

RAIVIS AIRE

THE ROLE OF A TOUR GUIDE IN

TOURISM EXPERIENCES.

THE CASE OF A DMC IN BERGEN, NORWAY



UNIVERSITY OF ALGARVE

Faculty of Economics

2019

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TOURISM EXPERIENCES.
THE CASE OF A DMC IN BERGEN, NORWAY**

Masters in Management

The final work is carried out under the supervision of:

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UNIVERSITY OF ALGARVE

Faculty of Economics

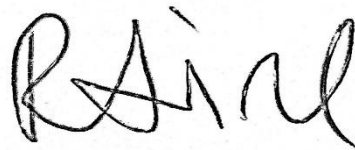
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Work Authorship Declaration

I declare to be the author of this work, which is unique and unprecedented. Authors and works consulted are properly cited in the text and are in the listing of references included.

RAIVIS AIRE

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Raivis Aire', written in a cursive style.

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(signature)

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RESUMO

O presente trabalho é composto de duas partes: revisão de literatura e relatório de estágio.

A revisão de literatura foca o turismo de experiências e a economia das experiências, destacando a sua importância para a satisfação e para as memórias dos turistas. Em segundo lugar, a revisão da literatura aborda o turismo de natureza, visto que a Noruega constitui um país atrativo relativamente a este tipo de oferta, levando a que muitos turistas procurem viver e experienciar diversas atividades turísticas relacionadas com a natureza.

A revisão da literatura e o relatório de estágio destacam a importância que o guia turístico tem na prestação de serviços e experiências de qualidade para satisfazer as necessidades dos turistas.

O estágio decorreu no operador de turismo Easy Travel Ltd, em Bergen, na Noruega, por um período de quatro meses. A Company Easy Travel Ltd é um operador turístico com sede na Finlândia. Todos os anos a empresa recebe 2500 turistas e colabora com inúmeras agências de turismo de todo o mundo. Neste contexto, o relatório de estágio visa descrever as funções de um guia turístico de uma DMC durante a experiência turística. O estágio foi concluído sob a supervisão de Artūrs Kisiļevs, sócio-gerente na Noruega da empresa anfitriã, e de Nelson Matos, professor da Universidade do Algarve. A equipa na Noruega era composta por cinco funcionários.

Durante quatro meses - junho a outubro de 2018, as principais tarefas desempenhadas durante o estágio de guia turístico na Easy Tour Ltd, consistiram em: 1) Receber turistas, serviço de *meet and greet* e conduzir. A condução envolveu transferes para o aeroporto, para os hotéis, para a estação de comboios, para o terminal de cruzeiros e muitos outros locais; 2) Agir como guia local, orientando os turistas pela Noruega durante as excursões (de um ou cinco dias); 3) Comunicação interna e externa: Comunicação constante com os turistas, outros guias turísticos e supervisores da empresa; 4) Limpeza de veículos, por exemplo, a preparação do veículo antes e depois da excursão (aspiração, limpeza das janelas, limpeza do interior com guardanapos molhados, lavagem do veículo); 5) Pesquisa e planeamento *antes, durante e depois* das experiências; 6) Compra e pagamento de bens e produtos relacionados com a atividade de guia turístico; 7) manter sempre uma atitude profissional, cortês, de apoio e ajuda ao cliente durante a experiência.

O cliente típico da Easy Travel Ltd é composto por casais jovens e idosos, embora o principal grupo etário seja o dos turistas com mais de 50 anos, aposentados e de nacionalidade americana.

A Easy Travel Ltd opera com grupos exclusivos, oferecendo aos turistas conforto e privacidade pelo que pagaram. Constatou-se que uma característica comum para os diferentes grupos de turistas é que eles estão dispostos a gastar mais dinheiro, desde que a experiência seja gratificante. Verificou-se também que alguns turistas não são as pessoas mais aventureiras, e por esse motivo, apoiam-se na segurança e no conforto das empresas para terem profissionais em quem confiam a orientar a sua experiência de férias.

No geral, estar numa equipa pequena e gerir um grande número de clientes em viagem constante, todos os dias, por toda a Noruega, foi um desafio e uma responsabilidade diária de toda a equipa. O estágio foi uma oportunidade de aprender com outros profissionais e colegas, e permitiu desenvolver novas *skills* no mercado de trabalho. Por último, o estágio juntamente com o mestrado de gestão, possibilitou o crescimento pessoal, profissional e académico do estagiário.

Palavras-Chave: Turismo de experiências, Turismo de natureza, Guia Turístico, Relatório de Estágio.

ABSTRACT

The present work is composed of two parts: a literature review and the internship report.

Firstly, the literature review is focused on tourism experiences and experience economy highlighting its importance to tourists' satisfaction and memories. Secondly, the literature review also addresses nature experiences. In the fact, Norway is one of the most sought countries by tourists for nature-based tourism experiences.

The review of the literature and the internship both point out the importance of the role of a tour guide, more precisely delivering and providing rich and quality experiences to satisfy tourists' needs.

The internship was in the Tour operator *Easy Travel Ltd* in Bergen, Norway for a duration of four months. The *Easy Travel Ltd* is a tour operator from Finland. Every year the company receives more than 2500 tourists and cooperates with many international tourism agencies. The goal of the internship is to describe the role and tasks of a DMC tour guide during experiences. The internship has been completed under the supervision of Artūrs Kisiļevs (Managing Partner Norway) for the hosting company, and Nelson Matos, Professor at the University of Algarve.

For four months – June to October 2018, the main tasks of the internship as tour guide at the Tour operator *Easy Travel Ltd*, consisted of: 1) Welcoming and meeting tourists - *meet and greet* service and driving, which included hotel transfers, airport transfers, train station transfers, cruise transfers and many other; 2) Acting as a local guide: Tour guiding for a day or five-day trip, with the same group family across Norway. 3) Internal and external communication: between tourists, tour guides and supervisors to solves occurrences and unplanned events. 4) Cleaning vehicles; 5) Research and planning *before, during* and *after* tours. 6) Buying and paying for services during the experiences (e.g., gasoline, food, sightseeing tickets); 7) keeping a professional, kind and helpful attitude. The internship along with the master course allowed the intern to growth academically, professional and personally.

Keywords: Tourism experiences, nature tourism, tour guide, Internship report.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Theoretical Background and internship objectives

Tourism is about experiences, in which tourists co-create their experience (Dimanche and Andrades, 2014) and own narratives (Binkhorst and Dekker, 2009). During the experience, tourists are involved and interact with companies, other tourists and local society (Boswijk, Thijssen and Peelen, 2005). During these interactions' tourists connect with the *others* while engaging in their culture (Gunn, 1988).

In effect, during the experience's consumption, tour guides are a crucial element because they are a part of the service delivery and influence the tourist's engagement and evaluation of the experience. In this process tour guides intervene by helping tourists and by actively engaging tourists at a personal level helping to experience unique distinctive and memorable experiences.

In this context, the study's main objective is **to describe the role and tasks of a tour guide during Tourism experiences in a destination management company (DMC).**

The internship report describes the activities carried out during the four months, full-time internship at the Tour operator *Easy Travel Ltd.*

1.2 Relevance of the topic

Tour guides are professional experts that can be recognized as part of travel products, since such expertise can influence tourist's impression of service quality of tour guiding and improve tourist satisfaction (Lin, Lin and Chen, 2017). Customer experience is considered as an important component affecting customer value, loyalty and positive word of mouth (Berry, Carbone and Haeckel, 2002; Pine and Gilmore, 1999). The concept of experiences related with marketing, tourism and psychology has been a popular subject in the literature (e.g., Pine and Gilmore, 1998). Therefore, each tourist can use the destination stage to create his own experience by using various elements of the destination like building *Lego* (Swarbrooke, 2001).

1.3 Internship Report Structure

This report is composed of four chapters (figure 1.1.). Starting with Introduction as chapter 1, the report is composed of three more chapters. Chapter 2 is a review of the literature on Tourism experiences, experience economy, nature-based tourism and the role of tour guides. Chapter 3 focuses on the internship. It describes the company, services, products, customers, partnerships, and future perspectives. In addition, the internship information regarding tasks, followed by the critical analysis and acquired knowledge are presented. In the end, chapter 4 presents the final considerations.

Figure 1.1. – Internship Report Structure

Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Theoretical Background and internship objectives; •Relevance of the topic; •Internship Report Structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Tourism Experiences; •The Experience Economy; •Nature-based tourism experiences; •The role of a tour guide in Tourism Experiences; •Discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Tour Operator Easy Travel Ltd; •Past, The Company, origin and development; •Present, Products and Services; •Future, New Experiences; •Presentation of the Internship; •The Internship at Easy Travel Ltd; •Main tasks •Critical Analysis of the Internship; •The search for the Internship; •Acquired knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Final Considerations

Source: Own Elaboration

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Tourism Experiences

The market offerings have been changing their approach to customers by engaging and involving them in a memorable way. Therefore, the economic output of tourism experiences relates to a distinctive and relevant form of offering, and as such, it holds the key to promoting future economic prosperity (Pine and Gilmore, 2014).

