in increasing numbers of future supporters even over generations. Thus supporter clubs do lots of very important voluntary work for the franchise, both by their everyday activities as well as by organizing and arranging away trips.

Services at the ice hall are a good chance to create revenue from visiting supporters. Price, variety and quality of food don't seem to please visiting fans. Variety and quality of food did seem to be connected to happiness with overall game experience though. This suggests that emphasizing the quality and variety could lead to more money spent in the game. If this is economically worth the investment, teams and ice halls should consider improving their food sales. Consumers are probably rarely happy with prices they have to pay at any cultural events and the prices are likely already calculated to an optimal level to maximize the entrepreneurs' income, but crowd's opinion is that prices could be checked down. Service received at the sales points and from security guards are already at a good level.

Seating of visiting fans seems to be the most strongly connected factor to overall game experience. To make visiting fans happy, teams should offer suitable seats for supporter clubs. Interviews revealed that there are ice halls where fan clubs don't like arranging trips to because of lack of quality of seating. If Liiga organizations compete from visiting fans, the first thing they should do is offer good and suitable seats for fan organizations. This makes them stand out from other organizations and brings a good reputation within fan communities. Liiga spectator numbers indicate that regular season games are seldom sold out. Attracting more visiting fans would fill the ice halls closer to their maximum capacity.

This is a time to take a look at the research questions again. Table 9 summarizes the answers.

*Table 9. Research questions and summarized answers to them.*

1. How are the destinations of away trips decided?	2. Which aspects affect the visitors' decision to participate in an away trip?
Most important factors are day of the week (Saturday) and seating. Distance to destination has some effect on decisions but only if destination is very far.	Seeing the favorite team play and supporting the team stand out here. Also company has effect on some decisions.
3. How do away trippers perceive the services at the destination ice hall?	4. How could the host teams, organizations and local stakeholders better benefit from away trips?
The amount of services available is good, price, variety and quality are not. The latter two were considered important for overall game experience. Service visitors receive at the ice hall is good.	Especially variety of food and drink were seen important so these should be emphasized. Visiting fans should be offered good seats to make them return. Co-operation between stakeholders could benefit local economy.

Some improvement suggestions for ice hockey related stakeholders came into light with this study. Price and variety of products sold at the ice halls did not please the respondents. Also times spent at the queue during the intermissions was mentioned at the interviews even as thing that could possibly reduce the amount of products sold at the ice hall. I happened to get into contact with Teemu Karenius, CEO of a company called Yonoton which has created a mobile application that makes queuing unnecessary at hockey games. The customer can pre-order the products via the application and pick them up without waiting during the intermission. Even getting the products delivered to a seat at chosen time is possible. Innovations like this can certainly increase sales at the games. For example, average purchase with Yonoton application is 10 % higher in money than conventional purchase via checker and it can also improve attendance numbers by enhancing spectators' game experience (Karenius 2017). This particular application is currently (as of spring 2017) used by four Liiga teams.

To sum up all the suggestions to tourism planning, marketing and product sales presented in this chapter and earlier in this work, the following issues showed up:

- Seating is a very important factor in luring visiting fans to game. If ice hall's facilities allow it, visiting fans should be offered seats that are good for their use. Otherwise they will go elsewhere some other weekend and all the economic and reputational potential for the host organization and region is left unused.
- There is a possible demand for more overnight trips. This could increase income from outside of the economical region, but to be more effective, requires co-operation with Liiga organizations and local stakeholders.
- Price and variety of products sold at the ice halls should be paid attention to.
- New technology, e.g. mobile applications, could enhance the game experience and increase revenue at the ice hall.

This study is only an overview of a wide topic. Suggested foci for further studies include a segmentation of fans as travelers and consumers, movements of fan groups and/or individual supporters within a trip, and social media use of visiting fans. There is still lots of interesting data to gather and e.g. visualizing fan movements could be a fruitful topic for



a geographer. Segmentation would make targeting of services and advertisement easier for host organizations.