In the *Lexico Oxford Dictionary* an experience is defined as: “An Event or an occurrence that causes an impression to someone”. An experience occurs when “...a company deliberately uses services as the stage, and goods as props, to involve specific customers in a way that creates an unforgettable event.” (Pine and Gilmore, 1998:98).

Experiences are in this way, coming up as specific economic offerings enhancing products and services. Traditional ways of differentiation are becoming ineffective therefore there is a rising demand for experience products that fit to tourist’s individual wants and needs (Ritchie, Tung and Ritchie, 2011; Wong and Wan, 2013). This has led experiences to be co-created, and tourists to be the co-creators of the experience (Tan, Kung and Luh, 2013).

Tourism destinations should offer complex experiences that meet tourists’ requirements and are arranged next to their knowledge used in their evaluation of a destination (Lew, 1987). Regardless of different definitions, opinions and evaluations, customers repetitively do sharp comparisons between their leisure experiences and their life’s daily routine (Cohen, 1972).

Experiences are individually relevant in the tourism industry. The tourists travel to experience something different and new (MacCannell, 1973). Nonetheless, defining core tourism products (sought by tourists), different from each other regarding the products, services and context is a challenging task (Gordon and Goodall, 2000). Moreover, since to create the overall experiences in a destination, it is necessary to associate products and services (Williams and Buswell, 2003). In addition, each tourist can create his or her own experience like a *Lego* bricks, leading to different experiences (Swarbrooke, 2001).

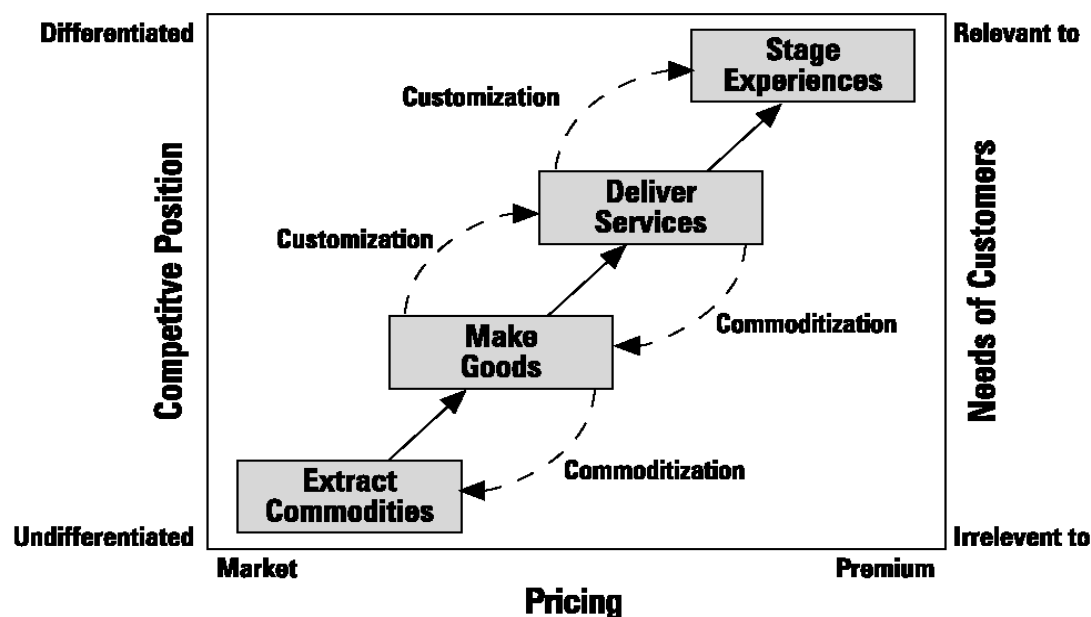
Consequently, tourists co-create their experiences with destinations by physically, emotionally and intellectually involving themselves in the process (Booms and Bitner, 1981). The implication of this immersive involvement is the *flow*, where tourist lose the concept of the time and place and focuses only on the activity that he/she is involved in (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). Tourists are also part of the product, since inseparability is one characteristics of tourism (Normann, 1985).

Therefore, tourists are performers and the tourism destination - the stage (Edensor, 2001) for creating experience, which is vital to both (tourist and destination). Formerly, leading tour operator companies were widely using only standardized products on the customers. Yet, the experiential tourist is bringing what they want onto the marker, which generates new opportunities for new products and alternatives to appear. Diversification has become the new trend of the tourism product (Stamboulis and Skayannis, 2003).

2.2. The Experience Economy

Over the past 20 years, the experience economy has been changing businesses worldwide and has become a fundamental shift in the competitive market (e.g., Pine and Gilmore, 1998). As the figure (2.1.) shows, in the progression of economic value, at the beginning, commodities were extracted, followed by goods, services and staged experiences.

Figure 2.1. The Progression of Economic Value



Source: Pine and Gilmore (1998:98)

The companies and customers no longer expect just good quality products/ services, instead companies need to design and develop new products/services that could provide special and memorable experiences to their customers (Berry, Carbone, and Haeckel, 2002). For example, the authors Pine and Gilmore (1998) mentions how Starbucks creates experience from just coffee beans as commodities transformation.

For instance, a plain coffee with the cost price of 0,2 dollars per cup, can be sold in a cafeteria as an experience to consumers for 2-5 dollars per cup. The economic distinction extends from the economy perspective to the economic function, nature of the offering and more importantly to the factors of demand, addressing sensations by providing stages for memorable and personal experience(s) (Pine and Gilmore, 1998).

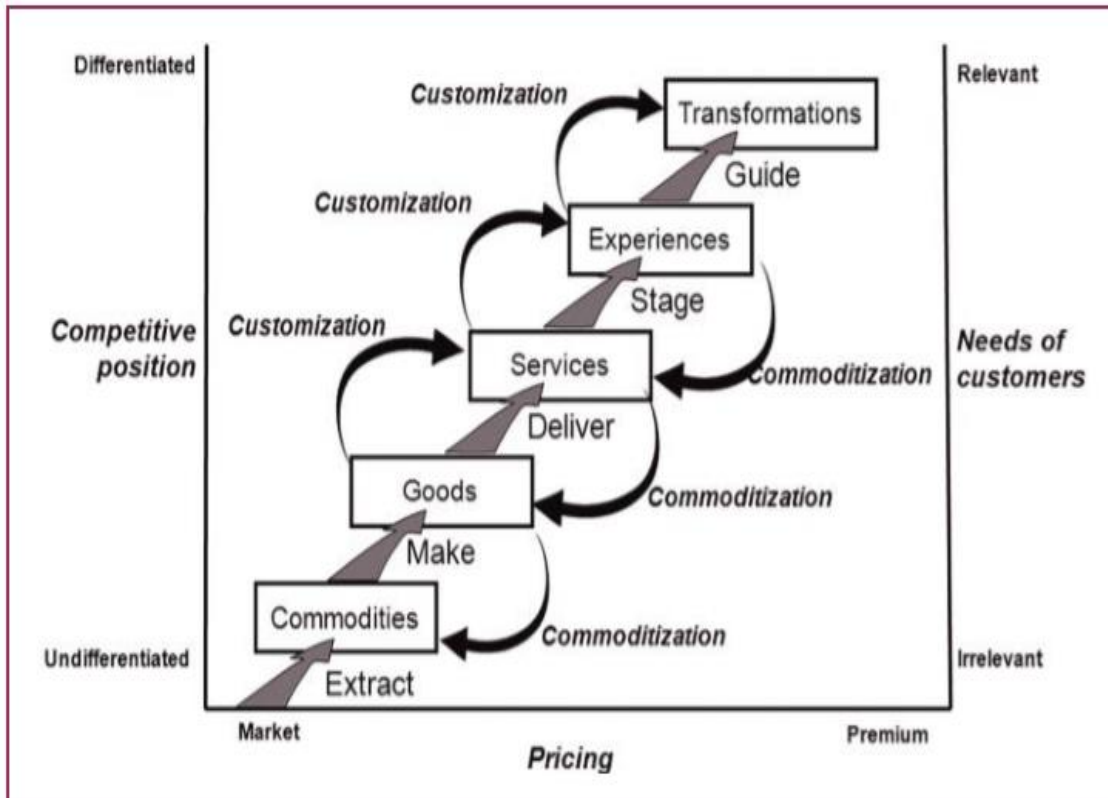
Figure 2.2. Pine and Gilmore (1998), The Experience Economy

Economic Distinctions				
Economic Offering	Commodities	Goods	Services	Experiences
Economy	Agrarian	Industrial	Service	Experience
Economic Function	Extract	Make	Deliver	Stage
Nature of Offering	Fungible	Tangible	Intangible	Memorable
Key Attribute	Natural	Standardized	Customized	Personal
Method of Supply	Stored in bulk	Inventoried after production	Delivered on demand	Revealed over a duration
Seller	Trader	Manufacturer	Provider	Stager
Buyer	Market	User	Client	Guest
Factors of Demand	Characteristics	Features	Benefits	Sensations

Source: Pine and Gilmore (1999:98)

Later in 2014, the same authors extended this model to consider a new version (figure 2.3.), from staging experiences they can customize into transformations, which would like to the internal transformation of the customers due to the highly rich experience they lived.