## **6. Discussion**

There are several uncertainties regarding the results of this thesis. Firstly, the number of interviewees in the qualitative section was smaller than I had hoped for. Even when the interviews met their purpose of getting background information about the trips and getting ideas how to edit the survey design, the generalization of results with this little number of respondents must be approached carefully. Things interviewees said were well in line though and I believe only a couple more interviews would have resulted in saturation of answers. It would've also been interesting to make interviews further away from Helsinki from supporters who don't have that many other Liiga cities nearby and see if answers regarding the trip arrangements would have been different.

Also the geographical and demographic distribution of the respondents in the survey was not such as I had thought it would be after making the interviews. Many of the respondents live in only several Finnish regions (maakunta). I hoped I would get more answers from all over the country. The number of respondents was fair though at 103. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, female respondents might be overrepresented in the survey. Whether this affects the results or not can only be guessed. Godenhjelm (1998) found that female fans identify themselves more to players than teams while men did other way around. Gender has been found to affect ice hockey spectator motivations as well (Andrew et al. 2009). On the other hand, the amount of female respondents wasn't much larger than in the study of Pöntinen (2001). The estimation of interviewees in the qualitative part of the study may also have been wrong. All this may have some effect on answers to sport-related questions of the survey. In any case, I think it is great to have so many female respondents in a thesis with topic like this one!

The section with correlations should be discussed as well. Correlations only tell if respondents have answered different questions in a consistent way. There's no way to tell if there actually is a connection between two things even if they correlate with each other. I tried to take this into account while making the analysis and the results suggest there probably is causation involved. The things that correlated with each other usually made

sense and there were no unexpected results, one way or another, that went against common sense.

Finally, this turned out to be a very challenging thesis to write because of lack of previous academic literature about the topic. There are a huge number of studies about tourism geography, sport fans and even sport tourism, but hardly anything about traveling after a sport franchise, especially in travelers' own home country. Studies of sport tourism concentrate on sport the tourists do instead of tourists who travel to watch sport. This means that finding background information for this topic was extremely difficult. Most of the studies cited in this thesis only merely touched my topic. There is very little theorization about the phenomenon. All this results in very few references to previous studies in the Results and Conclusions sections: there was not much to compare my results to. That also means that validating the results is left to the hands of the reader. Choice of topic is, in my opinion, still justified as ice hockey is the most popular spectator sport in Finland and it clearly lacks local academic research. I could have taken easier way and chosen the topic differently as now I had to build my own background for the parts that were most interesting to me. On the other hand, I got to work with a topic that really intrigued me and which raised interest also among many people I discussed it with. This was a good topic to work with and I hope readers enjoy this text as much as I did while writing it, at least for most of the time.

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Petri Hård

May 3rd 2017

Helsinki

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. The base for e-mail sent to fan organizations when looking for interviewees

Hei!

Olen matkailumaantieteen opiskelija Helsingin yliopistosta ja teen Pro Graduani Liigaseurojen fanien vierasmatkailusta. Etsin seurojen faniyhdistyksistä vierasmatkojen järjestelyissä mukana olevia/olleita henkilöitä haastatteluihin, jotka kestävät arviolta noin puolesta tunnista tuntiin. Haastattelut liittyvät pääosin matkakohteiden valintaan ja siihen liittyviin tekijöihin. Siispä kysyn, löytyisikö XXXX Fan Clubista henkilöä (tai miksei useampaakin), joka olisi joskus ollut mukana vierasmatkojen järjestelyissä ja olisi halukas haastatteluun joskus lähipäivien/viikkojen aikana? Haastattelun tarkempi ajankohta ja paikka voidaan sopia erikseen. Haastateltavan nimeä tai muita henkilökohtaisia tietoja ei käytetä lopullisessa työssä ilman suostumusta.