Figure 2.3. Progression of economic value – from commodities to transformations

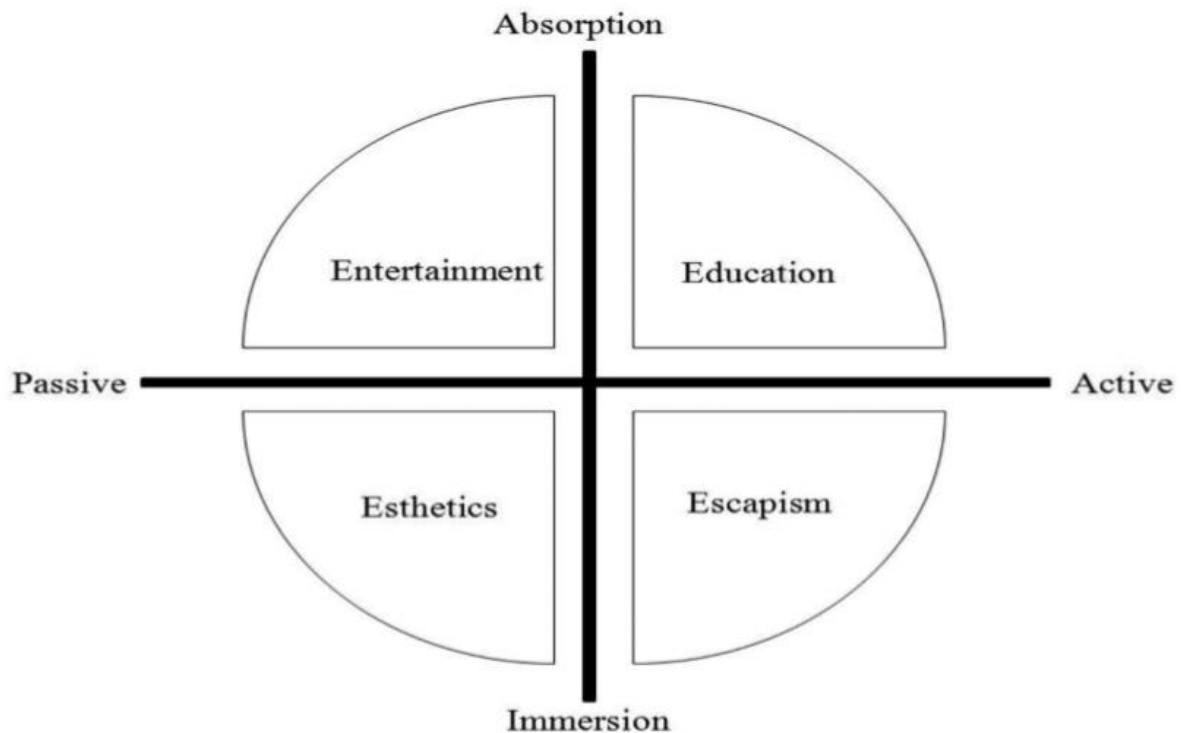


Source: Pine and Gilmore (1998:98)

In this dynamic experience economy there are five value-creating opportunities which are likely to drive further progress of the business such as: 1) Customizing goods, 2) enhancing services, 3) charging for experiences, 4) fusing digital technology with reality and 5) transformative experiences, a promising frontier (Pine and Gilmore, 2014).

The “Experience Economy” (also known as 4Es) which was proposed by Pine and Gilmore in 1998, has two dimensions: 1) the form of customer involvement (i.e. passive and active) and 2) the connection that unites them with particular events or performances (i.e. absorption and immersion) and four realms in the experience economy (i.e. *education, entertainment, esthetics* and *escapism*). This concept is showed in Figure 2.4 (Hwang and Lee, 2018).

Figure 2.4. 4Es of the Experience Economy



Source: Pine and Gilmore (1998:99)

Education in the experience economy tells that it is natural for humans to desire and learn new things. In addition, education is seen as absorption because it refers to “occupying a person’s attention by bringing the experience into the mind” (Pine and Gilmore, 1999:31) For example, when tourists visit the Egyptian pyramids, they can learn the history of the Egyptian civilization (Hwang and Lee, 2018).

Entertainment refers to the performance of humorous or pleasurable people (Merriam and Webster, 2016). Furthermore, *entertainment* is considered absorptive because of participants high mediations on attractive aspects of the performances/events (Pine and Gilmore, 1999). For example, tourists can basically just enjoy watching Fountains of Bellagio or The Volcano at The Mirage without any active involvement (Hwang and Lee, 2018).

For instance, in the experience economy, *esthetics* can be explained as consumers interpretation of the physical atmosphere surrounding them (Hosany and Witham, 2010). When people visit Cristo Redentor in Rio de Janeiro, Brasil, they are extremely immersed by the statue of Christ the Redeemer (Hwang and Lee, 2018).

Escapism refers to when people are looking for a transformation in their life due to the boredom of everyday life. One of the significant ways to escape from the monotony of daily routine is to travel to places where they can relax both mentally and physically (Hwang and Hyun, 2016). According to Pine and Gilmore (1998), all four realms contribute for achieving a richer experience.

Experiences are, therefore, a source of competitive advantage in the long term, a source of differentiation by planning emotional stimulation or designing stages for continuously exceeding the physical and emotional expectations of consumers (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2004).

2.3 Nature-based tourism experiences

Nature-based tourism (NBT) or recreation travel to natural areas has been growing massively in last two decades (Balmford, et al., 2009) and it is predicted that this type of tourism to keep growing worldwide between 7% up to 25% by 2020 (Honey, 2008). Nature-based tourism actively supplies nature conservation and local living style. Usually it is promoted as a win-win scenario in which tourists have pleasant experience, tour agencies create profit, environmental conservation funds increase, and survival of locals' communities is maintained or improves (Honey, 2008).

The role of nature tourism in attracting travellers to unique destinations is now well established (Valentine, 1991). There are plenty of expressions for nature-based tourism mentioned in the literature. Laarman and Durst (1987) suggested the term *nature travel* to introduce a style of tourism which combines education, recreation and often adventure. Lucas (1984) definition of nature-based tourism considers the enjoyment of natural areas and the experience of nature and further defines that such tourism has a low impact environmentally, labour comprehensive and contributes socially and economically to the nation.

Nature-based tourists who are enjoying their travel experience may possibly be open to become extra profoundly involved in adopting pro-environmental behaviours (Ballantyne and Packer, 2011). Nature based tours have certainly been shown to be an influential mechanism for revolutionizing the environmental behaviour of some travellers (Ballantyne and Packer, 2011). Tourists can reinforce environmental knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour intentions through

relevant, first-hand opportunities with wildlife, nature history, and conservation messaging (Ballantyne and Packer, 2011).

The moment for a tourist to experience pleasure, relaxation or well-being through performing in activities that are different than their usual lifestyle and surroundings serves as a major driver of potential destination visitation (Bello and Etzel, 1985). Tourist will be triggered to satisfy inherent desires that can only be realized through destination attributes such as nature-based activities that can only be experienced at certain destinations (Dann, 1981).

Most tourist destinations are characterized by distinct seasons throughout the year (Baum and Hagen, 1999). Seasonality changes depending on destinations led to climate differences in temperature, humidity, and snow depth for instance (Baum and Hagen, 1999). These variations in seasons contributes for certain destinations with tourism potential to attract preferable nature-based activities only available at different times of the year (Baum and Hagen, 1999).

For example, countries such as Canada and Japan benefit largely from tourism during the winter season. It includes nature-based activities such as skiing and snowboarding, although Spain and the Caribbean are trendy for summer tourism, such as activities like sunbathing and swimming in the ocean. Therefore, in many countries such as Finland and Norway, tourists can experience both summer and winter seasonal nature-based experiences. Although tourists are driven to participate in nature-based activities exclusive to specific destinations with seasonal attractions, these activities differ among tourists based on their personal tendencies (Tkaczynskil et al., 2015).

In conclusion, nature-based tourism is mainly concerned with the explicit enjoyment of some relatively untouched phenomenon of nature. For ecologically sustainable tourism, it must be convenient for the specific location and should not cause any permanent degradation of the natural environment (Valentine, 1991).

2.4 The role of a tour guide in Tourism Experiences

Tour guiding experts are important to provide a continuous service for travel agencies in the tourism industry (Pereira, 2015; Schwartz, Tapper and Font, 2008). They are the tour leaders, pathfinders, interpreters, storytellers, and mentors for tourists (Lin, Lin and Chen 2017). In

recent years, tourism industry has realized that tour guides can play a crucial role. The work of tour guides can affect tourists' feelings toward business image of travel agencies and overall experience (Caber et al., 2019). Tour guides are then the key of successful travels amongst individual and group package tours. Their professional expertise can either make and provide the highest quality of experiences or they can damage them (Al Jahwari et al., 2016; Mak, Wong and Chang, 2011; Frochot and Batat, 2013).

Tour guides should not only control the travel quality, but also need to assure tourists rights. They are the bridges between destinations and tourists. Therefore, tour guides must contribute with instant, appropriate service to attain customer satisfaction (Lin, Lin and Chen 2017). Satisfaction is an abstract comparison between the expected and received experience of a product or service. It is a psychological state appearing from the confirmation or disconfirmation of the experience lived and the initial customer expectation (Oliver, 1981).

Among the outcomes of satisfaction, are impressions of enjoyment, entertainment, excitement and enlightenment (Oliver, 1997). Swan, Trawick and Carrol (1982) claim that satisfaction is an evaluative or cognitive theory that analyses whether the result of products consumption is satisfactory or dissatisfactory. Therefore, it is a response to an emotional link resulting from a certain transaction (Halstead, Hartman, and Schmidt, 1994). Moreover, Anton (1996) describes customer satisfaction as a condition in which the customers' needs, wants and expectations are met.

Thus, tour guides role can be recognized as part of travel products, since they can influence positively or negatively tourist's satisfaction (Caber et al., 2019). For travel agencies, tour guides are human capital to create profitable business in today's extremely competitive tourism market (Lin et al., 2017). To attract customers of niche markets, leading tourism firms must provide high-quality travel products or services and manage their tour guides professional expertise (Lin et al., 2017; Chiang, and Chen, 2014).

The reason for such high-quality service demand, comes from customer experience being considered as an important component affecting customer value, loyalty and positive word of mouth (Berry, Carbone, and Haeckel, 2002; Pine and Gilmore, 1999).

2.5 Discussion

In the last two decades, experience economy has been growing among business and has become an integral part of tourism. Authors Pine and Gilmore (1998) suggest that experience economy relying on experiences when companies deliberately involve customers in the process of purchasing products or services in a way that creates an unforgettable experience for consumers is the fourth economic offering.

Thus, it is important to say that the tour guides influence tourists' experiences and memories (Baloglu, Busser, and Cain, 2019). Tourism experiences consists of stages for tourists creating memories, adapted to their personal characteristics, but as we argue, in these experiential stages tour guides are an important element that impact on tourists' experience. As recent empirical studies suggest, engaging experiences will contribute for emotional estates and positive memorable experience, which on the other will reinforce tourist's recommendation and intention to return, and ultimately loyalty (Zhong, Busser, and Baloglu, 2017).

In a similar context, nature tourism is becoming more popular since certain tourists' segments prefer to do hiking, running, walking outdoors or just travel to more natural countries in general. Two of the destinations for such activities are Finland and Norway. As Ham, Butler and Wheeler (2015) suggest Norway is a destination with great nature-based potential, thus having unique experiential stages for *once-in-a-lifetime* experience. In effect such stages are an added value element, because creating memories is crucial for every tourist. When tourists travel, these memories stay with them for long time or even for the rest of their life. Based on authors Pine and Gilmore's (1998; 2014) opinion, we can see that in tourism experiences change the market and to certain degree the academia interest in this topic.

In sum, the literature review states that the tour guides are the key element for successful traveling within the destinations (Frochot and Batat, 2013) and for experiencing in a memorable way those stages, thus transforming tourists from *within*. Depending on tour guides expertise, products and experiences can be served with satisfaction or poor result (Swan, Trawick and Carrol, 1982). When tourists are physically, emotionally and intellectually involved in the process of travel experiences he/she connects their experiences with the destination (Booms and Bitner, 1981).

CHAPTER 3. THE INTERNSHIP

3.1. Tour operator *Easy Travel Ltd*

The company *Easy Travel Ltd* is a tour operator from Finland. Each year the company operates with more than 2500 tourists and cooperates with the largest tourism agencies across the world. *Easy Travel Ltd* team is an experienced organization with regular monitoring of services, quality and prices. Qualified salespeople have built experiences when it comes for travellers, for ability create tours that meet holiday makers the highest expectations year after year. Tour operators can offer several transport options for the tourists. Arranging from standard class vehicles to VIP class vans or can request any type of vehicle. Therefore, regarding special cases, every type of vehicle which is requested by customers can be arranged according specific price.

3.1.1. Past, The company, origin and development

The *Easy Travel Ltd* tourism company started in early 2005 in Rovaniemi, Finland. At that time, the current company's general manager Alex Sirota was a student at Rovaniemi University of Applied Sciences. Rovaniemi, a city in northern Finland, within arctic circle has been a tourist destination for past decades. Today, Rovaniemi is the official hometown of Santa Claus.

This is one of the reasons why Alex Sirota decided to start his tourism business in the city of Rovaniemi and therefore saw lots of business perspectives. *Easy Travel Ltd* started in 2005 with only Russian tourists coming for winter holidays from mid-December until mid-January which included New Year's Eve and Russian Christmas period. The company started selling tours to Russian tourists such as: a) snowmobile experiences b) reindeer rides c) husky farm and many more.

Figure 3.1. Location of Rovaniemi, Finland



Source: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/127578601914969816/> (2019)

In 2012, the internship supervisor and direct operations manager Artūrs Kiseļevs joined *Easy Travel Ltd*. They started to expand in Baltic countries such as Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. For a few years business was doing well so then Artūrs Kiseļevs expanded business to Scandinavian countries such as Norway, Sweden and Denmark. In summer of 2012 Artūrs went to Germany to buy the first Mercedes van for tourist chauffeuring. When Artūrs first went to Norway he had no knowledge about where to go or what to do.

However, he drove some beautiful roads through fjords and started selling such products straight away. First tour for Artūrs was Bergen-Oslo transfer which took nearly 7 hours. Later, he became successful with driving tourists around, which then led to hiring workers, buying more cars and create partnerships with hotels, farms and other tourism service companies. The company has developed and the current main office of *Easy Travel Ltd* is in Helsinki, Finland. The company operates throughout the year in 7 countries: Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark. The main countries for summer season are such as: a) Norway, b) Finland and c) Sweden.

Currently the company operates all year round, including the main season in summer (May to October) and few months over Christmas time in winter season.

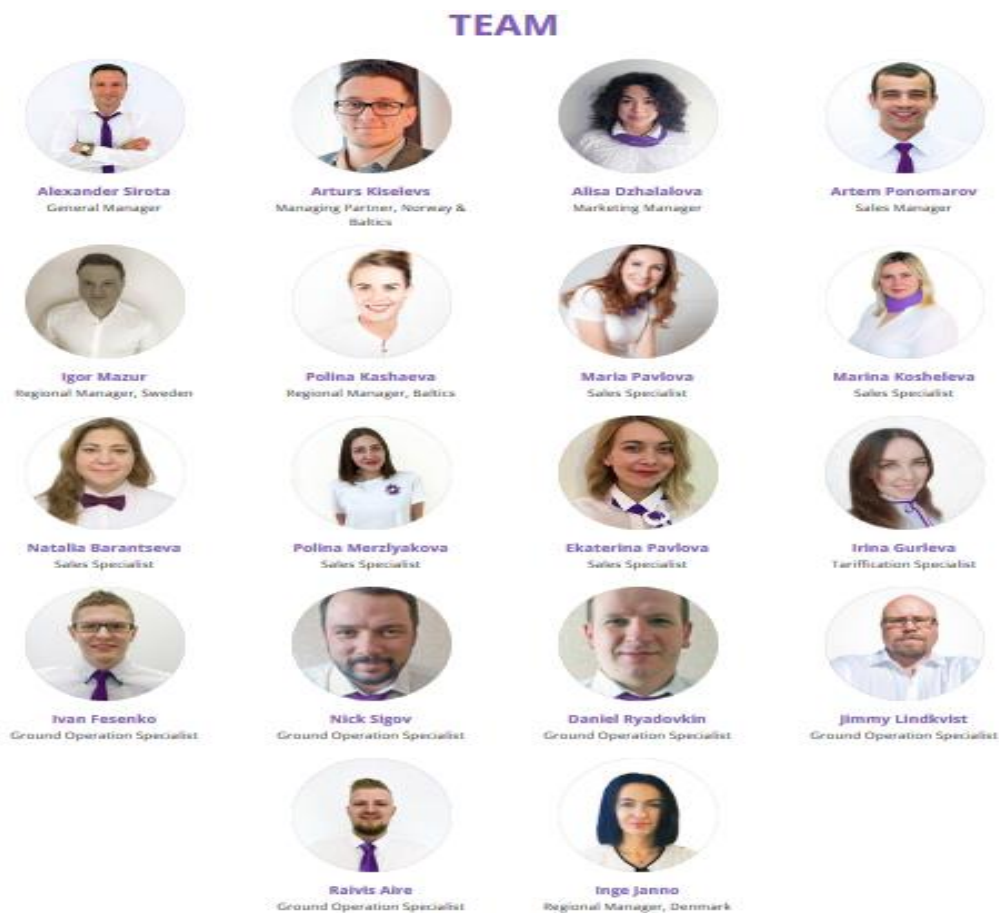
Figure 3.2. Company's *Easy Travel Ltd* logo



Source: www.easytravel.eu (2019)

In total, *Easy Travel Ltd* company has nearly 40 employees by 2019 which include salespeople, bookkeepers, managers, ground operation specialists and other people the company outsources for special events like, for example, around Christmas and New Years' time. The team consists of 90% of Russian speaking employees. There is no requirement to speak Russian to be able to work for *Easy Travel Ltd*, since the compulsory language is English. As majority of tourists are English speaking.