Mikäli halukkaita löytyy, pyydän ystävällisesti vastaamaan tähän sähköpostiin tai ottamaan yhteyttä minuun puhelimitse tai muulla tavalla. Haastattelun on tarkoitus olla rento tapahtuma, joka etenee pitkälti omalla painollaan. Vastaan myös mielelläni, mikäli tulee jotain kysyttävää haastatteluista, gradustani tai jääkiekosta yleensäkin.

Terveisin,

Petri Hård

petri.hard@helsinki.fi

Puh. XXX XXX XXXX

## Appendix 2. Survey design which was also used as a base for interviews

### Kysely Liigajoukkueiden kannattajien vierasmatkoista

Hei, kiekkofani! Nimeni on Petri Hård ja teen Helsingin yliopistolla matkailumaantieteen pro graduani Liigajoukkueiden kannattajien vierasmatkailusta. Pyytäisin sinua ystävällisesti vastaamaan tähän kyselyyn, joka kestää noin 15 minuuttia. Vastaukset käsitellään anonyymisti.

#### Ohjeita kyselyyn vastaamiseen:

\* Kyselyn kohderyhmänä on kausilla 2014-2015, 2015-2016 tai 2016-2017 jääkiekon SM-Liigan (Liigan) ottelua *muualla kuin asuinpaikkakunnallaan tai suosikkijoukkueensa kotipaikkakunnalla* seuranneet katsojat. KooKoon kannattajien osalta kysely siis koskee aikaa kaudesta 2015-2016 eteenpäin. Mikkelin Jukureiden kannattajat voivat osallistua kyselyyn, mikäli ovat olleet vierasmatkalla kaudella 2016-2017. Myös Espoo Bluesin perässä matkustaneet voivat osallistua.

\* Kysymykset koskevat *viimeisintä* vierasmatkaa, jolla olet ollut mukana. Pyydän siis, ettet vastaisi etenkään osioihin 4 ja 5 yleisellä tasolla, vaan *tuoreimman kokemuksesi* mukaan. HUOM! Teknisistä syistä Mikkeliä ei voi kyselyn loppupuolella valita matkan kohteeksi. Jätä tässä tapauksessa kohta tyhjäksi.

\* Sillä, miten matkustit vierasotteluun, ei ole merkitystä. Sekä faniyhdistysten kuljetuksilla että omatoimisesti matkanneet katsojat voivat vastata kyselyyn.

\* Sinun ei välttämättä tarvitse olla minkään tietyn Liigajoukkueen kannattaja vastataksesi kyselyyn, mutta se helpottaa vastaamista suuresti.

Mikäli sinulla on aiheesta jotakin kysyttävää, haluat antaa palautetta tai muuten olla yhteydessä tutkimuksen tekijään, voit lähettää sähköpostia osoitteeseen petri.hard@helsinki.fi. Kiitos ajastasi!

#### 1. URHEILULLISET TEKIJÄT

Miten suuri vaikutus seuraavilla asioilla oli päätökseesi lähteä vieraspelimatalle?

Halu nähdä oman suosikkijoukkueen pelaavan

Halu kannattaa omaa suosikkijoukkuetta

Halu olla paikan päällä

Suosikkijoukkueeni menestys Liigassa

Vastustajajoukkueen mielenkiintoisuus

Suosikkijoukkueeni ja vastustajajoukkueen välinen jännite ja kilpailuasetelma

Vastustajajoukkueen pelillinen taso

Ottelun oletettu tasaisuus

Suosikkijoukkueeni oletettu voiton todennäköisyys

Ottelussa pelaavien tähtien tai muuten mielenkiintoisten pelaajien näkeminen tositoimissa

Ottelun tai vierasmatkan erityislaatuisuus

#### 2. MATKAAN LIITTYVÄT TEKIJÄT

Miten suuri vaikutus seuraavilla asioilla oli päätökseesi lähteä vieraspelimatalle?

Viikonpäivä

Etäisyys vierasmatkan kohdekaupunkiin

Vierasmatkan kohdekaupungin mielenkiintoisuus

Halu matkustaa toiselle paikkakunnalle

Halu nähdä muita paikkakuntia

Halu nähdä uusia paikkakuntia

Halu viettää aikaa toisella paikkakunnalla  
Halu yöpyä toisella paikkakunnalla  
Halu vieraila jäähallissa, jossa en ole aiemmin käynyt  
Kohdekaupungin jäähallin olosuhteet  
Vieraskannattajien sijoittelu jäähallissa ja katsomopaikan laatu  
Kohdehallin tunnelma  
Otteluun liittyvä oheisohjelma hallilla (mahdolliset esiintyjät, tapahtumat, ottelun teema...)  
Vierasmatkan hinta

### 3. SOSIAALISET TEKIJÄT

Miten suuri vaikutus seuraavilla asioilla oli päätökseesi lähteä vieraspelimatalle?

Matkaseura  
Ystävien ja tuttavien tapaaminen  
Uusiin ihmisiin tutustuminen  
Kanssakäyminen vastustajajoukkueen kannattajien kanssa  
Omatoimiset aktiviteetit matkan aikana  
Henkilökohtainen tapa/perinne käydä vierasmatkoilla

### 4. TYYTYVÄISYYS VIERASHALLIN PALVELUIHIN

Miten samaa mieltä olet seuraavien väittämien kanssa?

Hallissa oli riittävästi ruoan myyntipisteitä  
Hallissa myynnissä ollut ruoka oli laadukasta  
Hallin ruokavalikoima oli monipuolinen  
Hallissa myynnissä ollut ruoka oli edullista  
Hallissa oli riittävästi juoman myyntipisteitä  
Hallin juomavalikoima oli monipuolinen  
Hallissa myynnissä olleet juomat olivat edullisia  
Käytettävissäni oli riittävästi WC-tiloja  
WC-tilat olivat siistit  
Hallissa oli tarjolla monipuolisesti palveluita

Voit kirjoittaa allaolevaan laatikkoon kommenttisi liittyen vierailemasi hallin ravintola- ja muihin palveluihin:

Puuttuiko vierailemastasi hallista jokin palvelu, jonka olisit toivonut siellä olevan?

### 5. KOETTU PALVELUN JA OTTELUKOKEMUKSEN TASO JÄÄHALLISSA

Miten samaa mieltä olet seuraavien väittämien kanssa?

Palvelu jäähallissa oli nopeaa  
Palvelu jäähallissa oli ystävällistä  
Olin tyytyväinen järjestyksenvälvojen toimintaan  
Järjestyksenvälvojat kohtelivat vieraskannattajia hyvin  
Tunsin oloni hallilla turvalliseksi  
Vieraskannattajien paikat olivat hyvät ottelun seuraamisen kannalta  
Vieraskannattajien paikat olivat hyvät suosikkijoukkueeni kannustamisen kannalta  
Olin tyytyväinen hallissa saamaani palveluun

Olin vieraskannattajana tyytyväinen hallin katsomojärjestelyihin  
Olin tyytyväinen vieraskannattajien katsomopaikkoihin  
Olin tyytyväinen ottelukokemukseen kokonaisuudessaan

## 6. TAUSTATIEDOT

Mikä on ikäsi?

Mikä on sukupuolesi?

Missä päin Suomea asut?

Millä paikkakunnalla vierailit?

Miten matkustit ottelupaikkakunnalle?

Matkaseurueesi koko itsesi mukaanluettuna?

Kuinka monessa vierasottelussa olet käynyt tämän ja edellisen kauden aikana?

Kuinka monessa vierasottelussa aiot vielä käydä tämän ja seuraavan Liigakauden aikana?

Mitkä ovat taloutesi käytettävissä olevat bruttovuositulot?

Alle voit kirjoittaa palautetta tai yleisiä huomioita tutkimuksesta. Kaikki kommentit ovat tervetulleita!  
Voit myös lähettää sähköpostia osoitteeseen [petri.hard@helsinki.fi](mailto:petri.hard@helsinki.fi).