Figure 3.3. Team of *Easy Travel Ltd*

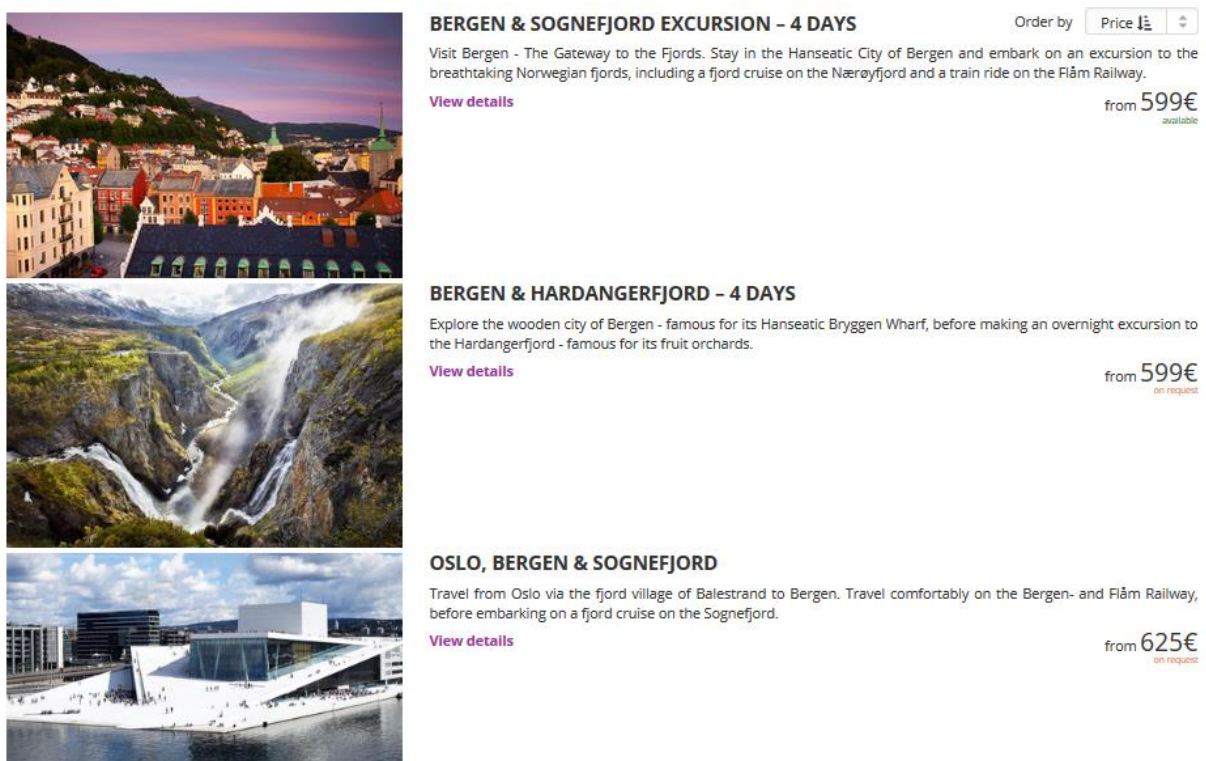


Source: www.easytravel.eu (2019)

3.1.2. Present, Products and Services

The company has maintained its business throughout the years and now has several partners regarding the segments B2B and B2C. In summer 2018, *Easy Travel Ltd* has expanded their services to other Norwegian cities as Aalesund, Oslo and Trondheim. As well *Easy Travel Ltd* has been awarded with the Finnish certificate of quality AAA, which confirms the highest extent of credibility to the enterprise. Over the last ten years the company has been providing destination management company (DMC) services for thousands of tourists travelling to Finland, Sweden and Norway.

Figure 3.4. Main products of Norway



The screenshot displays three travel packages on a website. Each package includes a photograph, a title, a description, a 'View details' link, and a price starting from 599€ or 625€.

- BERGEN & SOGNEFJORD EXCURSION – 4 DAYS**
Visit Bergen - The Gateway to the Fjords. Stay in the Hanseatic City of Bergen and embark on an excursion to the breathtaking Norwegian fjords, including a fjord cruise on the Nærøysfjord and a train ride on the Flåm Railway.
Price: from 599€
Order by: Price (€) (dropdown)
- BERGEN & HARDANGERFJORD – 4 DAYS**
Explore the wooden city of Bergen - famous for its Hanseatic Bryggen Wharf, before making an overnight excursion to the Hardangerfjord - famous for its fruit orchards.
Price: from 599€
View details
- OSLO, BERGEN & SOGNEFJORD**
Travel from Oslo via the fjord village of Balestrand to Bergen. Travel comfortably on the Bergen- and Flåm Railway, before embarking on a fjord cruise on the Sognefjord.
Price: from 625€
View details

Source: www.easytravel.eu (2019)

3.1.2.1. Easy Travel Experience Tours Packages

Tour number 1.

The most popular tour for tourists is “Bergen & Sognefjord Excursion – 4 days”. Visiting Bergen, the second largest city of Norway and the fjord capital tourists are entering the Gateway to the Fjords. Compare with older version Bergen is the world’s only city surrounded

by 7 mountains and countless fjords. The arrival to destination is according to tourists' own itinerary and mostly is a free day from tours. On the next day the excursion continues with Fjord boat cruise and Flam Railway. The cruise takes two hours and takes travellers through the Nærøfjord, which is the narrowest fjord channel in Europe and has recently been added to UNESCO's World Heritage List. After stepping off from the cruise travellers continue their way to Flams railway, which is the only railway in the world running on normal tracks that is so steep over a long distance. Arrival back to Bergen is around 18h00 in the afternoon. In the third day of an excursion tourists are experiencing and sightseeing the city of Bergen. With a local tour guide 3 hours of walking tour through several places, World Heritage Sites, Bergen Fortress, and walking through old wooden houses and other historic sights. The other half of the day is free time for tourists. In conclusion, the last day is the departure time from Bergen according to tourists' own itinerary. *Easy Travel Ltd* provides this product for 599 euros per person. The price can change according to chosen hotels, transportation options or further services. Services included are: a) Transfers from airport to hotel and back to airport, b) Electronic travel documentation, c) Train tickets, d) Cruise tickets, e) Bus tickets, f) Bergen city tour, g) 3 nights hotel accommodation in a standard room.

Tour number 2.

Another main product for Norway is a four-day excursion "Bergen & Hardanger fjord". Starting with arrival in Bergen according to tourist's itinerary continues with transfer to Bergen centre, upon arrival a professional city tour guide will guide them to do a 3-hour Bergen walking tour. Staying overnight in Bergen. The next day is a self-guided tour taking a bus to Ulvik, a small village located by the Hardanger fjord. This fjord is the second largest in Norway and famous for its fruit orchards. The next day starts with breakfast at the fjord hotel and departure on a cruise across Hardanger fjord to Eidfjord. Afterwards taking a bus tour to Vøringsfossen Waterfall, Norway's highest waterfall. In the afternoon the journey continues with a 3-hour cruise on the Hardangerfjord to Norheimsund. The last part of the journey is by bus to Bergen, passing the Steindalsfossen waterfall. The accommodation provided is in Bergen.

At the last day, a transfer is provided for the tourists to the airport and departure time is according to the tourists' itinerary and schedule. The four-day excursion costs 599 Euros per person and can be modified according to travellers' requests. Services included are: a) three nights hotel accommodation in a standard room, b) train tickets, c) bus tickets, d) cruise boat tickets,

e) 2,5 hours sightseeing tour in Eidfjord, f) Electronic travel documentation, g) Bergen city tour, h) transfers airport-hotel-airport.

Tour number 3.

Third main product is “Oslo, Bergen & Sognefjord”. The tour starts with arrival in Norway’s capital – Oslo according to tourists own itinerary. The day of arrival is a free day for sightseeing in Oslo. The next day tour continues with Oslo – Flåm Railway – and Fjord Cruise to Balestrand. Starting the day with train ride to Flam and continuing with boat cruise to fjord town Balestrand, where travellers stay overnight. The third day starts with another boat cruise through fjords to Bergen. After arriving to Bergen, the tourists have the rest of the day to explore the city on their own. This four-day tour costs 625euros per person. Services included are: a) three nights hotel accommodation in a standard room, b) Transfers airport to hotel, c) Train tickets, d) Cruise boat tickets, e) Electronic travel documentation.

Tourism work in northern Europe or in Scandinavian countries is usually a seasonal business. Tour operator *Easy Travel Ltd* have currently 9 cars which are being used for driving tourists. It includes limousine class vans, 9 seat minibuses, sedans and jeeps. Regarding premises such as offices, apartments and storage rooms everything is rented for specific seasons. Company does not own any property estate.

Besides all the employees *Easy Travel Ltd* company must outsource other city tour guides, especially those that speak a specific language. For example, Spanish, Portuguese, French and Russian language. As the main months of the season is during June and July very often *Easy Travel Ltd* hire extra work force, taxi drivers with their own cars and other tourism related workers to manage all the many bookings and special requests from tourists.

The *Easy Travel Ltd* has also other departments, for example, the marketing department in St. Petersburg, Russia where nearly ten salespersons are selling excursions, tours, transfers to tourists all around the world. The office in St. Petersburg includes the marketing specialist team. Nevertheless, it is in the main office in Helsinki, Finland from where the key decisions are made. The main booking-keeping department for Norway is in Tallinn, Estonia. Therefore, ground handling department consists of local tour guides, representatives or others providing services at the local destination, at this point in Bergen, Norway.

Table 3.1 Employees and Vehicles

Country	Employees	Vehicles
Norway	5	4
Sweden	3	2
Finland	5	2
Denmark	1	1
Estonia	1	0
Latvia	1	1
Lithuania	1	0

Source: Own elaboration

3.1.2.2. Nature Tourist's Profile

The typical tourist of *Easy Travel Ltd* range from young to seniors, but the main group are couple tourists over 50+, retired couples from United States of America. As *Easy Travel Ltd* operates only with one family/group or couple at the same time there is no groups mixed during the tours. This policy gives tourists comfort and privacy for what they have paid for. One thing common for different kind of tourist groups are that they are willing to spend more money if the experience is rewarding enough. Tourists might not be the most adventurous people, thus they want the security and comfort from someone they trust to show them around, such as tour operator *Easy Travel Ltd*.

On average the typical tourist coming to Norway for four days. Usually everyone starts their tour in the capital city of Norway, Oslo as it has the international airport and then continues towards west coast Flam, Gudvangen, Voss and end their tour in Bergen. Their trip continues further for example they fly to Copenhagen or Stockholm or take a northern cruise through Atlantic or Baltic see. For the Tourists who are flying on their holidays to Norway, it is very

important that all the flights and transfers are well connected, and they can see most of the foreign destinations.

Most of the reservations happening through agencies, sometimes it could be even two different tourism agencies in between and only *Easy Travel Ltd* at the end. Doing the last service on the spot. The company has clients which are coming straight to *Easy Travel Ltd* by making reservations and bookings through the website. This means the company earns a greater margin of profit because no commission is shared with other agencies.

As most of the tourists are coming to Norway through (B2B) tourism agencies tour guides are obligated to not mention that they work under *Easy Travel Ltd*. The reason for that is that the clients are not from *Easy Travel Ltd* direct clients, but other agencies. This is how the company works, with partnerships with agencies all around the world, with *Easy Travel Ltd* being their local tourism operator.

In 2018, there has been quite amount of online sales. It has been a trend among tourists to book tours by themselves, without any intermediaries, thus reducing the sales price. Season in Norway starts in May and lasts until end of September. Sometimes companies have some bookings over the winter period when the prices are little lower, and the destination is not too overcrowded.

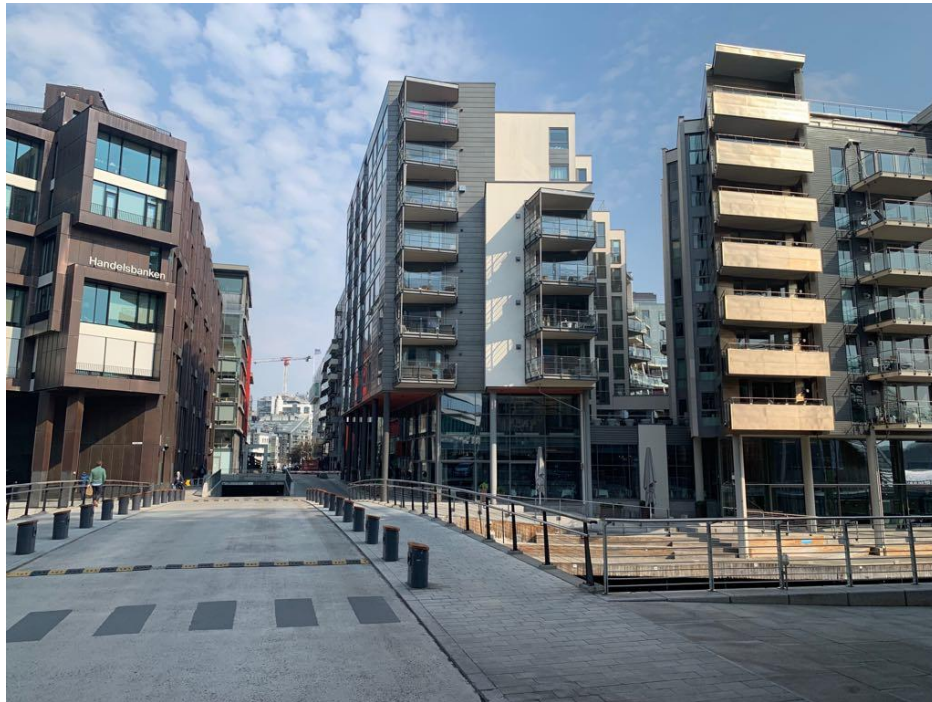
3.1.2.3. Company Partners and outsourcing services

The company would never be able to keep the business without partners. Therefore, *Easy Travel Ltd* is doing partnerships with tourism agencies such as: a) *Arctic Signature*, b) *Nordic Luxury*, c) *Flashpack*, d) *Get away tours Canada*, e) *Euro-bones*. These tourism agencies are the biggest companies *Easy Travel Ltd* operates with to receive incoming tourists at a destination, in this case Bergen for *Easy Travel Ltd*.

Hotel partnerships includes being in touch and getting better offers from hotels such as: a) *The Grand Hotel*, b) *Continental*, c) *Scandic*, d) *Radisson hotels*, e) *Bergen Bors*, f) *The Thieff*. Hotels *The Thieff* and *Continental* are in Oslo and have 5* which includes porter service from

vehicle to the room and vice-versa. We can see in the Figure 3.5 that local infrastructure and surroundings are formed according the most modern style.

Figure 3.5. Oslo, next to hotel “The Thief”



Source: Own elaboration

Additional partners and outsourced companies *Easy Travel Ltd* is working with in Norway such as: a) RIB boat excursions, b) Bicycle rental with city guide, c) City tour guides, d) Mountain & Glacier instructors and e) Goat farm. Meaning of RIB is rigid-inflatable boat. The boat is very light with high performance and high capacity. Very often used in Norwegian fjords or even at the open sea. Tourists using such a service for more adventurous type of sightseeing through Norwegian fjords.

Normally all the tours are tailor-made. It gives tourists a more personal experience throughout the tour. Tours can be from 1-hour airport transfer until 1 week travelling all around Norway, staying in different fjord hotels, doing boat and mountain tours and many other nature-based tourism activities.

Table 3.2 Partners and suppliers

<i>Agencies</i>	<i>Hotels</i>	<i>Suppliers</i>
<i>Arctic Signature</i>	<i>Grand Hotel Oslo</i>	<i>FjordSafari - Flam Guide Service AS (Speed boat)</i>
<i>Nordic Luxury</i>	<i>Continental Hotel</i>	<i>Viking Biking & Viking Hiking</i>
<i>Flashpack</i>	<i>Radisson Hotels</i>	<i>Norway guides AS (Glacier hikes)</i>
<i>Getaway tours</i>	<i>Scandic Hotels</i>	<i>Oslo & Bergen & Ålesund (City tour guides)</i>
<i>Eurobones</i>	<i>Bergen Børs</i>	<i>Voss Active (Rafting & extreme sports)</i>
	<i>The Thieff</i>	

Source: Own elaboration

3.1.3. Future, New Experiences

In the future, *Easy Travel Ltd* wants to expand to north of Norway to the city Tromsø, located behind arctic circle. It is a winter destination for Northern light tours, skiing, winter activities and other services. Another goal of the company is to improve online selling, because emails are becoming less popular. The plan is to increase online B2B platforms, (e.g., Bokun) which will help to oversee all the activities, bookings, suppliers and resellers at one place. This option can help the company to save time and money.

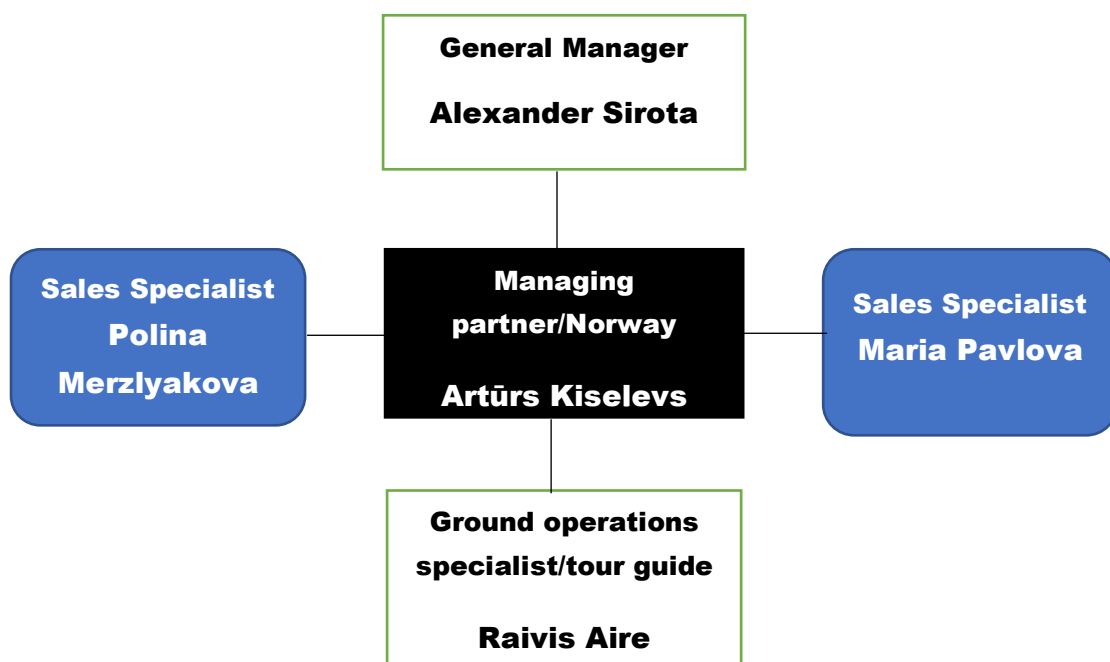
3.2 Presentation of the Internship

The internship took place in Bergen, Norway and as well in other Norwegian cities according variety of specific tour destinations such as Oslo, Aalesund, Flam, Gudvangen or in Voss. The chosen company for the internship was the tour operator *Easy Travel Ltd*. The duration of the internship was of four-months or 640 hours. Internship as tour guide took place from 15th June to 15th October which is the high season for tourism in Norway.

3.2.1. The Internship at Easy Travel Ltd

My team in Norway consisted of five employees (figure 3.6). Most of the information had to be confirmed by Artūrs Kiseļevs who is the main person responsible about Tourism operations for Norway. Two main salespersons for clients were involved in the process as well. My main activities at the company were guiding and supporting incoming tourist activities. At the end of the internship, the owner of *Easy Travel Ltd* was in personal contact regarding changes in tours, clients or about any other relevant information.

Figure 3.6. Direct colleagues for Norway



Source: Own elaboration

As an intern one of the main tasks is to communicate through one of the two main employees of *Easy Travel Ltd*. First, one of them is the direct supervisor Artūrs Kiseļevs. Supervisors main tasks such as: a) communication with clients by email/phone, b) tailor tour development, c) sightseeing tour planning and scheduling, d) confirming processes of activities.

Managing partner of *Easy Travel Ltd*, Artūrs Kiseļevs is in Bergen, controlling and managing the field operations. Such operation meant supervising three drivers/tour guides of VIP minivans (Mercedes-Benz V-Class). Mercedes-Benz V-Class can fit 7 tourists and the driver, but in Mercedes-Benz Sprinter it fits 8 tourists and the driver.

The second direct operations supervisor is Alexander Sirota who is responsible for all the seven countries throughout the year. He is general manager of *Easy Travel Ltd*. Although he is working from the main office in Helsinki, communication between him and tour guides/clients/suppliers was constant in my daily work routine. Communication through him regarding some VIP families or other individual travellers was an important part of work.

In fact, general manager was almost never directly at the location with the tourists, only in very special cases when there was coming delegates or people from tourism partner companies. During all the operations and tours Alexander Sirota was responsible for the problem solving when it comes for bad feedback from agency, broken car or other difficulties *Easy Travel Ltd* had to encounter.

As an intern very often the work location changed, from airports to cities and staying overnight at different hotels. Tourism work is always in motion. The main players are the tourists who pay a lot of money for their dream holidays.

The main goal of the company which was requested to assure during the internship was to achieve the company's highest quality services every day. Most importantly, timing and convenience are the key aspects of a successful tour. Adapting products, tours, changes in schedule to tourists was a need. For example, it often happened that when tourists arrive at the destination, they have changed their mind about their tours such as: different pick up time, different lunch place or completely different tour. Because of that, among the tasks as an Intern was to contact the direct supervisor Artūrs Kiseļevs and forward information regarding tourists' requests.

In order to solve this as soon as possible, as tour guide, solutions for tourists' requests had to be found, and communication exchange with the head office had to be efficient and prompt. In

other words, being an intermediary between tourists and direct supervisor was one of the key aspects of a successful tour.

Starting from the basic meeting and greeting service at the airport to delivering the unknown guests to the hotel. Therefore, arriving on time and providing courteous service experiences was also essential.

Tour guiding work in *Easy Travel Ltd* had a lot of responsibility when customer services were concern. Every single misunderstanding, mistake or negative feedback in Tourism industry costs a fortune for the company and negative feedback to a tour guide and can influence the professional work career in the company.

If the customer is unhappy regarding provided service, he/she has the rights to complain to the agency for a refund. Thus, as tour guide it was learned that *no problem is small enough nor big enough*, i.e., which means attention must be given to all details and any problems can have a solution.

3.2.2 Main Tasks

The four-month period of the internship, the performance of all employees was monitored by the company. In order to create service of excellency, tour guides are trained on how to behave in any situation. The task performed, besides the previously mentioned, also included the following:

Driving:

Most common activity for tour guide at the company is driving and present different settings and experiences to the clients. As a tour guide, we are driving a sedan, minivan or jeep to do a specific tour. Requirement for the company to be able to drive the car is to have a valid B category driving license. Every day at the company was different, there was never a pre-set daily working time. One day tour guide could be a 40 km airport transfer, but the next day could be a 1000 km Oslo-Bergen-Oslo transfer.

Driving included airport transfers, train station transfer, cruise boat terminal transfers and many other transfers from and to the hotel. It involved mostly waiting and meeting the tourists doing

“meet and greet” service. For example, tour guide waits for unknown tourists at the airport arrivals hall with their Name and Surname on the paper, tablet or phone.

Acting as a local guide:

Tour guiding included driving day tours or even with the same group of tourists having five-day tour across Norway. When it comes for driving, tour guide is a host, tourism manager, information provider and a friend. All the 4 personalities and many more must be taken into consideration when operating with tourists. During the trip interaction with the tourists, provides the opportunity to know them and vice-versa.

Cleaning vehicles:

Cleaning car was as important as driving it. As *Easy Travel Ltd* works with VIP class client’s cars from inside and outside always had to be as clean as brands new. In my experience a clean car helps to get more tips and offers positive impact in tourists experiences.

Internal and External Communication:

Constant internal communication between tourists, tour guides and supervisors are part of the daily business. Communication varies from talking with the supervisor, reading emails and checking the working schedule until communication got throughout about the tour to the tourists. Even after the tour ended, it was necessary to write some reports to the agencies or directly to the supervisor from *Easy Travel Ltd*, with the purpose of providing and obtaining feedback from and to our partners.

Tour guides did not get involved directly with the external communication process, such as public relations. This task was more often done by the general manager Alexander Sirota and by the direct supervisor Artūrs Kiseļevs. For example, communicating with (B2B) partners, hosting partner meetings and visiting tourism exhibition halls.

In special cases, tour guides task was to provide tourists with personal phone number. Therefore, tourists could contact their tour guide for Norway in case of extra questions or

emergency. Regardless of spending a full day together with tourists at the night only during an emergency was the tour guide disturbed. Tourists almost never took advantage and did not abuse the fact that they could have called their tour guide during 24h/7 days.

Research and planning:

Another important task was to do research and planning before the tour start. First, timing is very important and always that must be taken into consideration. Factors such as traffic, road works or weather conditions can influence the tour. It was always crucial to plan stops for bathroom and snacks, which is always a needed thing. Therefore, having a break at the stunning Norwegian landscapes or nearby moving waterfall is a key fact when it comes to planning.

Not always everything goes smoothly and as expected. In tourism business problems and misunderstandings happens a lot, for a very simple reason. The information regarding tourists can be going through few different agencies, where are quite a few workers from all over the world. Sometimes a smallest detail which was not mentioned can cause lots of trouble.

Perhaps, not only human factor tends to create problems. Also, weather and traffic conditions can influence, for example, roads work or an accident on the, narrow fjords roads which are the only way to get to the destination. Tour guides job was to solve the issues whenever they were as soon as possible without causing too much of stress for the tourists and the first thing to do was to contact Artūrs Kiseļevs and let him know what has happened. The reason for that was to solve faster any problem(s) as soon as possible by informing the supervisor. The tourist's direct agent and other people who are part of the tour were also informed. Normally most of the issues were possible to solve by phone or email, but sometimes the tour guides job included acting according to the given circumstances and situation, thus performing unplanned task (i.e., choosing a different route, cancelling part of the tour, selecting another place to visit, etc.).

Buying and paying products and Services:

The tour guide had to use the company credit card for refuelling the vehicles, buying waters and snacks on the road. In some cases, buying museum tickets and lunches. After all these purchases, the following task was to collect the receipts and create an excel file in which the receipts should be listed and accounted. Later, it was the bookkeepers' job to continue the process of accountancy.

Professional attitude:

Since the beginning when meeting tourists, during and at the end my most important task was always to be and look professional. This means, tour guide had to have the appropriate clothes depending on the tour. The tour guide also must be polite, educated, and be pro-active in creating better experiences, for that always smile helps, in the same way as opening doors, or giving a hand and provide information. Professionalism is what matters the most as *Easy Travel Ltd* is working with high class tourists which are paying a lot of money. Nevertheless, the more professional looking tour guides *Easy Travel Ltd* has, the more feedbacks and customer satisfaction *Easy Travel Ltd* receives.

Figure 3.7. Company's personal minivan



Source: Own elaboration

3.3. Critical Analysis of the Internship

The internship is the outcome and the final step of the Master's in Management programme at the University of Algarve, Portugal. This internship provides an opportunity to grow professionally between the university period and the start of a professional career.

Being a Latvian citizen, the decision to continue to study at a master's level after graduating at the Lapland University of Applied Sciences, in Finland, was a challenge. The bachelor's diploma was in *Innovative Business Services*. Consequently, after obtaining the business degree, new opportunities to working in the tourism sector, including to try an internship period materialized. In addition, the personal experience enabled to learn to speak fluently Latvian, English, partly German, Russian, Slovak and Finnish.

The management Master is focused not only on Tourism but also on business and management in general. In fact, tourism is a business related to these two topics and they cannot be taken away from each other. Surely, to study and work in tourism in the region of Algarve is a prospect.

Being for the first time in Norway in 2018 and living for four months with this nation's culture was a shock that appeared in a positive way, regarding differences between Norwegians and, for example, Portuguese. Norwegians seem not to show emotions compared to Portuguese, but at the same time they are both educated and welcome foreigners' tourists. Working at *Easy Travel Ltd* was an opportunity to establish great relationships with local tour guides and allowed to know more about Norway.

An important reason for a success of the internship and tours done is the relationship between people, i.e., colleagues and clients during the tour guide. Working as a tourist guide, one must adapt to any kind of situation. It was important to keep personal opinions away from the job tasks. Some tour guide or hosts neglect this since it can be difficult.

Tourism industry needs professionals who are passionate and who love what they do. There are different kind of travellers and to adapt their needs and wishes is a challenge. It is important to find common interests and have a connection between tour guides and tourists.

Working for *Easy Travel Ltd* was an interesting choice, not only because of the dissertation report, but also for practical reasons, the professional experience obtained opened new job opportunities in tour guide professional career, and permitted to have a full-time job at *Easy Travel Ltd*.

In conclusion, the *Master in Management* studies was an essential to perform well as intern at *Easy Travel Ltd*. The courses taken at the University of Algarve prepare students for real life work and situations, especially courses such as tourism operations management, revenue management and cost accounting in tourism.

3.3.1 The search for the Internship

This part explains how to choose an internship place, what factors to consider and that not everything what sounds great *in title* is a perfect match for future master's students.

When looking for an internship, students will face challenges and several difficulties. The first is: to understand or realize where to start and how to find an internship. Firstly, climate problems, too warm and humid can be a factor of searching for an internship. Northern European countries such as Finland, Sweden or Norway have not that heated climate as in Portugal. After sending few motivational letters for applying to jobs in Northern European countries, *Easy Travel Ltd* responded the fastest and accepted internship work possibility.

The internship location was in Norway, home to some of Europe's most spectacularly beautiful landscapes. Starting from its breath-taking coastline, and dazzling natural wonders, to its urbane cities and traditional towns. Europe's fastest growing capital Oslo is a home to outstanding museums, world class restaurants and cutting-edge architecture (Evensberget, 2003).

Norway is a country with contrasts: grandiose mountains surrounded by mysterious fjords; cold winters are often followed by delightful summers; and long polar nights creating glorious midnight sun. Norway is one of the oldest civilisations in Europe currently has become one its youngest nations. Most people are pleasantly surprised when visiting Norway. Besides Norwegian people being friendly, English language is spoken widely among locals. Communications and services in Norway are efficient, and it is safe to walk at night-time.

Price wise, Norway is one of the most expensive countries in the world, however Norway's spectacular nature is for free at any time (Norway, 2015).

Despite the Norway's attraction, to find the right internship is important not only follow your heart or your feelings, but to make sure to check facts, analyse some markets and consider very carefully all options, because life changes constantly. This time it was not possible to get a feedback of the working conditions from some of the workers of *Easy Travel Ltd*, although asking for more information could help to improve the work circumstances.

Determination helped to find in Norway a perfect place to learn, meet great customers, tourists and even to earn some money, with the purpose of future integration into the working market.

3.4. Acquired Knowledge

The Internship at *Easy Travel Ltd* has helped to improve the skills needed in future career. Tour guide improves in many ways such as: organizing time management, improving language skills, history and culture about Norway, customer behaviour, service excellency, importance of responsibility and many others.

The contract with *Easy Travel Ltd* said that my title is a driver/guide and my main duties were: pick up customers from airport or hotel and transfer them according the schedule, prepare and clean vehicles, but mostly in answer tourists' questions, learn how to solve problem and adapt to the circumstances. Transfers included city tours as well and few day tours around Norway, which help to know more about the country.

Today's typical tourists' behaviour is about to spend more money on stimulating experiences. For example, tourists enjoyed the tours more when the tour guide was taking them through back roads which are less popular and not overcrowded with other tourists, even though the amount of money tourists paid was the same.

The internship job description included to sell/provide great views, tasty foods or popular destinations, but as well to sell experiences, which require a certain degree of knowledge in the approach and in the form (i.e., the way tour guide experiences were conducted). Indeed, general knowledge about experience economy improved my abilities to use it in real life work when

being with customers, including VIP families and exclusive guests. Despite of this fact, the context and the tourists background allowed to learn more about the tourists and their culture.

The constant feedback from the company as well from tourists, was the best way to monitor and asses the performance during the internship tasks at *Easy Travel Ltd.*

CHAPTER 4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The present internship report allowed to describe the role and tasks performed as a tour guide in the company at *Easy Travel Ltd*, in Bergen, Norway. As mentioned, in the literature review most authors agree that tour guides play an important part in providing memorable tourism experiences.

The work of tour guides affects tourists' feelings, experiences and satisfaction of tourists. After four months of internship, *Easy Travel Ltd* and other (B2B) tourism operators provided the opportunity to experience the trade and the challenges and demanding tasks a tour guide must perform.

The internship also provided networking possibilities with other drivers, tour guides and tourists. A tour guide is required to be the tourist host and needs to have a strong personality and wide range of skills. Dealing frequently with groups, is important to be open to any circumstances and as well to solve problems immediately. The management of small and private group tours is extremely tiring, since tour guides are constantly engaged by tourists. In comparison, being in a bus, provided the tour guide a different environment, in which he or she only need to talk in general to the whole group.

Tour guides can be tour leaders, pathfinders, interpreters, storytellers, and mentors for tourists. For example, having a four-day tailor made tour for family from United States across western Norway tour guide is responsible about: 1) driving 2) explaining 3) answering question 4) problem solving 5) communicating and many other tasks.

During the internship, knowledge was acquired about how tourism industry works, especially when working with VIP tourists. Overall, much was learned, since much work was done independently, because of the trust the company had on the intern. A downside of the internship was the short duration of the summer season in Norway, just few months and it is very hectic.

The tour guide is required to work in a team, help one another if needed, but most importantly to manage all the given activities, transfers and tours during the working day. During that time, despite few misunderstandings (arriving late to pick up tourists, traffic delays, replacing flat tyres, missing reservations from outsourced companies), the overall assessment is very positive, on a personal, academic and professional level.

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